

**MARKETING EDUCATION:
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TARGETING ASIAN STUDENTS**

REPORT 3

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SUMMARY

As shown in Report 2 of this series, the Asian market is proving to be an increasingly attractive area of opportunity for New Zealand tertiary educational institutions. Where Report 2 aimed to identify how New Zealand tertiary institutions could better target this lucrative market, this report aims to provide some distinct recommendations for tertiary educational services marketers attempting to enter the three countries used in the study. These recommendations are in terms of promotional message, promotional tools and media and key marketing strategies that are most effective in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In modern society, education is a highly valued commodity and advances in technology and the competitiveness of the job market have made a quality education a prerequisite for professional success anywhere in the world. Asia is one of the fastest growing continents in the world in terms of population, wealth and technology and New Zealand is fortunate to be geographically close to a continent whose tertiary education market is looking to the rest of the world for overseas education opportunities.

English is often described as 'the international language of business' and many Asian students are eager to improve their English skills through education in an English-speaking country. New Zealand's status as an English-speaking country and its proximity to Asia make it one of the most obvious choices for an overseas tertiary education. New Zealand is also considered to be financially attractive to Asian students, due to its low exchange rate when compared to that of the United States or the United Kingdom.

1.1 Objectives of the Current Report

Report 2 highlighted a number of differences in students' from Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore preferences for certain promotional tools, media and messages. The study looked at cultural and socio-economic differences between the three countries studied and New Zealand briefly when considering explanations for the above mentioned differences, however Report 2 centres more on presentation of statistical results of the study than recommendations for marketers. This report therefore aims to provide a framework for tertiary educational marketers to consider when entering the Asian market by imparting recommendations developed from the results shown in Report 2.

As indicated in Report 2, each of the three Asian markets studied (Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore) exhibited certain differences particular to each country in terms of their preferred promotional tools and messages, therefore each country will be discussed individually with respect to these areas. Additionally, key marketing strategies that encompass the preferred promotional tools, media and messages of each of the three Asian countries studied will also be discussed in order to provide a better guide to targeting students in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore.

In order to understand and implement the recommendations given in this report however, it is first necessary for the tertiary educational marketer to gain an understanding of the educational environment found throughout Asia. With respect to this then, aspects of the education system and decision-making surrounding the educational choices made by Asian students will be discussed initially, followed by the marketing recommendations outlined above.

2. BACKGROUND TO EDUCATION IN ASIA

2.1 Parental Motivation

Education of one's children is a top priority for parents in Asia, and they are highly motivated to ensure that their children do well. Raising a family in Asia is valued as synonymous with providing a good education, and Confucian tradition reinforces this through an emphasis on the importance of knowledge. Education is thus seen as an investment in the future of one's children, and any parental investment in it will be repaid when the children care for their parents in old age. Most families in Asia prefer medical or university-level teaching careers for their offspring, though high-level business qualifications (such as an overseas MBA) and technological sciences (to doctoral level) are becoming increasingly popular.

There is a well known Chinese proverb which states *"although you are poor, you must give your children education"*, and this can be seen as representative of the high level of motivation behind Asian parents' willingness to provide a good level of education for their children. Asian parents tend to invest heavily in their children's education, and this is done to ensure that they have a better future. Malaysia for example, has a rising level of education, and this has led to a greater awareness of rights, the desire to articulate interests and a willingness and motivation to act on and secure these rights and interests. As an industrialising country, Malaysia offers a wide variety of job opportunities for those who are skilled and intelligent, and this adds to the above mentioned levels of motivation concerning education.

2.2 Learning and Memory

The learning system in Asia is generally based on discipline. From an early age, the importance of education is stressed, and Asian students are expected to be competitive and study hard. This is not only to succeed, but so that their achievements reflect well on their families, and bring them 'face'.

Asian students however are not taught how to deal with logic in terms of problem solving, and are instead only presented with results or solutions, without explanations of how it is achieved. This aspect of Asian educational culture has implications in that the system is essentially based on rote memory systems, and thus is strong in math, national language, history and science, and weak in creative thinking and problem solving. Because of this, Asian students are taught to value this type of learning above the creative thinking process that is valued in countries such as New Zealand. Hence, the New Zealand tertiary education system may have to be presented in a different way to Asian students than it is to New Zealand or other European students.

2.3 Age and Authority

It is a common practice in Asian schools to teach social etiquette, such as respect for one's elders. Because of this, many Asian students are not quick to answer their Lecturer's questions, as they are taught that this may suggest that the lecture given was less than perfect, or that the questioner was incapable of understanding what the Lecturer wanted from them. Classes are thus run in a very uniform manner, with little interaction between the Lecturer or Professor and students.

The Confucian legacy of a set social hierarchical order implies that one always stands in a definite relationship with the other, in a superior or inferior position in accordance with appropriate circumstances. Ranking is an important exercise in Asia in order to know how to behave in a given situation so as not to offend. The value of respect is of utmost importance therefore in Asian culture and older members of the community are afforded the most reverence. In terms of tertiary education then, Asian students expect Lecturers or Professors to be older and a very formal relationship to be had between the Lecturer and student. Where many New Zealand Universities therefore emphasise the interactive or relaxed nature of the Lecturer/student

relationship, this may not be an appropriate or desirable way to portray the educational system to potential Asian students.

As times change in Asia however, a distinct difference in values and attitudes between generations can be noted. Older Asians grew up in quite different times to their children and grandchildren, and the values that they hold most important may no longer be so to younger generations. This indicates that the way in which New Zealand's tertiary education system should be marketed to students may be quite different to how it should be presented to their parents, and as most parents provide the funding for tertiary education, it is important to consider this.

2.4 Achievement and Social Class

The significance of social class in Asia is reflected in the education system, and it is commonly believed that the higher one's education, the better one's social standing and vice versa. As education is so highly valued, those who were educated at university level, especially *foreign universities*, afford a greater amount of respect among society, and are more likely to find a job easily, and be paid well for that job.

The value of achievement is very important to Asian, including Malaysian students. The strength of this value of achievement can be seen in the motivation of students, where they "focus less on being a student than on their general motivation to work industriously toward future achievement". Achievement in this sense can mean not only satisfying personal desires for education, but also achieving social admiration and status within their peer groups and because of this, it is important to most Asian students to study at a University or other tertiary institution that is internationally recognised and respected.

2.5 Educational Choice and Cost

Most Asian families save for years for their children's education and products or services linked with education are usually prioritised over other purchase items. This can create extreme pressure on students to do well in their studies and as such, many focus their entire lives on the exams that determine admission to university – exams that are considered particularly difficult by most educational standards. Passing these exams has become such an important aspect of life in Asia that a whole new consumer industry has emerged – that of private 'cram' schools, where the sole focus of teaching is to prepare students to pass these university exams.

The high value that is placed on a University education can be seen to be rooted in the value of family for most Asian students, unlike New Zealand students, many of whom study for personal achievement reasons or enjoyment. The value of family in Asia is motivated by the need to ensure that future generations of the family are financially secure. For example, the Asian businessman in general does not build wealth to make his family more comfortable, but in order to make them more productive – to provide his children with the motivation that will allow them to create wealth and care for their families as well. In short, what these businessmen are interested in is to make money for their children and their children in return make more money for their children.

2.6 Collectivism

A concept that is seen throughout Asia is that of collectivism - emphasising the social unit - family, friends, society or country - as central to the value system. In other words, most Asians identify strongly with a referent group of family members, friends or colleagues and expect others to do the same. In sharp contrast, New Zealanders are individualists who believe that each person in society should act as an individual in the way that they express their needs, likes, values and desires. The Asian individual is therefore likely to put their feelings aside and act in a way they believe their referent group would

expect them to act. This is important in terms of marketing tertiary education to Asians. Specifically, the marketers need to remember that there will be more people involved in the decision to study overseas than just the student, and the values of all of these potential influencers need to be considered when developing a manner of targeting appropriate to this group.

2.7 Decision-Making

Most Asians still hold the attitude that the father, as head of the household, should be the ultimate decision-maker within the family group, although in terms of choosing a location for tertiary education, the wishes of the student are becoming more and more important. In our study of Asian students, we found that the students themselves were the main decision - makers with regards to the place of study. Parents and friends were secondary influencers (see Report 2).

In general, Asians are very careful in ensuring that they know precisely what is on offer before deciding to commit. Due to their non-confrontational nature, it is abhorrent then for the Asians to raise issues or question certain aspects once they have made up their minds so they are doubly careful that any decisions are based on close scrutiny and long deliberation. This means that potentially much more information about the University system will need to be provided to Asian University age students. This also includes other information regarding the country in which the University is based, accommodation and safety will also need to be provided before a student may consider enrolling at a foreign University.

2.8 Cultural Values and Socio-Economic Aspects

Asian students are strongly orientated towards helping others and the desire to live in harmony in terms of their inherent cultural values. They also hold a strong work ethic and value self-discipline – an essential part of a successful education. It is therefore important that Asian students feel that they will be able to live in harmony in the country that they choose to study in and that

they will fit in with other tertiary students – essentially that their cultural differences will not be an inhibiting factor in their work.

Another overriding part of Asian culture is the deep respect that is held for tradition and wisdom and therefore education itself in the way in which it facilitates these values. While most young Asians are open to new ideas – shown in the way many choose to study in foreign cultures – they still hold great deference towards the elderly and those in authority and being well respected in one's community is of most importance. Education therefore, as it is often linked with wisdom and authority in Asian culture, is seen as a way of achieving community respect through not only financial success, but excellence in every aspect of life.

Many Asian students view the standard of education found in New Zealand to be excellent and somewhat better than what they can expect in their own countries. Linked to this is the fact that Asians tend to perceive the standard of living in New Zealand to be slightly better than that of their own country's standard of living (see Report 2) and this makes New Zealand, in socio-economic terms, a very attractive place for Asian students to undertake overseas study.

In summary, education is highly valued by Asians. In order to capitalise on this, marketing strategies must address implicit Asian cultural values as well as consider what promotional messages and use of promotional media/tools is most appropriate for each of the Asian markets that a tertiary educational marketer wishes to enter.

3. HOW TO REACH ASIAN STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA, HONG KONG AND SINGAPORE

3.1 Promotional Message

Culture not only affects the way an individual perceives a message, but also their level of acceptance of that particular message. This is important in terms of attracting Asian students to New Zealand tertiary institutions, as understanding of the preferred messages of students in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore will aid marketers to communicate more effectively with their Asian student target markets.

3.11 Malaysia

The Malaysian culture places a high emphasis on courtesy, harmony and relationships with family members and the general community. The strength of these communal values were seen in Report 2 and Malaysian students were also shown to emphasise national identity, cultural understanding and consciousness and appreciation of the arts. With respect to these values, Malaysian students can be said to hold a sense of pride in their national identity and are success-driven in terms of their education as a means of maintaining this pride.

Malaysian students were the most likely to rate New Zealand higher in socio-economic terms than their own country, but did not view the standard of living as a particularly important factor in the choice of an overseas educational destination. Instead, Malaysian students tended to place the most emphasis on the three educational factors of (1) a quality learning environment, (2) reputation of the tertiary institution and (3) overall career prospects.

Promotional messages that will best target Malaysian students therefore, should emphasise the ability of the tertiary institution concerned to satisfy all three of the above mentioned educational factors. A quality learning

environment for example, can be portrayed through information concerning the academic achievements of both staff and past students and an emphasis on the teaching and resource facilities available to students. The reputation of the tertiary institution and overall career prospects are best imparted through international recognition of the institution itself or the courses it offers. A graduate qualification from an overseas internationally recognised tertiary institution is highly prized in Malaysia and can lead to a better than average income, thus an emphasis on the status of the particular institution internationally is a successful method of attracting students from this country.

Malaysian students are also more concerned about the cost of an overseas education, thus a promotional message that emphasises New Zealand's low exchange rate and the reasonable cost of living in most of the country's university towns will be quite attractive. Additionally, the fact that New Zealand is a multi-cultural country should be mentioned in the promotional message imparted to Malaysian students due to the emphasis that they place on maintaining their cultural identity and acceptance of others cultures.

Essentially, Malaysian students are at university to 'study not play' and therefore the promotional messages used in Malaysia should have the overlying theme of the quality of the New Zealand learning environment. Of secondary importance to this is the need for marketers in the Malaysian environment to emphasise the hospitality of New Zealand as an overseas educational destination. Malaysian students in general however do already associate both of these aspects with New Zealand and marketers simply need to design a series of promotional messages that reinforce these ideas.

3.12 Hong Kong

The population of Hong Kong is expected to rise to 9 million in 30 years time (www.info.gov.hk 05/10/00) and this rapid rate of growth means that the job environment in Hong Kong is becoming increasingly competitive. Hong Kong students therefore rate good career prospects as the most important factor to influence their choice of an overseas tertiary education, thus a promotional

message designed to target these students must incorporate the career opportunities that a New Zealand tertiary qualification will give. Hong Kong students also prefer comparative forms of advertising and a pertinent method of communicating one's advertising message to this group is by highlighting what New Zealand universities offer in comparison to tertiary institutions in the rest of the world.

Hong Kong students, like their Malaysian counterparts, regard the reputation of the institution as important also and any promotional message used in this country should take into consideration the achievements of the institution and its members, the brand name of the institution and the high standard of education offered.

Additionally, while Hong Kong students generally perceive New Zealand's standard of education to be inferior to that of their own country, they do however believe that New Zealand has a slightly higher overall standard of living to Hong Kong. This could be capitalised on in terms of the promotional messages used to attract students from Hong Kong by mentioning the high standard of living, access to recreational facilities and friendly atmosphere of New Zealand as a country.

Hong Kong students also place somewhat of an emphasis on liberal values such as individual rights and the liberal outlook of New Zealand should be imparted to these students through the promotional messages used. Despite this emphasis on liberal values however, many Hong Kong students still adhere to the traditional value of respecting the opinion of one's parents. This should be taken into consideration by marketers when designing a promotional message, as it may be necessary to give parents of potential students messages based on the safety of New Zealand as an educational destination for their children, New Zealand's proximity to Asia and the lower financial cost of a New Zealand tertiary education compared to other overseas destinations.

3.13 Singapore

Singaporean students participating in the study showed a strong preference for communal values, which reflects the collectivist nature of many Asian societies. This was illustrated through the high level of importance that Singaporean students placed on factors such as honesty, a respect for authority and living in harmony with others. Interestingly, when the responses of the Singaporean students themselves and those of the New Zealand tertiary education marketers were compared, a discrepancy was revealed. This discrepancy needs to be addressed, as the development of an appropriate promotional message to target Singaporean students must be based on those students' inherent values and attitudes in order to be successful.

Singaporean students tend to view the standard of living in New Zealand as inferior to that of their home country. Singaporean's pride themselves on the cleanliness and safety of their country and there are strict laws and regulations governing environmental pollution and vandalism. There are therefore parallels that can be drawn between New Zealand and Singapore here, as New Zealand offers a much safer and cleaner living and studying environment for Singaporean students when compared to the United States, the United Kingdom and even Australia. Singaporean students also rated the natural beauty of the country as relatively important. This indicates that a promotional message that highlights the unrivalled beauty of the New Zealand countryside along with the rich cultural heritage of the country will be well accepted by students from Singapore.

Students from Singapore tend to be highly competitive and want to achieve the best results possible. These students place a great emphasis on their future and wish to earn a better income and have better employment opportunities than their parents, and see an internationally recognised degree from a credible overseas institution as a means to do so. Overall Career prospects are therefore the most important factors that Singaporean students consider when choosing an overseas tertiary education destination. A

successful promotional message designed to target this group of students then, should emphasise employers' views of New Zealand graduates, the excellent employment prospects that a New Zealand degree can offer, international recognition of the institution and the success of past graduates in terms of their career.

One way of achieving the above would be to provide potential students with employment figures for past graduates of New Zealand tertiary institutions, listing the positions that they hold, scholarships or awards that they have received and if possible, salaries that they have gained. This not only emphasises the employment prospects that a New Zealand tertiary education offers, but highlights the values of success and hard work that appeal to many Singaporean students.

Where Singaporean students view the standard of education in New Zealand as somewhat lower than that offered in Singapore, New Zealand universities need to make every effort to become more internationally recognised. This is currently achievable through membership of *Universitas 21*, a new association of prominent universities from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, China, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. At present the University of Auckland is the only New Zealand member of this association, however other New Zealand universities would be well advised to strive to meet the requirements of becoming part of this group. This would allow these universities to become part of the exchange programme that *Universitas 21* offers with respect to the National University of Singapore and promote the message that as part of *Universitas 21*, New Zealand tertiary institutions attract the best and brightest students, offer a full range of internationally recognised academic programmes and excel in research.

Another method of imparting the high standard of education that New Zealand tertiary institutions pride themselves on is through reference to the *New Zealand Vice Chancellor's Committee* (NZVCC) and the *New Zealand Qualifications Authority* (NZQA). The major function of both of these organisations is to ensure that qualifications gained in New Zealand are of a

consistently high international standard. Mention of the *Quality Advancement Unit* (QAU) can also be used in a promotional message designed to stress the quality of a New Zealand education to Singaporean students. A promotional message could describe how the QAU constantly monitors and reviews aspects of New Zealand universities to ensure that the currently high standard of education is maintained.

3.2 Promotional Tools/Media

Each promotional tool available to a marketer has its own unique characteristics and costs and, as with promotional messages, each group of students targeted are likely to have preferences towards certain promotional tools over others. Those promotional tools that the target group show a preference for are generally the most effective in imparting a promotional message to that group. In order to target the three distinct groups of Malaysian, Hong Kong and Singaporean students therefore, it is necessary to define those promotional tools that are deemed most acceptable amongst each cultural group.

3.21 Malaysia

Malaysian students rate the Internet, newspapers and trade fairs as the three most preferred promotional tools respectively. Malaysian students are keen adopters of the Internet and most schools and colleges have Internet access readily available. This means that information can be found quickly, easily and in one place, an attractive feature for Malaysian students, particularly now that the Malaysian government has begun actively encouraging information technology culture amongst its younger generation. A website for each New Zealand tertiary institution wishing to enter the Malaysian education market is therefore a necessity and this website should be specifically designed with the appropriate promotional messages discussed earlier in mind.

The leading newspapers that need to be considered in Malaysia include the *Utusan Malaysia*, *Berita Harian*, *New Straits Times*, *Nanyang Siang Pau* and *Sin Chew Jit Poh*. These newspapers all have wide readership throughout Malaysia and can be used to reach those who perhaps do not have access to the Internet or to reinforce the messages given on New Zealand tertiary institution websites. Added to this is the possibility of using popular young adults publications such as *Malaysia Channel One*, *Education Quarterly*, *Remaja* and *ZOOM* to impart promotional messages regarding New Zealand as a tertiary educational destination.

Trade fairs and educational shows are the third most popular promotional tools in Malaysia. These can be combined with visits from agents and representatives of New Zealand educational institutions wishing to attract Malaysian students. This informed sales force can promote the educational product itself as well as enhance the reputation of the institution and answer potential students and parents queries. This method of personal contact with Malaysian students allows them to experience first hand the educational culture of the institutions and assess whether this is what they are looking for in an overseas education. Other promotional tools such as photographs, testimonials, posters, postcards, Alumni Association material, bookmarks and stickers can be used at the trade fairs to increase the level of brand awareness of New Zealand tertiary institutions amongst Malaysian students.

3.22 Hong Kong

Students in Hong Kong prefer the Internet, newspapers, television and magazines as promotional tools, similar to that of Malaysian students except in the inclusion of television and magazines as the third and fourth most popular promotional media and the lack of popularity that trade shows have in Hong Kong. Websites should be developed for the Hong Kong market therefore in the same way as for the Malaysian market, but instead emphasising the appropriate promotional messages for Hong Kong students as discussed earlier.

Space in popular newspapers such as *Apple Daily*, *Oriental Daily*, *Hong Kong Commercial Daily* and *Singtao Times* can be effectively utilised in Hong Kong as an effective means of promoting New Zealand tertiary institutions, as can selected television channels such as *TVB*, *ATB*, *CTN* and *Phoenix*, with 99% of households in Hong Kong believed to have at least one television set (AA&M 1996). Young adult magazines with a high readership such as *Project A* and *AsiaPac Net Magazine* can also be successfully used to this end.

One of the most difficult aspects of promotions in the Hong Kong market however, stems from the fact that Hong Kong has one of the most active advertising industries in the world and many Hong Kong citizens have been conditioned to take lightly what they see or read in newspaper and magazine promotions. It is important therefore, for a promotional campaign used in Hong Kong to be fully integrated and for the message imparted in any one campaign to be carefully considered for impact and effectiveness. Testimonials from past students and people in positions of authority could be the best means of gaining the attention of potential students in Hong Kong.

3.23 Singapore

Students from Singapore tend to prefer the promotional tools of newspapers, the Internet, television and trade fairs in that order. Communication with potential students through the newspaper medium can be achieved with both graphics and text and allows the student to keep the item for future reference. Newspaper advertising can also be used to encourage readers to visit a website (set up as mentioned in the Malaysia and Hong Kong sections) that will provide further information as well as a means of communicating with the appropriate university personnel via e-mail. Appropriate newspapers to use in the Singapore market include the *Straits Times Interactive*, *LianHe Zao Bao*, *Berita Harian* and *CyBerita* due to their enhanced reputation and wide readership.

Where television is the third most popular promotion tool in Singapore, there are many different channels to choose from. The television channels with the

widest audiences in Singapore are *English Channel 5*, *Chinese Channel 8*, *Singapore Television 12* and *Central* (made up of *Vasantham Central* which serves the Indian market, *Arts Central* and *Suria*, a Malay language channel). Additionally, trade fairs can be used in Singapore in the same manner as discussed for Malaysian students in section 3.21, as this form of promotional tool is relatively well accepted by Singaporean students also. As discussed earlier, the promotional tools used should be integrated through the use of a consistent message that aligns with the findings for Singaporean students outlined in section 3.13.

3.3 Summary of Promotional Message/Tools Findings

3.1 Use of the WWW

The Internet is one of the fastest growing and most popular of promotional media today. No other promotion tools exceed the communication ability of the WWW and the opportunities it presents appear to be limitless. The WWW therefore offers marketers the opportunity to promote New Zealand tertiary institutions directly to target customers around the world. In Asia, where adoption of the Internet is high, this is particularly pertinent. The Internet gives Marketers of New Zealand tertiary education products the ability to not only create brand awareness of the available tertiary institutions in this country amongst potential Asian students, but also to market a specific product – namely a New Zealand tertiary qualification.

Both Malaysian and Hong Kong students indicate that they view the internet as the most important information source when deciding on an overseas tertiary education destination and Singaporean students rank it second most important. Access to the Internet for potential students in these countries is not a problem and therefore the main issue lies in the method that marketers should use the Internet to promote their educational products.

The information, and particularly the style of the information, presented on a website can greatly influence the perception of those who view the site towards what is being offered. The design of the website itself therefore should take into consideration the cultural values and attitudes of each group of students, the reasons they want to study overseas and the specific objectives of the New Zealand tertiary education provider in attracting these students. The Internet has the distinct advantage over other forms of promotional media of being able to be updated quickly and easily. This is an area of major importance when using the Internet to attract potential students, as the information provided on the site must not be allowed to become out of date or redundant.

Asian students in general are likely to accept a website as more credible if it includes testimonies or recommendations from past or current Malaysian, Hong Kong or Singaporean students. Additionally, students in the above countries will treat a site that answers queries quickly with more respect, as this fits with the Asian culture of relationship building and politeness. Adding a link to the New Zealand institution's website from the homepage of one of the local universities that it is associated with in each of the three countries will also help build credibility through the association with a local institution. Often there are local educational institutions or professional agencies in Asian countries that provide broad information about studying abroad. Potential students will browse these pages before they have any special interest in a particular university or program and a link from one of these information sources can prove an invaluable way of making first contact with Asian students.

3.32 Print and Broadcast Media

Newspapers were rated highly as promotional media in all three countries, ranked as the most important promotional tool in Singapore and second most important in Malaysia and Hong Kong. Additionally, all three countries have a relatively high level of newspaper circulation, indicating that a promotional message placed in one of the country's more popular daily papers will reach

the target audience quite effectively and gain enhanced credibility through the association with a 'news' source.

Newspaper advertisements need to be of a high quality and presented in a clear and concise fashion to gain the attention of Asian students. As indicated earlier, use of graphics, including pictures of the institution and its facilities are likely to generate more interest than plain print. Testimonials are of great importance here, as newspaper promotions are likely to be read not only by the students themselves, but by referent groups such as parents and friends. The institution's website URL should be given in all print media to provide the link between the two types of promotional media.

When placing print advertisements however, it is pertinent for New Zealand tertiary education marketers to be aware of the academic year structure in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore. These are quite different to that of New Zealand, and students may be looking for information regarding tertiary education options at a different time to New Zealand students. In general, the Malaysian academic year begins in June and runs until March the following year, with a short semester break in October. The Singaporean academic year is much the same, but in Hong Kong a fall semester runs from September to December and the last semester of the academic year continues from February till May.

Hong Kong and Singaporean students both rated television as the third most important promotional tool in terms of gaining information regarding overseas tertiary educational destinations. Television advertisements for New Zealand tertiary education institutions in these two countries should firstly feature a testimonial from Hong Kong or Singaporean students who are currently attending the institution or who are past students, as well as a message from the Vice Chancellor/head of the institution. Respect for authority and experience is high in both Hong Kong and Singapore, therefore messages presented by these individuals will be more credible to students in these countries.

3.33 Public Relations

Using public relations methods such as trade fairs and representatives/agents gives potential students in Asia the opportunity to gain an insight into the educational culture of New Zealand. This will enable students from Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore who are considering an overseas tertiary education to obtain information specific to their individual needs. Essentially, this marketing strategy adds an aspect of tangibility to the otherwise intangible education product, where students can be told in a face-to-face manner what a New Zealand tertiary qualification is in terms of international standards and the benefits that studying in New Zealand will provide.

In order for New Zealand tertiary education marketers to remain competitive in the Asian environment, it is important for them to occupy a place amongst competitors at the educational institution trade fairs that are popular in Singapore and Malaysia. Establishing a presence at trade fairs in Hong Kong however is not so important, as Hong Kong students indicate that they do not place much of an emphasis on gaining information about overseas study at these events. Because of the popularity of these events in Singapore and Malaysia, there will be little room or time to communicate all of the institution's promotional messages. It is important in this environment that the main promotional messages that are of greatest importance to Singaporean or Malaysian students are concentrated on and contact details for further information given out to those who are interested.

All promotional material such as posters and brochures, as well as the layout of the stand itself should be carefully orchestrated to impart the desired image of the institution in each of the countries. Additionally, it is important to have those running the stand appear knowledgeable and of good status within the institution. It is often useful in Asian countries to have an older person giving out information or answering questions at these trade fairs given the respect for age and experience seen in Asia. It would also be beneficial for the agents/representatives of the New Zealand tertiary institutions to visit colleges

and universities in Singapore and Malaysia to talk to interested students in a small group basis.

4. KEY MARKETING STRATEGIES

This section of the report develops some key marketing strategies that are most pertinent in the Malaysian, Hong Kong and Singaporean tertiary education markets. The section outlines a number of crucial points that New Zealand tertiary education marketers should cover when designing a promotional mix aimed at students from one of the three markets listed above. These points include:

- 1) Marketers need to firstly identify their target markets correctly and identify the needs and wants of particular segments of that target market.
- 2) Marketers should develop a promotional mix that fits the needs and wants of their target market whilst still aligning it with the overall strategy of the institution.
- 3) The WWW and print media such as newspapers should be used by marketers in each of the three Asian markets identified.
- 4) Public relations, such as testimonials from past and present students as well as the use of representatives and agents should form a part of the promotional mix used, particularly in Singapore and Malaysia.
- 5) Marketers should seek expert advice from other marketers/advertising agencies/tertiary institutions within each of the three Asian countries identified with regards to effective promotional mixes.
- 6) Marketers should be aware of all cultural and socio-economic factors that may affect a student from Singapore, Malaysia or Hong Kong's decision to study abroad and realise that there are inherent differences between each of the three countries in terms of this.

- 7) With respect to point 6) above, New Zealand tertiary education marketers who intend to enter more than one of the identified markets should localise their marketing efforts and produce a promotional mix suitable for each individual country.
- 8) Marketers should consider what they can offer overseas students in terms of additional experiences etc. as part of their overseas study and incorporate this into the promotional package.
- 9) Finally, integration should be an overriding goal of marketers in any of the three Asian markets identified and marketers should strive wherever possible to communicate in the most efficient and cost effective method in each country.

4.1 Identifying the Target Market

Where a New Zealand tertiary education marketer may decide to target students from a specific country, it is important that they recognise the various segments within that target market and decide who it actually is that their promotional campaign will be directed at. For example, when a marketer wants to enter the Malaysian, Hong Kong or Singaporean education market, they need to decide whether they will be promoting New Zealand tertiary qualifications to secondary school students, undergraduate university students, graduate students who are currently in the work force or professionals who may want to 'upskill'.

Once the target market has been identified, marketers should focus on finding out as much as possible about that market's needs, wants and preferences in terms of tertiary education abroad. This can be done through contact with the target market themselves as well as experts within the market such as Malaysian, Hong Kong or Singaporean tertiary education marketers, advertising agents or local research companies and foreign tertiary education representatives or agents who have spent time within the market. Additionally, identification of referent others should occur at this point, including parents, friends and relatives who may influence the decision to

undertake tertiary education abroad to some degree. The expectations of these groups in terms of an overseas education should also be defined.

4.2 *Developing the Promotional Mix*

As noted in point 2, it is of vital importance for marketers to develop a promotional mix that aligns with the needs and wants of the target market as defined above. The current report has identified certain promotional tools and messages that are most effective in the three markets of Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore, and these should be taken into consideration before the final promotional mix is decided on.

The WWW has been seen to be an effective promotional media in all three Asian countries and holds many advantages for marketers. Despite the Internet's inherent popularity with students from Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong, it allows an interactive, informative package to be set up that will act as a base for the entire promotional campaign. Newspapers should be used to complement the WWW in all three countries, as the association with a credible source such as a newspaper will lend credibility to the New Zealand tertiary institution being promoted. To capitalise on this, it is advisable for marketers to present newspaper promotions in an editorial/article format rather than as straight advertising.

The promotional messages used in the campaign should, as noted earlier, fit the preferences of the individual target markets identified by the marketer. For example, the current report has shown that messages targeted at Malaysian students should emphasise the excellence of the teaching staff in New Zealand tertiary institutions. Hong Kong students however, prefer an emphasis on the high standard of education they would receive and Singaporean students are most concerned about international recognition of their qualification.

4.3 *Public Relations*

Public relations are an important part of the promotional mix to be used in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. Testimonials from past and present

students, as well as a message from the Dean/Vice Chancellor of the institution concerned, will help to add credibility to the promotional campaign undertaken. These testimonials should be based on the preferred promotional messages as identified above for each country, in order to reinforce these points with the students concerned.

Representatives and Agents from the New Zealand tertiary institution are also a valuable part of the promotional campaign, particularly with students from Malaysia and Singapore. These representatives should visit either schools or tertiary institutions in Malaysia, Hong Kong or Singapore, depending on the particular target market of the campaign, allowing potential students the chance to ask questions and collect information that they may desire as part of their decision-making process. Representatives and Agents of New Zealand institutions should also strive to set up contacts and relationships with the representatives of schools/colleges/universities in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. This will make visits to the various institutions around these countries easier, and a favourable opinion of an overseas institution may mean that representatives of local institutions recommend it to students.

4.4 *Expert Advice*

In a country that is quite dissimilar from that of a marketer's home country, it is always a pertinent part of any promotional mix development to seek expert advice from experienced others within that country. In the case of tertiary education products, these would include other education marketers or advertising agencies which deal with the identified target market and tertiary institutions operating within that market (and their various representatives and agents). These 'experts' would be able to provide an experienced opinion on what promotional tools and message are most likely to be effective with a particular target audience, and can also advise on the most cost effective promotional methods within their particular country.

4.5 *Cultural and Socio-economic Factors*

As shown in the present report, there are various cultural and socio-economic factors that will affect the way a student perceives certain promotional

messages and tools. It is important then, that New Zealand tertiary education marketers wishing to enter either the Malaysian, Hong Kong or Singaporean markets endeavour to understand these factors and their effects. Malaysian students for example, emphasise the importance of self-discipline and harmony in life, so a promotional message should take these cultural values into account. Another example can be seen where students from Malaysia and Singapore place a large amount of emphasis on traditional values, but Hong Kong students do not. This may mean that Malaysian and Singaporean students are likely to give great deference to their parents' opinions regarding tertiary education, whereas Hong Kong students would place less of an emphasis on this.

Socio-economically speaking, there are various differences between the three groups of students studied. These differences should be taken into account as students from each country are likely to value different socio-economic factors in different ways. Students in all three countries studied believe that they have more exposure to other cultures in their home country than they would in New Zealand and marketers would be thus advised to emphasise the cultural diversity of New Zealand as a country in their promotional campaign.

In terms of the importance that these students place on socio-economic factors, Singaporean students see the standard of education as particularly important whereas Hong Kong and Malaysian students do not. The standard of living is seen as particularly important to both Singaporean and Hong Kong students. This means that a promotional campaign targeting Singaporean students should stress the high standard of education and living found in New Zealand, whereas a campaign targeting Hong Kong students would be best advised to stress the standard of living found in New Zealand more.

4.6 Localisation of Marketing

Where three potential markets for tertiary education students have been covered in this report, one of the main points that should be made is that marketers who intend promoting a New Zealand tertiary education institution in more than one of these markets must use a localised promotion strategy.

The differences between each of the countries that have been identified earlier lead to the conclusion that a promotional mix that is successful in attracting students in Singapore for example, may not be so in Malaysia.

4.7 Added Value

Overseas students are often looking for more than just an education when they choose to study abroad and this is true of students in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore also. As shown earlier in the report, students from these countries place a high level of emphasis on the hospitality of New Zealand as a country and the variety of experiences that they can expect to gain in New Zealand. Marketers need to 'add-on' to the education package by offering additional experiences of the New Zealand lifestyle to Asian students wishing to study abroad.

For example, many students from Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong are aware of the Queenstown and Central Otago regions of New Zealand and the promise of guided a trip that incorporated some of the region's popular Winter snow sports, or Summer water sports, would be well received by these students. As mentioned in Report 2, **New Zealand marketers need to ask themselves not what Asian students can do for New Zealand tertiary institutions, but what New Zealand tertiary institutions can do for Asian students.** Without the promise of added benefits of a New Zealand tertiary education, there is little incentive for Malaysian, Hong Kong and Singaporean students to choose this country.

4.8 Integration

Finally, the importance of integrating the promotional mix used to attract specific segments of Asian students to New Zealand tertiary institutions must be stressed. Without integration of message and theme, the promotional mix becomes disjointed and confusing for students and the full impact of the message is lost. New Zealand tertiary education marketers should strive to create an overall image of the institution they are promoting for each target market of students, and ensure that every part of their promotion mix aligns with this overall image.

5 CONCLUSIONS

New Zealand tertiary institutions are under increasing pressure to perform financially. Changes in government policy and funding have forced these institutions to operate as financially viable businesses and to seek alternative means of funding their operations. One of the most popular and effective methods of doing this has been to promote New Zealand as an overseas tertiary education destination to students in other countries. International students in New Zealand are required to pay full tuition fees, often ranging from NZ\$ 13, 000 to NZ\$ 20, 000, thus making this a very lucrative market. In all, fees and expenditures of international students are said to contribute NZ\$ 1 billion to the New Zealand economy and this figure has the potential to double in the next five years (Pang 1999).

New Zealand has become a popular overseas study destination for Asian students in particular, due to its close proximity to Asia, its hospitable environment and favourable exchange rates. As the number of Asian students who are looking for overseas tertiary education increases, the opportunities for New Zealand marketers of tertiary education products also increases. In order to successfully attract Asian students to New Zealand however, it is necessary to specifically design a promotional campaign that addresses the cultural and perceptual differences of the different groups of students within Asia. With respect to this, it must be recognised that these differences not only exist between New Zealand and Asian students, but between students from different countries within Asia as well.

The Asian countries of Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore have many potential tertiary students who are open to the idea of studying in a foreign country. An overseas degree in fact holds a certain level of prestige in these three countries, and therefore they are three particularly attractive markets for the New Zealand tertiary education marketer to target. It is strongly evident however, that the three countries addressed in this report should be

considered separately due to the fact that they hold differing ideas about the promotional tools, messages and cultural and socio-economic attitudes. Each of these students therefore has different reasons for wanting to study abroad and different expectations about what the experience will offer them. By using the most effective mix of promotional messages and tools for students in each of the three countries studied, New Zealand tertiary education marketers will be able to efficiently and effectively increase the number of Asian international students choosing New Zealand as an educational destination.

There are several benefits that New Zealand will receive through better targeting of Asian students in the tertiary education market, including the opportunity to position New Zealand as a high quality educational service provider, to become a market leader within the international tertiary education industry, to become a favoured destination for Asian students wanting to study abroad and to encourage the growth of the New Zealand tertiary education sector. The long-term objective of tertiary education marketers in New Zealand therefore, should be to market educational opportunities to a wide range of international markets. At present however, the growing markets of Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore represent a good area to begin.

The analysis performed in Report 2 has shown that New Zealand tertiary education marketers should not attempt to use a standardised promotional strategy when marketing to Asian students. The study found explicit differences between the respondents from the three countries studied, regarding their preferred types of promotional tools, the importance they placed on various promotional messages and the relevance that they attributed to certain cultural themes. Failure on the part of New Zealand tertiary educational marketers to acknowledge these differences is likely to have a particularly negative effect on the effectiveness of promotional campaigns used in Malaysia, Hong Kong or Singapore.

From a cultural point of view for example, most of the Asian student respondents placed an emphasis on studying in a harmonious environment. New Zealand marketers thus need to emphasise that New Zealand has a

good environment for overseas students to study in by designing a message that encapsulates this and presenting this message through the appropriate media. Another example of tailoring the promotional package to each group of students can be seen where Singaporean students show great concern for their final career prospects. New Zealand marketers wishing to attract Singaporean students would therefore need to concentrate on promoting the fact that a New Zealand tertiary qualification is internationally recognised, and provides good career opportunities, more than other aspects.

Socio-economic factors were seen to be of high importance to the study respondents also, yet there were distinct differences between the way that Malaysian, Hong Kong and Singaporean students viewed the standard of living and standard of education found in New Zealand as compared to their home countries. Singaporean students for example felt that their home country has a better standard of living and education than New Zealand, thus a promotional message that improves the socio-economic image of New Zealand should be tailored to reach these students.

Essentially, New Zealand tertiary education marketers need to be more aware of what Asian students in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore are looking for in terms of their tertiary education and use this information to develop the most effective and appropriate methods of promotions for each group. New Zealand already holds much promise as an international tertiary education destination for Asian students and using the right promotional message and tools can only help to improve New Zealand tertiary institutions image and desirability amongst students from Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore.

6. REFERENCES

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