# Exploring the relationship between Australian university websites and international student enrolments

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# Abstract

The lack of interaction and relationship building capabilities of the low ranking university websites is considered as a major reason for the lower student enrolments (Klassen, 2002). The tertiary education institutes which target international students should enhance the international student recruitment process through improving the online customer service as most of the international students rely on the internet when selecting a study destination (Gomes & Murphy, 2003). The main aim of this research is to explore the relationship between Australian university websites and international student enrolments. Few studies have investigated this relationship and, as such, this research addresses some of the existing knowledge gaps. A mono-method qualitative methodology was adopted for this study. Primary data collection was through the website content of selected Australian universities. Six Australian universities were selected; three universities with positive international student enrolments and three universities with negative international student enrolments. The website content of the selected six universities was analysed using the dimensions of the ICTRT framework (Li & Wang, 2011) to evaluate website effectiveness. The study results were based on two analysis levels, an overall thematic analysis (level 1) and an ICTRT framework based analysis (level 2). The thematic analysis, based on the major themes and concepts, was conducted using Leximancer 4.5. Two major findings emerged. First, the websites of universities with positive international student enrolments tend to be more people focused whereas websites from universities with negative international student enrolments tend to be technology or system focused. Second, websites from universities with positive international student enrolments tend to be more visionary or forward focused whereas websites from universities with negative international student enrolments tend to be more backward focused. Additionally, the study findings indicate some important website marketing strategies for Australian universities with negative international student enrolments.

**Keywords:** international student enrolments, university websites, website marketing strategies, ICTRT framework, Australian higher education sector