# WEBSITE AND INTERNET MARKETING RESEARCH

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For Education New Zealand Trust

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Networkers
EVALUATION ✦ TRAINING ✦ RESEARCH

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## FIGURES AND TABLES

## GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS USED

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adobe ColdFusion:** | Web development software for most platforms (Linux, Unix, Solaris and Windows). |
| **Adobe Dreamweaver** | A web development application originally created by Macromedia, and is now developed by Adobe Systems, which acquired Macromedia in 2005. |
| **Apache:** | It is web server software notable for playing a key role in the initial growth of the World Wide Web. |
| **ASP.NET:** | ASP or Active Server Pages is the server side Microsoft developed technology used to create dynamically-generated Web pages. |
| **Atomz:** | Provides site search functionality that crawls your site for content. |
| **Blog:** | Short for Web log, a blog is an individual's personal journal published on the Internet for public viewing. It is usually updated daily. |
| **Blogger:** | Blogger has been around since 1999 but is now available as part of Google tools. Essentially it sets up a web page or web site with particular functionality that allows for frequent additions of 'blogs' or dated and timed entries. |
| **Bug:** | An error or defect in software or hardware that causes a program to malfunction. Often a bug is caused by conflicts in software when applications try to run in tandem. |
| **Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)**: | CSS is a term of computer language that describes any structured document and it's presentation in HTML, XML or XHTML. This blueprint is upheld by the World Wide Web Consortium. |
| **Closed Source:** | A program without accessible source code, with the effect that it cannot easily be modified. |
| **Content Management System** | A content management system is a system used to manage the content of a Web site. The CMS allows a content manager, who may not know HTML, to manage the creation, modification, and removal of content from a Web site without needing the expertise of a Webmaster |
| **Debian** | Debian is a free operating system for your computer. An operating system is the set of basic programs and utilities that make your computer run. Debian uses the Linux kernel, but most of the basic OS tools come from the GNU project; hence the name GNU/Linux. |
| **Dynamic** | A Dynamic Page is a Web page that is constantly changing or being updated. Many search engines will favour these kind of pages. |
| **Fedora** | Fedora is a Linux-based operating system that showcases the latest in free and open source software. Fedora is always free for anyone to use, modify, and distribute. |
| **ExpressionEngine** | A flexible, feature-rich content management system that empowers thousands of individuals, organizations, and companies around the world to easily manage their website |
| **FeedBurner** | FeedBurner provides custom RSS feeds and management tools to bloggers, podcasters, and other web-based content publishers. |
| **Google Webmaster Tools** | It allows webmasters to check indexing status and optimize visibility of their websites. |
| **Google suite** | The full range of Google applications and widgets, that can be accessed through the Google site. Includes Google Docs (shared documents held online) gmail and many others. |
| **HTML** | HyperText Markup Language is language that is specifically used in the creation of web pages. |
| **Interactivity:** | Ways for users to participate in, give or get feedback on a website. |
| **Interface:** | The connection between a user and a machine. Computer programs that translate information from one system or application into a format required for use by another system or application. |

**JavaScript**
JavaScript is a scripting language that is object-oriented and is based on the concept of prototypes. The syntax of JavaScript is close to that of Java, but it more closely linked to Self. JavaScript is mainly used in Web sites.

**Joomla!**
An open source content management system platform for publishing content on the World Wide Web and intranets as well as a Model–view–controller (MVC) Web application framework. It is written in PHP, stores data in MySQL and includes features such as page caching, RSS feeds, printable versions of pages, news flashes, blogs, polls, search, and support for language internationalization.

**Learning Management System:**
Software that automates the administration of training. The LMS registers users, tracks courses in a catalogue, records data from learners and provides reports to management.

**Lightbox JS**
Is a simple, unobtrusive script used to overlay images on the current page.

**Mahara**
is an open source ePortfolio and social networking web application. It provides users with tools to create and maintain a digital portfolio of their learning, and social networking features to allow users to interact with each other.

**Meta elements**
Meta elements can be used to specify page description, keywords and any other metadata not provided through the other head elements and attributes

**Microsoft Sharepoint:**
A content management system with integrated search functionality developed by Microsoft that allows users to work in a web-based collaborative environment.

**Moodle**
Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is a form of interface that is organised so large organisations can utilise e-learning or learn over the Internet.

**MSN:**
MSN (The Microsoft Network) is a collection of Internet sites and services provided by Microsoft.

**Navigability:**
The ability to move from one web page to another.

**Open Source:**
Software that can be used, redistributed and/or rewritten free of charge.

**OpenSSL**
The quickest and easiest way to secure a TCP-based network application is with SSL.

**Operating System:**
Software that controls the allocation and usage of hardware resources such as memory, CPU time, disk space, and input and output devices and acts as an interface for users.

**Perl**
Perl (Practical Extraction and Report Language) is a type of programming language that takes features from many different languages.

**PHP**
PHP is a programming language that is open source. It is mainly used for applications that are server side and it is useful in the development of dynamic web content.

**RSS**
RDF Site Summary is a method of updating a web site's content in XML format. It is used to update news stories and software updates. An RSS enabled browser is needed to access these feeds.

**Search Engine:**
A tool or program which allows general or topic-specific searching for relevant sites or information on the Web.

**Site Map:**
A webpage that lists the contents and shows the structure of a website, to aid in navigation

**Skype:**
A software application that allows users to make voice and video calls over the Internet.

**Static Linking:**
Combining all necessary subroutines from external libraries into one executable file when compiling an application.

**Static Page**
A Static Page is a web page that is only made up of HTML and is not dynamic.

**Technical Platform:**
The basic technology of a computer system's hardware and software that defines how a computer is operated and determines what other kinds of software can be used.

| | |
|---|---|
| **UTF-8** | 8-bit UCS/Unicode Transformation Format is a variable-length character encoding for Unicode. It is able to represent any character in the Unicode standard, yet is backwards compatible with ASCII. |
| **Widget** | Widgets are small programs that are used on the Yahoo! Widget Engine. |
| **XHTML** | XHTML (Extensible Hypertext Markup Language) is another markup language that is similar to HTML but with a tighter principles. |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study involved 20 case studies of schools and surveys of prospective and current students and their parents, and agents, and took place between November 2009 and April 2010. While agents and 'word of mouth' were the most important sources of information about New Zealand schools, internet and school website searches were also important, making up 36 percent of primary searches.

Most school websites contain international pages or separate sites containing some or all information about enrolment, the school and region, curriculum and assessment, visa requirements, fees, accommodation, pastoral care and relevant links.  The best websites from a marketing perspective offer all this information,  sometimes in a range of languages and with good information to contact people at the school. Schools often had difficulty in formulating strategy for website development to improve their marketing focus. Most developed their approaches by looking at other schools' websites and talking to people. Schools are heavily dependent on the expertise available among staff, parents or BOTs.

80% of prospective students and their parents looking to enrol in a New Zealand school browse school websites.  Those who get their information from agents tend to browse between one to five sites, whereas those who looked solely at websites browsed between 6 to 10 . Those who undertook an internet search browsed 11 to 20 sites.  The only group to report browsing more than 21 school websites were those who get their information through word of mouth.  Students choose schools for a wide variety of reasons. Most students look at a number of countries as well as New Zealand. Most people interviewed for this study believed that internet marketing was going to become more important in the future.

Using a scale modified from the work of Gorski, twenty school websites were assessed on the characteristics of relevance, engagement, interactivity, ease of use, multiculturalism and trust and reputation, and the average score was between 'good' and 'very good'.

Schools also scored well on the technical capabilities of their websites, including quality, speed and connectivity. While the quality is good, it can be improved.  The example is given of one USA school website that was the 2009 winner of the Web Marketing Assn. award, which combined beauty, functionality and technical strength. Barriers to such improvements in New Zealand schools are time, resources, 'vision' and expertise.

Consideration is given to what is needed to improve search engine visibility and social networking capacity.  The report considers a number of international contexts in terms of their online marketing of schools.

The final section of the report looks to the future, with potential development of Alumni strategies, the development of databases for marketing purposes and information sharing in more informal settings, such as chat rooms, on the website and across the wider internet.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Schools need to ensure that they have clear policies in place around marketing to international students via the internet.

2. With 80% of prospective students browsing school websites before making their decision to enrol, schools need to ensure that the website is attractive, informative and reflects the environment and values of the school. There is no 'right' content: students are looking for a range of characteristics.

3. Key website information targeted at international students should, where possible, be available in the first language of the students.

4. Schools need to assess strengths and weaknesses of their websites using the categories outlined in this section, and plan improvements where necessary, and in particular:
Include as much relevant information as possible for prospective international students and their families, and agents;
Add a range of language and translation options to websites to improve communication; and introduce a range of interactive communication options into their websites.

5. Schools should carefully study the features available through the six main open source content management systems listed in Table 3. It is noted that schools have a 'wish list' for their sites including: language options, discussion forums, newsletters, email forms, events calendars and others. These are available as integral, or as an add on, to each of the Content Management Systems discussed later in the report.

6. Schools could consider adding a learning management system through their websites, if they wish to deliver information directly to students or parents. These have the capability to deliver information to parents as well as opportunities to deliver courses and assessments online. Moodle is the most common LMS currently used in New Zealand (note it is both a *content* and a *learning* management system).

7. Schools should consider adding a secure (password protected) intranet to their networks, which may be used to share information among staff, students, parents and possibly others (e.g. Alumni).

8. It should be noted that the main factors that influence search engine position are the existence of relevant tags and excellent keywords, number of searches for the school, high-quality content on the site and some software that can enhance search results.

9. All schools should develop a policy for the use of social networking sites that encompasses formal and informal use, strategic development of visibility on such sites and policies around surveillance and response. All schools should have, at

least, a formal Facebook group that links back to their website, a Wikipedia entry, and school activities section, that are updated regularly.

10. Schools should consider developing an Alumni section on their website, although its scope and complexity will depend on other factors, such as existence of a thriving network or association of Alumni. A potential middle ground might be the development of a network of former international students only, who may wish to keep in touch via the website.

11. Schools need to develop policies, procedures and administrative systems around the collection and use of data from internet enquiries, to improve responsiveness and market opportunities.

12. There are numerous opportunities on websites and throughout the internet to engage in quality discussions, testimonials and chat, in order to encourage international student enrolments, and schools should investigate these.

# 1.    BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The internet is an important element in marketing New Zealand schools to the world. School websites can advertise the culture and values, curriculum and activities, leadership and facilities, location and context of a school. They may contain essential information about applying, enrolling and getting in touch with schools. Increasingly, schools are more ambitious, wanting to set up two-way dialogues with students and families through their internet sites in order to showcase best practice, report progress and get feedback (Tubin & Klein, 2007).

This project examines the use, by schools and prospective international students, their families and agents, of the internet as a marketing tool to attract students from other countries. There is a general agreement in the literature and among those interviewed for this study that the internet is becoming increasingly important for schools to project their educational image and market themselves to others. School websites are, at the same time, also increasingly being used for other functions, especially with the growth of interactive learning management systems such as the open-source Moodle.

Gorski (1999) comments that it is not always clear whether school websites are targeted at educational or commercial outcomes, or a mixture of the two. This is important because the 'voice' and content of the website is determined by its perceived purpose and audience. In this study, both schools and students expressed interest in more functional, interactive sites for both promotional and educational purposes.

A range of cultural differences can affect marketing relationships, and this may be a reason why institutions can tend to proceed cautiously (Heffernan & Farrell, 2005). While the literature sees successful engagement occurring from planned, unified and strongly-led campaigns (Ross, Heaney, & Cooper, 2007), school websites generally provide passive 'displays' rather than active 'engagement'.

The ambivalence about school marketing is also demonstrated in another study (Ross, et al., 2007). It examined the marketing focus in Australian and New Zealand universities and secondary schools, through in-depth interviews. The findings underlined a lack of marketing expertise at the secondary school level, despite the importance of international students to the schools concerned. The authors conclude:

> Given the importance many educational institutions place on recruiting international students, being aware of institutional factors that may affect student recruitment and developing recruitment strategies that incorporate and acknowledge these factors is vital (p. 603).

There is little literature on the internet marketing of schools. One research study, using surveys with students and educational providers, spanned school and tertiary sectors in Australia. The study found that students and their parents used the internet at various points to search, select or confirm choice of institution. The authors noted that both search engines and website portals were important in assisting the decision-making process.

The 2006 evaluation of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students noted that expenditure on marketing of New Zealand export education has

tended to be low (p. 21), especially compared to Australia (Gordon, et al., 2006). Schools have traditionally marketed in two main ways: attendance at international trade fairs for education, and working through a range of education agents, who are tasked with finding students for New Zealand schools.

The study asked both existing and prospective students where they got their information about New Zealand schools (see Figure 1).  While Agents and word of mouth scored first and second in the individual rankings,  'internet search' and 'school websites'  were 3rd and 4th respectively and together constituted 36% of sources.
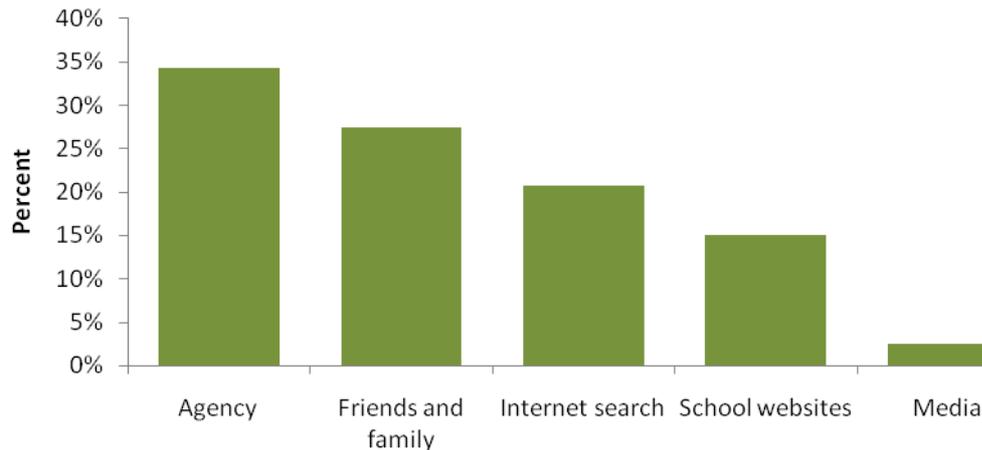


Figure 1. Sources of information used by current and prospective students (%).

The implication of this is that, whether intended or not, the web presence of schools  - in websites, social networking or search engines  - is an important factor in decision-making around enrolling in a particular school.


## METHODOLOGY

The project analyses a range of factors related to school marketing in the digital environment.  Specific objectives include:

    Gain an understanding of how current and prospective students (and their families) use the internet in seeking an offshore education provider;

    Discover any hardware or network factors that may limit website functionality internationally;

    Identify what current and prospective students and their families expect from school websites, and what attracts and engages site visitors;

    Understand the relative importance of these elements in the selection of an offshore education provider;

    Ascertain the potential of additional online marketing strategies such as e-marketing and social media; and

Any further factors which may impact on schools' online marketing strategies.

This study is based on primary research carried out between November 2009 and April 2010.  The research had five elements:

- A series of case studies of 20 schools, which included qualitative interviews with school staff and a technical assessment of school websites.
- An online survey of current students in New Zealand schools.
- An online survey of prospective students gleaned from case study schools.
- An online survey of New Zealand Specialist Agents
- A series of national and international internet searches, covering schools in other countries, searches, social networking and school presence.

In the 20 case study schools, interviews were conducted, where possible, with Principals, the teacher in charge of international students and the person responsible for web site content and operation.  In a number of cases these were all the same person.

As well as the interviews, the websites of the 20 schools were analysed using a modified scale derived from Paul Gorski (Gorski, 1999). The scale was developed by Gorski to assess features of educational websites. The scale was strong on assessing educational value but weaker on marketing elements such as customer service.  Using various online marketing scales, the original scale was amended and extended to meet the needs of the current project. The scale is based on the nine themes of: quality, relevance, accessibility, navigation, engagement, interactivity, customer service, reputation and website characteristics.  The full scale, with its themes and sub-themes, is attached as appendix 2.

In the other part of the study, surveys of current students, prospective students (recruited from case study schools) and New Zealand Specialist Agents were conducted. The current and prospective student surveys were placed online and offered in English, Korean, Chinese and Japanese. The survey of agents was offered only in English.

## 2. THE USE OF SCHOOL WEBSITES AS A MARKETING TOOL

## USE OF SCHOOL WEBSITES BY CURRENT STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

22% of respondents to the current student survey noted that school websites were influential in helping them decide to enrol in a New Zealand school. These respondents were twice as likely to have got their primary information from an agent, and rather more likely to have got their information from friends and family. Over three quarters of families browsed the websites of New Zealand schools before enrolling.
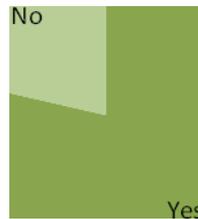


Figure 2. Did the family browse New Zealand school websites?

It appears that prospective students and their parents may *receive* their information about schools from agents, family or other source, and then *browse* the websites to confirm, select or reject particular options. Figure 2 (above) shows that agents and 'word of mouth' are the most common initial sources of information about New Zealand schools. When students and parents were specifically asked where they got their information, family, friends and agents were very much the main sources.

Only a small number noted that the source of their information was the internet, and specifically school websites. Yet we know from Figure 2 that most did, in fact, browse school websites. It therefore appears that decision-making, for most students and parents, followed a staged pathway, as follows:
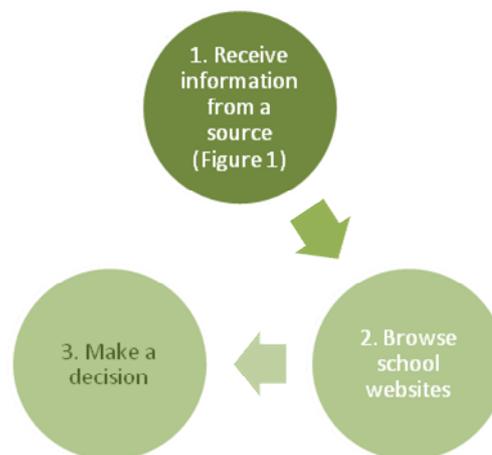


Figure 3. Model of a typical decision-making process for choosing a school.

Parents and students who noted that they browsed New Zealand school websites were asked how many websites they visited. Two-thirds stated that they looked at between one and five websites, and the rest examined more (see Figure 4). This fits with the pattern outlined in Figure 3, where the majority of families already had important information before undertaking a website search for the purposes of confirming (or otherwise) a particular choice, downloading forms and enrolling at a school. Family searches were typically carried out primarily by parents of primary school students, and by students themselves in the secondary age groups.
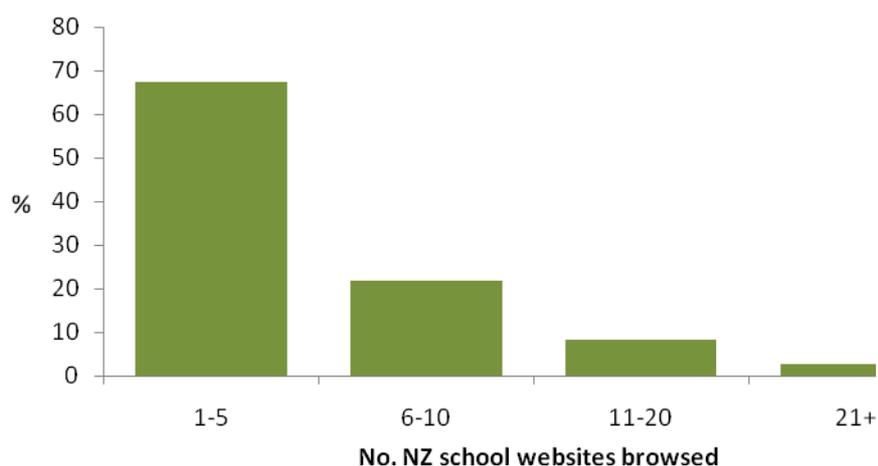


Figure 4. Number of New Zealand school websites browsed (%)

Table 1 provides the results of a cross-tabulation between survey results on the source of information about New Zealand schools and the number of websites browsed (excluding those who did not browse any NZ websites). The data combines both current and prospective student surveys. It shows clear trends that the number of websites browsed is closely related to the source of information. For example, only 2% of those who received information from agents browsed more than five sites.  At the other end of the scale, those advised by families and friends were the only group likely to browse more than 21 sites.

| No. school websites browsed | Initial source of information about NZ schools | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Agent % | School Website % | Internet % | Friends and family % |
| 1-5 | 98 | 3 | 5 | 11 |
| 6-10 | 1 | 93 | 5 | 11 |
| 11-20 | 1 | 3 | 90 | 0 |
| 21+ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 78 |

Table 1. Source of information by number of school websites browsed (%).

Current students were asked to write what made them choose particular schools.  One noted "I fell in love with [the school] immediately", having looked it up from a recommendation on the agent's website. Some wanted to be close to the city, while others wanted the "outdoor education" and "beautiful landscape" offered in some schools.

Several noted that they were looking for a co-educational school, and others talked of reputation, a quality curriculum, subject choices, maths and a good family environment.

The qualitative responses make it clear that New Zealand schools are catering for a very diverse range of students, wanting different and often opposing things.  It should therefore be quite easy for schools to position themselves through their website,  and also taking advantage of additional profiling on the NZEducated website, to attract those students who are looking for the specific factors the school provides. Students are reasonably good at sifting through relevant information to find their ideal school.

## USE OF SCHOOL WEBSITES  BY PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

As all of the respondents had contacted New Zealand schools through their websites, the group can provide insights into how prospective students see the websites and New Zealand schools. Prospective students were asked which countries, other than NZ, they were searching as a possible study destination.  The answers are provided in the following graph. Most respondents, when looking at New Zealand school websites, also looked at one or more other countries.
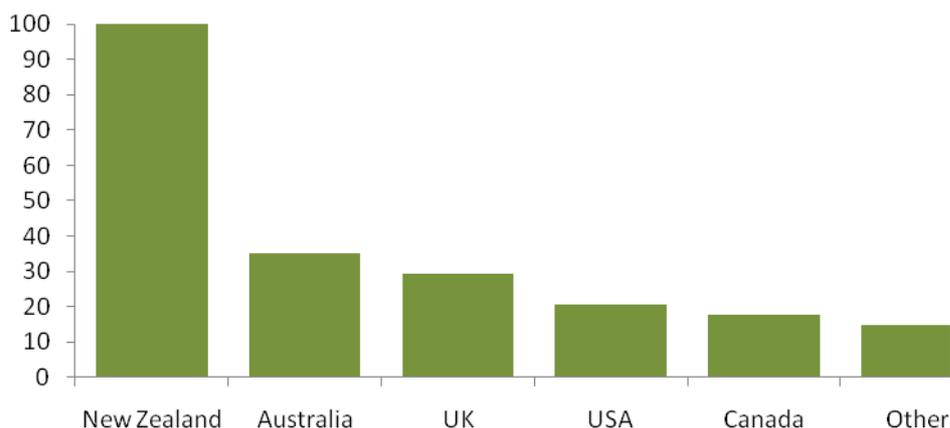


Figure 5. Countries searched as a possible study destination, prospective students (%)

Prospective students were asked how many New Zealand school websites they browsed, when they were looking for a New Zealand school. Most looked at only a small number (5 or under), although more than a third examined more than six school websites.

A total of 41% of prospective students noted that information on websites was available in their first language, which is higher than for current students and agents.  35% found their first language was not available on the sites visited, and 22% noted that their first language was 'sometimes' available.

Figure 6 below, examines modes of contact perceived to be available on school websites by prospective students.  Options were: an email address for enquiries; other non-internet contact details (e.g. names, phone numbers); a specific enquiry or feedback form that can be submitted online; access to offsite chat links such as Skype or MSN; or a system of 'live' online chat.
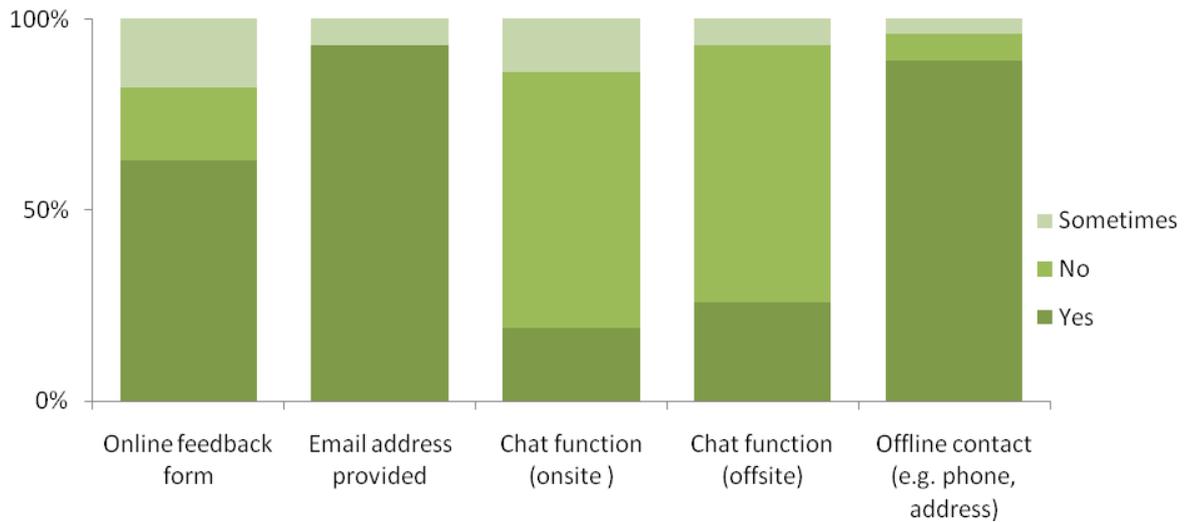
Figure 6. Perceived provision of specific types of contact, NZ school websites.

Of the students surveyed, 59% enrolled in a New Zealand school for 2010, while 9% enrolled in the United States and 3% each in Canada, Australia and England. Some others stayed in their own country to study and the destination of the rest was unstated. This represents a high conversion rate from looking at school websites to enrolling in a school, assuming that the population was uncommitted at the point of making the enquiry.

## USE OF SCHOOL WEBSITES BY AGENTS

All the agents surveyed for this study have specific links with New Zealand schools, and most also use the internet in a range of ways to search for schools. Use of search engines and social networking sites is discussed later in this report. All except for four agents stated that they had browsed New Zealand school websites.
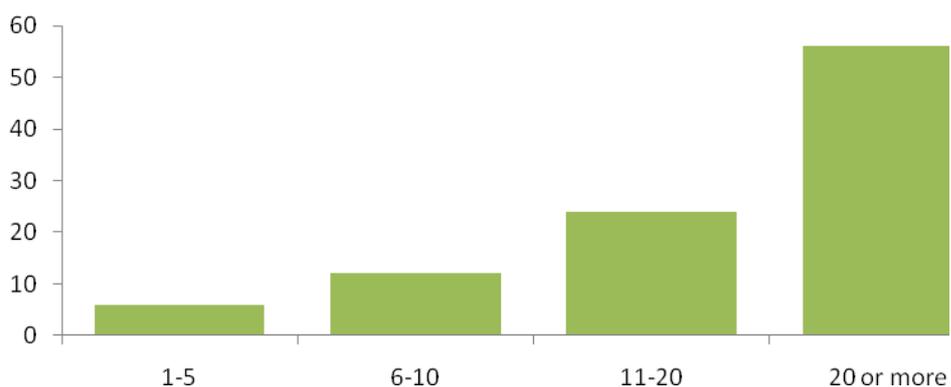


Figure 7. Number of NZ school websites visited – agents (%)

The profile for agents differs markedly from that of current and prospective students. 58% of agents who had accessed school websites had browsed more than 20 New Zealand sites, and 94% had browsed six or more. As well, most agents (80%) had contacted schools through their websites.

Agents were asked to score school websites they had visited on whether these provided effective forms of communication. They reported that most schools provided contact email addresses, and physical addresses and phone numbers.

Some sites provided an online form, while few offered live chat, whether online through website or through Skype, MSN or similar programmes. There was no demand by agents for a more interactive process: they were more concerned with having the right information online (e.g. prospectuses) and in the students' (and agents') first language.

There was a general preference stated for information in students' first languages. One agent noted that s/he was forced to translate large amounts of material before making it available to prospective students, which also raises issues about accuracy and the potential for incorrect information to be conveyed to prospective students.

## THE FUTURE

While many schools feel the pressure to upgrade their sites, there is little evidence from the surveys that students, prospective students or agents considered school websites to be worse than those of other countries overall. A small exercise in analysing websites of schools in other countries was undertaken for this study and reported below, which confirms the view that New Zealand websites compare reasonably favourably.

The marketing process within schools for recruiting international students to schools is highly traditional at present, with most commerce occurring as a result of word of mouth or family experience, and through traditional 'merchants' - education agents.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools need to ensure that they have clear policies in place around marketing to international students via the internet.

With 80% of prospective students browsing school websites before making their decision to enrol, schools need to ensure that the website is attractive, informative and reflects the environment and values of the school. There is no 'right' content: students are looking for a range of characteristics.

Key website information targeted at international students should, where possible, be available in the first language of the students.

## 3. WEBSITE CONTENT

The material in this section comes from the case study of 20 schools analysed using the modified Gorski scale (described above). In each section, the yardstick used was the goal of effective marketing to international students.  The website assessments, therefore, focus only on the marketing functions, not the overall functions, of the school websites.

## RELEVANCE

The first criterion used was the relevance of the school websites to the goal of marketing to international students.  School websites have multiple functions and a number of different audiences.  The question is whether prospective students and their parents, examining the school website, would find the information relevant to their needs.  Figure 9 provides a summary of the mean (average) assessed score on various elements of relevance, where 1 = not relevant and 5 = extremely relevant.
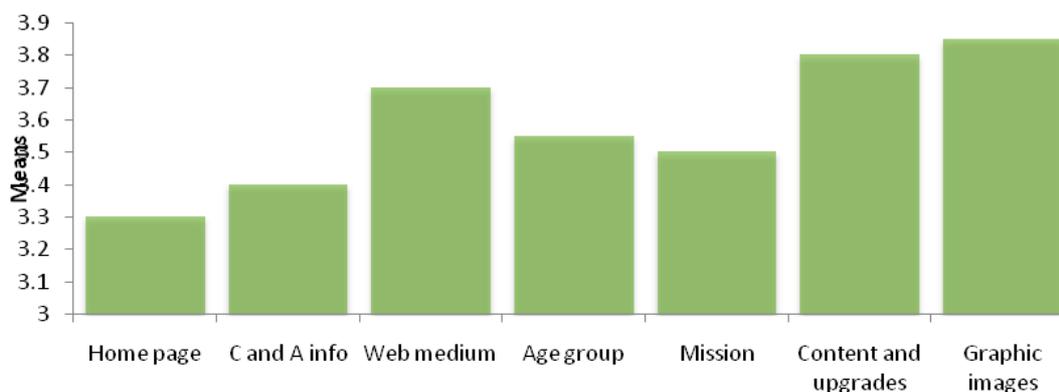


Figure 8. Relevance and appropriateness of main school websites – case studies

In this section, high scoring websites demonstrated the diversity of the school and included material for or about international students from the home page onwards. Images may reflect the multi-cultural character of schools (e.g. international students getting awards) or its regional attractions.  Curriculum and assessment information outlines ways in which second language learners are assisted. The school purpose and mission can include a multi-national focus.

Most of the schools surveyed scored well on these measures.  Websites were best at including attractive and relevant images, and poorest at providing an inclusive home page. Schools need to consider their audiences and ensure their home page addresses them.  Websites often did not explain how international students would be supported in their curriculum work, and this could be remedied with relative ease, be reference to support services, the international department and teacher assistance.  Because of the wide range of interests that prospective students have, schools should provide access to a lot of information on their sites, as they may lose prospective enrolments.

In the online surveys, students and their parents were asked to assess the relevance of information on New Zealand school websites. Table 2 provides a summary of their average scores on each of seven criteria.  The items were scored on a scale, where a

score of one was 'not helpful at all' and a score of five was 'extremely helpful. Thus an overall score of three indicates that an item was quite helpful.

| Type of information | Av. score |
|---|---|
| Information about school subjects | 3.6 |
| Support for international students | 3.5 |
| Pictures and videos | 3.5 |
| Information about fees and costs | 3.3 |
| Information about Music and the Arts | 3.2 |
| Information about learning English | 3.2 |
| Information about accommodation options | 3.1 |

Table 2. Quality and relevance of website information.

These scores are all good (average or better) but show areas where international students would like to see more information.  The same question was also directed at agents, and they tended to rate school websites more highly than did the students and parents. Top ranking content (at an average of over 4 out of 5) was fees information, school subjects, support and accommodation options.

Putting the data together, school websites are generally good at providing relevant information for students and agents, but certain areas of improvement  are indicated, particular with the addition of more relevant information in some areas and more inclusion of international students on key website pages.

## ENGAGEMENT

Engagement means, in principle, making connections with those you wish to attract.  It is a central element of marketing – making links between the product and potential consumer. On the modified Gorski scale, engagement included five separate elements: interest, integration, language, tone and images. Bear in mind there will be a degree of subjectivity that applies here.
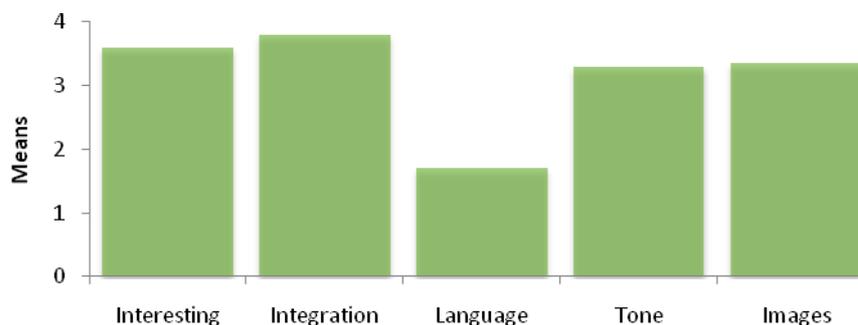


Figure 9. Engagement scores, case study schools

On all factors except language, the average score was between 'good' and 'very good'.

Current students and families were asked what made them choose a particular school – in other words what engaged them. The wide range of answers demonstrated the diversity of needs and wants.  It is likely that a wide range of factors engage particular students, as the following comments show:

> It had everything I wanted. A lot of sports, close to the beach, recommended homestay coordinator, cool subjects, size of the school, being modern, good student-teacher relation, good trips, a lot of information given, appealing website.

> The first reason was the experiences of graduate students. Many students from this school get scholarships and this was a major influence on choosing this school. Also the big population of girls. Furthermore the school cares very much about international students, they try to do everything to make students feel at home. Apart from those aspects, their prizes from Olympiads and competitions influenced me. These all indicated how qualified a school it was.

> Because I like it here, it is a good environment

> It's in the middle of mountains and near Queenstown, and offers courses that I never had in my school in France.

> I chose *****, because they offer a lot of subjects and other things (e.g. sports, music). Helpful with exchange students, promotes sports and other interesting trips, cool place, nice rules.

> I applied at a few different schools, but the Dean of this school sent me the nicest answer with a lot of information about the school and the town

> I chose my current school because this school looked very nice and it was not that expensive.

The implication of the diverse needs expressed by students is that schools should play to their own strengths, and in many of the cases they do. Elements that appear important in seeking engagement are: outline the factors that are special or unique about a school, put in place high quality systems to respond well to requests for more information, demonstrate the advantages of a person enrolling in the school, be caring and informative and provide lots of information about the curriculum and support services.

A remaining issue is whether good engagement requires information to be available to prospective students in their first language. There is some recent research (Campbell & Li, 2008) that notes difficulties faced by students over language once they are in New Zealand, but lack of first language information was not a common complaint in the student surveys.

As noted above, it was a concern raised by agents, who often interpreted website material for use by clients. On balance, having information available in various languages can only improve communication and thus engagement.

# INTERACTIVITY

Interactivity refers to every point at which there may be dynamic communication, either in a one-way stream (e.g. newsletters) or between participants via the internet or other means. The least dynamic type of online communication is the contact form or its equivalent, where a person can only make contact by filling out a form that goes to an unknown and unnamed party.

The most dynamic type of engagement is live online 'chat' (either by voice or typed), held at specific times and staffed by informed communicators (and especially if available in the first language of the enquirer). In interviews, a number of schools stated they wanted increased interactivity and dynamism in their websites.

The summary results for the assessment of interaction on the case study school websites are included in Figure 10 below. Highest score is for information provision, which refers to newsletters and other similar forms that are frequently updated and give relevant information in good time.

The second element is the existence and use of interactive technologies on websites. This could be a Skype or MSN contact address or number, a search engine on the site or a live chat or simultaneous translation. The third element is interactive content that engages interest in prospective students and their families, including excellent download systems for information, communication links and so on.
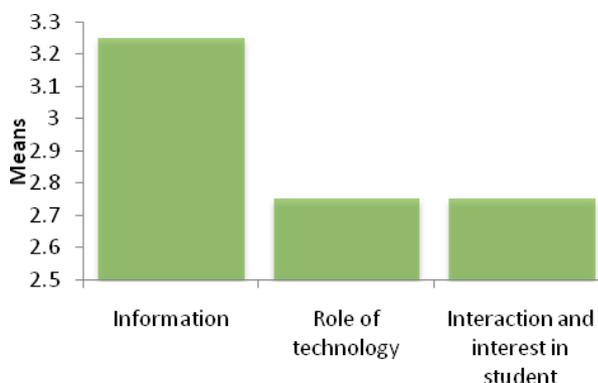


Figure 10. Interactivity scores, case study schools.

# EASE OF USE

Among current students, a small number of respondents found New Zealand school websites difficult to understand, and a similar number found them very easy. The rest, by far the majority, considered the websites 'quite easy' to understand. Given the low number of websites with foreign language elements, this is a good result.
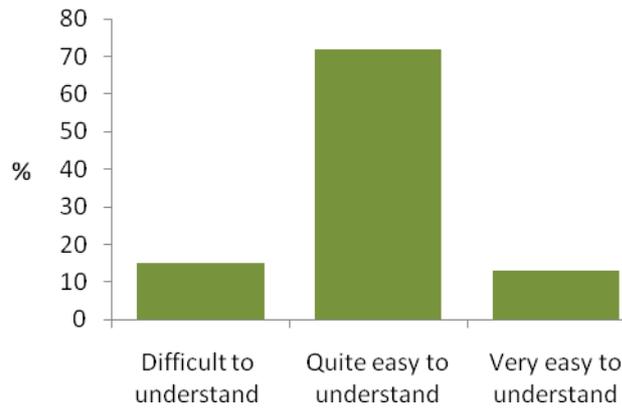
Figure 11. Reported ease of understanding content of NZ school websites, current students. %.

Agents scored higher than current students and their parents on the issue on the comprehensibility of school websites. Few considered the websites difficult to understand, with nearly 40% stating they were easy to understand, and over half noting they were 'quite easy'.
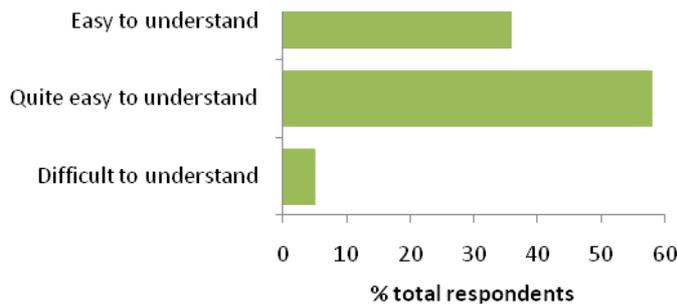


Figure 12. Reported ease of understanding content of NZ school websites, agents %.

Responses for prospective students mirrored those of the agents, with only 3 stating that the websites were difficult to understand, 11 noting they were very easy and 17 'quite easy'.

## SERVICE

This area of analysis was called 'service', but in fact enshrines two sets of factors: the extent to which the school website welcomes and embraces (and attracts) visitors, and the type and quality of the information given on the site. Issues of credibility and trust, related to this area, are dealt with separately below. The results are summarised in Figure 13 below, and then explained, Overall, schools scored reasonably well in this area, with the exception of language options.
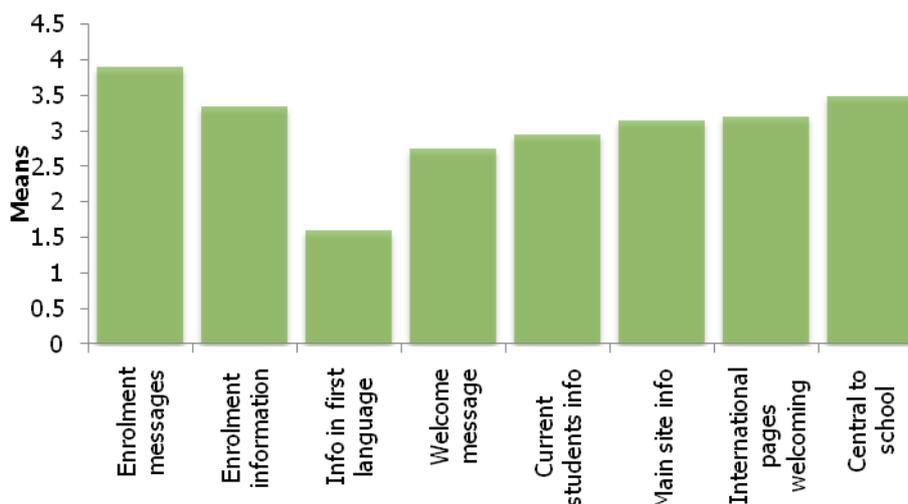
Figure 13. Service information available on websites, case study schools.

Good enrolment messages would be simple to achieve without website reform but could make quite a difference to how school websites are viewed. In the comments provided by current and prospective students, many noted they were attracted by kind and friendly responses that were directed at them. Many school websites (but not all) have a 'welcome' on their home page, but these are usually a 'welcome to everyone', followed by a brief description of the school.

The biggest area under service is the provision of information for international and domestic students.

A central principle of marketing is that information must be available at the point at which the person makes a decision. Barriers, including being forced to wait for the results of an enquiry, or not having adequate information, can result in an enrolment not taking place. Several students noted in comments that they had decided to enrol in a New Zealand school very late. If this is a common pattern, having a full enrolment procedure that can be completed online would be a distinct advantage. Several schools noted in interviews that they were working towards this goal.

Current and prospective students were asked to rank the quality and relevance of a range of information provided on school websites. The information is summarised above in Table 2. Scores (on a five-point scale) ranged from 3.1 for information about accommodation options to a high of 3.6 for subject information. While good, schools could (a) provide more information and (b) think through what information students and parents need in order to make a well-informed decision to enrol.

## MULTICULTURALISM

The Gorski tool adapted for this study had a strong focus on multiculturalism, working from the basis that "the Web transcends virtually all other educational media in its capacity for facilitating intercultural, interactive and collaborative teaching and learning". In other words, Gorski believes that the internet provides the opportunity to interact with educational ideals to produce a more effective multicultural community. In looking at multiculturalism here, the purpose is parallel to but different from Gorski's.

The critical question, from a marketing perspective, is whether a school website that reflects a multi-cultural community is more likely to attract international (and indeed, local) students than a monocultural site. This is a difficult and complex issue. Fifty years ago, the purpose of sending a child overseas for an education may have been to encourage them to adapt to another culture in order to bring about a cultural and social advantage for them (the English public school 'colonial' model). There is still an extent to which schooling is used, domestically and internationally, to try and improve the social position of students, for example by sending a children to a school in a higher socio-economic area than that in which they live, which at least partially explains the popularity of high decile schools in New Zealand.

But the New Zealand schools community is, in reality, increasingly multicultural, both by virtue of international student enrolments and also as a consequence of patterns of migration. In the case study schools, little was made of this on the websites of the schools, despite the clear advantages of the internet in being able to show and celebrate multiculturalism. The scores across a range of factors are laid out in the figure below:



Figure 14. Elements of multiculturalism on websites, case study schools

It is therefore worthwhile to note that the theme of multiculturalism is one that should be considered in designing and making school websites for marketing purposes.

## TRUST AND REPUTATION

The final area of website content examined in the case studies was the question of whether the websites demonstrated credibility and inspired trust. The results are summarised in the graph below. Schools scored very well (average of nearly 4 out of 5) on issues of reputation, credibility and trust. In the assessment, they lagged a little behind in demonstrating quality and providing high quality images to back up these reputational issues. This might mean, for example, that claims of the status of the music programme at a school is made in a credible way, but not backed up by good information about subject options and opportunities, and images/videos.

Figure 15. Trust and reputation, case study school websites.

## SUMMARY

The websites of the schools generally have good content, and the next section will demonstrate that they mostly have a good technical basis as well. Particular strengths are in ease of use and navigation, and provision of information on curriculum areas. Areas of weakness are multiculturalism (if that is a goal), engagement and interactivity.

The need to improve interactivity and engagement is well understood by many of the case study schools, and a number are actively working on what one called a "top secret project to market the school" which involves the use of new-generation interactive technologies.  The issue of multiculturalism is a more complex one, about which schools need to make individual judgements in terms of their own community needs.

In the website analysis undertaken for this study, particular attention was paid to the relationship between the main school website and the international pages (or separate site, as some had configured it). The question was whether there was a marked disjuncture between the main site and the international pages in terms of quality, approach, tone or content, that may provide implicit messages about the role and status of international students in the school.

In some sites international students were rather 'departmentalised', with the web pages being run by an international coordinator or section, and in others the information provided was not adequate, but in general the international sites and pages were of similar quality to the rest of the site.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools need to assess strengths and weaknesses of their websites using the categories outlined in this section, and plan improvements where necessary, and in particular:
Include as much relevant information as possible for prospective international students and their families, and agents;
Add a range of language and translation options to websites to improve communication; and
Introduce a range of interactive communication options into their websites.

# 4. TECHNICAL STRENGTHS AND BARRIERS

*Note: There are many technical terms used in this chapter. Please refer to the glossary at the front of the report for meanings.*

In the technical assessment of the 20 school websites, significant research was undertaken into an assessment of the quality and capability of the sites. This was done from the outside in (entering sites through searches, browsing sites, making connections within sites, using links and so on), and from the inside out, looking at the technical platform used by schools. The data was also triangulated from each of the surveys, where students, prospective students and agents were asked to discuss any connectivity issues that the websites had.

The overall picture of the technical strengths of the website is positive, with accessibility scoring the highest marks of all the Gorski scale categories in this study, with an average score of 3.97 out of a possible 5 (where 4 = a very good assessment). Essentially, links to the school sites, within them and out from them were very good, there were few bugs and overall navigability was high. The lowest score was on language, as it was considered that access to instructions and links in the person's home language was a positive element of accessibility and linkages. Across the 12 elements of accessibility, the average score of the 20 sites was as follows:
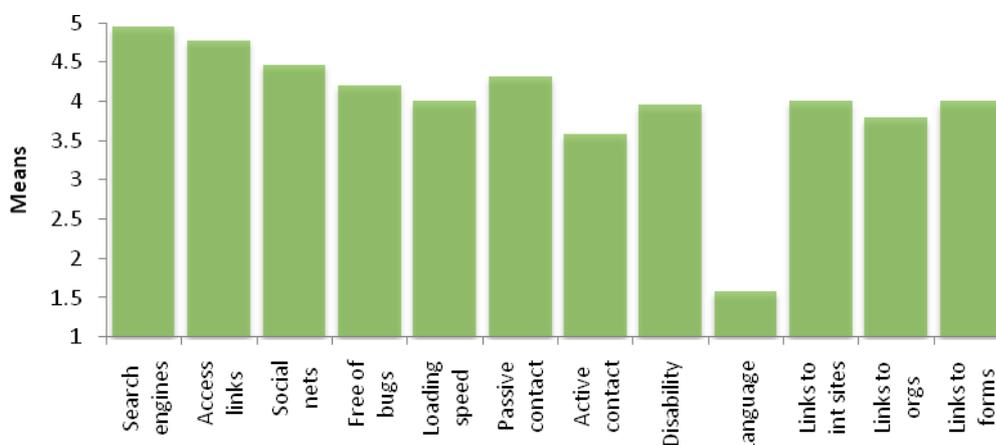


Figure 16. Assessment of website accessibility and links, case study schools.

Search engines: All sites were tested in terms of being able to access them readily through popular search engines such as Google and Yahoo. The school's name was entered as the keywords and the scores were based on where the school was listed in the search results. For the most part, international student pages or sites were connected to the main schools sites by links, and mostly could also be accessed directly through searches. While not scoring quite as high as the main school sites, the international sites and pages were still readily loaded by all tested methods.

Links: All links were tested within sites, plus links from the NZEducated site. There were a small number of broken links within sites, especially to forms that appear to have been replaced but no link re-made. A few out-of date features were also noted (a link

supposedly to a new international co-ordinator may feature her predecessor, for example) but in general the sites performed very well on accessibility issues.

International pages or websites were assessed in terms of their accessibility and links from and to important functions, and the results displayed in Figure 17.
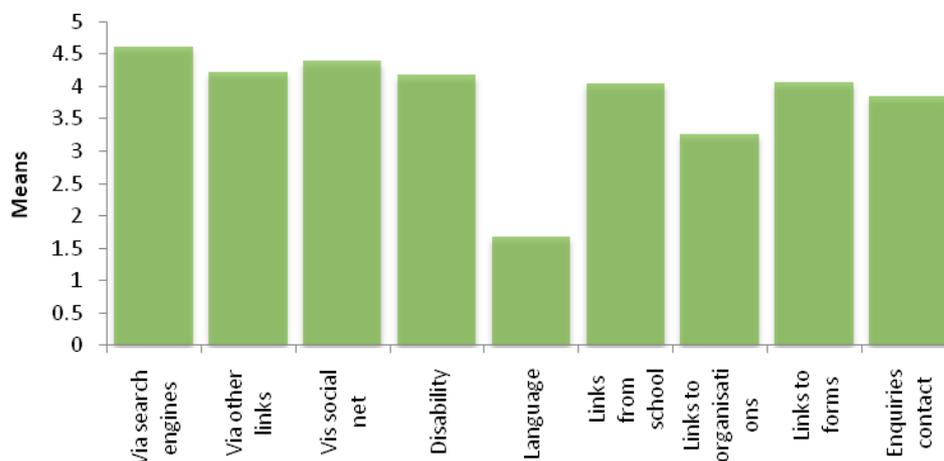


Figure 17. Accessibility and links, international sites.

Linkages *from* search engines, other links, social networking sites (where relevant) and the main school site all tested very good to excellent.  Linkages *to* forms, linked organisations and contacts tested good to very good. The only low score in this section was for language, on the basis that access is facilitated by having instructions in the first language of the person browsing the site.

## SPEED AND CONNECTIVITY

All case study websites were tested for speed of loading. The average score for speed of loading was 4.0 (very good) out of a maximum of 5.  The assessor reported few speed issues in loading websites, even where there were pictures and flash video usage.  She also reported the school websites to be largely free of bugs, scoring 4.2 out of 5.

Respondents in all surveys were asked whether there were any connectivity issues that affected their ability to browse New Zealand school websites.  There was a consistent minority in all surveys who noted that they did have such problems.  In the survey of current students, for example, just under 20% of respondents noted connectivity issues. Around 20% of agents, too noted connectivity issues, as did around 15% of prospective students.

Speed was the main factor, with more than half of technical problems involving  delays in pages loading.  One-third of the problems were related to problems linking with pages, including some blocked content, difficulty in viewing images and videos and the like.  The remainder of the problems were a diverse range of language difficulties, technical matters and internet problems.

There were four main issues that were raised by people as causing connectivity problems. The first were country difficulties, and this was an issue primarily for Korean respondents.

We received several comments about this, and did a small piece of research on it.  It appears that access to non-US hosted foreign websites may be difficult, for reasons that are unclear (we found two or three hypotheses, but no definitive answers). Two Korean respondents noted that when web servers are located in the United States, there are far fewer problems.  One Chinese respondent noted that some school websites appear to be blocked, although no other Chinese respondent reported such problems.

The second, and much more frequent, problem was a reported slow loading of New Zealand school websites. Around half of all reported problems had to do with loading speed.

The third reported problem was of missing sites, pages and links.  The case study schools rated on average between 3.8 and 4 on links to local agencies, international sites and forms. However, quite a few respondents noted missing links, however, and one (Japanese) respondent stated that a whole site s/he was trying to access was not available for a whole week.

Finally, the lack of English language skills caused problems in connecting for some people. Evidently this group thought that they would be able to find information in their own first language on the school sites, but were unable to do so.

## TECHNICAL PLATFORMS

A small number of the school websites appeared virtually static, meaning that pages need to be updated and replaced manually using either html code or a web page programme such as Dreamweaver (http://www.adobe.com/products/dreamweaver/). Most school websites have one or more content management systems, which are built-in systems for updating and controlling dynamic content on a website.

The other commonly used content for websites is Flash, which can provide some excellent graphics but has a range of limitations in terms of dealing with dynamic content and managing data.

The main finding of the technical elements of the sites was that nearly all the schools already had in place, or could easily achieve, nearly all the elements needed to reach their ambitions for their sites, whether these were "dynamic content", "translation into other languages", "more functionality", "online enrolment", "international parent login to update children's progress", "a daily report on attendance for all children, accessible by parents", and "a dynamic internet-based marketing campaign", to mention a few.

The context, however, is fast-changing. The range of free and open source (i.e. available to everyone, and available to change and modify to meet specific circumstances) content management systems (see Table 3 below) and 'add-ons' (things that can be imported to provide specific functions on websites) is very large and growing larger.  While there is a risk in using new and untested widgets on a website, there are now numerous tested and secure options available, especially through the Google suite and Microsoft options.

Table 3. Comparison of different Content Management System packages

| | Word Press | Moodle | Joomla! | Expression Engine | Drupal | 1024 AJAX |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cost | Free | Free | Free | Free - $249 | Free | Free |
| License | Open Source | Open Source | Open Source | Closed Source | Open Source | Open Source |
| Operating System | Any | Any | Any | Any | Any | Any |
| **Management** | | | | | | |
| Online Administration | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Web Statistics | Free AddOn | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Web /Template Mngt | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Web Translation Mngt | Limited | Yes | Free AddOn | Yes | Yes | Limited |
| **Flexibility** | | | | | | |
| Interface Localisation | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Multi-lingual Content | Free AddOn | Yes | Free AddOn | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Multi-lingual Content Integration | Free Addon | Yes | Free AddOn | Limited | Free AddOn | Yes |
| **Applications** | | | | | | |
| Classifieds | Free AddOn | Yes | Free AddOn | Limited | Free AddOn | Yes |
| Discussion / Forum | Free AddOn | Yes | Free AddOn | Costs Extra | Yes | Yes |
| Events Calendar | Free AddOn | Yes | Free AddOn | Yes | Free AddOn | No |
| FAQ Management | Free AddOn | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Link Management | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Free AddOn | Limited |
| Mail Form | Free AddOn | Yes | Yes | Yes | Free AddOn | Yes |
| Newsletter | Free AddOn | Yes | Free AddOn | Yes | Free Add On | No |
| Photo Gallery | Free AddOn | Yes | Free AddOn | Yes | Free Add On | Yes |
| Search Engine | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Site Map | Free AddOn | No | Free AddOn | Yes | Free Add On | No |

Comparison chart made using http://www.cmsmatrix.org/matrix/cms-matrix
All the packages can be used on any platform and are free to use.  Translation tools and localisation tools are available in all these packages.  They all offer very similar applications and tools.
Moodle: http://www.moodle.org;
Wordpress http://www.wordpress.org;
Joomla! http://www.joomla.org;

ExpressionEngine: http://www.expressionengine.com;
Drupal:  http://www.drupal.org;
1024 Ajax CMS http://www.1024cms.org

Moodle is both a Content Management System and a Learning Management System, and is increasingly used by educational institutions all around the world.  The advantage of the learning management system is that it has widespread educational applications as well as the ability to structure websites.  Moodle offers, in principle, many of the future-focused elements that case study schools have on their wish lists, such as online learning, knowledge and assessment systems that can be shared across the world wide web (in principle also with the families of international students), and a range of ways to manage communications between the school and others through the web. Because it is open source and dynamic, Moodle offers a wide range of possibilities for schools.

## BARRIERS FOR SCHOOLS

The main barriers described by schools are time, resources, 'vision' and expertise:

> Constraints include lack of vision around how a website may look, lack of expertise in the school, cost, web-hosting shortcomings, lack of time.

A number mentioned a lack of time to undertake strategic planning or, if such planning occurs, a shortage of time to implement changes. However, within the area of timeliness, another set of barriers emerged, relating to personnel and organisational factors.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools should carefully study the features available through the six main open source content management systems listed in Table 3.  It is noted that most of the 'wish list' of schools in this study, for language options, discussion forums, newsletters, email forms, events calendars and others are available as integral, or as an add on, to each of these systems.

Schools should consider adding a learning management system through their websites, if they wish to deliver information directly to students or parents. These have the capability to deliver information to parents as well as opportunities to deliver courses and assessments online.  Moodle is the most common LMS currently used in New Zealand (note it is both a *content* and a *learning* management system).

Schools should consider adding a secure (password protected) intranet to their networks, which may be used to share information among staff, students, parents and possibly others (e.g. Alumni).

## 5. INTERNET PRESENCE

In the technical section above, it was noted that the search score was close to a perfect 5 for the 20 case study schools. This meant that the specific schools were easy to find on various search engines, by searching with the name of the school.

However, if a person wants to search on the internet for New Zealand schools, the picture is somewhat different. For the purposes of this study, the top search engines internationally - Google, Baidu, Yahoo!, Bing, AltaVista and AllTheWeb - were examined. The search term used was 'New Zealand schools'.

For each search engine, the top 100 results were analysed.  The aim was to map the position of each of the 20 case study schools in each of the search engines. In the event, this was not a difficult task. In Google, only one of the case study schools came into the top 100 listed sites using that search term, and none of the case study schools made the top 100 of any of the other search engines examined.

According to searchenginewatch.com the top search engines used internationally are Google and Yahoo.  In Asia Baidu is one of the most popular search engines, outranking Google.  Schools need to consider this when optimising their websites for other countries as English words may translate differently into other languages.

## OPTIMISING SEARCH RESULTS

The appearance of a website high on a search result is no accident. A good website developer will use high quality software to maximise the visibility of the website on search engines, and highlight appropriate keywords to ensure that search engines pick up on the central characteristics of a site.

One tool for doing this is a 'meta-tag'. Meta-Tags are easy to add to any website as they involve simple html coding.  There are different types of Meta-Tags and they can all be utilised effectively by good websites.  The different types are:

> The **Title Tag** contains the most important keywords and information in your website as the they have the highest ranking value with most websites.  Due to a limit on the number of characters a search engine will search for they should be no more than 60 characters long.  A New Zealand school might include the title New Zealand School along with the school name.

> The **Meta Description Tag** contains a description of what can be found on the current page.  Most search engines display the description in their results.  The description should be kept to under 150 characters.

> **Keyword Tags** contain different keywords that are relevant to the website.

In addition, there is the opportunity for websites to enrol in a service called 'sponsored links', to ensure that the site appears at or near the top of the listings on specific searches. Most search engines offer this paid service.

There are a number of things to take into account when attempting to improve a school's ranking on search engines. One is that it is important not to try too hard. Search engines eventually can penalise 'pushy' sellers. Another tip is to keep it simple. A simple website structure is key to getting a good search engine ranking. Providing a site map structure that is not too complex, and at least one static link to each page, is important. The more a site is accessed and used, the higher it's listing will be (all other things being equal), so encouraging website use is an excellent strategy for improving rank.

Content management systems also play a role in helping to create and update these tools. The most successful of the case study schools used a CMS called Joomla! to manage its search engine optimisation, which is acknowledged as one of the most effective systems. Other common systems are listed in Table 3 in the previous chapter.

## SEARCHES BY STUDENTS AND AGENTS

Of the agents, 14% stated that they did not use search engines to find New Zealand schools. Of the others, most (73%) used Google, although other search engines were also utilised, including Yahoo, Bing and the NZ Educated website's search functionality.
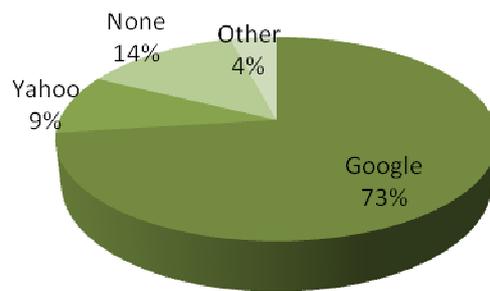


Figure 18. Use of search engines to find New Zealand schools – agents.

Of the current students, 64% noted that they did use search engines to search for New Zealand schools. Engines used included Google, Baidu and a small number of others. Prospective students showed a similar pattern, with an overwhelming dominance of Google, with a small number of other search engines (Naver is a popular Korean search engine and MOET is a Vietnamese Government education site).
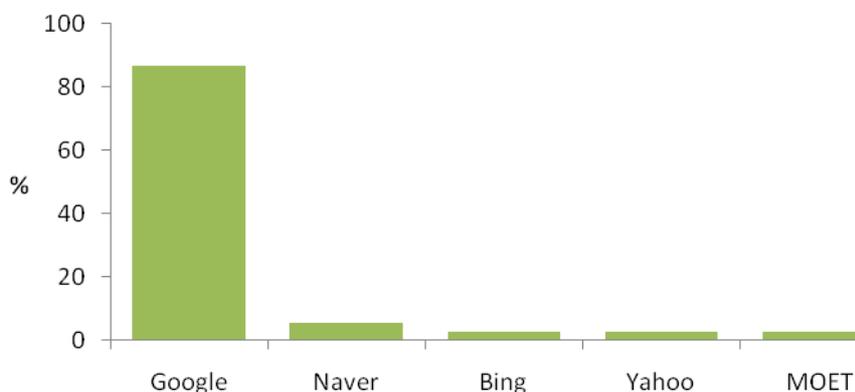


Figure 19. Use of search engines to find New Zealand schools – prospective students.

Current students were asked what search terms they had used to find New Zealand schools. The main interest here was in whether they used specific search terms, such as the name of the school, which were almost certain to elicit the desired response, or more general terms which, given the investigations undertaken for this project, may lead to less satisfactory results.

In the event, the search terms came under three categories. The first were general terms such as 'South Island school', or 'school New Zealand', 'middle school', 'high school' and so on. The second category were schools that had a qualifier attached to them: 'Biggest school', 'Anglican', 'Wanganui', 'Dunedin', 'academic achievement', 'sports', 'top ten' and so on. This was the biggest category. The final category were those schools that were searched by name: 'I knew I wanted Botany so I just looked up "Botany Downs Secondary College"'.

It is already understood from this study that most internet searches take place within the context of advice already received from agents, word of mouth or other sources, and that the source of information is strongly related to the number of websites browsed. However, the search patterns demonstrate that there could be significant opportunities for schools that embark on an effective campaign to market their school electronically.

## SOCIAL NETWORKING

The following table summarises the main social networking sites and their characteristics:

| Name | Description/Focus | Registered users | Registration |
|---|---|---|---|
| http://www.facebook.com | General. | 400,000,000 | Open |
| http://www.qq.com | General. In Simplified Chinese; caters for mainland China users | 200,000,000 | Open |
| http://www.habbo.com | General for teens. Over 31 communities worldwide. Chat Room and user profiles. | 162,000,000 | Open to ages 13 and up. |
| http://www.myspace.com | General. HTML based site. | 130,000,000 | Open to ages 13 and up. |
| http://www.twitter.com | General. Micro-blogging, RSS, updates | 75,000,000 | Open |
| http://vkontakte.ru/ | Social Network for Russian-speaking world. Biggest site in Russia | 72,225,077 | Open |
| http://www.bebo.com | General | 40,000,000 | Open to ages 13 and up. |

Table 4. Main social networking sites[1] and their characteristics

Few of the case study schools have researched or joined social networking sites. One school has official pages on Facebook and Bebo, another has a Facebook page

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[1] http://www.kenburbary.com/2010/01/dispelling-the-youth-myth-five-useful-facebook-demographic-statistics/

for international students (monitored by the international co-ordinator) and one has a Facebook presence for alumni. One school is considering Twitter, more as a communication tool with current students than for marketing purposes. Very few of the schools are currently planning a social media presence, although a number recognise the importance of this.

In the absence of official policies on social networking, others, mainly students, have filled the void with a range of unofficial sites. Schools may be the subject of active Facebook sites that they are not aware of, run by and for students. Primary schools noted that the social networking sites may not be the best way to reach their target market and their students are too young to join. However, it was found that this school has unofficial sites run by the students on both Facebook and Bebo. In fact, it appears that primary and intermediate students are keen to network around their school's identity.

Schools often noted that it was likely to be the students themselves, rather than their parents, who accessed social networking sites. But as these sites become more established and 'mainstream', more and more older people are joining a range of social networks[2], which means there are marketing opportunities on these sites to target both students and parents.

It is easy to see why schools face difficulties in deciding to enter the world of social networking. Any risk management regime would identify numerous perceived risks, especially around the content of the sites, and the task of scrutinising and policing could become large. There are many unofficial Facebook sites we found in researching this section of the report. These are going to sprout and grow no matter what other presence the school has on the website, which means that policing has to occur anyway. Having one or more official sites provides the opportunity for schools to present themselves in the ways that they choose.

Few schools out of the 20 had no Facebook page, official or unofficial. For the three quarters of schools in this study who did not have a social networking strategy, and no procedures in place, the social networking environment appeared to be thriving without the schools' knowledge or scrutiny, and without written policies in place around how to deal with issues arising from the sites. It is recommended that schools need to develop policies around social networking, and have active systems of scrutiny in place, whether or not they intend to officially enter the social digital world.

Over a third (41%) of prospective students and their parents looked at social networking sites when looking for New Zealand schools, and some looked at more than one site. 'Other' stated sites include NZEducated, Go Abroad, Skype and Google Earth.

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[2] http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/more_adults_than_ever_on_socia.php (and other similar references)
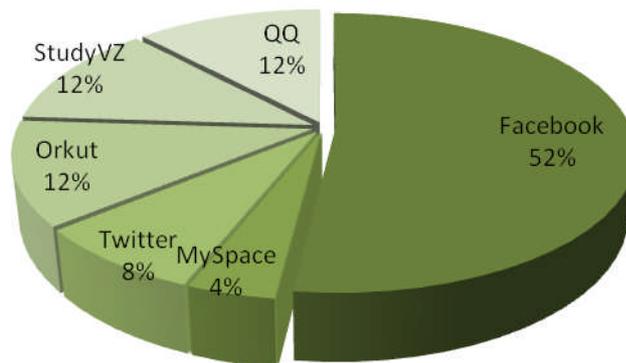
Figure 20. Websites used to look up New Zealand schools, prospective students..

Around a third of agents also have used a social networking site to look up New Zealand schools. As well as those listed in Figure 21 below, one agent cited Mixi (mixi.jp), a Japanese social network, as a site used for this purpose. While Facebook has the largest market share, it is obvious that other sites are also relevant.
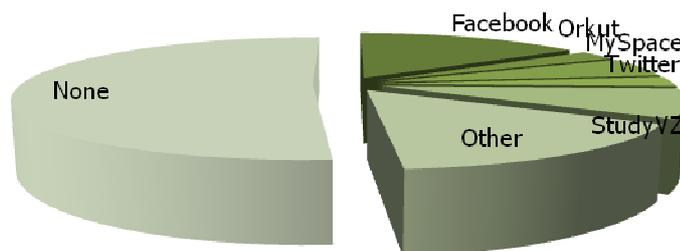


Figure 21. Websites used to look up New Zealand schools, agents.

Current students were not asked specifically about whether they used social networking sites to look up potential schools, but there is evidence that they do use these sites to report their experiences. Facebook, in particular, is full of references to New Zealand education.

There is an increasing range of facilitation tools available freely on the internet to support creative and effective forms of communication. For example, Wordpress and Google's 'blogger' function allows people to set up a blog and embed it on another website (in fact it provides multiple ways to do this), allowing for the possibility that international students could describe their life at a New Zealand school 'live' through the school's website.

Schools need to have clear policies for social networking, and these will also need to include protocols for frequent scrutiny of the world wide web. These should include:

- Policies and practices regarding official and unofficial presence on social networking sites;

- Ensuring that schools have an official site on the main social networks, that are accessible, interesting and frequently updated;
- Policing unofficial sites;
- Ensuring students are aware of and comply with school rules around such sites;
- Ensuring staff and the school community are aware of and comply with the policies;
- Having a group of staff, representative of senior management, international students and IT staff (at least) who develop, promote and ensure compliance with the policies; and
- Promoting open, principled, high quality communication about the school through all sites on the world wide web.

This list was gleaned from looking at some guidelines and approaches of other schools that were discovered on the internet. Schools need to do their own work to ensure that they have comprehensive policies and practices.

## ONLINE MARKETING IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

In the surveys of agents and prospective students, a number of questions were asked about using the internet to search for schools in countries other than New Zealand. Prospective students who enrolled in countries other than New Zealand were asked whether New Zealand school websites were better, about the same or worse on a series of key factors including interesting, relevant, interactive, accessible and easy to understand. Although the numbers are small, the results show that 44% noted that New Zealand sites were better than the sites of the chosen country, 51% about the same and only 5% were scored as worse.

Agents were asked the same question, and came up with a different pattern of responses. New Zealand school websites were generally judged to rank the same as international sites on most criteria. They were somewhat more likely to be judged more friendly than sites of other countries, and around 20% of agents thought NZ school sites were worse on the issues of feedback, interactivity, language and interest. In the survey, these terms were not defined, so were subject to any interpretation placed on them by the agents.
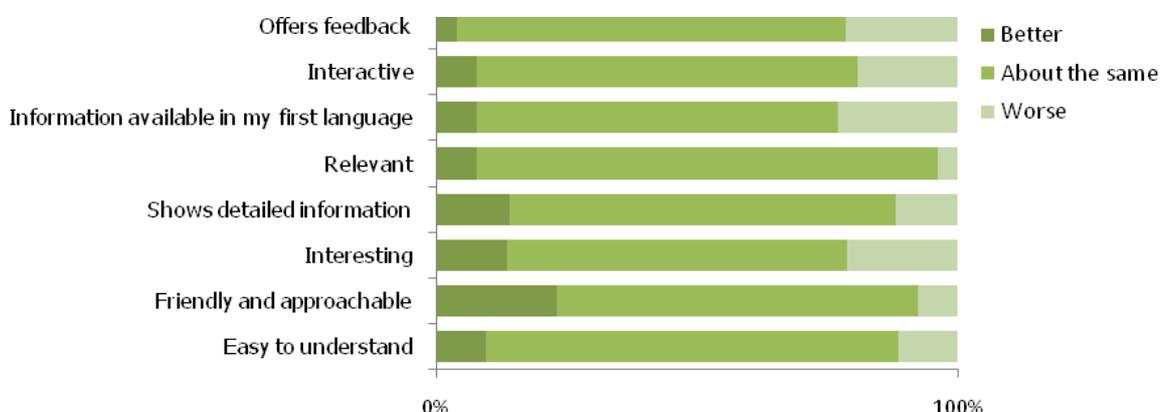


Figure 22. Characteristics of NZ school websites against those of other countries, agents.

It was noted above that prospective students tended to search the sites of schools in other countries when looking at New Zealand schools. This tendency was repeated among current students, to a slightly lesser extent. The following figure outlines the number of current students or parents that used the internet to search for school websites in various countries.
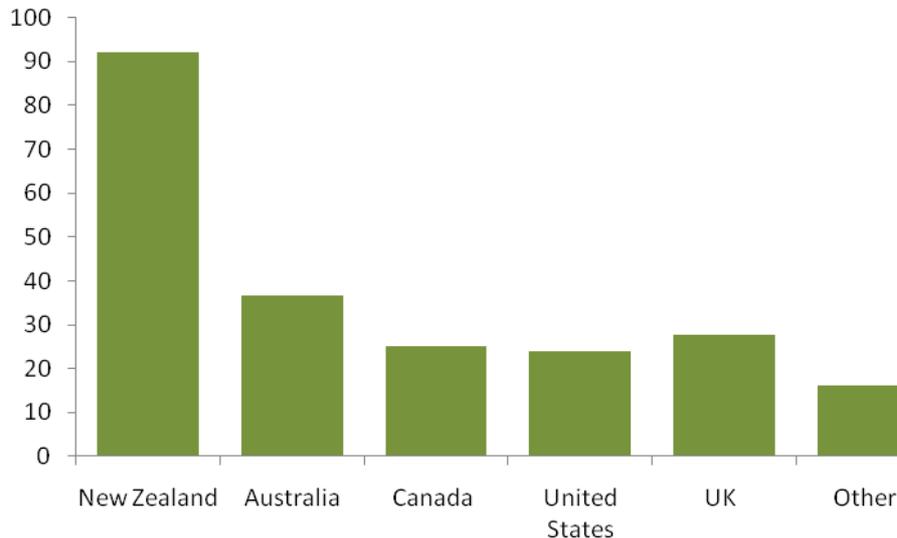


Figure 23. Countries searched as a possible study destination, current students.

By the time parents or students come to look at school websites, many have received prior information (see Figures 2 and 3 above) that predisposes them to New Zealand schools, and sometimes to specific schools.

As part of the study, thirty eight websites of schools in other countries were evaluated using a shortened version of the Gorski tool. The countries included in this study are the United States, Australia and Canada. The UK was not included because British schools do not market to international students in the same way as the other countries reviewed here.

A feature of US school websites is their local focus, with a tendency to concentrate on advertising school events and publishing online school magazines than on providing information about the schools. Those which provided information for international students generally gave a brief paragraph on who to contact. There was little information on accommodation, location and other relevant information. Most schools did list fees and an email contact for further advice. Links to outside organisations were generally not offered. The sites are attractive rather than informative.

Australian sites provide good information about the schools and what they offer including the facilities, English as a second language and location. The school websites were generally easy to find through search engines and education sites. They were well-designed with fast and effective links. Some had official social networking membership.

The Australian sites often used beautiful images of Australian scenery being enjoyed by international students to engage interest. There was often more emphasis on what was available outside than in, in relation to images and descriptions. They were well

presented and provided links to relevant organisations but very few used student stories or showed the quality of work undertaken with international students.
The Canadian sites were easy to find via education sites, social networking sites and search engines.  The best sites were good quality and fast loading. Links to outside organisations and information on how to contact the school were thorough.

Overall the websites were well designed and easy to navigate and international students was a core link.  Translation was also often offered using Google translation tools.
The Canadian sites captured international student interest with core links, translation tools and clever use of images.  As with Australia the sites used images and descriptions of the surrounding countryside to good effect. The sites were information rich and offered links to relevant organisations.  Student voices were used in a few sites to encourage trust.

## SUMMARY

Overall the Canadian sites scored best, followed by the Australian sites and then the American sites. In the United States, the focus of existing programmes appears to be on annual exchange rather than a full education.  For the size of the country, then, there were relatively few international students, reflecting the barriers to enrolment there (despite the obvious attractions of study in the US, especially in terms of future immigration).

Looking at the overall assessment scores of Australia and Canada, New Zealand's scores were slightly below those of Canada overall but similar to those of Australia. All three countries tend to rely on high quality images, a focus on trust and credibility, quality and relevance, although Canada had the edge in terms of multiculturalism and accessibility.

This analysis shows that New Zealand school websites are not lagging behind those of Australia or the United States, and need to improve  accessibility, interactivity and engagement to tie with Canada.  To put it another way, the New Zealand websites are of good quality but very standard in terms of design and use of engagement tools, in comparison with other countries.  There is space for improvement in these sites, to make them outstanding and up to date with current technologies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It should be noted that the main factors that influence search engine position are the existence of relevant tags, excellent keywords and the number of searches for the school and some software that can enhance search results.

It is recommended that all schools develop a policy for the use of social networking sites that encompasses formal and informal use, strategic development of visibility on such sites and policies around surveillance and response. All schools should have, at least, a formal Facebook site that links to their website, Wikipedia entries, and school activities, that is updated regularly.

# 6. EFFECTIVE USE OF THE INTERNET – A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

There are four key findings that inform this final chapter.  The first is that, for our size, New Zealand has the highest proportion of international students in our schools in the English-speaking world.  The second is that New Zealand school websites rank well in terms of website marketing quality, compared to other countries. The third is that, despite this, there are a range of barriers that prevent schools getting the web services they desire.  Finally, technology to enable the more integrated, interactive and intelligent websites that schools desire, and that will lead to a range of new approaches to international markets, is available, and schools need to be able to take advantage of them.

This final chapter considers three elements that can be used to enhance the marketing of schools to international students.  The first is the development of Alumni strategies through websites, that provide a place where past students can keep in touch and support the present aspirations of their old school. The second is collecting, storing and using information from prospective students to convert enquiries into enrolments. Finally, a range of options are considered for the use of websites to share information with prospective students, agents and others.

## ALUMNI STRATEGIES

Alumni are former pupils of education establishments.  In New Zealand, alumni are also referred to as 'Old Boys' and 'Old Girls'.   Overseas studies have shown that former international students are a significant influence on prospective student's decision to attend that school (Arambewela & Hall, 2008). International alumni are potentially a very effective recruitment tool.  A school's image and prestige are big factors when students are choosing a school and a strong international presence of alumni helps the school's status.

Most of the reasons given in current student and parent surveys for choosing a particular school had to do with specific school and regional characteristics. But a number also mentioned factors such as exam results, university preparation and options for future careers as reasons to enrol at a school. In either case, having an active Alumni space on school websites and social networking sites can play a role in the marketing of the school, as well as enhancing the school community more generally.

Having Alumni sections on school websites is not very common in New Zealand, but is increasingly so in Australia and Canada.  In the United States, Alumni Associations are an integral part of schools and often play a prominent role on school websites.

Establishing an online presence for alumni and maintaining good contact with international alumni is becoming an essential marketing and branding tool (Ruby, 2009). In 2002, a survey of international students found that they ranked alumni as one of the key factors in their decision making.  It has been argued that alumni based in students' home countries is the most important promotional tool to attract international students (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003).

A Google search for alumni pages on school websites turned up a small number of secondary schools with such sites.  Five of these were analysed for their content. The most comprehensive of the five had a separate alumni website. The content reads as follows:

**About**
[Name] School Alumni:  Information about the alumni activities with links to further information and registration forms. The objectives of the alumni are given and an invitation to all former students to register. Documents are available for download including membership application, registration of details and alumni scholarship forms for the children of alumni.

**Committee:** List of committee members.

**Constitution/Rules:** The constitution and rules are available for download via PDF.

**Membership Application:** Details eligibility, cost and benefits of being Alumni.
A downloadable application form is provided along with contact details.
Alumni Scholarship:  Provides information on a scholarship offered to children of lifetime members.

**News and Events:**
News:  Articles about alumni events and projects going back to May 2007.
Upcoming Events:  Notices on AGMs and other events.
Past Events:  Reports and photographs of past alumni events.

**Projects:**
Current:  Details about current projects.
Completed:  Details about completed projects.

**Members:**
Profiles:  Brief biographies and images of notable alumni members.
Memories:  Submitted stories from past students about their school days.

**Contact Us:**  Contact can be made by filling in an online form.

The difficulty with such sites is that they require updates on a regular basis and people to provide and add content.  Some of the sites looked a little sparse, with empty pages and dated material.  Part of the reason is the static mode of presentation of most of these sites.  A more dynamic approach, involving community discussions, class reunion options, blogs and so on would be much more effective. Probably the best way that schools can keep their alumni pages up to date and looking good is to get an enthusiastic former student to take on the work.

In the search for Alumni pages it was noted that some are password protected while others are open.  From a marketing perspective, open sites are best because prospective students would be free to browse them and decide whether they want to be part of the school's community. If the site includes a blog or online chat forum, that part of the site at least may need to be password-protected.

# DEVELOPING DATABASES

The schools in this study collect a lot of information about prospective students but, in general, do not use the data for marketing (or any other) purposes. In order to effectively use this data, schools need three things: a policy on data use and marketing; high quality data capture techniques; and an administrative system capable of using the data according to the policy.

A result of not having policies is that school staff have not thought through any uses that the data might have in assisting with marketing, with the result that most of the time no follow-up was done at all.

As a result of such concerns, not only is there no 'hard sell' by schools, but there is mostly no contact at all – even a brief follow-up asking whether the school might provide any further information.

Most school websites have content management systems that are already set up to collect and store information (or can easily be set up), from basic usage information through Google analytics and other programmes, but it is not well-used.

Content management systems invariably have the ability to develop, display and collect information from forms based on school databases.  This data can be fed back to Excel or Access on the school desktop, and might look something like this (the datasheet below is made up – a real one might include country of origin and possibly other information as well):

| Date | From | Name | Task | Topic | Status | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17/03/10 | illy.lindber@web.de | Illya | Download document | | Poss. Student | Nil |
| 19/03/10 | blackroom2008@hotmail.com | Dorcas | Enquiry | Fees | Poss. Parent | What are your fees for 2011? |
| 14/04/10 | linyi@hanmail.net | Lin | Enquiry | Dates | Current student | When does term 2 start? |
| 15/04/10 | zinzin23@naver.com | Susie | Browsing | | Poss. Student | Do you have a website in Korean? |
| 21/04/10 | julia3156@hotmail.com | Julia | Download document | | Poss. Parent | Nil |
| 29/04/10 | hans.joachim@web.de | Hans | Download document | | Poss. Student | Nil |
| 1/05/10 | noobur@msn.cpm | Xin Lui | Enquiry | | Agent | Please contact me re a student |
| 3/05/10 | jrenhi@live.jp | Hiren | Enquiry | Subject | Poss. Student | How many international students do you have? |

Table 5. Mock-up of Excel data summary from website.

There is significant scope for using this information to further market the school through engaging and enlarging the school's contacts.  There is no need for the 'hard sell' feared by at least one principal.  An email in the person's first language, thanking them for visiting the website and asking if they would like any further information, or to be put on an e-newsletter list, is simply good practice.

At a more sophisticated level, the database provides the opportunity to send targeted marketing messages to specific groups, whether it be nations, language communities,

graduates, agents or any other group.  The message may be as simple as 'Poneke High School now has its international pages available in Korean' (to Korean addresses), or 'Otautahi College can now deliver information on the progress of students directly to parents through a website login'.

Other options include online newsletters in the appropriate language, calendars of events (including in the person's home country) and other relevant materials.

## SHARING OF INFORMATION IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Both of the issues considered so far in this chapter are of a capacity-building nature.  The final one is even more so.  Through their content management systems, schools have the opportunity to significantly broaden their modes of communication and access.

As noted above, many students have set up 'informal' Facebook pages to share information about schools.  The problem with these is that they are outside the control of schools and those on the site can say whatever they like (within the law). While there is risk of poor outcomes in most internet options that provide for two-way interaction, there are ways to mitigate the risk, through password protection, oversight processes and possibly limiting input. The possibilities of an official Facebook page are considered above.

The approaches considered here might take place on the school's website, in chat rooms or other less formal sites around the internet. The main aim of such approaches would be to provide an informative, interactive and accessible method of communication that both enhances and showcases the culture, values and achievements of the school community. A number of possible outcomes may emerge from such initiatives, including such things as mentoring and support from former students to current students, sites dedicated to current, former and prospective international students and places where students can tell their 'stories' (a testimonial approach) and discuss their experiences with others.

The marketing effect of such initiatives would be significant, providing a multi-faceted view of the school community, but marketing is only one of several potential effects of an information-sharing approach.

How might it work?  All the content management systems listed in Table 3 have the functionality to host discussion/forum options, and there are a number of free blog programs (such as Google's Blogger) that can be embedded on or linked to websites. Another option is chat rooms, which are hosted at a specified place (URL) on the internet. Again there are numerous free options.

To take a simple option.  The menu on the international page of a school's website might include an item entitled 'International students speak'.  On that page it might read: 'What is it like to be an international student at [Name] College? Read about our students' experiences and talk to them online' (this may be written in a number of languages). Then it will have photo, nationality and name of students from different countries (around 12, to give a range of options).

A prospective student from China may click on a link to a Chinese student, and a new page will come up (in either English or Chinese – a drop down box will select language options) where the student has written a story about her interests and her life in a New Zealand school.  Beneath this there will be options to ask the student a question, or simply chat about New Zealand or the school. The student will moderate her own page and answer any questions (working with the international department). Most CM systems reviewed here contain translation packs to aid in language to language translation.

Many schools already have student 'stories' embedded on their websites.  The notion that prospective students can actually engage with those students simply takes that idea one step further, enabled by modern technologies.

## CONCLUSION

In the case studies, a number of school expressed interest in a wide range of developments, including those allowing for interaction on the website, sharing of information, live chat and other initiatives.  Some also expressed their frustration that their aspirations were difficult to attain.

Modern content management systems, and numerous free add-ons available from mainstream suppliers, provide the potential for most of these aspirations to be met. Tailoring a CMS to a specific website still requires significant work (although websites such as www.joomla.org appear to be geared at least partially to a 'do it yourself' approach).  The advantage in using one of these systems is that the school can know in advance what functions are available, and work with the IT person to achieve their desired outcomes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools should consider developing an Alumni section on their website, although its scope and complexity will depend on other factors, such as existence of a thriving network or association of Alumni. A potential middle ground might be the development of a network of former international students only, who may wish to keep in touch via the website.

Schools need to develop policies, procedures and administrative systems around the collection and use of data from internet enquiries, to improve responsiveness and market opportunities.

There are numerous opportunities on websites and throughout the internet to engage in quality discussions, testimonials and chat, in order to encourage international student enrolments, and schools should investigate these.

# APPENDIX 1. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Who is responsible for policy and strategy around the development of the website in relation to international students?

What research have you done, if any, to understand how to attract international student enrolments through your website?

Is the website intended as a marketing tool to attract international students?

What messages is the website intended to present to prospective international students, agents and others?

How, if at all, do you measure the success of your website in attracting international students?

What future plans, if any, do you have around internet marketing and website development?

What kind of content management system is used for the website?

Who plans changes, additions and alterations to the website?

Who makes the changes?

What constraints are there in further development (especially major changes) of the website relating to international student marketing? *Constraints may include lack of vision around how a website may look, lack of expertise in the school, cost, web-hosting shortcomings, lack of time and so on.*

What systems do you use to collect information provided by people who make enquiries through the website?

How, if at all, do you use that information?

When you think about using your website to attract enrolments, which groups are you actually talking to (parents, students, agents, certain countries and so on)?

Looking at your website, do you think that it is attractive to those groups?  Why/ why not?

Do you think the internet is becoming more or less important in terms of marketing to international students?

How important do you think the website is as part of your overall marketing strategy for international students?

Do you use social networking sites such as Facebook, Bebo or Twitter as tools to market your school internationally?

Apart from your own website, what work do you do to expand your internet presence?

What work would you like to do, if any, to expand your internet presence?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about website marketing to international students?

# APPENDIX 2. MODIFIED GORSKI SCALE OF WEBSITE CHARACTERISTICS

| | |
|---|---|
| Quality of information provided on main school website | About the school culture and values |
| | About school academic programmes, including assessment |
| | About Arts , Music, Drama and other artistic programmes |
| | About support services for students |
| | About the city or region, local facilities and special facilities (e.g. sport, skiing and similar) |
| | Level of welcome on main site to international students |
| | Language options on main site |
| Quality of information provided on school's international web pages/site | About the school culture and values |
| | About academic programmes, including assessment |
| | About English language programmes for international students |
| | About Music, Drama, Arts and other artistic programmes |
| | About support services for international students |
| | About accommodation options |
| | About the city or region, including special facilities |
| | How welcoming is the international sites/pages |
| | Pages available in students' home languages |
| | More detailed information available via PDFs etc. |
| Relevance and appropriateness of the overall website | Main website home page |
| | Main website curriculum and assessment information |
| | Web medium |
| | Target age group |
| | Mission and scope |
| | Timely content and frequent upgrades |
| | Graphic images |
| Relevance and appropriateness of international student pages/site | Home page |
| | Scope of information provided and available |
| | Location and accommodation |
| | Forms and further details |
| | Timely content |
| | Graphic images |

| | |
|---|---|
| Accessibility and links | Accessible via search engines |
| | Accessible via education organisation links |
| | Accessible via social networking sites |
| | Free of obvious coding bugs |
| | Speed of loading |
| | Passive contact details |
| | Active contact details |
| | Accessibility re disability |
| | Language accessibility |
| | Links to international student pages/ website |
| | Links to other organisations |
| | Links to forms |
| Accessibility of international student pages/site | Direct access via search engines |
| | Direct access via other links (agent or education website) |
| | Accessible via social networking sites |
| | Accessible for people with disabilities |
| | Language |
| | Good links from main school website |
| | Links to other organisations (e.g. immigration) |
| | Links to forms |
| | Clear contact information for those having questions about the enrolment of international students |
| Overall website/s | Site is intuitive (no need to look at site map) |
| | Amount of scrolling and number of clicks |
| | Simple and obvious (clear progression etc) |
| | Transition tools |
| | Navigation bars |
| | Language instructions |
| | Evident importance of international student sections of site as shown through system of navigation (central or afterthought) |
| | Navigable links |
| Engagement | The site is designed to capture the interest of potential international students and families |
| | The international student experience is treated as a core part of the overall school |
| | Core information in students' first language |
| | Tone of information |
| | Images and videos |
| Interactive technology | Prospective students/families able to interact with the site to gain information |
| | Interactive technology plays core role in site |
| | Impression that interaction gives about interest of school in student/ family |

| | |
|---|---|
| Customer service | The school website shows interest in enrolling prospective students |
| | High quality information about enrolment, fees and other relevant information is available on the website |
| | Information is available in the student's first language |
| | There is a message of welcome |
| | Blogs, case studies and other information about current international students is available |
| | The main site addresses international students |
| | The student pages/site in welcoming and informative |
| | The overall impression is that international students are central to the school community |
| School website | Evidence of multiculturalism on the home page |
| | Images |
| | Staff |
| | Facilities |
| | Curriculum |
| | Arts and culture |
| | Other |
| | Links to international student pages are clear and central and express the desire for multicultural engagement |
| International student pages/site | International 'home' page - engagement at cultural level |
| | Images - use of diverse styles |
| | Staff |
| | Facilities |
| | Curriculum |
| | English language course options |
| | Arts and culture |
| | Other |
| | Links to resources and information |
| Reputation | How does the site present the reputation of the school? |
| | How does the site present the quality of the school's work with international students? |
| | Is the information provided on the website credible, or is there a credibility gap? |
| | Presence of factors that encourage trust, including links with reputable bodies |
| | Voices/ writings that encourage trust and enhance reputation |

# APPENDIX 3. SURVEYS

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY

*This survey will take about five minutes, and will help New Zealand schools provide better information.*

Please select the language that you would like to proceed in:
English
Chinese
Japanese
Korean

Are you a...
☐ International student
☐ Caregiver of an international student

Which country are you from?
[ ]

What is your first language?
[ ]

Where did you get your information about New Zealand schools?

☐ An agent
☐ School websites
☐ The internet
☐ Friends or family
☐ TV, newspapers or magazines

What source of information was most important in your decision to enrol in a New Zealand school?
[ ]

Did you use search engines (e.g. Google) to look for New Zealand schools?
○ Yes
○ No

Which search engines did you use?
[ ]

Which specific countries or regions did you search online when looking for schools?

☐ New Zealand
☐ Australia
☐ United States
☐ United Kingdom

☐ Canada
☐ other

Please list any search terms you used to find the school you wanted.

[          ]

Did you or your family browse websites of New Zealand schools?
○ Yes
○ No

Please list any school websites that offered the most useful information.

[          ]

How many New Zealand school websites did you look at?
☐ 1-5
☐ 6-10
☐ 11-20
☐ 21+

Did any network, connection or internet problems make it difficult for you to browse these websites?
○ Yes
○ No

If yes, please explain what network or internet problems you had in browsing the school websites.

[          ]

What country were you in when you did these searches?

[          ]

Overall, were the New Zealand school websites

○ Difficult to understand
○ Quite easy to understand
○ Very easy to understand

Did the websites have information in your native language?

○ Yes
○ No
○ Some

Rank the following website features from 1-5 on the basis of how helpful they were to you in choosing a New Zealand school. 1 = not helpful at all, 5 = very helpful.

|                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pictures and videos                  | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about learning English    | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about school subjects     | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Information about Music, Drama, Dance and the Arts | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Support for international students | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about accommodation options | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about fees and costs | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about sports and outdoor activities | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about the city or region | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Please explain in a few words why you chose your current school.

## PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS' SURVEY

During 2009 you looked at one or more websites of New Zealand schools. Please complete this brief survey to help schools provide better information to international families and students.

Please select your preferred language:
English
Chinese
Korean
Japanese

Are you a...
○ School student
○ Parent
○ Agent
○ Other, please specify:

Which country are you from?
○ China
○ Korea
○ Japan
○ Germany
○ United Kingdom
○ Canada
○ Other, please specify:

What is your first language?
○ 中国人
○ 한국
○ 日本人〔日本語〕
○ Deutsch
○ Le français

○ Español

○ Other, please specify: [                    ]

How did you first find out that New Zealand was an overseas study destination you could consider?

○ An agent
○ The internet or websites
○ Social networking sites
○ TV, newspaper or other media
○ Friends and family
○ Other, please specify: [                    ]

Which countries were you searching for as a possible study destination?

☐ New Zealand
☐ Australia
☐ United States
☐ Canada
☐ England
☐ Other, please specify: [                    ]

What search engines did you use to find New Zealand schools?

☐ Google
☐ Yahoo
☐ Bing
☐ Other, please specify: [                    ]

What social networking sites did you look at to find New Zealand schools?

☐ Facebook
☐ Bebo
☐ MySpace
☐ Hi5
☐ Twitter
☐ Orkut
☐ StudyVZ
☐ QQ
☐ None
☐ Other, please specify: [                    ]

How many New Zealand school websites did you look at?

○ 1-5
○ 6-10
○ 11-20
○ 20 or more

Did any internet problems make it difficult for you to browse these websites?

○ Yes
○ No

What kind of internet problems did you have?

☐ Slow or very slow to load pages
☐ Use of technology not available on your browser
☐ Broken links or missing pages

☐ Other, please specify: [＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿]

Overall, were the New Zealand school websites
○ Difficult to understand
○ Quite easy to understand
○ Easy to understand

Did the websites have information in your first language?
○ Yes
○ No
○ Sometimes

Rank the following website features from 1-5 on the basis of how helpful they were to you when looking at information about a New Zealand school.
1 = not helpful at all, 5 = very helpful.

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pictures and videos | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about learning English | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about school subjects | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about Music, Drama, Dance and the Arts | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Support for international students | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about accommodation options | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about fees and costs | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about sports and outdoor activities | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about the city or region | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Did you contact any New Zealand schools through their websites?
○ Yes
○ No

Did the sites provide a good and simple method to contact the schools?

|  | Yes | No | Sometimes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Online feedback form | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Email address provided | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Onsite Chat function | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Offsite chat function (such as Skype, msn, yahoo messenger) | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Offline contact details (phone, address etc) | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Other | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Did you or a person you were acting on behalf of enrol in a New Zealand school?
○ Yes
○ No

Did you or a person you were acting on behalf of enrol in a school in another country?

○ Yes
○ No

If yes, which country?
○ Australia
○ Canada
○ United States
○ England
○ Other

Looking at the following factors, how do you rate New Zealand school websites compared to those of your chosen country?

|  | Better | About the same | Worse |
|---|---|---|---|
| Easy to understand | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Friendly and approachable | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Interesting | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Shows detailed information | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Relevant | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information available in my first language | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Interactive | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Offers feedback | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Other | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## AGENT SURVEY

We are looking for agent's views on how effective New Zealand school websites are in attracting overseas students.

Which country are you from?
○ China
○ Korea
○ Japan
○ Germany
○ United Kingdom
○ Canada
○ India
○ Other, please specify: [_____]

What is your first language?
○ 中国人
○ 한국
○ 日本人〔日本語〕
○ Deutsch
○ Le français
○ Español
○ Other, please specify: [_____]

What search engines do you use to find New Zealand schools?
☐ Google
☐ Yahoo
☐ Bing
☐ None

☐ Other, please specify: [                    ]

What social networking sites do you look at to find New Zealand schools?
☐ Facebook
☐ Bebo
☐ MySpace
☐ Hi5
☐ Twitter
☐ Orkut
☐ StudyVZ
☐ QQ
☐ None

☐ Other, please specify: [                    ]

How many New Zealand school websites have you looked at?
○ 1-5
○ 6-10
○ 11-20
○ 20 or more

Are there any internet problems that make it difficult for you to browse these websites?
○ Yes
○ No

What kind of internet problems have you experienced?
☐ Slow or very slow to load pages
☐ Use of technology not available on your browser
☐ Broken links or missing pages

☐ Other, please specify: [                    ]

Overall, are the New Zealand school websites you have looked at...
○ Difficult to understand
○ Quite easy to understand
○ Easy to understand

Did the websites have information in the first language of your clients?
○ Yes
○ No
○ Sometimes

Rank the following website features from 1-5 on the basis of how helpful they are when looking at information about a New Zealand school.
1 = not helpful at all, 5 = very helpful.

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pictures and videos | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

|                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Information about learning English                     | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about school subjects                      | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about Music, Drama, Dance and the Arts     | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Support for international students                     | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about accommodation options                | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about fees and costs                       | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about sports and outdoor activities        | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information about the city or region                   | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Have you contacted any New Zealand schools through their websites?
○ Yes
○ No

Did the sites provide a good and simple method to contact the schools?

|                                                          | Yes | No | Sometimes |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|-----------|
| Online feedback form                                     | ○   | ○  | ○         |
| Email address provided                                   | ○   | ○  | ○         |
| Onsite Chat function                                     | ○   | ○  | ○         |
| Offsite chat function (such as Skype, msn, yahoo messenger) | ○ | ○ | ○       |
| Offline contact details (phone, address etc)             | ○   | ○  | ○         |
| Other                                                    | ○   | ○  | ○         |

Have you looked at school websites in other countries?
○ Yes
○ No

If yes, which countries?
☐ Australia
☐ Canada
☐ United States
☐ England
☐ Other

Looking at the following factors, how do you rate New Zealand school websites against the school websites of other countries?

| | Better | About the same | Worse |
|---|---|---|---|
| Easy to understand | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Friendly and approachable | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Interesting | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Shows detailed information | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Relevant | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Information available in my first language | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Interactive | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Offers feedback | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Other | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Are there any comments you would like to make to help us improve New Zealand school websites?

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