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(Ad)ventures in Global Education

A study on how international branch campuses in China recruit Chinese students

Abstract: Increased mobility of students and universities worldwide has resulted in a global education market, in which knowledge and financial resources are transferred across borders. One trend in the internationalization of higher education is to establish international branch campuses (IBCs), in which a university offers a degree abroad by collaborating with a domestic university. In China, where demand for higher education is increasing, this trend is becoming evident. By conducting qualitative interviews with seven IBCs in China, this thesis studies how IBCs in China recruit Chinese students. The empirical findings are compared with theory on student recruitment within enrollment management, which assumes that universities want to control their student enrollments by performing for-profit marketing strategies. The research finds that effort in first hand is put on improving the name-recognition of the IBCs, since the IBCs offer a new educational product in China. Furthermore, the IBCs need to recruit through a national college entrance system, controlled by the Chinese Ministry of Education, which limits the freedom of controlling the size of the student body. To overcome this, interviews and other quality checks can be included in the recruitment to be able to affect the characteristics of the student body. To conclude, the findings imply that the studied IBCs share the market-centered view that enrollment management builds on. However, the institutional resources are not found to be as systematically used as enrollment management theory propose, which might be a result of differences in cultural backgrounds of the partners cooperating the IBC.

Keywords: *Student recruitment, International higher education, Enrollment management, International branch campus, China*

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"As a new university we have to be more aggressive in our recruiting strategies, because we are offering something very different compared to other Chinese universities."

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List of concepts and definitions

Institution	In this thesis referred to as an organization founded for an educational purpose.
International Branch Campus (IBC)	A jointly-run institution operating in the name of a foreign education provider. The jointly-run institution provides an entire academic program on site, leading to a degree awarded by the foreign partner (Cross-Border Education Research Team 2016).
Student recruitment	A process involving activities to attract new students (Hossler and Bean 1990:5).
Student retention	A process involving activities to retain enrolled students (Hossler and Bean 1990:5).
Enrollment management	An organizational concept with a systematic set of activities designed to enable institutions to exert more control over their student enrollments (Hossler and Bean 1990:5).
Institutional resources	Resources such as human capital (e.g. faculty), physical capital (e.g. equipment or technology) and organizational capital (e.g. processes or routines) (Barney 1991, cited in Hossler and Bontrager 2015:367).
Chinese students	In this thesis referred to as students with Chinese nationality.
International students	Students who have crossed borders for the purpose of study (OECD 2013).
Prospective students	In this thesis referred to as students who might apply to an institution.
Higher education	Post-secondary education, including both public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools (World Bank 2017).
Western	Relating to North America, and countries in Western Europe (Cambridge University Press 2018).
Gao kao	Standardized test that is required to pass to be able to enroll in Chinese higher education. Also called the National College Entrance Examination (OECD 2016).

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Internationalization of higher education is increasingly important for the globalization phenomena (Bradford, Guzmán and Trujillo 2017). It has today become an evident field both for practice and research (Bedenlier, Kondakci and Zawacki-Richter 2018). In de Wit and Hunter's (2015) definition of internationalization of higher education, the process is described as an integration of a global reach in the purpose of education. Internationalization can increase the quality of education and research, and hence make a societal contribution (de Wit and Hunter 2015). Enrolling international students is also a source of financial revenue, and the economic aspect of internationalization has therefore become a discussed rationale for internationalizing higher education (Li and Bray 2007).

International cooperation, in the form of jointly run educational institutions, is today common within international higher education (Bradford, Guzmán and Trujillo 2017). One element of the trend is to establish international branch campuses (hereafter "IBCs") abroad, where both domestic and international students earn a degree from the foreign university partner (Kinser and Lane 2016). In the end of 2015, there were 249 IBCs worldwide (Cross-Border Education Research Team 2016). The People's Republic of China (hereafter "China") hosts the most IBCs in the world, with 31 operating branch campuses in 2017 (Cross-Border Education Research Team 2017). Wu and Qiang (2018) argue that the increase of international cooperation in China is a sign of an inward-oriented internationalization process, in which foreign knowledge, educational models and norms are being imported from abroad.

With a population of 1.3 billion and almost 260 million students, China has the world's largest education system (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2014). The Chinese students are among the highest academic achieving students in the world, according to the PISA tests made in 2015 (OECD 2018). Furthermore, Chinese parents' second biggest spending is on their child's education (Bodycott 2009). Between 2006 and 2014, the percentage of students pursuing to higher education in China increased from 21 percent to 39 percent (UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2018). Rapid economic growth has created an excess demand for higher education, that can be met by international higher education models abroad or in China (Li and Bray 2007). As the number of foreign jointly-run institutions in China increases, the institutions perform rather aggressive recruitment strategies towards Chinese students (Ozturgut 2015).

1.2 Previous research and research gap

Research on internationalization of higher education has increased both in quality and quantity (Kehm and Teichler 2007). However, in the context of student recruitment at IBCs, a research gap has been identified. Previous research on IBCs has mainly focused on the rationales for establishing partnerships (Girdzijauskaite and Radzeviciene 2014), and not how student recruitment is performed by the IBCs.

There is existing research on decision making factors for Chinese students seeking international education (Mazzarol and Soutar 2002, Cubillo, Sánchez and Cerviño 2006, Li and Bray 2007, Bodycott 2009). From an institutional perspective there is existing research on student recruitment processes in other parts of the world, mainly found in American studies on *enrollment management*. Hossler and Bean (1990:5) defined enrollment management as *"an organizational concept and a systematic set of activities designed to enable educational institutions to exert more influence over their student enrollments"* and developed a framework that further on will be used in this thesis.

Hossler and Bontrager (2015:8) mention that enrollment management has become important in American higher education and that it is likely to affect student recruitment globally. Studies within enrollment management have mainly been made in the U.S. and not in other parts of the world, such as China. Thereby, research on enrollment management practices in China is yet limited. By studying student recruitment processes of international institutions operating in China, this thesis hopes to contribute to enrollment management research in a Chinese context.

1.3 Purpose of thesis and research questions

This thesis studies how IBCs in China use their institutional resources to recruit Chinese students. By conducting qualitative interviews with seven IBCs in China, this thesis aims to see what similarities or differences that can be found between the studied recruitment practices and Western student recruitment theory.

The following research questions have therefore been used in this thesis:

1. *How do international branch campuses in China recruit Chinese students?*
2. *What similarities and differences between the studied recruitment processes and Western enrollment management theory can be found?*

1.4 Limitations

International collaborations between universities can take several forms, such as different partnerships, student exchange programs or local research centers. However, this thesis focuses on IBCs that operate on site in China in the name of the foreign institution and offers an entire academic program. This thesis will see the recruitment process through the perspective of institutional departments, and not from the view of other stakeholders such as prospective or currently enrolled students.

The prospective students in the recruitment processes of the IBCs that this thesis studies are students with Chinese nationality, and thereby not on students with other nationalities. No comparison between the universities' recruitment of students in China and the recruitment practices in the Western home country is included. Instead, this thesis compares student recruitment practices among IBCs in China with theory on student recruitment. This focus was set to give the thesis a clear scope, given the limitation of time and length of the thesis.

The enrollment management framework focuses on several institutional areas, where pricing strategy is one. This thesis will however not focus on pricing strategies, since admission and financial planning departments often are separated (Hossler and Bean 1990:8), and the aim was to interview similar departments. Moreover, this thesis will not include the aspects of student retention, as the study looks at student recruitment. Lastly, this thesis will not focus on how the recruitment affects the number or perceived quality of applications for the institutions, and neither how the IBCs practically establish their branch campuses in China.

1.5 Assumptions

Enrollment management theory builds on the assumption that institutions want to be able to influence their student enrollments. According to Hossler and Bontrager (2015:13) this is unlikely to change and hence this thesis builds on the same assumption. This thesis assumes that the IBCs operating in China want to recruit Chinese students, either because of their academic abilities, financial resources or other rationales.

This thesis builds on the assumption that the product that IBCs offer is perceived as an international educational degree for the Chinese students. Hence, when students apply to an IBC, they apply for an international education degree. Theory on enrollment management that is used in this thesis is therefore supported by theory made on international student recruitment and decision making factors of Chinese students seeking international education.

2 Theoretical framework

The following section presents the theoretical framework that has been used to analyze the empirical findings. First, the background of enrollment management and its key components are presented. Further on, the enrollment management framework is supported by other research on student recruitment from an international view to give a deeper perspective.

2.1 Choice of theoretical framework

According to Hossler and Bontrager (2015:3-4), globalization has made the concept of enrollment management increasingly important worldwide, and it has today become a managerial paradigm for institutions. To study the recruitment processes performed by IBCs in China, this thesis will use Hossler and Bean's (1990:5) framework "The key elements of enrollment management" for the analysis of the empirical material. The framework will be used together with more recent research in enrollment management (Hossler and Bontrager 2015) and other studies on international student recruitment. Enrollment management is commonly mentioned in professional publications in the field of higher education (Hossler and Bontrager 2015:8), and research on enrollment management has previously been used to study institutional marketing and recruitment in an intercultural context (Gregory 2008). Hossler and Bontrager (2015:4) explain that the emergence of *strategic enrollment management,* a development of enrollment management, builds on the original enrollment management studies made in 1980s. Hossler and Bontrager's (2015:5) research builds on Hossler and Bean's (1990:5) framework, but has added aspects of globalization and social media marketing.

2.2 A background to enrollment management

Enrollment management was first studied in the U.S. in the 1980s as institutions started to understand the importance of a systematic use of institutional resources to recruit students (Hossler and Bean 1990:4). The research field builds on three theoretical perspectives that originate from the fields of sociology and public management (Hossler and Bontrager 2015:10). The first perspective, *resource dependency theory,* explains the strategic use of scarce institutional resources when the external environment shifts. Secondly, *institutional theory* explains how institutions mimic structures of other institutions to seek legitimacy. Lastly, enrollment management builds on *new managerialism* which explains how public organizations adapt practices that usually are associated with the private and for-profit sector. Altogether, Hossler and Bontrager (2015:10) mean that these theories have been used as a

foundation in enrollment management theory to explain the shift into a market-centered view among higher education institutions, in which the use of for-profit business marketing strategies is growing.

The goal of enrollment management according to Hossler and Bean (1990:5) is to exert control over the size and the characteristics of the student body. Hossler and Bean's (1990:20) research in enrollment management provides institutions with *"a conceptual and structural framework for directing institutional activities to attract and retain students"*. The research is built both upon on the fact that student enrollment is beneficial for the image and reputation of an institution, as well as for the increased financial stability of the institution (Hossler and Bean 1990:14). Hossler and Bean's (1990) framework, together with Hossler and Bontrager's (2015) more recent research in the field, was chosen as theoretical framework together with other additional on student recruitment from an international perspective. The integrated theoretical framework was used to see whether similarities and differences could be found between the empirical and theoretical findings, and is summarized at the end of the theory section.

2.3 The key elements of enrollment management

"The key elements of enrollment management", defined by Hossler and Bean (1990:5), lays the foundation of the structure in the thesis. A modified version of the key elements is presented below in Figure 1. Element 1.b and 5 that relate to student retention and persistence, are excluded from the theoretical framework, since the focus of this thesis is set on student recruitment. Furthermore, aspects related to pricing strategies are excluded (see Section 1.4).

Figure 1: Modified version of "The key elements of enrollment management"
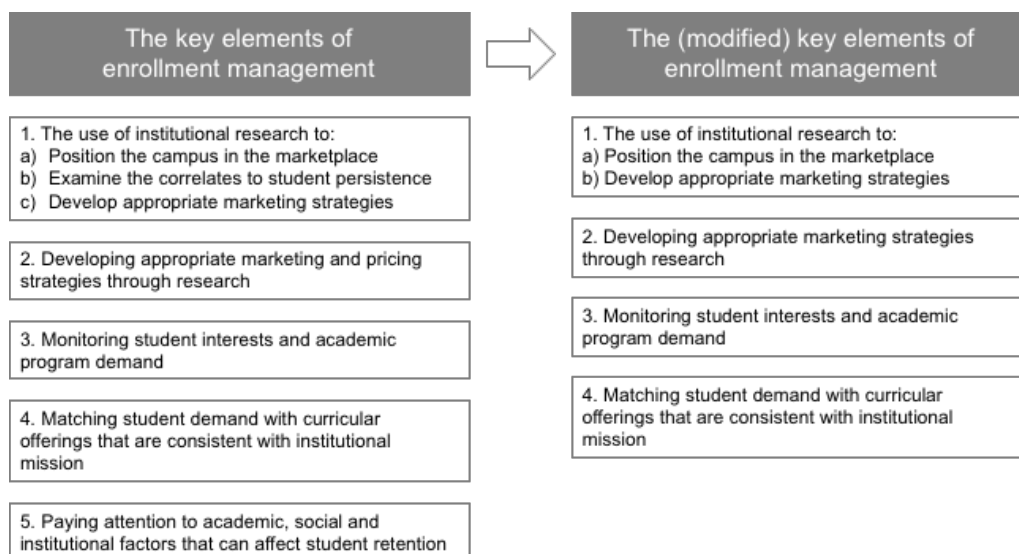
2.3.1 The use of institutional research

The first key element of enrollment management highlights the importance of conducting institutional research. As the competition in the education market gets more competitive, institutions cannot make decisions based on assumptions, and therefore need to conduct research (Hossler and Bontrager 2015:110). Being aware of academic, social and institutional factors, and using this knowledge is crucial as changes in trends and values affect the recruitment process (Hossler and Bean 1990:13). Institutions therefore need to be aware of the external environment and consider the following external factors: *demographic trends, economic trends, student market trends*, *characteristics of market segments*, *educational and non-educational options for potential students*, *competitors* and *non-tuition sources of income* (Hossler and Bean 1990:39).

Successful enrollment management requires knowledge of the characteristics of applicants, what prospective students value and how to communicate with the selected target segment (Hossler and Bean 1990:4). To measure students' interests when seeking and applying to an institution, both quantitative methods, such as *surveys,* and qualitative methods, such as *focus groups* with students, are typically used by institutions (Hossler and Bontrager 2015:110-111). Gregory (2008) points out that surveying "cultural insiders" such as *alumni, current students* and *faculty* can be of help to understand prospective students.

2.3.2 Developing marketing strategies through research

The second key element of enrollment management emphasizes the importance of developing appropriate marketing strategies through institutional research. According to Gregory (2008) the term "appropriate" means that marketing strategies should not only be developed to match the institution itself, but also to the target group. The target groups in the recruitment might be prospective students, firms that collaborate with institutions or the students' families (Hossler and Bean 1990:74). The main goals of marketing strategies in enrollment management according to Hossler and Bean (1990:118) are to strengthen market image or position, attract student inquiries, motivating students to apply and thereafter enroll.

The most commonly used marketing activities found in research on enrollment management include *publications*, *network marketing* (through counselors, staff, current students, alumni and parents), *marketing in the field* (through education fairs and school visits), *on-campus activities* and *direct marketing* (through mail, e-mail, telephone or social media) (Hossler and

Bean 1990:101-117, Hossler and Bontrager 2015:118). The concept of branding has also been identified as important in student recruitment strategies (Ivy 2008). Brand communication can be done through several channels such as *open days* and *face-to-face communication* (Ivy 2008)*,* as well as *websites* and *social media* (Zailskaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite 2012). Hossler and Bontrager (2015:118) mention that institutions that do not consider the importance of interacting with prospective students through social media are missing out on valuable opportunities in student recruitment.

Naidoo and Wu (2011) highlight the critical role of communication between senior management and marketing departments when organizing international student recruitment to bring credibility in the communication with prospective students. Furthermore, marketing teams need to encourage academic faculty to participate in marketing activities connected to student recruitment, such as open days or school visits. Prospective students and parents place trust in the individuals representing the institutions at these events, since their knowledge and enthusiasm directly reflect the image of the institution (Hossler and Bontrager 2015:117). Mazzarol (1998) mentions that when cooperating in international education, foreign partners can improve the marketing profile by taking advantage of the resources of the local partners.

2.3.3 Monitoring student interests and academic program demand

The third key element of enrollment management discusses the need of monitoring student interests and academic program demand. It is vital in student recruitment to understand what students value and how they choose education (Hossler and Bean 1990:57). Research shows that the student decision making process is similar to a consumer decision process, with concerns regarding both long-term benefits as well as initial costs, such as tuition fees (Hossler and Bean 1990:19).

An important factor influencing the Chinese students is the *quality of reputation and institution* (Mazzarol and Soutar 2002, James-MacEachern and Yun 2017)*.* Chinese students are likely to be more influenced by *family, alumni* and *local actors*, such as educational recruitment agencies and local government websites*,* compared to students with other nationalities (James-MacEachern and Yun 2017). It is important for institutions to understand what the prospective students' parents rate as important (Bodycott 2009) and develop marketing strategies specifically targeting the parents of prospective students (Hossler and Bean 1990:105).

Career opportunities, gaining a *global perspective* and *learning English* are prominent motives for Chinese students seeking international education (Hegarty, Fuxman, Elifoglu and Chao 2013). A growing number of international companies open local offices in China, and need employees with both English and Chinese language proficiency. Chinese students who seek a career at an international company in China might therefore see an international education as an effective way of both earning a degree and learning English at the same time (Sánchez, Fornerino and Zhang 2006). Chinese students generally want an understanding of the globalization of business, and therefore institutions' missions need to include a global reach to attract the Chinese students (Hegarty et al. 2013).

2.3.4 Matching student demand with curricular offerings

The final key element of enrollment management highlights the importance of matching student demand with curricular offerings that are consistent with the mission of the institution. Hossler and Bean (1990:79) mention that the academic program and the curriculum are important student decision making factors that institutions need to consider. As a link between prospective students and the curriculum in the recruitment process, the admission office has an important role (Hossler and Bean 1990:156).

For institutions who want to recruit Chinese students in China, there is a need to include a global reach in the curricular offerings, as this is what many Chinese students demand and are interested in (Hegarty et al. 2013). According to Willis (2005), Chinese students seeking foreign-sourced education in China, such as IBCs, desire education similar to the experience of studying abroad. To keep authenticity, IBCs should therefore *adapt as little as possible* to match the students' interest of gaining an international experience.

2.4 Alternative frameworks

An alternative theoretical framework that could have been used is recruitment theory from a human resource perspective, based on recruitment in settings such as employee recruitment. Since enrollment management theory focuses on both students and recruitment from an institutional perspective, enrollment management was viewed as more congruent with the purpose of this thesis.

Another alternative to the enrollment management perspective is recruitment theory from a pure marketing perspective. However, by choosing the enrollment management perspective

this study gains a broader scope of the recruitment process, as enrollment management theory includes marketing as well as an integrated organizational approach (Hossler and Bontrager 2015:7-8).

One framework within the field of enrollment management that could have been used is Huddleston and Rumbough's (1997) seven identified functional areas within enrollment management: institutional research and planning, marketing, admissions, registrar, financial aid, student orientation, and retention and advising. Huddleston and Rumbough's (1997) framework partly builds on Hossler's (1996) research on enrollment management. Hossler and Bean's (1990) framework was found to be more prominent to this thesis since it is more widespread in the field of higher education than Huddleston and Rumbough's (1997) framework, and more frequently used to describe the background and definition of the term enrollment management.

2.5 Discussion of theory

Enrollment management theory is mostly built on studies on the recruitment of domestic students in the U.S., and not students in China. Furthermore, Bedenlier, Kondakci and Zawacki-Richter (2018) argue that research that has been made on the internationalization of higher education also needs some reflection, as content analysis have shown that research in the field so far mainly have been Anglo-Saxon and Western European driven. According to Bedenlier, Kondakci and Zawacki-Richter (2018), the research contributions from Asia in the field of higher education internationalization could increase in order to enable diverse perspectives on the experiences of internationalization.

It is also worth pointing out that when comparing recruitment practices in a Chinese context today with Hossler and Bean's (1990:5) theoretical framework, that originates from 1990s, potential differences found might have been caused by both geographical distance and difference in time. By supporting enrollment management theory with more recent research from an international education perspective, this combined theoretical framework lay a foundation to help answering the research questions. The theoretical framework has been summarized in Figure 2 on the next page.

Figure 2: Summary of the theory section

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The key elements of enrollment management

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH	DEVELOP MARKETING STRATEGIES	MONITOR STUDENT INTEREST AND DEMAND	CURRICULAR OFFERINGS

Additional research

Research factors	Marketing channels and factors	Decision-making factors	International education in China

Research factors

Hossler and Bean (1990)
- Demographic trends
- Economic trends
- Student market trends
- Characteristics of market segments
- Educational and non-educational options
- Competitors
- Non-tuition sources of income

Hossler and Bontrager (2015)
- Surveys
- Focus groups

Gregory (2008)
- Alumni
- Current students
- Faculty

Marketing channels and factors

Hossler and Bontrager (2015), Hossler and (Bean 1990)
- Publications
- Network marketing
- Marketing in the field
- On-campus activities
- Direct marketing

Hossler and Bontrager (2015)
- Social media

Ivy (2008)
- Open days
- Face-to-face communication

Zailskaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite (2012)
- Websites
- Social media

Mazzarol (1998)
- Local partners with local knowledge and resources

Decision-making factors

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), James-MacEachern and Yun 2017
- Quality of reputation and institution

James-MacEachern and Yun (2017)
- Family
- Alumni
- Local actors

Hegarty et al. (2013)
- Career opportunities
- Global perspective and mission
- Learning English

International education in China

Willis 2005
- Adapt as little as possible

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3 Method

This section presents the choice of research strategy and research design used in this thesis to collect and analyze the empirics in order to answer the research questions. A discussion is included to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the chosen method, as well as a discussion of ethical aspects that has been considered in the process of this study.

3.1 Research strategy

A *qualitative research strategy*, through interviews with IBCs operating in China, has been used to answer the research questions in this thesis. A recruitment process might be seen as a quantifiable process that can be divided into categorized steps, and then generalized. However, it is more dependent on human relationships between the IBC and other stakeholders in the recruitment process, combined with several different factors such as marketing and partnerships that can differ between universities (Hossler and Bontrager 2015:4). These intangible attributes of recruitment are difficult to quantify, and therefore a qualitative strategy was used to get rich descriptions rather than a quantifiable data set. Moreover, the benefit of flexibility that comes with a qualitative strategy was convenient for the research, as research on IBCs in China is limited. Several interesting thoughts and factors emerged during the first interviews that were unknown on beforehand, such as the importance of gao kao, and the questions asked in the interviews could then be adjusted for later interviews.

The epistemological position for this thesis is the *interpretivist* paradigm, with features of both *deductive* and *inductive* research methods (see Appendix 9.4). By initially using theory to formulate the research questions and develop an interview guide for the interviews, a deductive method was used. Later in the process, an inductive method was used to process and understand the empirical material. The empirics were sorted into themes based on the authors' comprehension of student recruitment, but not directly according to the key elements of enrollment management. Thereafter, a deductive method was used again when themes were categorized and analyzed according to the key elements of enrollment management. Hence, an *abductive* method has been used in this thesis, in which understanding is embodied (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2008:55). By combining the analysis of the empirics with previous research as an inspirational source, patterns that enhance understanding can be discovered (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2008:56).

3.2 Sampling process

The sample for this thesis is IBCs operating in China, represented by employees working with recruitment at the IBCs. In the beginning of 2017, there were 31 IBCs in China according to the Cross-Border Education Research Team (see Appendix 9.5). All these were contacted by e-mail and received the same request to participate in this thesis.

There were no pre-established contacts involved in the study. The IBCs' websites were used to find contact information. Some IBCs publicly shared contact information to a department responsible for the recruitment of Chinese students, while others had more general contact information. If no direct contact information concerning recruitment was available, the emails included a specific request to speak to an admission or marketing department.

Among the 31 contacted IBCs, 13 initially showed interest in participating in the study. Seven of these IBCs agreed to participate. Out of the remaining six IBCs, three stopped answering without further explanation and three forwarded the request to another employee, that in turn did not reply. Reminding emails were sent to those that did not answer and to the ones who stopped answering. New e-mail addresses were also found and used. Among the seven IBCs that chose to participate in the study, interviews were conducted with nine employees in total. These employees work at departments related to recruitment, admission, marketing, communications and program support. Four of the interviewees come from a Western country and five from China. The sampling was not based on nationality, but instead on the employees' roles and insights in the recruitment processes.

When the interviews with the IBCs were completed and the empirics had been analyzed, one interview with an external professor was conducted. He has experience from leading positions at world known, highly ranked Western business schools, as well as a Chinese business school. The purpose of the interview was to interpret the findings of the research, rather than directly answering the research questions. His comments were used to put the research findings in perspective of the internationalization phenomena. These comments are included in the discussion section of this thesis (see Section 6.1).

3.3 Research design

A *cross-sectional design* is used in this thesis. Bryman and Bell (2015:61) points out that two of the characteristics of a cross-sectional design is that the study looks at more than one case, and that the data is collected at a single point in time, which is consistent with this study.

3.3.1 Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the empirical material. An interview guide was used to support the interviews in order to ensure that all interviewees were asked similar questions (see Appendix 9.3). Due to the nature of semi-structured interviews, the order of the questions could change, and follow-up questions asked if something was discovered that possibly could give explanatory value in the study (Bryman and Bell 2015:481). The interview guide was structured according to the key elements of enrollment management. Furthermore, it was supported by opening questions in which the interviewee could present themselves and their IBCs, as well as closing questions where the interviewee could elaborate and add what they found important.

The empirics were collected in China for two months. Nine interviews with staff from seven different IBCs were conducted in total (see Appendix 9.2). Six of the interviews were held on campus, while three were conducted through the Chinese messaging application WeChat due to time constraints and travel distance to the IBCs.

The interviews were held in English with both authors present and recorded electronically. Before the interviews started, all interviewees were reminded of the purpose of the thesis and informed that the interview would be anonymized. The interviewees were asked for their approval to record the interview for the purpose of transliteration, of which all interviewees approved. Lastly, interviewees who asked for a copy of the final thesis were offered to receive an electronic copy.

Eight of the interviews were between 39 and 67 minutes long, with an average of 45 minutes. All interviewees were asked questions from the interview guide but took different time in answering them. One interview was 15 minutes long, since the interviewee did not have more time. However, the interview still covered all major themes and a majority of the questions in the interview guide, and was therefore chosen to be included.

The interview with the external professor was held through Skype and lasted for 23 minutes. This interview was not based on the interview guide that was used for the IBCs. Instead, open questions about the findings of the research in this thesis were asked. The structure of this interview is similar to a *focused interview* (Merton, Fiske and Kendall 1956, cited in Bryman and Bell 2015:214). This focused method was preferred since the aim of the interview was to interpret the research findings, and the interviewee could freely elaborate on the specific context studied in this thesis.

3.3.2 Data analysis

The first step in processing the empirical material was to transcribe the interviews. The transliteration was done word by word to replicate the interviewees' answers as detailed as possible to reduce bias in the analysis. The transcribed material was cross-read by both authors. Thereafter, 228 quotes were selected through an inductive method, based on the authors' comprehension of student recruitment (see Appendix 9.4). The quotes were then categorized into 21 different themes. Lastly, the themes were sorted in accordance with the theoretical framework through a deductive method. Some themes did not naturally match any of the elements, and these were sorted into the new category "Additional elements". The abductive method enabled these additional elements to be exploited, which was important in order to find recruitment factors that the theoretical framework did not include.

The interview with the external professor was also transcribed, and quotes were selected and presented in the discussion of the research findings (see Section 6.1). The quotes were selected based on their relevance and explanatory value for the research findings.

3.4 Discussion of method

Common critique of qualitative studies conducted on a small sample is that it is difficult to generalize the findings (Bryman and Bell 2015:414). A quantitative method could perhaps have increased the response rate, by enhancing the feeling of security and anonymity for the participants. However, the aim of this thesis has not been to generalize towards the whole population of IBCs in China, but to see whether any similarities or differences between the studied context and Western theory can be found. To be able to capture additional elements in the recruitment process that are not found in theory, a qualitative method with face-to-face interviews was preferred. Moreover, conducting business research in China through surveys can be risky due to language barriers and misunderstandings of key concepts. This is especially

important when concepts are derived from Western researchers, and not as familiar in China, such as "institutional research" or "marketing strategy" (Roy, Walters and Luk 2001).

One risk of starting with a theoretical framework and then develop the interview guide from theory is that the answers from the interviewees can be biased towards the theory, which might limit the analysis. To reduce this risk other research on student recruitment, rather than just enrollment management, has been integrated in the theory and analysis sections.

The choice of sampling process gave every IBC the same possibility of participating in the study, which reduces the risk of sample bias (Bryman and Bell 2015:191). One weakness with the sampling process is that it was difficult to ensure that the participation request was sent to the person with most insight in the recruitment activities within the IBCs.

The sampling was based on the IBCs that were identified in the beginning of 2017 (Cross-Border Education Research Team 2017). Other IBCs can potentially have opened up or be in the process of establishing in China. However, no updated list of identified IBCs has been published from the Cross-Border Education Research Team at the time this thesis is written. To have a consistent definition of which institutions that classify as IBCs, this thesis has focused on this list of operating IBCs published in 2017.

The relatively low number of interviewees that chose to participate in the study can be discussed. The participation request was sent through e-mail, and some of the interviewees that chose to participate in the study mentioned that e-mail is not an efficient method of contacting people in China. The interviewees mentioned that the messaging application WeChat is the most important communication tool in China. If the participation request had been sent through WeChat instead, the reply rate might had been higher. Furthermore, some IBCs might have decided to not participate due to the fact that recruitment strategies can be tactical and secretive.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The name, size and program offerings of the IBCs that participated in the study are not included in the thesis to keep them anonymized. The interviewees, including the external professor, were informed that their participation would be anonymized in the study before starting the interview. Since there were only 31 identified IBCs operating in China in the beginning of 2017 (Cross-Border Education Research Team 2017), presenting information about the IBCs' characteristics could have placed the anonymity of the IBCs at risk. During several interviews,

the interviewees mentioned how important the anonymization was as they were giving information that they felt were sensitive. Therefore, reminders of the anonymization were given during all interviews, and effort has been put on not revealing the interviewees identities and their IBCs' names throughout the whole thesis process.

When conducting business research in China, especially when Chinese interviewees are interacting with researchers from other countries, some difficulties concerning cultural differences may arise (Roy, Walters and Luk 2001). Chinese respondents often make their key comments at the end of a conversation (Shenkar 1994, cited in Roy, Walters and Luk 2001), and therefore all interviewees were given the chance to highlight or add specific comments at the end of the interviews (see Appendix 9.3).

Another issue that may arise when conducting business research in China is topic sensitivity (Roy, Walters and Luk 2001). A long history of bureaucratic control has caused a fear of sharing too much information about the organizations' activities, which might cause limits on the freedom of speech (Roy, Walters and Luk 2001). With this in mind, all of the interviewees were informed that they did not need to give answers to questions if they did not want to, and that they were free to withdraw from the interview without further explanation.

4 Empirics

The empirics were collected through interviews with employees working at IBCs in China, with the purpose of gathering material that could be analyzed to help answering the research questions. This section firstly presents the empirical findings, categorized according to the key elements of enrollment management. Secondly, additional themes that were discovered from the conducted interviews are presented as "Additional elements".

Table 2: Overview of interview objects, including the acronyms of the IBCs, as well as the Western and Chinese partners of the IBCs.

IBC	Western University	Chinese University	Interviewee
IBC A	University Aw	University Ac	Anthony Alice
IBC B	University Bw	University Bc	Brian
IBC C	University Cw	University Cc	Catherine
IBC D	University Dw	University Dc	David
IBC E	University Ew	University Ec	Elliot
IBC F	University Fw	University Fc	Felicia
IBC G	University Gw	University Gc	George Gabrielle

4.1 The use of institutional research

4.1.1 Research methods

The interviewees mention different methods of conducting research to keep track of students and competitors. Catherine and David both describe that when their staff go out on high school visits, they speak directly to students to gain feedback on what they value as students. George says that IBC G uses surveys to ask admitted students about how they heard about IBC G, their decision making process and their experience of the application process.

David mentions that IBC D gathers feedback from both a student advisory board to develop future strategies, and a business advisory board with faculty, alumni and managers of different companies. This is done to understand what kind of education IBC D should offer, to assure

that their students meet the companies' requirements when they graduate. Furthermore, Elliot says that IBC E uses their alumni association to gain knowledge on what the alumni have done after their graduation. They also ask about what the alumni were satisfied or dissatisfied with in their education.

IBC F is using an external company that conducts research for them. Felicia says that IBC F maps the marketing potential by letting the company analyze how many prospective students that have clicked on IBC F's online advertisements in different provinces. IBC G is also in the process of starting to cooperate with a company that will conduct research for them, as they have reached a point where they feel that they need to learn more about their target segments.

The view on competition, and how much emphasis that is put on competitor analysis, differ among the interviewees. Catherine and David mention that IBC C and D actively conduct competitor analysis. Brian and Elliot on the other hand only mention the importance of being aware of the competition that their IBCs face from Chinese universities. Felicia highlights that IBCs face competition from three angles; domestic universities, foreign universities and other study abroad options.

4.1.2 External factors

Five of the interviewees mention economic and demographic trends. Catherine says that the positive economic trend is beneficial for the recruitment process. The growing economy and developing industries have resulted in a growing middle class with strong financial resources, of which a substantial part is invested in their child's education. More companies are also demanding highly educated students, which also benefit the IBCs as more students apply. George mentions their focus on the growing middle class:

"In terms of target group, these are the people we want to reach. The people who have not heard of us and who are moving into this middle class where education is the way they see themselves advancing a future for their children."

Elliott mentions that the young generation in China has a different lifestyle compared to their parents. He says that they are self-confident and more similar to Western students. Gabrielle believes that there is a shift going on in the education market. She believes that the demand for Western education and liberal arts education, in which students are encouraged to think critically, is on the rise.

4.2 Developing marketing strategies through research

4.2.1 Marketing strategy

How much focus and effort the IBCs put on marketing varies. Only one of the interviewees, Catherine, talks about a well-developed marketing strategy created by the IBC itself. David says that their overall marketing strategy is developed by the University Dw, and not by IBC D, since the marketing department is a centralized at University Dw.

Elliot says that IBC E is just in the initial stage of thinking about how to attract Chinese students, and that their marketing strategy therefore needs to be built up gradually. He further explains that there is common in China to believe that there is no need for universities to spend money on marketing. The current marketing of education in China is mainly based on rankings:

"We did not have to promote the university by means of what a cool lifestyle you have, or what nice activities, or social atmosphere. [...]. The whole attractiveness of Chinese universities only relies on the ranking".

When George is asked about IBC G's marketing strategy, he says that there is no outspoken strategy. At the same time, both George and Gabrielle mention that IBC G is aiming at increasing the marketing reach to raise the awareness of IBC G. She believes that one way of doing this is to not only target the prospective students, but to also include the influencing people around the prospective group of students.

4.2.2 Offline marketing activities

Four of the interviewees mention offline marketing activities such as open days, education fairs and high school visits. At IBC G's open days, prospective students can attend lectures and learn more about the advantages of studying at an IBC. Five of the IBCs mention that they take part of externally organized education fairs. After the fairs the IBCs can follow up on student leads and try to get the students to attend their onsite recruitment activities.

George argues that there is a need to explain the concept of an IBC face-to-face as it is rather new and unknown. They therefore put a lot of effort on high school visits in different provinces across China. A majority of the interviewees talk about the importance of establishing relationships with high school deans and head administrators, as they act as gate keepers at the high schools. Brian explains:

"You have to know the head administrators at the schools in orders to actively recruit students, and that is a little bit different from recruiting internationally."

Catherine, who also visits high schools, says that it is important to have academic faculty involved, since the administrative departments might lack knowledge of certain academic fields.

Other mentioned ways of having faculty involved in the marketing include international conferences and national roadshows, where faculty attend events to give public lectures. David believes that this kind of events can influence the local community and that people attending the events can spread the information through their social network.

Three of the IBCs mention the importance of having an active alumni network, as they are important spokespersons for the IBCs. George says that it is common that alumni travel to their home provinces and old high schools to share stories of their studies. IBC D and E both have active alumni networks and arrange alumni nights with the purpose of building connections.

Other offline marketing activities include the official student handbook published nationwide by the Ministry of Education, and printed material such as flyers, brochures, annual reports and college newspapers. Among these, the student handbook is highlighted as most important, as it is handed out to all high schools in China. Anthony explains that it will introduce the IBCs' majors, features and how many students they will recruit in each province.

4.2.3 Online marketing activities

All of the interviewed IBCs have websites both in English and Chinese, as well as presence in Chinese social media. Anthony says that IBC A is active in social media marketing since many people do not have time to come visit their IBC in person. He argues that social media can help IBC A to provide a deeper understanding of how it is to study at an IBC compared to how it is to study at a traditional Chinese university. IBC C, D and G have student teams responsible for running social media accounts where they post event information and videos. Catherine highlights the importance of letting students tell their story in order to gain legitimacy in the marketing. David also mentions that having alumni sharing social media content is a good way of promoting the IBC.

George says that e-mail is not an effective communication channel to use in China as few people neither read nor reply to e-mails. Felicia explains that using communication tools such

as Google, Facebook or Twitter is not an option since these social media channels are blocked in China. Instead, the interviewed IBCs use Chinese social media channels, such as the messaging application WeChat, the search engine Baidoo and the micro blog application Weibo. George and Alice mention that social media is used to spread information connected to student experiences and daily life, as well as to post information about admission, onsite and offsite recruitment activities.

4.2.4 Branding

Elliot argues that ranking plays an important role for the branding of the university. He says that the quality and reputation of the degree are the most important factors for students when entering the labor market. David further explains that Chinese students care a lot about employment rates. Consequently, David explains that IBC D publish their employment rates online so that people can search and compare with other universities as IBC D has a relatively high ranking.

Elliot, Felicia and George all mention that reputation is important as their IBC brand is quite unknown. Apart from competing against Chinese universities and universities abroad, Gabrielle mentions that there is a need to diversify their brand from University Gw:

> *"There is a big pressure in this institution [IBC G] that we actually have to be better than University Gw. Because otherwise, we would suffer from the reputation of being the back door to University Gw."*

4.2.5 Marketing and communication challenges

Two of the interviewees mention organizational challenges in marketing and communication. George says that it has been difficult to ensure that IBC G is delivering a consistent message because there are many different people in charge of administrating the marketing content. Furthermore, Elliot mentions that when he started to make flyers, University Ec was skeptical:

> *"Because I am from a Western country, I really have a different view on marketing. The Chinese side do not think we need those things [flyers]."*

Elliot and George also mention that there are challenges when adapting the content of the marketing material as it addresses different target groups. George mentions that adapting the promotion material to specific audiences can create problems:

"They [the Chinese audience] do not care if the international students are doing well [...] They want to know specifically how the Chinese students did. So, we have to separate out the data, which of course is really a communication challenge for us because we do not want to put our students against each other."

4.3 Monitoring student interests and academic program demand

4.3.1 Chinese students

Many interviewees mention several advantages for the Chinese students to attend an IBC, such as learning English and earning a double degree. These advantages are included in the marketing material communicated to the prospective students. Brian explains that another advantage of attending an IBC is that the students get Western style education, without having to leave their home country. Furthermore, David says that the Chinese students' ideas are changing and that there is a demand for a more innovative style of education:

"Students are not like students in previous years. They are more interactive and innovative. They have many ideas and they are more individualized, so we need to meet their demand."

Six of the IBCs mention the importance of international degrees for Chinese students. Elliot emphasizes that it is easier for Chinese students to get employed at multinational companies if they have two degrees, both from a Chinese and a Western university. David also emphasizes that the dual degree is an attracting point:

"They spend the same time, but they can get diplomas from two universities [...] Yes, the tuition is more expensive. But if the students can afford it, they will choose it because in this way they can get a more international education."

4.3.2 Chinese parents

The most mentioned stakeholder that influences the student decision making are the students' parents, since they see their child's education as an investment. Both Elliot and George therefore develop special marketing campaigns targeted to the parents. Elliot says that during open days, the parents usually ask more questions than their children. George also says:

"They [the students] are like 'Hey I want to go to this university'. The parents are like 'Show us what our money is buying'."

4.4 Matching student demand with curricular offerings

No interviewee says that their IBC has made any major adaption to their curriculum. All IBC curriculums are based on a Western-style education model with English speaking faculty, and the curriculums are usually developed by the Western universities, and not the IBCs. Brian explains:

"IBC B did not design the curriculum with the specific customer in mind. The curriculum was designed by the University Bw faculty, to be a very integrated interdisciplinary curriculum to meet the needs for the 21st century."

Several interviewees mention that their IBCs have made some small additions to their curriculum. Many of the IBCs offer English language courses, as this is a demand from the Chinese students who want to overcome the language barrier.

Elliot highlights that as an IBC in China, the long-term interests of students need to be taken into account. However, he says that it would be difficult to continually implement major changes in their curriculum:

"It is very difficult to take it into account what students are saying and what they want. Sometimes there is one hot topic this year and next year there is another hot topic and you cannot do that. It's just not going to work. [...] You need to have a long-term perspective."

4.5 Additional elements

As mentioned in the method section, some additional elements were discovered through the inductive feature of processing the empirics. These additional elements are presented below.

4.5.1 Regulations and gao kao

All interviewees claim that the gao kao system has a big impact on student recruitment in China. IBCs regulated by the Ministry of Education need to recruit Chinese students through the gao kao system according to the enrollment quota they are given annually.

According to Brian, this gives complications since IBC B not only need to meet high academic standards from University Bw, but also need to follow policies from various provincial governments and the Chinese Ministry of Education. Hence, Brian emphasizes that changes in the political environment have a great impact on the recruitment, and that it might cause risks:

"It is a risky venture. I think everybody is aware of that. The change, the conditions are always changing, and regulations and policies are out for change."

4.5.2 Admission process

The IBCs use different strategies to ensure the quality of students. IBCs B, D and G all use different types of interviews and face-to-face interactions with the students during the admission process. Brian describes:

"We need to make sure that the students are well qualified to take on a very regorate challenging educational program in English language. So our admission process is set up with various checks, including on site campus interviews, to ensure that students are of the caliber, having the abilities and will thrive in this learning environment."

IBC A and D base their recruitment almost exclusively on gao kao scores, although this might have some drawbacks according to David:

"Sometimes we will find that although they get very high grade, their qualities lacks. They are not polite, not disciplined, they are lazy […] We cannot do anything about it, because we are passive in recruiting students. If we would do an interview that would be better. "

5 Analysis

This section follows the same structure as the empirical material. The purpose of the analysis is to view the empirical material in the perspective of theory on enrollment management and student recruitment in international education, to discover potential similarities and differences between the theory and the studied context.

5.1 The use of institutional research

In line with what Hossler and Bean (1990:24) say about the importance of being aware of the external environment, the interviewed IBCs show awareness of external changes. These changes include *demographic trends* among the younger generation in China, in which *characteristics of market segments* are becoming more individualized and innovative. An increase in the demand for Western education is seen in *student market trends*. The interviewees also mention *economic trends,* with a growing middle class. Also, *competitors* and other *educational options*, such as traditional Chinese universities, affect the way the IBCs position themselves in the marketplace.

When comparing the empirical findings with enrollment management theory, it is found that the studied IBCs do not have as systematic use of institutional research as theory on enrollment management suggests. The IBCs conduct some research through organized research methods. Quantitative methods such as online competitor analysis, and student and alumni analysis through *surveys* are being used among several of the IBCs. Qualitative methods, such as *focus groups* consisting of students, faculty and industry stakeholders, are also mentioned. However, it is more common that the studied IBCs conduct research by speaking to stakeholders in unorganized forms, such as during high school visits. Through these research methods, the studied IBCs conduct research on both *alumni, current students* and *faculty,* which is in line with Gregory's (2008) findings.

What is not mentioned in the empirical material is *non-educational options* for prospective students and *non-tuition sources of income* for the studied IBCs. What is mentioned among the interviewees, but not highlighted in the theoretical framework, is the importance of *political trends*, which is more thoroughly discussed in Section 5.5.

5.2 Developing marketing strategies through research

There are no outspoken marketing strategies found in the empirics except for one IBC. However, the empirical findings show that some IBCs perform target-adapted marketing activities based on their institutional research. Hence, the developed strategies match the condition of being "appropriate" according to Gregory's (2008) definition.

The empirics show that important marketing activities among the IBCs are *network marketing* through alumni and companies, *marketing in the field* such as high school visits*, and *direct marketing* through social media. These findings are consistent with the theoretical findings in enrollment management (Hossler and Bean 1990:101-117, Hossler and Bontrager 2015:118). Other marketing factors that is mentioned in enrollment management theory include *publications*, *on-campus activities*, *open-days* and *websites.* According to the interviewees these are needed, but not considered highly important. The use of mail, e-mail and telephone marketing are not at all mentioned in the empirics.

As the interviewed IBCs consider themselves as new in the marketplace, the empirical findings show that branding is important when promoting the IBC and the concept of Western education. The empirical findings highlight *face-to-face communication* and *social media* as important communication channels to promote the brand, which is consistent with Ivy's (2008) and Zailskaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite's (2012) theoretical findings on brand communication.

The theoretical findings by Mazzarol (1998), that indicates the importance of leveraging of *local partners with local knowledge and resources*, is not found in the empirical material. Rather than using local knowledge, the empirical findings show that the IBCs use foreign knowledge. Foreign professors are giving guest lectures in a Western educational style at Chinese high schools and conferences, in order to promote the concept that IBCs offer. Furthermore, both theory and empirics highlight the importance of having faculty involved in the marketing activities, in line with Naidoo and Wu's (2007) research.

5.3 Monitoring student interests and academic program demand

Enrollment management theory highlights the importance of understanding how students choose education and what they are influenced by in their decision making process. Consistent with Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) and MacEachern and Yun (2017) findings on influencing factors for Chinese students, the empirical material shows that the studied IBCs emphasize

quality of reputation and institution in their marketing. The effort on targeting the students' *family* as well as the inclusion of *alumni* and *local actors* in the marketing, is also in line with James-MacEachern and Yun's (2017) research. Since the product that the IBCs offer is an international education taught in English, the *global perspective* that many Chinese students demand is already included in the IBCs offerings. They also *learn English*, and earn a double degree, which improves their *career opportunities* after graduation. This is in line with Hegarty et al. (2013) research on motives for Chinese students seeking international education.

The empirical findings show a need to explain and promote the concept of the education the IBCs offer, rather than continually monitoring the demand in the student market. The empirics show some monitoring on the interests of enrolled students through surveys and focus groups. However, the empirical findings show that an unsystematic monitoring, by spontaneously talking to prospective students at high school visits, is more common.

5.4 Matching student demand with curricular offerings

No continuous systematic changes in the curricular offerings to match student demand is found. The IBCs follow the foreign partners' curriculum and *adapt as little as possible* to Chinese education and teaching styles. Altogether, this is in line with Willis (2005) findings that shows that foreign-sourced education in China should keep the international experience in the education that is being offered to the students. A minor adjustment to the curriculum that was found is the adding of English courses, that is done in order to match the desire of Chinese students of *learning English*.

5.5 Additional elements

Additional elements that were found in the empirical material but lacks a clear coherence with the theoretical findings include *regulations* and *quality checks* in the recruitment process. The political environment in China, with educational regulations and policies, affect the way the IBCs can recruit students. As the IBCs are limited in controlling the number of students they can recruit, it becomes difficult for the IBCs to fulfill the enrollment goal of controlling the size of the student body. Many of the IBCs instead include quality checks in the recruitment process, such as interviews and face-to-face interaction, rather than only looking at gao kao results. This is a way to in some extent control the characteristics of the student body.

5.6 Summary of analysis

The analysis shows that the empirics is mainly similar to both the key elements of enrollment management and the additional research on international student recruitment. The empirical findings highlight that the IBCs need to explain the concept of IBCs and Western style education in their promotion since the awareness is generally low. The main difference found between enrollment management theory and the practices is that there is no systematic use of institutional research, student monitoring or curriculum adaption. Furthermore, the factors non-tuition sources of income and non-educational options were not found in the empirics. These differences will further be discussed in Section 6.1.

6 Discussion

This section firstly presents the research findings by answering the two research questions. The findings are then commented by the external professor. Lastly, the findings are discussed in the perspective of internationalization of higher education.

The research questions that have been used in this thesis are the following:

1. *How do international branch campuses in China recruit Chinese students?*
2. *What similarities and differences between the studied recruitment processes and Western enrollment management theory can be found?*

This thesis has found that the studied IBCs are highly affected by the gao system when recruiting Chinese students. By directly and indirectly conducting institutional research, they develop target-adapted marketing through high school visits, network marketing and social media presence. This is done to position themselves and the concept of Western style education among other universities in China.

Similarities and differences have been found between the recruitment process of Chinese students at the IBCs and the theoretical elements in student recruitment from an enrollment management perspective. Firstly, the IBCs need to follow external regulations that control the size of the student body, and hence they cannot control it. Many of the studied IBCs instead control the characteristics of the student body by conducting interviews and other quality checks. Moreover, no systematic or recurring use of institutional research have been observed, although indirect research in the field is common. No outspoken marketing strategies are found except one. However, most IBCs are active in several platforms in online and offline marketing. No systematic monitoring of student demand is found, instead the focus is set on explaining the concept that the IBCs offer, to raise the awareness within China. Lastly, minor adaptions are made in the curriculum since many Chinese students demand a Western-style education. The studied IBCs therefore use foreign knowledge through foreign faculty rather than leveraging off the local knowledge of the domestic partner.

The identified similarities between the interviewed IBCs' practice and the Western theoretical framework imply that the market-centered view that enrollment management builds on is shared with the IBCs interviewed. The jointly-run institutions import foreign knowledge and perspectives from Western faculty into China. This faculty come from Western universities

where for-profit business marketing strategies seem to be more accepted and encouraged than from the Chinese partners' side. The student market in China has previously been characterized by excess demand and a focus on rankings. The need for universities to develop active recruitment strategies has therefore not felt as important as it does for new IBCs that are establishing in China.

Looking at the differences, the Chinese government has large control of the Chinese education market with regulations bringing uncertainty to the operations of the IBCs, due to potential unexpected changes in the regulatory. These regulations can have an impact on the IBCs' ability to control their student enrollments. Furthermore, two external factors were not mentioned among the studied IBCs' institutional research: non-tuition sources of income for the IBCs and non-educational options for students. The reason why the first factor was not mentioned might be that the IBCs do not currently experience it as an issue, or that no employee with financial responsibilities was interviewed. The second factor can potentially be explained by the excess demand of students seeking higher education.

The unsystematic institutional research and monitoring of student demand might be explained by the fact that most of the IBCs only have few years of experience in China, even though in several cases their "home" Western university have operated for centuries. The few adaptions made in the curriculum might be explained by mainly two things. Firstly, the demand for Western style education in China seems to be growing. Secondly, strict requirements from the Western university make it difficult to implement major changes in the curriculum, as the IBCs in that case cannot provide the students with a degree from the Western university.

The research findings were presented to the external professor to get additional perspectives, in order to interpret the findings. Firstly, he highlights that differences in culture might explain the identified non-systematic recruitment strategies performed by the IBCs:

"You mention that the recruitment is not that systematic. [...] You would be surprised, for the Chinese are not that systematic. [...] They are more ad hoc."

Secondly, the external professor further mentions that the Chinese are less acceptable to traditional Western marketing in education, such as advertising. In line with what the interviewees said, he believes that word-of-mouth, views of the family and recommendations of high school counselors are important factors that IBCs need to consider in their recruitment strategies. The external professor mentions that the low brand awareness is a problem for the

IBCs. He explains that Western universities like Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge are widely known among Chinese students, but that the Western universities that open IBCs in China are not as well-known.

In line with the discussion about the internationalization of higher education, the external professor believes that establishing an IBC can be effective for institutions that want to globalize. Although, he points out that it is difficult to globalize, and that this trend is not for every type of institution. He believes that universities that are not among the highest ranked in the West, but still are relatively well-known, are best-suited for establishing IBCs. These universities have enough reputation to attract students, but not too much reputation to lose.

To summarize the discussion, the IBCs do not only offer a new type of education, but also import recruitment strategies that are similar to Western for-profit business marketing strategies. Whether these views on student recruitment will have an impact on the recruitment practices performed by Chinese universities cannot be answered through this research. However, an increase in the presence of Western education and a diversification in the education market in China might have a societal effect in the long run, through the exchange of norms and research.

7 Conclusion

This section presents the final conclusions of the research and discusses how this thesis contributes to research and practitioners within the field of international higher education. Lastly, some suggestions for further research areas are presented.

The rapid economic development in China has created a growing middle class with strong financial resources, resulting in an increased demand for higher education. Many of these students see the importance of gaining international experience, and therefore look for an international degree. This thesis has studied IBCs operating in China, which play an important part in the global trend of internationalizing higher education. When importing and exporting higher education services, the internationalization processes contributes to both cultural and economic development. To be able to achieve this exchange of knowledge, the recruitment of new students is important. Assuming that IBCs in China want to be able to control and affect their student enrollments, the focus for this study has been on recruitment processes of Chinese students, that in general hold both strong academic and financial abilities.

Internationalization of higher education has made the organizational concept of enrollment management increasingly important. Hossler and Bean's (1990:5) enrollment management framework was developed to guide institutions to exert control over the size and characteristics of the student body through effective use of institutional resources. The framework consists of a set of activities including institutional research, development of marketing strategies, monitoring of student demand and adaption in curricular offerings. This thesis finds that the studied IBCs are restricted by regulations to control the size of their student body but have the opportunity to control the characteristics of the student body by implementing quality checks.

The market-centered view, including the use of for-profit marketing strategies, that enrollment management builds on is mainly shared with the studied IBCs in China. However, the processes are not as systematically performed as described in Western enrollment management theory. Both the systematic use of institutional resources and view on marketing seem to differ between the Western and the Chinese side of the IBC. The reason for this might be because of differences in cultural backgrounds of the partners.

7.1 Implications

This thesis contributes with knowledge on how IBCs recruit Chinese students in China today. In addition, similarities and differences that were found between the Chinese practice and student recruitment theory from a Western perspective are presented. The Western theory is mainly built on studies on enrollment management in American higher education institutions. Studies on enrollment management in a Chinese perspective has previously been limited. Thus, this research adds to the enrollment management field from another part of the world. Furthermore, this thesis contributes with research to the internationalization of higher education in the context of jointly run institutions.

The additional elements found in this research, which includes regulations, gao kao and quality checks in the admission process, are all connected to political aspects. In order for the studied IBCs to control their student body, these political aspects need to be considered throughout the whole recruitment process. As these political factors were found to be significant for the IBCs when conducting institutional research on the external environment, we suggest that political factors should be considered in future research on enrollment management in China.

As the competition between institutions operating in the Chinese education market increases, it becomes important to understand how institutional resources can be used to motivate students to apply to their institution. We hope that this thesis can help both currently operating IBCs in China, and institutions that are in the process of entering China, to understand how IBCs today recruit Chinese students and which factors that characterize this specific market.

7.2 Suggestions for further research

In the area of student recruitment practices in China, cultural aspects could be more thoroughly studied when comparing the recruitment practices to further understand on how culture differences might affect recruitment. Future research could also be made on recruitment at traditional Chinese universities, to see whether similarities or differences can be found compared to Western enrollment management theory. As IBCs also recruit international students, studies could be made on comparing how Chinese students are recruited versus international students, to see if there are any differences. Lastly, instead of taking an institutional perspective on the recruitment, a student perspective could also be used to see how prospective and currently enrolled students experience the recruitment process.

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9 Appendices

9.1 List of figures and tables

Figure 1 – *Modified version of "The key elements of enrollment management"*

Figure 2 – *Summary of the theory section*

Table 1 – *List of concepts and definitions*

Table 2 – *Overview of interview objects, including the acronyms of the Western and Chinese partners of the international branch campuses*

9.2 List of interviews

"IBC"	"Name"	Department	Place	Date
IBC A	Anthony	Admission	WeChat	2018-02-08
IBC A	Alice	Marketing	WeChat	2018-02-08
IBC B	Brian	Program Office	WeChat	2018-02-08
IBC C	Catherine	Marketing	Campus	2018-03-06
IBC D	David	Admission	Campus	2018-03-07
IBC E	Elliot	Program Office	Campus	2018-03-21
IBC F	Felicia	Recruitment	Campus	2018-03-22
IBC G	George	Marketing	Campus	2018-03-23
IBC G	Gabrielle	Communication	Campus	2018-03-23
	External professor		Skype	2018-05-02

9.3 Interview guide

Introduction

1. Presentation of thesis authors and the purpose of the thesis.
2. Clarification that participation in the study is optional and that it will be anonymized.
3. Explanation that the interviewee can withdraw from the study during the interview.
4. Asking for permission to record the interview, in order to transcribe it.

Opening questions

- Can you start by telling us a bit about yourself and your position?
- As an international branch campus in China, how is the recruitment process organized at IBC X? Which departments are involved in the recruitment activities?
- Is the recruitment process at IBC X different compared to the recruitment of students at the home university of the branch campus?
- Does IBC X have any specific goals when recruiting Chinese students?

Main questions

- Does IBC X conduct any research to understand the education market in China?
- Are there any trends or changes in the external environment that affect the recruitment process at IBC X?
- Does IBC X have a marketing strategy?
- What marketing activities do IBC X perform, when recruiting Chinese students?
- Does IBC X conduct any research to monitor student demand and interests?
- Does IBC X adapt anything in the curriculum to match the demand from Chinese students?

Closing questions

- Are there any challenges in the recruitment process of Chinese students?
- To summarize, what are the most important factors in the process of recruiting Chinese students for IBC X?
- Do you have any questions or anything else to add?

9.4 Data analysis process

Deductive method

Inductive method

Deductive method

1) Study on enrollment management and other recruitment theory

2) Interview guide is created with the studied theory in mind

➡

9 interviews are conducted

➡

1) 71 pages of transcribed material, 44,418 words

2) Highlighting interesting quotes in a document

University	Quotes
University A	22
University B	16
University C	35
University D	36
University E	43
University F	22
University G	54
Total	228

➡

1) Finding themes from the highlighted quotes
2) Using an Excel sheet to organize the quotes

- Research
- External factors/trends
- Attitude to China
- Differences China vs. Western
- Marketing strategy
- Offline marketing
- Online marketing
- Branding
- Challenges: Marketing
- Chinese students
- Chinese parents
- Target group and stakeholders
- Competitors
- Demand from students
- Changing the curriculum
- Gao kao and regulation
- Organization/partner university
- Enrollment goals
- Admission process
- Partnerships
- Challenges: Attracting students

➡

Restructuring the order of the themes according to "The key elements of enrollment management." and merging themes together

1. The use of institutional research
- Research methods
- External factors

2. Developing marketing strategies through research
- Marketing strategy
- Offline marketing activities
- Online marketing activities
- Branding
- Marketing and communication challenges

3. Monitoring students interests and academic program demand
- Chinese students
- Chinese parents

4. Matching students demand with curricular offerings
- Demand from students
- Changing the curriculum

New additonal elements

5. Additional elements
- Gao kao and regulation (Enrollment goals)
- Admission process

9.5 List of IBCs in China

Institution Name	Home Country	Status
Southeast University-Monash University Joint Graduate School (Suzhou)	Australia	In operation
Shanghai-Vancouver Film School	Canada	In operation
Beijing Normal University - Hong Kong Baptist University United International College	China (Hong Kong)	In operation
Chinese University of Hong Kong Shenzhen	China (Hong Kong)	In operation
Sino-German College of Applied Sciences of Tongji University	Germany	In operation
Beijing-Dublin International College at BJUT	Ireland	In operation
DUT-RU International School of Information Science & Engineering at DUT	Japan	In operation
Sino-Dutch Biomedical and Information Engineering School	Netherlands	In operation
Ulsan Ship and Ocean College at Ludong University	South Korea	In operation
The University of Nottingham Ningbo China	United Kingdom	In operation
Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University	United Kingdom	In operation
Surrey International Institute Dongbei University of Finance and Economics	United Kingdom	In operation
Bangor College of CSUFT	United Kingdom	In operation
HBU-UCLan School of Media, Communication and Creative Industries	United Kingdom	In operation
China Medical University – The Queen's University of Belfast Joint College	United Kingdom	In operation
SWJTU-Leeds Joint School	United Kingdom	In operation
Shanghai International College of Fashion and Innovation, Donghua University	United Kingdom	In operation
Hopkins-Nanjing Center for Chinese and American Studies	United States	In operation
Sias International University (Henan)	United States	In operation
LNU-MSU College of International Business	United States	In operation
Fort Hays State University (Liaoning)	United States	In operation
University of Michigan - Shanghai Jiao Tong University Joint Institute	United States	In operation
New York Institute of Technology-Nanjing Campus	United States	In operation
New York University Shanghai	United States	In operation
Sun Yat-sen University-Carnegie Mellon University Joint Institute of Engineering	United States	In operation
Duke Kunshan University	United States	In operation
Wenzhou-Kean University	United States	In operation
Tsinghua–UC Berkeley Shenzhen Institute	United States	In operation
Sichuan University - Pittsburgh Institute	United States	In operation
Ecole de Management de Lyon / Sun Yat Sen University	France	In operation
Ecole de Management de Lyon / Far East University	France	In operation
Asia-Europe Business School	France	Development Pending
University of Groningen, Branch Campus Yantai	Netherlands	Development Pending
Lomonosov Moscow State University	Russia	Development Pending
Chungbuk National University	South Korea	Development Pending
Georgia Tech Tianjin University Shenzhen Institute	United States	Development Pending
Tianjin Juilliard School	United States	Development Pending
Fort Hays State University (Beijing)	United States	Closed in 2009

Source: The Cross-Border Education Research Team (C-BERT)

The branch campus listing above has been developed by C-BERT and was lastly updated January 20th, 2017. Since 2010, C-BERT has studied the increased cross-border export of educational programs from organizational, sociological, economic and political perspectives. C-BERT has a research group in China, with a mission of conducting unbiased academic research on cross-border education activities in China.

The definition of IBCs used in this listing is: *"An entity that is owned, at least in part, by a foreign higher education provider; operated in the name of the foreign education provider; and provides an entire academic program, substantially on site, leading to a degree awarded by the foreign education provider".*