



**PROMOTIONAL TOOLS AT SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN THE TSHWANE
METROPOLITAN REGION**

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of Technology: Marketing in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the

Durban University of Technology

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ABSTRACT

Due to the competitive environment, the changes in the higher education landscape and limited financial resources, higher education institutions are forced to evaluate and review their marketing strategies in order to recruit suitably qualified students. This study will examine the impact of the current promotional tools at public higher education institutions in the Tshwane metropolitan region.

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the promotional tools used by public higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region from a student perspective. Furthermore, the study strived to establish whether the demographics of the students played a role regarding the value they attach to choice factors when selecting a higher education institution. Prospective students will benefit from the study because promotional tools were identified to make informed decisions about their institution of choice. The study also identified the effect of the existing promotional tools used as sources of information by students and identified the most appropriate promotional tools to enable proper allocation of the promotional budget.

An empirical study was conducted using a questionnaire adapted from Wiese (2008) study. Likert scale was used to structure questions. Non-probability sampling was used to select first year students from two public institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region. Data was captured into a software package and analysed using SPSS Version 18. Descriptive statistics summarised the results of the research questions, namely; socio demographical profile of respondents, factors influencing students' decision making process, the information sources used by students and the effectiveness of promotional tools.

The results of this study showed that students preferred higher education institutions to use personal communication tools for student recruitment. Interestingly, students rated social media as one of the most important communication methods. Furthermore, emphasis on the core product and specific aspects of the tangible product and augmented product was found. It was also noted that students from diverse backgrounds and provinces used different sources of information during their search for enrolment at a higher education institution.

The study limitations were that the survey was only restricted at two higher education institutions in the Tshwane metropolitan region. It was noted that marketing practitioners at higher education institutions may renew their existing promotional tools (open days and career exhibitions) to gain competitive advantage.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare, that the work represented in this thesis is my own and has not been previously submitted for an award at any higher education institution. The thesis contains no material previously published except where due reference is made.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The challenges represented by the restructuring of higher education through a National Plan for higher education in South Africa and the implementation of the National Qualification Framework have created new opportunities and challenges for tertiary institutions (Jones 2002: 2). The National Higher Education Framework aims to provide students with opportunities such as mobility and easy access to education and training (National plan for higher education 2001: 5). Higher education institutions are now faced with the challenge to respond quickly and decisively to the changes that are happening in the higher education sector. Due to these changes, higher education institutions are faced with the challenges such as competition, a decrease in government funding, an increase in marketing costs, students not paying fees and repositioning their primary product. According to Goff, Patino and Jackson (2004: 10), there is a visible growth in advertisements, promotions, and other promotional mix elements and the challenge is to influence the decision making process effectively. Espinoza, Bradshaw, and Hausman, (2002: 20) also agree that, to respond to the pressures created by the changes in the higher education sector, institutions must make efforts to influence the decision making of suitable prospective students.

The higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region are also going through major changes, and facing many challenges. Van der Merwe (2004: 131) states that the shift from a largely white elite higher education system to a mass education system means major changes in the composition of the student population. Due to the political history of public higher education in the Tshwane Metropolitan region, they are faced with challenges such as transformation, providing access for students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, developing new promotional strategies, addressing the diversity and sustainability of the institution, and, at the same time, maintaining academic excellence. The study aims to determine whether the promotional tools employed by public higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan region have an influence on the

decision making process of 1st year students. A proper assessment of the factors that influence the students' decision making process was made.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Higher education institutions do not operate independently, they depend on the environment for supply of students and financial resources (Maringe 2005: 566). Research on higher education institutions in Tshwane has been conducted by Ferreira (2003) A framework for continuous improvement in the South African education sector and Wiese (2008) A higher education marketing perspective on choice factors and information sources considered by South Africa's first year University students. According to Bonnema (2007: 20), little is known about prospective students' information needs when deciding which institution to attend. Due to the competitive environment, the changes in the higher education landscape and limited financial resources, higher education institutions are forced to evaluate and review their marketing strategies in order to attract suitable qualified students.

Based on the views presented in the above paragraph, the research problem can be formulated as follows:

The higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region have not as yet identified promotional tools to serve as sources of information to prospective students to consult when searching for information about a higher education institution to enrol at. The higher education institutions have also not explored the role played by demographics of the target in terms of promotional tools. The role played by demographics in identifying choice factors during the decision making process is also not clear. Furthermore, little is known about the role played by university choice factors in influencing the students' decision of enrolling at a particular higher education institution.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The main objective of this study is:

To evaluate the promotional tools used by public higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region from a student perspective.

Sub-objectives include:

- To determine factors that influence students' decision making process when choosing an institution; and
- To determine the role of demographics in the decision making process.

1.4 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Higher education institutions are expected to determine how current and prospective students make their decisions, identify the factors they consider, how they weigh the relative value of these factors and the influences that operate in the process. When marketing higher education institutions, it is important to determine the elements of the promotional mix that create a competitive advantage.

The study therefore focused on:

- The factors that prospective students consider when choosing a higher education institution.
- How students make decisions when choosing an institution to enrol at. The public higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan still use English and Afrikaans as their medium of instruction.
- An investigation whether students with diverse home languages differ regarding the value they attach to choice factors when selecting a higher education institution. KwaZulu-Natal higher education institutions could not be used for this study as they only use English as the medium of instruction. Marketers at higher education institutions can use the findings of this study to develop market oriented strategies to enhance the student decision making process. Students will also benefit from the study because promotional tools will be formulated to enable them to make informed decisions about their institution of choice.
- The effect of the existing promotional tools that were used as sources of information by students and identified the most appropriate promotional tools to enable proper allocation of the promotional budget. Furthermore, the study will also contribute to higher education institutional marketing theory and knowledge derived from previous research findings.

The rationale for this investigation evolved from a political interest, in terms of addressing the imbalances of the past in the higher education sector. The former race oriented institutions had to re-brand and develop marketing strategies to recruit students from previously disadvantaged areas. The importance for the study is its practical usefulness for identifying promotional tools and sources of information that are constructive for student recruitment at higher education institutions.

1.5 DELIMITATIONS

The study was limited to Tshwane Metropolitan Regional public higher education institutions, namely, University of Pretoria and Tshwane University of Technology. The study focused on first year students in three faculties, namely, engineering, science and management sciences in each institution. A sample from three faculties in each institution allowed the study to be more feasible for administering the research instrument. The literature review focused on the background of South Africa's higher education sector, promotional tools employed by public higher education institutions, and the decision making process of prospective students.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of this study focused on developing a theoretical framework for the changing higher education environment. Previous studies on the transformation of higher education in South Africa were utilized as background information for this study. Furthermore, the literature review also highlighted the marketing landscape of higher education institutions and the consumer decision making process.

1.6.1 Promotional strategies of higher education institutions

Pick (2006: 229) observed that higher education institutions are competing in a global higher education market. Furthermore, combinations of government policies and broader social and economic events have created a complicated terrain through which higher education institutions must now develop a plan of action. Higher education institutions have the responsibility to establish how current and prospective students make their decisions, identify the factors they consider, how they weigh the relative importance of these factors and the influence that operates in the process. Higher education institutions

need to explore the elements of a promotional mix which offer opportunities for effective marketing of higher education institutions. According to Jones (2002: 54), promotion mix consists of all the vehicles that communicate to customers about products and services. It is crucial for higher education institutions to communicate in various ways to ensure that the message is effectively received by the target market (Haikins 2006: 17). Haikins further states that promotional tools could be used in support of one another. The components of a promotional mix include advertising, personal selling, public relations, sales promotion and direct marketing. Jones (2002) and Haikins (2006), describe exhibitions, open days, advertising, public relations and word of mouth as the most relevant promotional tools for marketing higher education institutions. For open days and exhibitions, faculties design promotional material to market their courses to their target audience.

Haikins (2006: 4) suggests that higher education institutions must embrace the marketing idea that considers the heterogeneity of higher education programmes and products that provide the students with the variety of choices in the competitive sector. According to Hoyt and Brown (2003: 4), for higher education institutions to stay competitive, they must execute a market-oriented framework which consists of the following:

- Establish its image or market position;
- Identify competitors;
- Determine the needs of various target market segments;
- Develop a promotional plan for promoting their educational offerings;
- Factors such as politics, social, technology, economic and competition create opportunities and threats for higher education environment.

Literature shows how important it is for higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region to understand how the macro-environment can affect the higher education sector and conduct SWOT analysis to determine their position in the market. Furthermore, the literature suggests that these higher education institutions should further segment their target market in order to identify subgroups that may exist within the target market.

1.6.2 Factors students consider when selecting an institution of choice

According to Jones (2002: 85), consumers are mostly influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological characteristics. Hoyte and Brown (2003) utilized twenty-two previous studies to identify factors considered by students when choosing a higher education institution. They identified the following factors: as the most important factors, academic reputation, location, and quality of education, availability of programmes, quality of the faculty, cost, reputable programmes, financial aid and job outcomes. The other important factors were: variety of courses offered, size of the institution, admission requirements surrounding community, quality of social life, class size, extracurricular programmes, attractiveness of campus facilities, friendly/ personal service, and admission to graduate school.

A South African study by Cosser and Du Toit (2002: 95) found that reputation, whether the reputation of the institution or study programme, as the most influence for the choice of the institution. The results of the study also indicated that the provision of world class sporting facilities have a greater influence on choice than scholarships, paternal study, fees or friends' recommendation. A study conducted by Bonemma (2006) also identifies sport, study programmes, student life and money as important factors that students consider when selecting an institution. Results obtained by the study conducted by Jones (2002: 144) show family, career exhibitions and friends as important factors that students consider when selecting a higher education institution.

Based on the above paragraph the higher education target market is concerned with the core product and have certain expectations of the product and are concerned with the augmented aspects of the product. Therefore, higher education institution promotional strategies may need to incorporate influential factors that students consider when choosing the higher education institution to enrol at.

1.6.3 Promotional tools and recruitment strategies at Higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan Area

Accessibility to all has created a diverse student population in higher education. According to Tshwane University of Technology attracting academic achievers as prospective students is crucial for higher education institutions. Furthermore, the higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region also aim to attract prospective students who excel in

cultural, social and on the sport fields. For recruitment purposes, the Tshwane Metropolitan Regions public higher education institutions use the following promotional tools:

- Campus visits;
- Consultations with learners and parents;
- Career exhibitions; and
- Annual open day.

Other marketing initiatives at public higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region take place in the form of mass media communication (television and radio advertisements, publications, billboards, and newspaper advertisements). The higher education institutions must choose the elements of a promotional mix that will reach their target audience and also appeal to prospective students. The elements of a promotional mix should be able to provide the information required by prospective students and market the value of their products to prospective students. The marketing officers of higher education institutions must also understand the students' decision making process and their perception of benefits and cost.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Research Design

This quantitative study is aimed at collecting data through questionnaires, interviews, normative surveys, job analysis and developmental studies (Torriola 2006: 8). This study used the survey methodology approach to collect data from a large number of respondents within a limited time frame. This design had a descriptive focus, as the main aim of the study was to find out about the use of promotional tools at higher education institutions and the decision making process of students. The study is a cross sectional study as participants were surveyed on one occasion. The advantage of cross section research is that data can be obtained from various people in a relatively short period of time (Burns and Bush 2006: 125).

1.7.2 Target Population

According to Cooper and Schindler (2006: 146 & 762), population is the overall number of elements /units of analysis from which the researcher aspire to draw conclusions. The study focused at two public higher education institutions in the Tshwane metropolitan, namely: Tshwane University of Technology and the University of Pretoria. The target population was first year students in the faculty of Science, Engineering, and Management Sciences who enrolled at these two institutions in January 2010. The study surveyed 215 students at Tshwane University of Technology and the University of Pretoria. According to Sekaran (2003: 294), if the size of the population is very large, a sample size of 384 should be adequate to support research findings.

1.7.3 Sampling Method

There are two ways of sampling: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling ensures that each member of the community has a definite chance to be selected. In non-probability sampling, there is no guarantee that each member of the population may have a chance of being included (Diamantopoulo and Schlegelmich 2000: 11-13). According to Welman and Kruger (2001: 62), non-probability sampling is less complicated and more cost effective. Non-probability sampling was used for this study as this sampling method has a particular appeal due to financial and time constraints. Convenience sampling was used for this study. Convenience sampling was applied to all first year students from faculties of Engineering, Science and Management sciences based on their availability. The sample size was determined by practical concerns such as being granted permission to carry out the study, resources in terms of money, time, research assistants, and the number of respondents available in class and is willing to participate. In order to avoid potential bias of using non-probability sampling, the questionnaire was administered at two different higher education institutions at different times (Wiese 2008: 192).

1.7.4 Data Collection

Data was collected using the survey method. According to Torriola (2006: 8) quantitative research is aimed at collecting data through questionnaires, interviews, normative surveys, job analysis and developmental studies. For the purpose of this study, data was collected

using a questionnaire modified from Wiese (2008) to investigate the factors that influence the decision making process of students' when choosing an institution for enrolment. Research assistants were used to administer the questionnaires. The research assistants were provided with information on the subject matter to enable them to clarify any questions that arose from students.

Permission was obtained from the Tshwane University of Technology and the process of obtaining permission from the University of Pretoria delayed the process of data collection. Therefore, the data was collected at AC Devilliers stadium where University of Pretoria students have their sport training sessions. Only respondents from Tshwane University of Technology were surveyed during their lecture periods in all three faculties. First year students from the faculty of Science, Engineering, and Management sciences were asked to complete the questionnaire and return it to the researcher /research assistant.

1.7.5 Data Analysis

Welman and Kruger (2003: 194) state that, after the data has been obtained, the results must be analysed and interpreted. Zikmund and D' Amico (2001: 142) define analysis as the statistical and qualitative consideration of data gathered by research. Data was presented, analyzed and interpreted using the SPSS version 18. Data obtained from the questionnaire was represented in charts, figures and tables. Cross tabulations were used to assess the relationship between variables and factor analysis was also used to identify major factors in the research questions. Other relevant statistical tests, such as inferential statistical analysis, were used to test the research objectives.

1.7.5.1 Validity

Validity is the extent to which a test or instrument measures what it is supposed to measure and that particular measure is free from systematic random errors (Toriola 2006: 32). This means that validity is concerned with the question: are we measuring what we want to measure? According to Hair, Babin, Money, and Samouel, (2003: 303) validity refers to the extent to which conclusions drawn from the experiment are true. The questionnaire used was handed to experts to evaluate whether it is appropriate for the research problem and purpose, namely: face validity. A pilot study of 30 questionnaires was administered to ensure that the questionnaire was suitable and clear. The questionnaire

was designed to be brief and easy so that the questions were understood easily to avoid errors.

1.7.5.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency from one administration to the next by the same participants. Therefore, the results of reliability should produce consistent results when the measurements are repeated. Reliability will be concerned with the consistency, accuracy, and predictability of the results (Toriola 2006: 32). Wiese (2008: 207) states that reliability is a necessity for quality measurement but it is not enough if done alone.

1.8 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: Introduction

This first chapter highlights the background of the research, research problem and question, research objectives, importance of the study and limitations.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The landscape of the higher education sector served as background information for formulating appropriate marketing communication strategies. Higher education has been undergoing through major changes, including the formation of partnerships, increased focus on the global market and a rise in competition. Higher education institutions also face challenges such as financial constraints, return on investment, and broadening access to higher education, mergers, changes in government funding and increased competition (Akoojee and Nkomo 2007). The literature tried to explore the history of the two target higher education institutions.

Chapter 3: Marketing strategies for higher education institutions

This chapter provided an overview of marketing at higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region. The literature also focused on promotional strategies employed by higher education institutions.

Chapter 4: Consumer decision making process

The literature covered the decision making process of prospective students, the evaluation of alternatives, the evaluating criteria and the consumer decision rules.

Chapter 5: Research methodology

This chapter focused on the research methods employed by the researcher and the sampling methods. It also highlighted the procedures of collecting data from the selected higher education institutions (questionnaires). Data collected was analysed and interpreted using the SPSS, version 18.

Chapter 6: Data findings and analysis

Data obtained was represented in charts, figures and tables as part of the analysis. Cross tabulations were also used to assess the relationship between variables. Relevant statistical calculations were also applied to interpret the data obtained.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter provided the conclusions of the study. Recommendations on how to improve the industry in accordance to the findings of the research were also made.

1.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 provided a description of the current research study. The background of the South African Higher Education sector was highlighted, the decision making process of prospective students and the promotional tools used by higher education institutions were also discussed. This chapter also highlighted the importance of higher education institutions to understand their customer needs and wants in order to develop promotional tools that will be appropriate for the target market. Research methodology of the study was also discussed and reasons were offered for choosing a quantitative survey.

Chapter 2 will provide the background of the South African higher education sector. An overview of the effects of the apartheid regime in higher education, formulation of new policies and transformation of the higher education sector will be explored.

CHAPTER 2

THE LANDSCAPE OF SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter two gives a theoretical background on which a suitable research study can be based. This chapter begins by reviewing the South African higher education landscape. The challenges presented by the previous apartheid regime required South African higher education to transform the education system in order to meet the future needs (Department of Education 1997: 6).

2.2 THE SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

The landscape of South African higher education has been going through major restructuring over the years. The National Plan for Higher Education provides a framework for the restructuring of the higher education system to achieve the goals for transformation in the higher education system as outlined in the White Paper (a programme for the transformation of higher education 1997: 3). South Africa's tertiary institution sector has experienced a number of major changes in the past 10 years. Since 2000 and 2004, technikons were gradually transformed to universities of technology and some higher education institutions were merged. The task team appointed by the former Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, was given clear mandate to transform higher education so that it responds to the needs of students of all ages and their intellectual challenges of the 21st century. The task was also expected to share a passionate belief in the crucial importance of higher education to democracy, social justice and the economic and social development of South Africa (Council on Higher Education size and shape Task Team 2000: 25). Furthermore, the landscape of higher education was also aimed at promoting the sharing of resources including academic staff and library resources, eliminating duplication and promoting synergies between disciplines, universities and communities.

The successful implementation of the plan requires institutions to develop new marketing communication strategies (Jones 2002: 2). Higher education institutions are now left with the challenge to respond quickly and decisively to the changes in the higher education

sector. Due to these changes, higher education institutions are confronted with competition, a decrease in government funding, an increase in marketing costs, and non-payment of student fees and changing the ways they traditionally produced and packaged their primary product. Due to restricted financial resources, higher education institutions have to re-evaluate their marketing and recruitment strategies in order to attract the desired first year students. Promotional strategies of these higher education institutions must be designed in a manner that will appeal to heterogeneous markets. According to Goff, Patino and Jackson (2004: 795), there is a visible growth in advertisements, promotions, and other marketing elements and now the challenge is to influence the decision making process effectively. Espinoza, Bradshaw, and Hausman (2002: 20) also confirm that, to respond the pressures created by the changes in the higher education sector, institutions must make efforts to influence the decision making process of suitable prospective students.

The South African higher education plays a crucial role in the development of democracy in many ways. According to the Department of Education (2008: 15) increasing student numbers and improving access to higher education for disadvantaged black people were considered as the key to overcoming apartheid inequalities, creating a stable society, and producing the high level skills needed to drive economic growth. Universities were required to enrol many more students of all race groups and build a student body that more accurately reflected South Africa's demographic make-up. These developments will also foster open and critical intellectual debates that contribute to a vibrant and engaged civil society and increase the opportunity of participating in decision making. The higher education environment has experienced a new education landscape with a change in shape, and shape of higher education institutions (mergers), the change in autonomy and accountability, and the nature of higher education providers (Wiese 2008: 41). The aim of transforming South African higher education landscape was to maximize integration and diversity, and promote equity and quality (Council on Higher Education size and shape Task Team 2000: 13).

The higher education system in South Africa will be moderated and valued by the extent to which it provides greater access and opportunity for a selected group, especially Black African, Coloured, South African women and other socially disadvantaged groups (Council

on Higher Education size and shape task team 2000: 25). According to Pityana (2004: 6), the universities are expected to open doors of learning for all races, in order to develop a student body that more accurately reflected South Africa's demographic profile, and transform campuses and cultures to become less isolating to students from various backgrounds.

The council on Higher Education size and shape task team (2000: 25) reports that some success has been achieved towards the goals of equity and social redress through developments in South African higher education. They reported that, in terms of race and gender, the student body has become more represented since 1994. Table 2.1 indicates the race and gender composition in South African higher education institutions between 1993 and 2005.

Table 2.1 Race and Gender student body

1993	1999	2005
43% of students in Universities and Technikons were females	52% of students in Universities and Technikons were females	
40% students were African and 47% white students in	59% of students in all Universities and Technikons were African and only 29% white	the African share had grown to 61% and the number of white students had decreased to 25%
		Indians and Coloured students had increased to 14%.

Source: Department of Education (2008: 16)

<http://www.ieasa.studysa.org/resources/study-sa/Facts-figures-section.pdf>

In Table 2.1 data shows that South African Higher Education is expanding and transforming. The restructuring and transformation of higher education landscape created an opportunity of different innovative possibilities for a progressive higher education system. However, the new landscape should address the notion of common or shared identity for a South African higher education brand.

2.3 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

The Council on Higher Education size and shape task team identified the following characteristics for South African Public Higher Education:

2.3.1 Multi-Purpose Institutions

Public higher education institutions should offer broad-based higher education in order to achieve the objectives of higher education. Multi-purpose institutions will be able to accommodate newly developing areas of study. The report claims that single purpose institutions generally tend to be expensive and are often unable to subsidize expensive programmes.

2.3.2 The academic and economic viability of institutions

The primary aim is to develop increasing levels of intellectual maturity in learners to give the opportunity to contribute in the development of new knowledge. Academic visibility and multi-purpose institutions require that the students enrolling at public higher education institutions should not be concentrated in a single broad area of study. In South Africa, it has proved effective to differentiate between the following areas of study: Humanities and Social Sciences, Business and Commerce, and Natural sciences, Health Sciences, Engineering and Technology (SET).

2.3.3 Research involvement of institutions

Involvement in research requires highly qualified and competent people, research infrastructure, the quality and availability of post graduate students, and the quality and quantity of research outputs. These requirements pose a challenge for sustaining adequate resources for extensive and high level research capability and involvement at every higher education institution on an efficient and effective basis. With modifications that are sensitive to the conditions of the present South African higher education landscape, key features that will characterize institutions with a mandate must be identified (Council on higher education 2000: 34).

2.4 TRANSFORMATION POLICIES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Department of Education, Higher Education Act (1997:18) views any educational institution providing higher education, whether it's a university, college, university of technology or a subdivision of the three, as role players in higher education. A new political and economic environment has emerged in the higher education landscape. The National Plan for Higher Education was aimed at addressing geo-political imagination of apartheid planners. The plan indicated that inequalities and inefficiencies still plague the higher education system. The higher education terrain has changed as a result of how certain institutions have interpreted the white paper, the nature of responses of higher education institutions and the expansion of the private higher education sector.

Anon (2008) states that the South African Government is setting enrolment, performance, and programme targets for the higher education sector based on national goals and for universities on their capacity. According to Waghid (2003: 91), the primary aim of policy development is to ensure that the higher education system is planned, governed and funded as a single national coordinated system as well as to enhance the transformation of the education system. The restructuring of higher education landscape in South Africa has been influenced by policy development which includes the following: National Commission on Higher Education Report (NHCE 1996), the Education White Paper (EWP 1997), the Council on Higher Education Report (CHE 1997), and the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE 2001).

2.5 MERGERS IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education in South Africa has been characterized by change in size and shape. The landscape of higher education changed when the institutions were merged. According to Wyngaard and Kapp (2004: 185), the National Commission on Higher Education (1996) and the Higher Education Act (1997) became the policy platforms for the development of higher education in South Africa. The former Minister of Education, Kader Asmal (2002), announced the government proposal of restructuring the South African Higher Education sector. The South African government viewed the merger as an important step for restructuring. Three types of institutions were formed, namely: 'Traditional' research

focused universities, universities of technology, and new ‘comprehensive’ universities that combine academic and vocational-oriented education and are aimed at enhancing opportunities and market responsiveness. As a result, the following institutions emerged in the South African Higher Education landscape:

- Universities: eight new universities and three new created merged institutions. These universities offer bachelor degrees, with strong research capacity and large intake of postgraduate students;
- Universities of technology: two of the old technikons and three new institutions were a result of the mergers between technikons. These vocationally-oriented institutions award higher certificates, diplomas, and degrees in technology, and have some post graduate and research capacity; and
- Comprehensive universities: two of the old universities and four established out of mergers between technikons and universities. These are new types of institutions, offering both bachelor and technology qualifications, and focusing on teaching research and postgraduate studies. In Table 2.2 an outline of university types is presented.

Table 2.2 University types

University type	No	University name
Universities	1	University of cape town
	2	University of forthare
	3	University of free state
	4	University of KwaZulu- Natal
	5	University of Limpopo
	6	North-west university
	7	University of Pretoria
	8	Rhodes university
	9	University of Stellenbosch
	10	University of the western cape
	11	University of Witwatersrand
Universities of technology	12	Cape peninsula university of technology
	13	Central university of technology
	14	Durban university of technology
	15	Mangosuthu technikon
	16	Tshwane university of technology
	17	Vaal university of technology
Comprehensive universities	18	University of Johannesburg
	19	Nelson Mandela metropolitan university
	20	university of South Africa
	21	University of Venda for science and technology
	22	Walter Sisulu university of technology and science
National institutes	23	University of Zululand
	24	Mpumalanga institute for higher education
	25	Northern cape institute for higher education

Source: department of Education (2008: 15)

<http://www.ieasa.studysa.org/resources/study-sa/Facts-figures-section .pdf>

The restructuring process created a more effective system to address the challenges and needs of South Africa in the twenty first century. The mergers have created opportunities to address important issues such as differentiation, transformation and enhancing self-governance. Park (2003:6) is of the view that the involvement between the state and higher education institutions are changing due to the expansion of centralized decision-making structures.

The mergers in the higher education sector were influenced by political factors in an attempt to address the imbalances of the past created during the apartheid regime. These former race-orientated institutions in the Tshwane metropolitan had to re-brand and thereafter develop marketing strategies aimed at recruiting students from previously disadvantaged areas as required by South Africa's democratic elected government.

2.6 CHANGING PROFILE OF SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

One of the objectives of the National Plan for Higher Education was to promote equity and maximize access, to redress the inequalities of the past through ensuring that staff and student profiles in higher education progressively reflect the demographic realities of the South African Society (Pityana 2006: 6). Smit and Schonefield (2000: 17-20) describe diversity from an educational perspective, it includes gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, and religion, however, it also focuses on the access and success of students from under-represented racial and ethnic backgrounds. Higher education institutions are expected to accommodate a diverse profile of students (Park 2003: 6).

South African higher education institutions provide for a diverse student body and double medium higher education institutions face particular daunting challenges. Badat (2005) claims that the higher education system from the post-apartheid era was mainly planned to produce white, predominantly male privileged, and black, predominantly female subordination in all spheres of South African society. According to van der Merwe (2004: 131) the shift from a predominantly White elite higher education system to a mass education system means major changes in the composition of student population.

The South African government aims to achieve equitable access to higher education for previously underprivileged students, with different educational backgrounds (Hardman and Ng'ambi 2003). The South African education sector has to provide for different race groups with multi-campus institutions that are multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-lingual. However, English is the primary language of instruction at a few campuses. Higher education institutions should be able to recruit quality first year students based on the requirements of the National Plan. Clearly, all aspects of the higher education sector need to be reviewed and restructured in order to serve the needs of a diverse population and affinity groups which are looking for their services. The challenge for higher education is not only about increasing throughput in terms of numbers and the diversity of its student population but also ensuring appropriate delivery of education (Council on Higher Education size and shape task team 2000: 132).

2.7 CHALLENGES OF LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

Diversity of the higher education sector is also expressed by the multilingual society of South Africa with eleven official languages. Due to political turmoil and economic restraints, Afrikaans and English became the medium of instruction in higher education institutions. Interestingly, there are higher education institutions that still use both English and Afrikaans as media of instruction. This is despite the fact that the language policy for higher education requires multilingualism in all higher education institutions (Ministry of Education 2002: 2).

As a result, in 2002, the Minister of Education released a language policy for higher education (LPHE). The language policy for higher education requires all higher education institutions to acknowledge all eleven official languages in accordance to the constitution. Objectives of the Language Policy for higher education (Ministry of Education 2002: 15-16) include:

- The development, in the medium-term to long-term, of South African languages as mediums of instruction in higher education, alongside English and Afrikaans;
- The development of strategies for promoting proficiency in designated languages of tuition;

- The promotion of the study of foreign languages; and
- The retention and strengthening of South African languages through planning and funding.

The language policy for higher education requires higher education institutions to provide for the linguistic needs of the new, diverse and larger student population (Wiese 2008: 66). A study conducted by Czerniewics and Brown (2005) on higher education students' and academic staff's access to and use of computers in five South African universities found that 39% of the respondents used English as a first language at home and 54% spoke other languages. Another study, conducted at the University of Cape Town, indicates that, on average, 65% of the students utilized in the study indicated that English was their first language while 35% speak the other South African official languages and other international languages (Spigiel, Khotseng, Gxilishe, Kaschula, Van der Mewre, Ramesar, Kapp, Wijzenbeek 2003). Du Toit (2005: 2) is of the view that the increase in English speaking students to historical Afrikaans higher education institutions, as well as a decrease in government funding, is causing a challenge in lecturing in both English and Afrikaans.

Although English is the main medium of instruction at higher education institutions, students who come from previously disadvantaged backgrounds have to first adapt to learning in their second language. Koch and Dornbrack (2008: 346) conducted a case study on the use of language criteria for admission to higher education in South Africa. The study indicated that the implementation of language criterion is biased as it does not take students' backgrounds into consideration. A research carried by Cummins (1996) shows that language and academic accomplishment are closely linked and it is a challenge to adopt an academic language as a second language. Spiegel et al (2003) observed that there was more than 20% difference in throughput rates between English first language students and second language students at the University of Cape Town. Addressing the issue of multilingualism in academic programmes can be extremely difficult for higher educations. This would require lecturers who are fluent in not more than two languages. Therefore, if the student population is diverse, as claimed, using multilingualism in academic programmes would be a challenge. Even the higher education institutions with both English and Afrikaans have to change as this may lead to confusion and frustration amongst the student. Language policy at higher education institutions plays an important role as it is

used as a communication tool for students and prospective students. Using multilingual language may have a positive impact on promotional activities of higher education institutions. To communicate effectively, higher education institutions must strive to establish their target markets' preferred communication language (Wiese 2008: 66).

2.8 CONCLUSION

The changes in the South African Education sector have a major impact on languages used by higher education institutions. The challenges facing the higher education sector rotate around student differences, which include, student diversity, multilingualism in a first language context, and schooling background. Higher education institutions are expected to contribute in the growth of democracy in South Africa. The overall well-being of the country relies on the impact of higher education to the social, cultural, political and economic development of its citizens and language is a crucial tool of communication and it is an attribute that is present in all cultures.

Chapter 3 will include discussion in marketing of higher education, market segmentation and understanding the student customers.

CHAPTER 3

MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter covered the landscape of South African higher education describing the challenges facing the higher education sector and the opportunities that exist within the system were identified. Higher education institutions are expected to meet the requirements of the National Plan on Higher Education. Higher education institutions not only face competition from other public higher education institutions, but there has been an increase in the number of private institutions. An increase in advertisements, promotions and other marketing mix elements is an indication of the growth in higher education institutions (Goff, Patino, and Jackson 2004: 795). This chapter reviews literature on various promotional tools (Advertising, Direct Marketing, Public Relations, Personal selling and Sales Promotion). Furthermore, the chapter will explore the importance of market segmentation and the role of electronic media.

3.2 MARKETING OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

According to Jones (2002: 41), many higher education institutions are utilizing marketing communication tools to offer courses in order to preserve market share. In order for higher education to market themselves effectively, they must know who their customers are, understand the communication process, the elements of the marketing communication mix and the decision making process. Bok (2003: 79-80) points out that strategic marketing is a tool that creates local, national and international marketing opportunities for higher education institutions. According to Kotler and Keller (2006: 6), marketing refers to the analysis of appropriate opportunities, choosing target markets, developing marketing mix and managing the marketing effort. Lamb, Hair, McDaniel and Terblanche (2004: 5) view marketing as a process that focuses on identifying the target markets, researching the needs and wants, matching the organizations' offer and the customer needs, and followed by effectively communicating and selling to the customer. Belch and Belch (2007: 8) maintain that marketing is a function in the organisation aimed at developing and

interacting with customers more than any other business function. In other words, marketing mainly seeks to identify and satisfy customers' needs. It is crucial for marketers to segment the market, select the appropriate target market and develop customer value. Thus, marketing activities are crucial for creating competitive advantage (Doyle 2000: 18).

Hemsely-Brown and Oplatka (2006) explain that for gaining competitive advantage, higher education institutions are applying marketing theories and concepts which have been effective in business. Kotler (2003: 114) states that higher education institutions readily adopted marketing principles. Although many higher education institutions engage in marketing activities, the philosophy of marketing, is made up of three core elements; namely, customer orientation, the total company effort and long-term profitability (Jones 2002: 16). Furthermore, Kotler (2000: 56) states that the implementation of marketing strategy is very critical to ensure that the organisation obtains a competitive advantage. Clearly, higher education institutions are expected to identify the target markets, understand their needs and wants, and communicate with them directly to encourage interaction. In Higher Education the target market has many clients; students, employers and the society (Maringe 2006).

According to Law (2002: 4), the higher education institutions in South Africa are changing their approach from "marketing is promotion" to emphasising on positioning and strategic planning. The targeted customers are the core or centre of the higher education institutions' marketing strategy. Furthermore, Jones (2002: 17) states that institutional stakeholders must understand and support vital enabling marketing strategies. Mzimela (2002: 2) states that the nature of South Africa's political history, which resulted to various socio economic levels of South Africans, has created a market place where student recruitment practitioners create marketing strategies that are equally informed and heterogeneous. Positioning and differentiation strategies at higher education institutions are also important as it provides institutional image and develop their position in the minds of the market.

Kotler and Andean (2003: 461) explain the process of fostering a long-term relationship with students: In the past years, higher education institutions were concerned with enticing students to enrol at their institutions. Now, they realize that these students can be lifetime customers. In future years, former students can be donors of funds and services. Alumni

students are often the right candidates for money making seminars, workshops and advanced degrees that most higher education institutions are currently promoting. Therefore, relationship marketing is crucial for higher education institutions as to foster a good relationship with students and maintain the image and standard of the institution.

3.3 HIGHER EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS

The challenge for higher education institutions is to identify who their customers are before they can satisfy their needs. According to Jones (2002: 18), problems arise when one attempt to identify the customer as there are a number of people who can acquire the benefits. High school students are one of the most vital targets of the marketing communication strategies of marketing higher education providers. Due to this fact, the preparedness and the image among them is an important advantage for every academic institution trying to develop promotional tools for student recruitment. Conway, MacKay, and Yorke (1994: 32) suggest that higher education institutions have four parties as potential customers:

- The government;
- The administrators;
- The academics/ teachers; and
- The learners, their facilities, employers and society.

These authors regard the learners as primary customers, paymasters as secondary customers; that is, local education authorities, employers, parents and society. Wambsganss and Kennet (1995: 39) state that, traditionally, students are viewed as the customers because they pay tuition fees for services offered by the higher education provider.

A study on information needs and source preferences of the target market of higher education institutions in the city of Cape Town established that it is critical for higher education institutions to segment the market to identify the right target market. One of the objectives was to determine the information needs of high school learners when selecting tertiary institutions. Understanding the information needs of the target market will create a competitive advantage for the higher education institution. The role of potential students

as decision makers and consumers of education suggests that students are customers of education and efforts must be focused at satisfying their needs and want (Bonnema 2007).

3.4 MARKET SEGMENTATION AND POSITIONING

Markets are made up of potential buyers that differ in their wants, purchasing power, geographical locations, buying attitudes, and buying practices (Kotler 1994: 264). According to Kotler and Keller (2006: 240), market segmentation is the division of a market to market segment of consumers with similar needs and wants. Market segmentation assists the marketer to identify and profile the distinct groups who may require a different marketing approach due to their diversity. Markets can be segmented based on demographic characteristics, lifestyle characteristics, psychographic characteristics, benefits characteristics and geographic characteristics (Strydom, Jooste and Cant 2000: 107). The adoption of government policies has given higher education institutions the challenge of concentrating on marketing activities. Market segmentation and positioning activities at higher education institutions are undertaken by the strategic unit of the organization. Jones (2002: 51) states that market segmentation is crucial in order to deliver programmes and identify attributes that are essential to the prospective student. Tonks and Farr (1995: 25) state that, in competitive markets with diverse customer requirements, the policy and the practice of segmentation and positioning are obvious manifestations of marketing management in action, through the various languages.

According to Jones (2002: 52), market segmentation helps the higher education institutions to understand the market place, educational offerings, perceptions and attitudes of students, related strategies and the competitive environment. After segmenting the market it is critical for higher education institutions to position their market offerings in a way that is to satisfy the needs of the consumer better than its competitors (Wiese 2008: 87). After segmenting the market, the higher education institutions must develop a unique appeal for the targeted programme to the prospective students' minds and position the brand as satisfying a need of the prospective student. Furthermore, Nicolescu (2009: 36) states that, after identifying the target market, the higher education institution must develop a positioning strategy that will be based on differentiation from its competitors.

Strydom (2004: 77) describes positioning as the position a product occupies in the customer's mind of a specific target market segment. Brand positioning gives the consumer a clear picture about the specific brand and the benefits that are obtainable from the brand. Furthermore, Kotler and Keller (2006: 310) explain positioning as the role played by marketers to instil their product characteristics in the consumer's mind with the aim of maximizing the company's benefits. Duffy (in Hemsely-Brown and Oplatka 2006: 331) identified five main brand positioning dimensions: a university learning environment (includes brilliant staff, facilities and resources); reputations (including brand name, reputation and quality of education); graduate career prospects (including employability of graduates, expected salary and recommendations of graduates by employers); destination image (includes political stability, safety and hospitality) and cultural integration (including cultural diversity and religious freedom). Positioning can be achieved in the consumer's mind through brand symbols, brand marks, logos and other characteristics of the brand. The higher education institutions need to develop marketing strategies that will have long-term effects on the minds of the prospective student. Product positioning will assist the higher education institutions to communicate the benefits of their higher education institution, build the image of the education institution in the consumer's mind, and establish how the product can be differentiated from the competitors' products. Brand positioning may play an effective role in establishing relationship marketing with the prospective student. Enslin (2003: 43) suggests that customers must first identify the benefits of being associated with a particular brand and the brand must meet their needs and wants before it can be successfully positioned in the minds of the consumer. Schuller and Rasticova (2011: 59) claim that diversity, image, identity and brand enhancement are very crucial for attracting prospective students.

3.5 UNDERSTANDING STUDENT CUSTOMERS

With the transformation of South African higher education, it is important for higher education institutions to understand the interests of students and the overall quality of the higher education system. The expectations of prospective students have an influence on them, and their decision making process (National plan for higher education 2001: 28).

Higher education institutions in South Africa should be able to adapt to the changes in the customer mix. It is crucial for higher education institutions to engage in market segmentation and positioning due to the heterogeneous nature of the market (Jones 2002: 21). According to Soutar and Turner (2002: 40), there are four main student segments:

- International students;
- Offshore, and onshore;
- mature age students; and
- High school leavers.

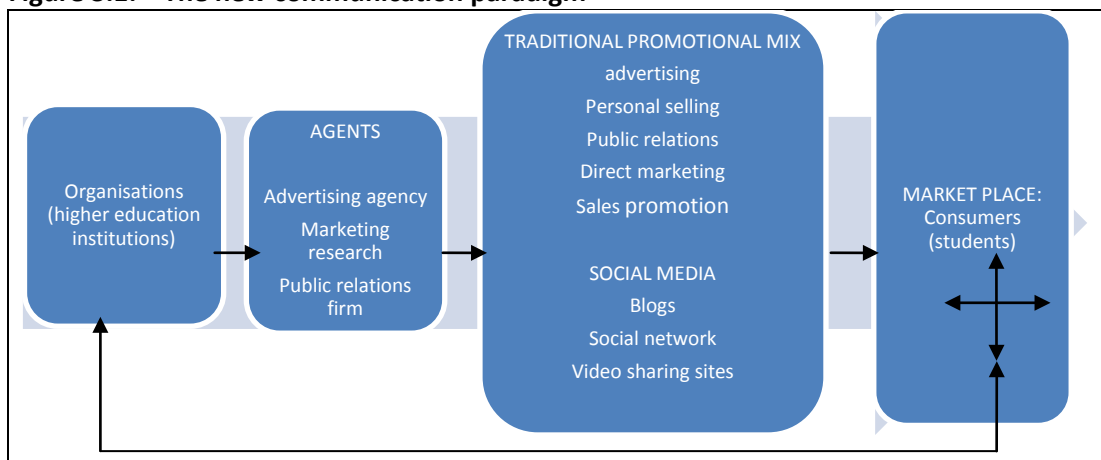
For example, mature-age students usually work full-time and study part-time at higher education institutions. Thus, such students are likely to consider the availability of evening classes as a high priority, whereas students who have entered university straight from high school, tend to work part time, if at all, and study full-time, and are likely to consider prospects as more important.

Kotze and du Plessis (2003: 186) assert that students are not passive receivers of educational services but are also co-producers of education as they play a major role to their personal satisfaction, quality and value perception. In addition, Kotler and Armstrong (1999: 135) state that consumers' purchases are strongly influenced by cultural, social, personal and psychological characteristics. Higher education institutions can create an effective communication method once they have understood the characteristics of the target market (Strydom 2004: 75). According to Kotze and du Plessis (2003: 190), students' perception of quality of teaching is influenced by the role the students play in the delivery of their education. Higher education institutions must understand the kind of information the prospective students need and the sources they prefer to use when searching for the information. Furthermore, demographic analysis is important as it will enable the higher education institution to liaise with the students using proper communication tools. Students play a major role in shaping the quality of education they receive. Hence, higher education institutions should engage the students in strategic planning and decision making roles.

3.6 THE ROLE OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION

All organizations need strategies to accommodate customer needs and changing markets. According to Kotler and Armstrong (1999: 439), integrated marketing communication, in an institutional context, integrates and coordinates many communication channels to deliver a precise, consistent and persuasive message about its organization and its products. Mangold and Faulds (2009) are of the view that marketing communication changed drastically after the emergence of social media. Mangold and Faulds (2009) developed a new communication paradigm as shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: The new communication paradigm



Source: Mangold and Faulds (2009)

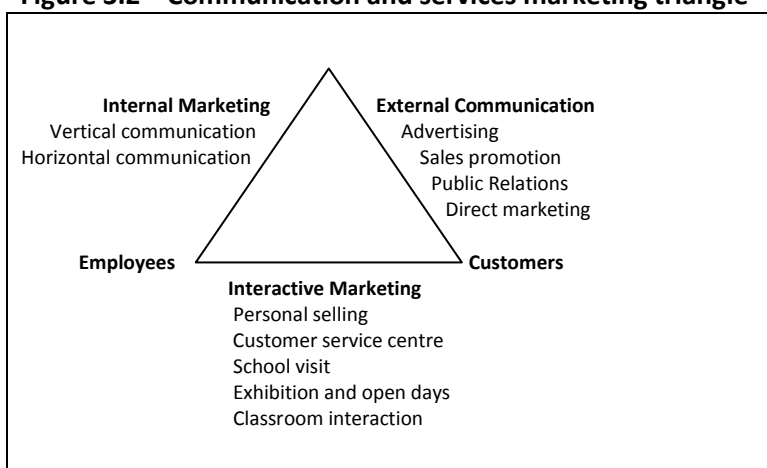
Marketing also plays a crucial role in strategic planning, as the strategic plan guides the marketing function, which must be consistent with other functions in the organization to achieve overall objectives. According to Moulder (2004: 228), integrated marketing communication is about analyzing the desires and priorities of stakeholders and then tailoring marketing and communication programmes that address these needs and priorities. The strategic focus of the marketing communication function is also rooted in customer need satisfaction (Enslin 2003: 23). Furthermore, the relationship between the marketing plan and the strategic plan shows the importance of strategic planning at higher education institutions.

Kitchen and De Pelsmacker (2004: 7) explain that the integrated communication mix is driven by the need for a customer-oriented, and customer driven promotion mix. Higher

education institutions must develop a marketing and communication strategy that will enhance the corporate brand or image of the respective education institution and also inform prospective students about the peculiar characteristics of the institution that will make it attractive to enrolment. The marketing function aims at effectively allocating and coordinating marketing resources and activities. Schuller and Rasticova (2011: 59) suggest that higher education institutions, who aim to address prospective students efficiently, must have a clear knowledge of their target audience. According to Kotler and Fox (2001: 18), an institution markets itself by designing the organization's offerings according to the needs and desires of the target audience as well as using effective pricing, communication and distribution to inform, motivate and service its market. Marketing communication, therefore, requires all personnel involved in student recruitment to understand the higher education institution's marketing strategy and its promise to students (Jones 2002: 45).

Marketing communication helps communicate unique features about the institution, highlight strength and create competitive differentiation. Temple and Shattock (2007) warn that marketing communication applied in other sectors is not directly transferable to higher education. Higher education institutions shall create both internal and external communication channels. According to Goff, Patino and Jackson (2004: 796), communication messages that do not consider the social and economic conditions and consequent information requirements of the market may have little or no success.

Figure 3.2 Communication and services marketing triangle



Source: Zeithaml and Bitner (2000: 403)

Figure 3.2 demonstrates the communication and services marketing for higher education institutions. The marketing communication strategy for higher education institutions should involve all stakeholders: employee, students, alumni, stakeholders and the community (Jones 2002: 45). In addition, there are three components of the services' marketing triangle, namely: internal marketing communication, external marketing communication, and interactive marketing and all should also be included.

3.6.1 Internal marketing communication

According to Law (2002: 3), a service marketing approach emphasizes the importance of internal marketing. Internal marketing refers to the process of planning and executing marketing activities aimed at the creation and development of exchange processes within the organization, with the objective of reaching the organization's objectives in a more efficient and effective way (Lamb, Hair, Mc Daniel & Telblanche 2000: 191). Internal marketing plays a major role in delivering the promises that were made by the respective higher education institutions to the external public. Furthermore, Wiese (2008: 101) explains that all the internal stakeholders responsible for communicating with the external market must deliver the service that is expected by the client. The internal market needs to be empowered with skills development, tools and other necessities to enable them to communicate effectively. An exchange process between the members of the institution is very critical to ensure that internal marketing functions properly. The exchange process can be classified as follows:

- Exchange process between the institution and its employees;
- Exchange process between top management and the departments;
- Exchange process between departments; and
- Exchange process between departments and its employees.

It is crucial for higher education institutions to have an effective internal communication as this will ensure that each and every internal stakeholder is working towards achieving a common goal. This may also increase the effectiveness of word of mouth communication (Lamb et al 2000: 191).

3.6.2 External Marketing Communication

External marketing communication includes the use of promotional tools such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing (Kotler and Keller 2006: 536). These tools will be analysed under the promotion mix (See section 3.7).

3.6.3 Interactive Marketing Communication

Interactive marketing communication involves the messages that the staff relay to students through personal selling, which involve exhibitions, school visits, classroom interaction and customer service centres (Jones 2002: 43). According to Brennan, Felekis, Goldring, (2003: 155), interactive marketing is mostly performed by members of the college who are not marketing specialists and had never received any marketing training before. Interactive marketing will also be scrutinized under the marketing mix (See section 3.7).

3.7 THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION MIX

Hawkins, Best and Coney (2004: 19) describe the elements of a promotion mix or marketing communication mix as advertising, personal selling, public relations, packaging, and other activities that the organization engages in to promote their products. According to Du Plessis, Jooste and Strydom (2001: 341), the elements of a promotion mix should be determined by the information needed by the prospective student, nature of product/service being offered and the capacity of the institution. All the elements of the promotional mix should blend together and be consistent, so that it is not diluted in the consumer's mind (Kitchen, Schultz, Han, and Li 2003: 1420). Furthermore, higher education institutions must be able to identify the communication mix that will meet the needs of the target market and also achieve the institutions objectives. Haikins (2006: 17) also explains that communication tools can be effective when combined with tactics employed to achieve the organization's objectives. Furthermore, Du Plessis and Rousseau (2005: 345) maintain that to ensure the coordination of all the promotional mix elements, the communicators must use the integrated marketing communication (IMC) approach. Usually, one communication tool can be used in support of another (Haikins 2006: 17). It is important to note that communication efforts are aimed to tell, influence and remind the target audience about the benefits of the product/service, in order to influence the

consumer decision making process (Enslin 2003: 23). Belch and Belch (2007: 15) regard the elements of a promotion mix as tools that are utilized in IMC in order to communicate with relevant audiences.

Due to the increase in the media cluster, the target audience is able to control the communication process. Donalson (as cited by Haikins 2006: 17) asserts that information accessed by prospective students play a vital role in identifying the most effective marketing communication methods and media. These sources of information have an effect on the student's final decision based on the credibility and reliability. It is vital for higher education institutions to explore how they can better promote their institutions and identify the appropriate promotion mix to create the desired awareness and generate interest from prospective students. The channel and marketing activities used by higher education institutions are dependent on those institution's marketing objectives and target audience.

3.7.1 Advertising

Advertising is any payment for non-personal communication about an organization's product service or idea by an identified sponsor, using mass media to convince the audience (Arens 2004: 7). With regard to service advertising it is important to focus on using recognizable symbols, trademarks, credible spokesperson and the use of testimonials. On the other hand, Enslin (2003: 24) states that advertising, involves the buying of space and time in mass media to communicate messages to bigger audiences. The increase in higher education competition has resulted in advertising becoming one of the most important tools to create student awareness of higher education institutions. Wells, Moriarty and Burnett (2006: 7) state that advertising plays the role of marketing, communication, economic and societal roles. According to Kitchen and Delsmacker (2004: 33) advertising was the dominant force in marketing communication until media fragmentation, electronic technology and database management were introduced. Customers were selected with greater cost efficiency, resulting in a greater expenditure on below-the-line of the marketing mix.

Designing and advertising programme requires careful planning, to ensure that the right message is conveyed by the appropriate media to reach their target audience. Jones

(2002: 56) states that higher education institutions are investing more in advertising as competition increases. Kitchen and De Pelsmacker (2004: 43) explain that the biggest challenge in advertising is measuring its effectiveness as a separate function or as a component of other marketing communication tools. According to Kotler and Fox (1995: 368), advertising is important for building the image of the institution and for informing the public about specific events or programmes. Higher education institutions use both print and electronic media to advertise their institutions. Print media can be divided into two types (newspapers and magazines). It should provide accurate information that the customer can control as the customer is able to use a preferred type of print media (Blomster and Nyberg 2005: 20). Newspapers are targeted at broader markets, as they carry valid and updated information and have a flexible geographical location. Magazines are targeted to specific readers. In a study conducted by (Redmond 2010: 106) at Durban University of Technology the results affirm that career guidance magazines and newspaper advertisements are the most effective print media used to communicate with prospective students. Therefore, it makes it easy for the higher education institutions to geographically target the market they want to reach through newspapers or magazines.

The listening, reading, viewing and buying habits of the target audience and target marketing segment play a crucial role when choosing a specific advertising media (Strydom 2004: 146). Blomster and Nyberg (2005: 21) maintain that radio has been the most popular electronic media choice, because it provides accurate information, is flexible, and can reach the target market on a regular basis. Respondents in a study conducted by (Redmond 2010: 107) at Durban University of Technology also verify that radio stations broadcasting is the most effective electronic media. Furthermore, radio advertising is a cost effective tool, it becomes interactive when the listener makes enquiries about the broadcasted information. Koekemoer (1998: 144) describes radio as a companion, a friend especially to young people (teenagers). Higher education institutions should send the message in a clear manner. Higher education institutions should also use the opportunities provided by radio talk shows, where the audience can also be given the opportunity to call in and ask questions.

Television delivers a high quality of sound, movement, and colour work at the same time. Television is viewed as the most dynamic and prestigious medium for marketing communication, because it provides audio and visual information to an extensive and

diverse audience and also communicates with a large audience. The use of television advertising as a marketing communication tool can cost the marketer a huge amount of money due to a number of factors involved (Duncan 2002: 400). However, Respondents in Wiese (2008: 308) study rated the usefulness of television advertisement in the last place which means television advertisements are the least effective sources of information. Marketers can also use cinema as a broadcasting medium, especially trying to reach its target market. Another tool of mass advertising is posters, billboards, and hot air balloons. Billboards are also an effective form of mass media communication. Large, colourful billboards with striking images may be strategically placed so that they are noticed by drivers on their way to and from work every day. Media, such as billboards, provide a good reminder to potential customers. Advertising tools can play a crucial role in building the image of the institution, or a certain programme on offer (Strydom 2004: 146).

3.7.2 Public Relations

Koekemoer (2004: 14) defines public relations as a function and practice that is used to enhance an organization's marketing efforts by influencing people's attitudes about the company or products. Furthermore, Arens, Welgold, and Arens (2011: 708) state that public relations is a management function aimed at managing relationships and communications between the organisation and its public to create common goodwill and maintain good reputation of the organisation. Public relations also strive to research the available media, identify the media contacts, brief the contacts and provide them with the institutional information (Jones 2002: 62). Maringe (2005: 569) mentions that public relations office, the external relations office, publicity and publications office, and the press release office are believed to be the pedestals of marketing worldwide. Many higher education institutions spend a substantial amount of money to create a positive public image. Duncan (2002: 537-559) differentiates between corporate public relations and marketing public relations. It is stated that corporate public relations focuses on image and goodwill management activities. The strategic intent is to identify, establish, and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its target market.

Public relations can play a role in higher education institutions as it involves strategic thinking, a close relationship with the overall integrated marketing plan and publicity about the institution (Jones 2002: 61). Most higher education institutions use publications,

newsletters, and annual reports to keep their staff up to date. According to Kotler and Fox (1995: 350), public relations, when used with the other elements of the marketing communication mix, can help provide information about the institution, attracting students and encouraging enrolment. Belch and Belch (2004) assert that the advances in technology have created another form of marketing known as internet/interactive marketing. The internet can be utilized to expand and implement advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, personal selling and public relations strategies. Events such as open days, career exhibitions, conferences can create awareness about the institution and the programmes it offers, enhance the image of the institution, and persuade prospective students to enrol at the institution.

3.7.3 Direct marketing

Koekemoer (2004: 14) defines direct marketing as the use of mail, telephone, fax, email, and other non-personal tools employed to correspond directly with specific consumers to obtain a direct response. According to Du Plessis and Rousseau (2005: 343), direct marketing is an important element within the communicational mix, as it utilizes specific media to target specific consumers. Higher education institutions can utilize mail and telemarketing as a direct marketing tool (Wiese 2008: 104). The advantage of direct marketing is that an organization develops a relationship with the target audience on a named individual basis with the projected message and the response is easily measurable. Objectives of direct marketing are action specific, for instance, a purchase or request for information. According to Enslin (2003: 28), direct marketing medium can later on function as a market place. Hasouneh (2010: 48) states that e-mail direct marketing campaigns analysis show the development of a customer relationship between the business and the client.

3.7.4 Personal selling

According to Lamb (2000: 310), personal selling takes place when an organization communicates with a prospective buyer in an attempt to influence the buyer to make a purchase. Personal selling involves a two-way flow of communication between a prospective buyer and the marketer with the objective to influence the purchase decision. The marketer's messages may be modified to suit the needs of the consumer. Enslin (2003: 26) states that the power of personal selling lies in the ability to tailor the product offering

and communicate an appeal to deliver an instant response to customer feedback. A recent trend in personal selling is the formation of a relationship between the sales-person and the buyer (Kotler and Armstrong 2001: 530).

Koekemoer (2004: 13) states that, in terms of the high cost of personal selling, marketers must ensure that the expense is justified before it can be incorporated into the marketing mix. Services that are highly complex and require demonstration, customization or explanation require personal selling the most (McColl-Kennedy 2003: 250). With regard to higher education institutions, the use of teaching and front line staff can play a crucial role in communicating with the target market. According to Jones (2002: 58), the role of personal selling at higher education institutions is twofold, namely: the servicing of established accounts/ clients and looking for new accounts or customers. Open days, social events, career exhibitions, winter or summer schools are successfully used by higher education institutions which strive to improve and maintain the relationship (Jones 2002: 58). The findings made by Wiese (2008: 308) show that students rated open days and career exhibitions at first place as the most useful sources of information. Higher education institutions have a responsibility to build strong relations with the students from the first day they attend to the time they complete their studies. Higher education institutions must treat each student as a valued customer so that they can become satisfied alumni to recruit students for the institution and also donate funds to the institution. A study by Wiese, Cornelius, van Heerden and Jordaan (2010: 1291) reveals that prospective students search for information from brochures, websites, talking to friends and attending open days at higher education institutions. Evidently, education institutions must implement an integrated approach so that the message can be communicated effectively. For personal selling to be more effective, it must be integrated with traditional elements of the promotional mix (Kotler and Keller 2006: 558).

3.7.5 Sales Promotion

Koekemoer (2004: 13) defines sales promotion as incentives that run for a limited period of time to stimulate the consumer to buy. Sales promotion, like advertising, provides the advantages of obtaining customer details and information for the purposes of an integrated marketing communication plan. Duncan (2002: 572) regards sales promotion as designed to encourage prospective customers to make a decision and buy the product. Furthermore,

Belch and Belch (2007: 508) explain that consumer promotions are composed of a variety of incentives, such as free samples, coupons, loyalty programmes, refunds and price-offs.

At higher education institutions, sales promotion takes the form of specific events to persuade students to register for a specific course. According to Jones (2002: 65), Peninsula University of Technology engages in promotional activities such as “Women in Engineering Week” to encourage female students to pursue a course in engineering. Jones further mentions that promotional material such as t-shirts, folders, and pens are distributed to promote the event. In education, promotions like competitions are utilized to obtain customer lists of students who have interest in enrolling at the higher education institution, with details of their career interests (Bonnema 2007: 69). Sales promotion must be designed in such a way that it contributes to the brand identity and image in the market place.

3.7.6 Electronic media

The electronic media added to the promotion mix include internet, email and mobile technology (Koekemoer 2004: 15). This type of media is utilized by consumers who have the financial means to acquire these technological tools, or a consumer who is in an environment where these tools are readily available. A study by Redmond (2010: 72) reveals that the majority of respondents (96%) indicated that they use the internet. Blomster and Nyberg (2005: 24) explain that organizations that use internet as a marketing tool have an advantage over their competitors and this tool is also beneficial to the consumers as it provides a 24-hour access and it is available seven days a week. Belch and Belch (2004: 496) believe that the internet can be used with other communication tools. Electronic media make two-way communications possible between the participants. The World Wide Web is made up of information pages on the internet to enable cooperation. The World Wide Web contains information in audio, graphic and text form. More and more organizations are using the World Wide Web as a major communication tool to conduct daily business. Electronic media is a versatile medium for sales promotion, personal selling and public relations and enables companies to design their marketing communication activities based on consumers’ needs and wants (Belch and Belch 2007: 479-482).

Koekemoer (1998: 186) state that a website can play a cost effective role in the communization mix in the early stages of the process-need recognition, development of product specification and supplier search, and can also play a major role as the buying process progresses towards evaluation and selection. Email is also the type of new media and refers to the mail that is electronically transmitted via the internet (Duncan 2002: 427). Higher education institutions can also maintain a data base of high school learners from various provinces and can use email to send information about the institution, the programmes they offer and newsletters. However, higher education institutions should be careful in using this communication medium, they should first establish whether the students are interested in receiving information and which kind of information they would like to receive. Electronic media also plays a crucial role in relationship building, as it gives the marketer the opportunity to exchange information with the target audience (Hasouneh 2010: 48).

Social networks are also utilized as social media advertising by creating a social presence of the organization. Reuben (2008: 1) states that social media should be part of the overall marketing mix as it can be an effective promotional tool. According to Hardy (2009: 49), authenticity is crucial for higher education institutions as social media creates a corporate presence in the social networks. Social networks present the institutions with the opportunity to communicate with their prospective students who are already active on chatrooms. The social networking member is able to play games, engage in conversation, share interests, and meet people with common interests. Social media can facilitate extensive interactive communication.

The following social media can be used as effective promotional tools:

- Facebook: This is the social service that joins people with friends, colleagues, and communities;
- Myspace: is a web wide world community that allows you to meet friends, friends, share photos, journals, and interests;
- Youtube: creates the platform to view videos online, and provides the opportunity to share videos through the World Wide Web;
- Flickr: is a photo sharing site where users can make comments concerning posted photo's that can be organized in sets and collections;

- Blogs: are online journals that allow individuals and companies to post comments in reaction to an article; and
- Twitter: is a cross between instant messaging and blogging that let friends to send short updates to other friends and users can follow other updates of friends (Reuben 2008: 2).

Higher education institutions can setup social media and websites for informing its target market about the university's offers (study programmes, availability of financial assistance, quality of courses, and course requirements). The websites can also be used to address student markets, on activities ranging from campus sport and recreation, arts and culture, student politics, and other campus activities.

3.8 MARKETING MIX FOR HIGHER EDUCATION SERVICES

Marketers of higher education institutions have to develop marketing strategies and utilize the marketing tools of the marketing mix. Elements of the marketing mix include price, product, place, promotion and each provide the foundation of a marketing strategy designed to successfully position an organization within its market (Hemsely-Brown and Oplatka 2006: 325). The combination and coordination of marketing elements enables the organization to identify the needs and wants of their customers and satisfy them. Furthermore, Maringe (2005: 575) suggests that the elements of the marketing mix must be blended together as they are all critical for implementing a successful marketing strategy. Koekemoer (2004: 2) explains marketing mix as the controllable variables of the marketing plan. The traditional marketing mix was extended to include processes, people and physical evidence (Brassington and Pettit 1997: 927). Smith and Taylor (2004: 8) also point-out of sale, e-marketing, and corporate identity and word of mouth as other important promotional elements.

3.8.1 Product

A product is any physical item or service offered to a consumer by an organization to satisfy the consumer's need. The courses and programmes offered by higher education institutions are actual products. Courses and programs offered within the higher education industry vary and encompass a broad range of disciplines and level. Courses vary in

duration and cost as well as content and delivery medium. A service is intangible, inseparable variable and perishable.

- Intangibility makes it difficult for prospective students to assess the quality of the service, besides the observing the tangible elements (communication material, study material, equipment, symbols and price).
- Variable means that the population involve providers (academic staff) and customers (students) who are different. Therefore homogeneity cannot be achieved.
- Perishability of education means services cannot be stored; therefore, it is consumed partially at the point of delivery.
- Inseparability refers to the provision of a service which cannot be separated from its consumption as students consume and produce the educational product or knowledge (Kotler and Keller 2006: 405-406).

Furthermore, Brassing and Pettitt (2000: 262), Blythe (2008: 119) and Strydom (2011: 118) maintain that a product is comprised of the following distinct elements:

- The core product consists of the benefit or utility that the product (education) transfers to the consuming customer (student). The benefits that education transfers include both economic and social elements;
- Expected product is best described in terms programmes and courses offered by the institutions. The focus is on higher education with the university degree or higher degree being the principal qualification sought. It also includes the extra features that customers would expect, (the facilities and teaching materials or equipment) utilized during the course of study;
- The augmented product refers to additional tangible and intangible items that are purchased by students during the course of study. The physical environment of the institution (cleanliness, life style, social activities, residences, cultural activities, sports facilities) is crucial for augmented products. A study conducted by Bonemma (2006: 133) also confirms that student life and sport and recreation activities are important factors that students consider when selecting an institution.
- Blythe (2008: 119) states that the above factors are what differentiate the product from other competing products. The quality and reputation of an institution play a vital role in student recruitment. Due to the intangibility of the education service, it is likely that

the aspect of the product may be the main area over which institutions can demonstrate to prospective students as competitive advantage; and

- Product image is established from the augmented and tangible attributes of the product. The image of the higher education institution that has been engaged in promotional activities and corporate social investment may get a good product image for its initiatives.

3.8.2 Place

The place refers to the location of the product, which also involves the channel utilized to supply the product to the consumer. The location of the product refers to the geographic location of the higher education institution and the place where the learning happens, for example, lecture rooms (Strydom 2004: 194). According to Law (2002: 5), a place or location has various dimensions in the United States. Brassington (2006: 31) describes a place as a system of delivery and channels of distribution.

In the environment, higher education institutions have to position their services/programmes in a way that will make them accessible to the target market. Technology has created opportunities for institutions to communicate their products to students through the World Wide Web. Higher education institutions can also use telephones, television, radio, newspapers or mail to communicate with current markets and attract new markets. Higher education institutions need to make important decisions concerning the delivery of their products. Maringe (2006) narrates place to the campus built surroundings and residential facilities. The two higher education institutions participating in the study have more than one location and use websites to reach prospective students. The institutions have other branches around Pretoria. There are four reasons why new locations or delivery systems should be established:

- When the market is saturated;
- When the size of the local market has decreased and there is change in employment patterns;
- When the institution is operating well, but aware of demand from other locations; and
- When the institution is operating well but wants to expand its services to new locations.

Although higher education institution may want to distribute their programmes to

various locations, they cannot take that decision independently as they need to make consultations with the Department of Education.

3.8.3 Price

Price refers to the value that is attached on a product/service being sold. Higher education institutions all over the world rely on student fees to cover costs and keep on operating. Machado and Cassium (2002: 99) assert that the price of a service plays two major roles, namely, first, it influences how much of the service/product the customer will purchase. Secondly, it influences whether selling the service will be profitable for the organization or not. Brassington and Pettit (2002: 953) explain that, since education is intangible, it is a challenge to set a price and justify it. The prices of higher education are influenced by the subsidy from the government as well as donations and the cost of presenting the course, prices of competition, and inflation (Wiese 2008: 93). Jones (2002: 27) also suggests that, at times price is seen as the measure of quality. Therefore, education institutions should avoid opting for low student fees as a method of attracting students, because such institutions are seen as low prestige institutions. According to Anon (2006: 6), tuition fees represent only a fraction of the total cost and other education related expenses must be considered by students. Furthermore, Cosser and Du Toit (2002: 77) maintain that price is a crucial factor that is taken into consideration when choosing a higher education institution as students and parents are anxious about the financial implications of attending a university.

3.8.4 Promotions

Promotion refers to marketing communication involved in selling the product to the public. Koekemoer (2004: 11) states that effective communication requires the institution to understand the needs of the consumer and communicate with the consumer to meet the needs. Before the institution can make a decision on which marketing tools to use, institutions need to firstly identify the decision making process of students. Students need information to base their decisions when choosing a higher education institution. The objective of promotion is to generate attention, create interest and desire and also invoke action. Brassington (2006: 31) regards communication as a make or break of the marketing mix due to its high profile and persistent nature.

3.8.5 People

Hawkins et al. (2004: 19) point out that promotion or marketing communication includes advertising, the sales force, public relations, packaging and any other market efforts that higher education institutions engage in to promote their products and services. According to Wiese (2008: 98), most higher education institutions are using promotional or communication tools to promote courses in an attempt to increase their market.

Education as a service industry, its satisfactory delivery depends on the human factors that are involved in delivering a service to a customer for an organization. Jones (2002: 29) states that the quality of a service being delivered may play a vital role on the future of the institution. Du Plessis and Resseau (2005: 377) maintain that personal appearance, attitudes and behaviour of the human factor and organization influence the customers' perception of the institution.

According to Brassington and Pettit (2000: 957), people add value and variety to the marketing package more than the basic product offerings. Learn Marketing (2006) (as cited by Wiese 2008: 112) points out that consumer's perceptions are formed based on the interaction between them (consumers) and the employees. Therefore, good interpersonal skills, aptitude and service knowledge play a crucial role to the total service offering. The ability of staff to provide services to customers, deliver the product at an expected quality and to represent the image of the organization effectively are major concerns (Jones 2002: 29).

3.8.6 Process

Wiese (2008: 115) explains that the processes involved in service delivery play a major role on how the customers perceive the product or service. Transparency in service delivery is very important for higher education institution as students want to know what to expect when the service is being consumed. According to Jones (2002: 31), the diversity of student profiles presents a gap in terms of service delivery. When delivering a service various factors have to be considered by an organization. Processes include the queuing mechanism, preventing customers from getting irritated while waiting, processing consumer detail and payment as well as ensuring high service professionalism and quality (Brassington and Pettitt 2000: 27).

3.8.7 Physical evidence

Physical evidence dimensions include ambience, design, social and communication factors, (Brassington and Pettit 2000: 27). Jones (2002: 31) suggests that the institution's atmosphere should provide support to the needs of both service providers and users simultaneously Du-Plessis and Rousseau (2005: 13) explain that organizations should determine the image they want to portray, their corporate identity, brand name and how they should enhance the institutions' image through physical evidence such as décor, building and signage. The marketing mix is very crucial in this study as it applies to higher education institutions.

3.9 STUDENT RECRUITMENT

According to the University of Pretoria, "students are a lifeblood of a university: without them the institution may lose much of its primary *raison d'être*". Keling and Krishnan (2008: 92) developed the following elements of a student recruitment agent management system:

- Recruitment agents must develop marketing plans which will outline promotional activities that they will utilize to attract the target market;
- The higher education institution should develop strong bonds with the recruitment agents in order to form a powerful partnership that will lead to the successful implementation of marketing and promotional tools;
- The recruitment agents must receive training to enable them to effectively promote and sell the services of the institution;
- An online reporting mechanism must be established to allow reporting and exchange of information in a short space of time; and
- A reward structure should be developed and based on the number of students recruited by an agent.

4. CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the literature on marketing of higher education. The chapter also identified higher education customers and defined their role. Most higher education institutions use the elements of the communication mix, namely, personal selling, public relations, direct marketing, sales promotion, and advertising. This chapter discussed the

marketing of higher education, the role of marketing communication and identified the higher education stakeholders. The review of the total marketing mix is needed in order to ensure the sustainability of effective marketing of higher education. In chapter 4, the consumer behaviour and decision making process will be discussed. A description of information sources as well as the decision rules that play a role in the consumer decision making.

CHAPTER 4

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND DECISION MAKING PROCESS

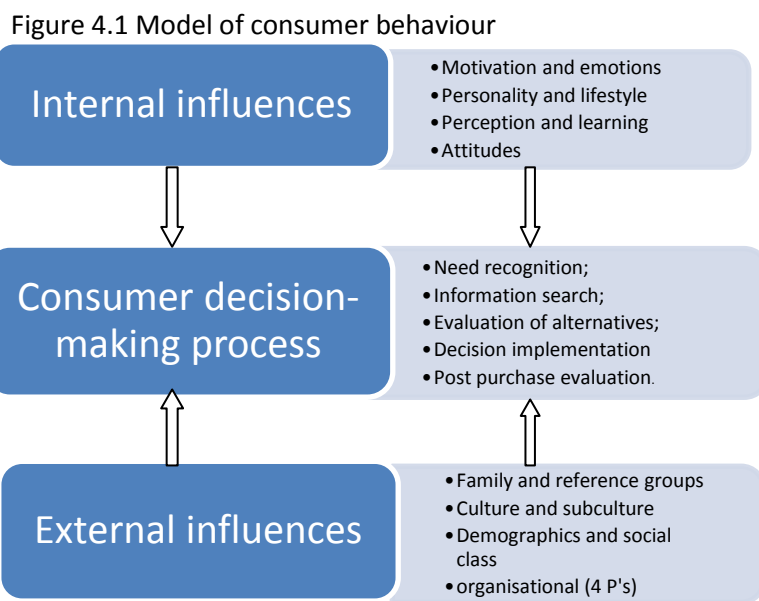
4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 gives an overview of the literature on decision making. The consumer decision model will be discussed, followed by the factors that influence consumer behaviour and the consumer rules during decision making. The study of the decision making process involves analyzing the needs of people, how they evaluate their alternatives, the behaviour that occurs before and after the choice and the buying patterns that emerge as a result of this process. Understanding the consumer decision making process is very important in order to analyze how people make choices and understand the internal and external factors that play a role and also understand the student market. Higher education institutions (HEI) attempt to open their doors as widely as possible in order to grant students the opportunity to further their studies and to understand the decision making process.

4.2 THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS OF PROSPECTIVE HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

According to Van Rensburg, Holtzhausen and Wiese (2005: 1), consumer decision making is a process where consumers evaluate between two or more products and choosing the alternative that will satisfy their needs. The consumer decision-making process is a critical area of study with respect to consumer behaviour. Prospective students go through an extensive decision making process when applying to HEI's. Students need to make decisions in order an attempt to achieve their future goals. Espinoza, Bradshaw, and Hausman (2002: 20) state that HEI's have made attempts to respond to pressures of the changing environment by understanding the process of the decision making of prospective students. According to Jones (2002: 68), the process of decision making starts in Grade 9 when learners have to choose a course stream which will be carried until matric. Jones (2002: 69) maintains that learners enquire about institutions and course programmes when they reach Grade 12. This process is often complicated, risky and has lasting effects in their lives (Pegoraro 2006: 5).

Previous studies that were done on consumer behaviour of prospective students have indicated that socio economic status (SES) and specific demographic characteristics play a vital role for students' choice of type of institution (Bonnema 2007: 50). Jones suggests that because of the risks associated with choosing the higher education institutions, the higher education institutions should make efforts to reduce those risks. Belch and Belch (2004), James (2002), Schiffman and Kanuk (2004: 8) have developed decision making models for high involvement purchases. Kotler and Keller (2009: 191) mention the following stages of the decision making process:



Source: Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2006:5) and Schiffman and Kanuk (2010:36)

4.2.1 Step 1: Need Recognition

The consumer buying process begins when the buyer becomes aware of a need or a problem. For prospective students to realize the importance of obtaining a qualification (degree or diploma) that might open up future career possibilities. Hawkins, Best, and Coney (2004: 504) reveal that internal and external stimuli can trigger a problem. Once the need has been recognized, the student will have to search for information to solve the problem. Berman and Evans (2001: 234) claim that there is a gap between the actual and desired state that can encourage the student to search for information. The actual state is the position the prospective student finds herself/himself to choose a higher education

institution after matriculating. The desired state is where the prospective student would prefer to be for the desired course of study. According to Cosser and du Toit (2001: 2), nine out of ten learners see HEI's as a gateway to employment. When the learners recognize the need for higher education, higher education Institutions can use their marketing mix to solve the recognized problem. The service may be very complex as it involves service product development, repositioning, a different price and other marketing strategies. Bonnema (2006) states that each and every year high school pupil always identifies a need to enrol at a higher education after matriculating. It is after the need has been recognized that the student will start searching for information to fill the gap between the need and the students' desired state (Blackwell, Miniard and Engel 2006: 102).

4.2.2 Step 2: Information Search

Once the consumer is aware of the need for a product, he/she will seek a solution. As students may have experience when choosing a HEI, they will search for information. Du Plessis and Rousseau (2005: 87) describe this stage as the search advances and the individual's frame of reference begins. The student can gather information from both internal and external sources. According to Wiese, Cornelius, van Heerden and Jordaan (2010: 1291), during this stage, prospective students search for information from brochures, websites, talking to friends and attending open days at higher education institutions. The higher education institution must ensure that sufficient information is available as, at this stage, the prospective student is looking for answers in order to solve the identified problem. Information search activity requires the availability of sources of information that can be utilized by prospective students. The study will attempt to scrutinize the sources of information that students use when selecting a higher education institution.

4.2.2.1 Sources of information used by students

Higher education institutions must be aware that consumer decides how many and which information sources to use (Hawkins et al 2004: 530). Consumers go through an internal or external search of information.

- **Internal sources**

According to Blythe (2008: 32), internal sources refer to a person's past experience with similar types of purchases. If it cannot be found, the consumer turns to external sources. Wells et al (2004: 193) state that when a product is classified as 'high involvement', such as a car, more effort must be put into this phase. For prospective students, the best way to obtain information is searching for it externally.

- **External sources**

External sources which students may use to obtain information are personal sources (friends, family and career guidance) and non-personal sources (mass and media). HEI sources of information such as brochures, seminars, internet, exhibitions, campus visits, and university radio are very important as the institution is able to communicate its academic reputation and fields of study through these sources. According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2000: 32-33), word of mouth is a powerful source of information. Extensive search for information is very important as it guides a prospective student to make an informed decision.

When purchasing a service like education, consumers rely more on the following personal sources to reduce the risk of making a wrong choice by providing the opportunity to receive feedback:

- Friends, family, and peer groups may be able to provide informed information, whether based on experiences, knowledge, or opinion (Jones 2002: 76).
- Alumni can also contribute a great deal as sources of information and their services are costless. Alumni can play a major role towards an institution attaining a competitive and sustainable advantage over other higher education institutions;
- Community leaders, media personalities and corporate leaders that have enrolled at the higher education institution can be utilized for promoting the higher education institutions;
- Higher education institution representatives can also visit the targeted high schools and provide insight on admission processes. Representatives from higher education institutions also accept email from prospective student;

- Attending open days, and exhibitions can also be effective as they provide the prospective student with first-hand information rather than rely on mass media. Activities such as sport events and concerts also play a role in providing the prospective student information; and
- Attending open day and sporting events helps the prospective student explore the campus facilities and find detailed information on subjects offered (Schuller and Rastlcova 2011: 62).

Cosser and Du Toit (2002: 2) discovered that the family has the highest level of influence in choosing a higher education institution. Prospective students also utilize marketing sources such as media advertisements, websites, email and brochures as sources of information. The university's prospectus provides detailed information about each institution, its accommodation, libraries, computing facilities, welfare support, sporting and social facilities, clubs and societies, and the city or town where the higher education institution is situated. Although these sources of information are costly, they can be very effective as a relationship building tool. In South Africa, websites were identified as one of the most crucial sources of information that prospective students use. Websites are very effective as they provide up-to-date information, especially for prospective students. Information about specific subject areas can be obtained by searching your course content or subject area home pages (Haikins 2004: 56).

Some institutions produce CD-ROM/DVD or issue audio video clips in their websites. Prospective students also prefer to receive information directly from the institution (Cosser and Du Toit 2002: 101-102). Utilizing mass media can play a huge role in increasing the visibility, prestige and status of higher education institution. According to Goff, Patino and Jackson (2004: 795), improved advertising, promotions and other marketing elements are visible in the higher education sector. This approach will work in some market segments and may not work in other market segments with different ethnic groups requiring different sources of information.

Davidson et al (2003: 9) state that the increasing usage of the World Wide Web and the dependence on associated forms of communication technology (email and chat room) are causing profound changes in the selection of higher education institutions. Abrahamson (2000: 7) ranked websites as second in comparison to campus visits as a crucial supplier of

information when searching for an institution for enrolment. However, Coetzee and Liebenberg (2004) identified open days and websites as the most crucial information sources preferred by students, and Jones (2002) recognized word of mouth as an important source of information. The major difference with the internet versus traditional marketing mediums such as advertising is that the prospective student becomes an active recipient as he/she is the initiator of the experience. Some higher education institutions provide information about their institutions to external higher education guides. The guides often contain facts, figures, and comparative assessments of universities. Some of these guides also provide information about league tables and ranking higher education institutions, which enable the student to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each institution. The guides can come as reference books, interactive CD-ROMS, which may be available in libraries. In the United Kingdom (UK), many higher education institutions have what is called Taster Sessions where one can try out subjects one is interested in (Bruwer 1996, Cosser and Du Toit 2002 and Goff et al 2004).

The other source of information that can be useful for students is the student finance website which supplies information on the range of financial assistance available, including tuition fees and bursaries. Career websites also provide information of different occupations, as well as provide advice about career planning. Quality assurance agencies for higher education undertake assessment of all higher education institutions in the UK on the quality of their teaching. Education institutions must create marketing tools that provide an outstanding venue for building a relationship with prospective students. The role of sources of information is very crucial for higher education institutions (Bruwer 1996, Cosser and Du Toit 2002 and Goff et al 2004).

According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2004: 549) there are three levels of consumer decision making process:

- **Extensive decision making**

Extensive decision making refers to the total amount of the search. Kotler and Fox (1995: 252) state that the total of information searches is determined by the strength of the motivation, the amount of information the consumer initially has, the easiness of getting information, the importance the consumer places in the extra information, the risk perceived and the satisfaction the consumer gets from the search process. The search

degree is reflected by the number of brands considered, attributes, information sources, and the time required to obtain that information. Choosing a higher education institution for prospective students require extended decision making, which involves internal and external search of information, followed by evaluation of alternatives (Hawkins et al 2004: 503).

- **Limited decision making**

The limited decision making characterizes the specific content of the search. The consumer had already established the evaluative criteria and the various brands within those criteria. The direction entails the specific brands, and sources of information the consumer considers during the decision making (Schiffman and Kunak 2004: 549).

- **Routine decision making**

The consumers already have experience on purchasing that type of products or service category and have a well established evaluative criterion, and utilize routine decision making to make a choice. It is not necessary to perform any external search or alternative criteria.

4.2.3 Step 3: Evaluation of alternatives

According to Chiffman and Kunuk (2004: 559), when evaluating alternatives, students will first list all the brands and each brand will be evaluated using a certain criteria. Consumers gather information on various brands, evaluate them and then they use the brand elimination process. Jones (2002: 77) describes a higher education brand as a name, sign, symbol, vision, philosophy, cultural value and style of the institution. Belch and Belch (2004: 116) point out that the consumer evaluates the set of products according to criteria that may be both objective and subjective. When students are choosing the HEI they evaluate alternatives by focusing on the appropriate evaluative criteria (choice factors), the importance of evaluative criterion (choice factors), the existence of various alternative solutions and the decision. According to Kotler and Fox (1995: 262,) consumers may evaluate the institution by means of criteria like brand image, utility function and product attributes. The students will evaluate the various institutions based on their performances on each choice factor and can utilize the consumer decision making rules to make the final decision.

Table 4.1 Alternative evaluation process

Evaluative Criteria (choice factors)				
Importance of evaluative criteria	EVALUATION OF EACH CRITERIA	OF	DECISION RULE APPLIED	SELECTED ALTERNATIVE (INSTITUTION)
Alternatives considered (HEI)				

Source; Hawkins, Best & Coney (2004: 556)

Table 4.1 shows the evaluative criteria and the decision rules applied during the consumer decision making process.

4.2.3.1 The Brand Elimination Process

Decision rules play a fundamental role in assisting a consumer to efficiently select from various alternatives during the decision making process.

- Conjunctive rule, the student considers all evaluative criteria as determinant, and minimum acceptable levels of each choice factor. The student will not consider any higher education institution that fails to meet one of the determinants. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2004: 564), the conjunctive rule helps reduce the number of available alternatives.
- Lexicographic rule, the student will place the evaluative criteria in order of importance. Then the alternatives are compared on the most crucial evaluative criterion, and then disqualify any institution that falls short of any important attribute. The student will only consider the institution that possesses the most superior attribute.
- Elimination by aspect rule, the student again ranks the evaluative criteria in terms of importance and develops a cut-off point for each evaluative criterion. The alternatives that do not meet the cut-off point are eliminated from the list. Compensatory rule implies that one very strong attribute of a higher education institution will compensate for the poor performance of any choice factor (Hawkins et al. 2004: 556).

4.2.3.2 Appropriate evaluative criteria (choice factors)

The criteria that prospective students utilize to evaluate the alternatives are made up of their evoked set, and are expressed in terms of characteristics or attributes. Evaluative criteria are used to compare various brands, products or services. According to Hawkins et

al. (2004: 572), evaluative criteria include the dimensions, features, or benefits that the consumers look for in making buying decisions.

Joseph and Joseph (1998: 90-96) suggest that students should consider the following factors before choosing where and what to study:

- Students should investigate whether the institution offers special programmes such as sport and recreational programmes;
- Students should check if they meet the requirements of enrolling for a certain course;
- Students should investigate the academic standards of the institution and the quality of the teaching facilities;
- Students enquire on whether bursaries, loans and scholarships are offered by the institution;
- Size of the institution should also be considered as smaller education institutions tend to focus on academics only. They may offer less academic and extracurricular activities and some students want to be part of a large student society;
- Geographic location of the higher education institution. Higher education institutions located in bigger cities offer diverse cultures, educational and internship opportunities for students;
- Campus life also plays a role when choosing a higher education institution for enrolment. Most institutions offer various student organizations, and the student chooses the one that fits his/her character;
- Student diversity is also an important factor as one has to establish how comfortable you are among people who may be different from you. Diversity can be ethnic or racial, economic and also geographic; and
- Investigating the language policy of the institution is very important as there are higher education institutions that still use both English and Afrikaans as media of instruction.

Souter and Turner (2002: 40), and Basjsh and Hoyt (2001: 3-5) point out factors that students might consider when determining their preference for a particular institution. Some of the factors include:

- The type of course that they want to do (e.g, business, law, engineering)
- The structure of the course (annual course, semester course, courses made up of modules);

- Accreditation (for example, Town Planning and Accounting require accreditation by relevant professional bodies);
- The campus atmosphere (quiet or lively);
- The campus safety (enquire about the presence of security officers, escort services at night, and emergency phones);
- The quality of the teaching staff (average/above average);
- The type of university (old or modern, traditional or technological);
- Public vs. Private (Public higher education institutions are subsidized by government and tend to be cheaper than private institutions).

Personal factors that students may consider are as follows:

- Distance from home (including time taken to get to the university, access to the public transport, parking availability);
- How the family views the university (whether it is held in good or poor esteem);
- Quality and responsiveness of personnel (helpfulness and accessibility);
- Personal development (role played by higher education institutions in implementing society's rules and gather the cooperation and support of the people);
- University prestige (This cannot be used as the best criterion to choose an institution, it should be considered as a bonus);
- Research activities; and
- Economic considerations Souter and Turner (2002: 40), and Basjsh and Hoyt (2001: 3-5).

There are many choice factors that prospective students may use in their decision making process to select an institution. Factors such as sporting, accessibility, comfortable attractive environments, employment prospects, course content aspects, financial aspects and the feel of the institution also play a crucial role in the decision making process (Bonnema, Van der Waldt 2008: 317). Sevier (1993: 51) suggests that higher education institutions must understand the factors that influence the selection process of prospective students.

4.2.3.3 Importance of each choice factor/evaluative criterion

The importance attached to each criterion varies from one student to the other. Some choice factors are more important than the others, depending on the prospective student

perception of what is important and what is not. A study done by Jones (2002) shows that of choice factors that students regarded as influential in the decision making process. They are ranked in the following order of importance (Jones 2002: 158).

4.2 Students' choice of institution

Rank	Reason for choice of your current institution
1.	Course
2.	Bursaries/ Financial aid
3.	Status of the institution
4.	Reputation of the institution
5.	Academic requirements
6.	Language
7.	Fees
8.	Travelling
9.	In service training
10.	Parents
11.	Pass rate
12.	Previous students
13.	Friends
14.	Not accepted for another course or at another institution
15.	Sports
16.	Member of the family study at the institution.

Jones (2002: 158)

Coetzee and Liebenberg (2004: 71) revealed that students identified academic reputation, image, sporting facilities, friends studying at the higher education institution and location as the most important factors. The mode of study, residence, fees and the fact that the parent studied there, were less important factors. Furthermore, studies by Bruwer (1996), Imenda and Kongolo (2002) established that image and academic reputation are critical factors in South Africa. Martin (1994: 36) found that first year students at the University of Australia ranked career preparation, specific academic programmes, distance from home, academic reputation, quality of research programmes and library sources as having a strong influence on the choice of an institution. In a study by Mills (2004: 29), the majority of students attached a high level of importance to financial aid offered by the higher education institution. Furthermore, in a study by Hoyt and Brown, (2003: 3), students with great academic potential attached a higher level importance to academic reputation, quality and scholarships than the academically challenged students. Black and Hispanic students were more concerned about the cost of education; therefore, financial assistance was a crucial choice factor to them. Older and part-time working students were more concerned about the location of the institution and vocational training than the other students.

4.2.4 Step 4: Decision Implementation

At this step, a student makes a decision regarding the higher education institution for enrolment. After the decision has been taken, the purchase transaction is the key point which institution and student come together in the economic system (Wiese 2006: 165). Belch and Belch (2004: 120) state that, once the consumer is in the outlet, competitor's products may also seem more attractive and the HEI marketing mix must ensure that the product is accessible and easily found.

Armould, Price and Zinkhan (2004: 676-677) state that students are faced with various purchase decisions that can also be applied to higher education:

- To respond to the need recognition, a student makes the basic purchase of higher education institutions;
- After the purchase, a student may choose to do a service product category decision, such as studying at a residential institution than a distance education institution;
- When choosing an institution for enrolment, by looking at the location, it means one is making a brand purchase decision, for example, when choosing between Wits University and University of Johannesburg; and
- Payment decisions are linked to the payment process and terms of payment, for example, study loans, cash payment scholarships or bursaries.

Enrolment is a beginning of a long-term process between the student and the institution. The process has to go through a number of stages before the actual purchase takes place. The stages will include the completion of an application form, data capturing, application screening, interviews and testing, submission of results, orientation and pre-registration and, lastly, enrolment (Jones 2002: 81). After the prospective student has chosen the institution, the final step in the decision making process will be the post choice assessment.

4.2.5 Step 5: Post purchase assessment

Once the consumer has purchased the product, the anticipation is that the initial need will have to be satisfied. Zikmund and d'Amico (2001: 160) noted that after making the decision and enrolling, the student will experience some tension that is caused by the levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. During and after purchasing and use, the service product is

evaluated by the student, although importance and complexity already have been identified as characteristics of student decision making. According to Solomon (2004: 308), consumers may consider to keep the product, dispose it by giving it away, or permanently disposing of the product. Therefore, for a service like education, disposal options could be action requires a student to enrol at the higher education institution for only one year, or withdraw before the completion of the programme.

Hawkins et al (2004) noted that dissonance tended to be heightened after making a difficult, important and permanent decision. While complexity and importance have been acknowledged as characteristics of decision making, a wrong decision leading to the student to cancel before the completion of the programme can be costly for all concerned. Schiffman and Kanuk (2004: 571) suggest that an important component of managing post purchase evaluation is the reduction of any dissonance behaviours, rationalizing decisions, seeking reassurance from satisfied individuals and persuading other consumers to make the same choices. The consumers' post purchase assessment includes post purchase dissonance, service product use, product disposition, and purchase evaluation. After the product has been purchased, it is expected that it must be used although at times post purchase dissonance exists.

4.2.5.1 Post Purchase Cognitive Dissonance

Consumers may experience doubts and anxiety after purchasing a product. Reducing post purchase dissonance is a crucial component of post purchase evaluation since consumers try to convince themselves that they have made a right choice (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004: 570). Such behavioural patterns often occur when high involvement products or services such as cars and education, when the consumer after the purchase learns of good qualities of another product that was not considered or selected. Van Rensburg, Holtzhausen and Wiese (2005: 5) identify the following factors that play a role in probability of dissonance and magnitude of dissonance:

- The irrevocability of the decision, for example, students have a high commitment when choosing a higher education institution. The more difficult it is to alter the decision, the greater the probability of occurrence of dissonance;

- The importance of the decision, choosing a higher education institution may have a great influence on the students' academic and career future. Therefore, the more important the decision, the higher the likelihood of occurrence of dissonance;
- The difficulty of choosing between alternatives, for example, if higher education institutions offer the same standard of programmes and opportunities, it will be difficult to make a choice from the alternatives and the occurrence of dissonance becomes greater; and
- The tendency of experiencing anxiety. The higher the tendency of experiencing anxiety, the higher the likelihood of occurrence of dissonance. For example, students can easily become anxious when they are faced with a decision.

This means that, after purchasing the service, a student will evaluate the decision of enrolling at that particular higher education institution. If the institution is yielding the expected results, the student may become a good word of mouth for the institution. If students had a bad experience with the institution, that may dent the image of the institution if the word gets out. Cognitive dissonance will make the student not to trust the higher education institution even in the near future.

4.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Consumer purchasing is influenced by both internal and external factors. The decision making process can be influenced in three areas: environmental influences, individual influences and psychological processes. It is important for higher education marketers to understand how subgroups are influenced by the three areas that have been highlighted by Kotler and Keller (2006: 174).

4.3.1 Internal Factors

Internal influences focus on how the individual responds to group influences, environmental changes and marketing efforts. Various internal forces exist and will be discussed briefly:

- **Demographics**

Demographic variables such as age, gender and race are consumers' personal information. According to Hoyer and MacInnis (2001: 384), the gender role is changing and males and

females have different views on consumer traits, information processing, and decision making styles and buying patterns. There is a major difference between male and female students and the importance they attach to choice in the decision making process of students (Maringe, 2006: 269). Arnould et al (2004: 516) also established that gender influences buying patterns of males and females due to their physiological differences. Age also plays a crucial role in making decisions as some needs vary according to age. A study by Hoyt and Brown (2003: 3) show that more mature students attach greater importance to choice factors, such as flexible study times, and job opportunities, compared to younger counterparts. Demographics have many areas of diversity including: age, gender, national origin, race, religion and sexual orientation.

One of the purposes of this study is to provide information on demographics particularly language and region of students in higher education institutions. This is to establish whether demographic variables play a role in the students' choice and the decision making process.

4.3.2 Psychological Factors

Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that psychogenic needs arise from uncertainty or tension that arises from an individual (Rix 2006: 150). Psychological processes exist in the decision making process which include information processing, learning, attitude and behavioural change (Kotler and Keller 2006: 184).

▪ Motivation

Motivation can be described as an inner need that will press the person to look for satisfaction to satisfy the need. According to Arnould , Price, and Zinkhan (2004: 288) consumers' goals and motivations depend on how consumers take macro environmental factors, local content, and social networks within their own personal history, circumstances and values. Most students' motivation to enrol at higher education institutions is motivated by their belief that it is the gateway to employment (Cosser and du Toit 2001: 3).

Belch and Belch (2004: 109) mentioned five levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs as motivators of behaviour: physiological needs, safety and security needs, ego needs and self actualization. Physiological needs come to arise when the consumer realizes that he/she needs water, food or need to sleep. Students may meet their need of studying at a higher

education institution; however, students may not acquire needs such as food and housing. Whilst students are at higher education institutions, safety will be a priority to them and their parents. Social needs will also develop as the student will try to settle and want to be shown affection. The need for association and friendship is very important to students.

James (2002: 4) regards social fit as an important element of attending a higher education institution, and may be a priority for prospective students. Self actualization need refers to intrinsic interest in a specific field and that interest influences the student decision to study. Aesthetic needs reflect to requirements of beauty. Aesthetic needs are very important to consumers and the education institution has to address this need in their marketing activities. Aesthetic enhancement by higher education institutions can help them satisfy the needs of their market. Some students will be concerned with esteem needs when they enrol at the higher education institution. Motivation, in this case, means that students, who have completed their high school education, have a need to enrol at a higher education institution and that need will drive them to look for an institution that will satisfy their needs.

▪ **Perception**

Perception refers to the way an individual selects, organizes, and integrates stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture (Kotler and Keller, 2006: 186). It differs from person to person as each individual sees things in his/her way. Perception consists of three components (exposure, attention and interpretation) and will be discussed briefly. Exposure arises when a consumer is exposed to a stimulus. Attention is activated by one or more sensory receptor nerves and relates the sensation to the brain for processing. Interpretation refers to the transferring of meaning to sensations by consumers. Interpretation is a function of the nature of stimulus, how the individual will interpret the information and characteristics of the situation (Strydom 2004: 44-45).

Perception of the quality of higher education is thought to have considerable impact on the student decision making process to study at a higher education institution. Institutions must, therefore, realize the importance of knowing and understanding the kind of media that the students are exposed to, how they scrutinize the information they receive, what captures their attention and what is their perception about the institution. According to Jones (2002: 88), good academic programmes, leadership opportunities, and job placement

determine perceived quality after graduation, opportunities for financial aid and good value for money.

- **Attitudes**

Attitude can be described as an enduring organization of motivational, emotional, perceptual and cognitive processes with respect to some areas of the environment (Van Rensburg et al 2005: 3). Higher education institution marketers can learn students' attitude and use the knowledge to determine trends in the market and develop marketing strategies. Attitudes can be positive, neutral and negative towards a product. A positive attitude will lead to brand selection and purchase behaviour by a consumer. Negative attitudes towards a brand may create the impression that the brand is inferior. Jones (2002: 89) mentioned that the historically black institutions that served the underprivileged students in the past are often seen as being low-grade because of the student market they have served and the financial status of the institution.

4.3.3 Environmental Influences

Environmental factors impact on the decision making process. Environmental influences occur when buyers' behaviour is the result from interactions between a consumer and external environment. In determining the influence of subgroups within the Tshwane metropolitan, it is important to understand how subgroups are influenced by the environment, like culture, reference groups, family groups, subcultures, and social class that exist within the target market.

- **Culture**

South Africa is a diverse country with various cultures and subcultures. It is important to look at the impact of culture on consumer behaviour. Culture is learned norms, beliefs, values, and customs of the society (Schiffman and Kanuk 2000: 346). According to Arnould et al (2004: 106) the values, myths, symbols and rituals also contribute to cultural behaviours and can help organizations to understand consumer behaviour. Societies can be divided into subcultures that are made up of people who are similar in terms of their ethnic origin, customs and the way they behave, such as race, language spoken and religion (Hawkins et al 2004: 152). Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003: 398) state that, due to the end of apartheid and segregation in South Africa, more people are exposed to other cultures and subcultures. A study by Cosser and Du Toit (2002: 2-12) established that racial/ethnic

groups are influenced by different choice factors when it comes to selecting a higher education institution. It identified the following variables:

- Black African students are mainly influenced by parental and peer persuasion than other groups;
- Most Indian and White students want to live at home whilst enrolling at a higher education institution; and
- Black African students are influenced by sporting facilities and lower fees than the other ethnic groups.

Wiese et al (2010: 1290) are of the view that unique characteristics of subcultures play a crucial role in consumer behaviour and higher education institutions need to understand which values and choice factors are important to students. Higher education institutions are under pressure to achieve equity with regards to student composition (Jones 2002: 91). The information obtained on culture can be utilized to develop marketing strategies directed at under-represented racial groups.

- **Social class**

Socio economic variables can also influence the choice of the higher education institutions. Schiffman and Kanuk (2004: 372) define social class as the division of members of a society into a hierarchy of distinct classes so that the members of each class can have the same status and the members of all other classes have either more or less status. Social classes differ in terms of occupation, education, income, ownership and affiliation. According to Jones (2002: 90), South Africa has experienced movement of students in higher education. Students from well to do families are pursuing International education. Cosser and Du Toit (2002: 3) found that South African students see higher education as a gateway to employment and the main reason to enrol at a higher education institution. Students from high social class have advantages of obtaining all sorts of information they need about a higher education institution. Students from low social positions struggle to obtain information such as student loan brochures and criteria of selecting a higher education institution (Jones 2002).

- **Reference groups**

Reference groups can be defined as persons or groups that act as a reference point informing values, beliefs and attitudes or deciding on appropriate behaviour (Belch and

Belch 2004: 129). Norms and standards set by the reference groups can help marketers shape consumer behaviour in terms of purchasing and consumption. It can be important for higher education institutions to choose a symbolic reference such as political leaders, television personalities and sport heroes. Students from low class often use teachers and family as their reference groups. Martin and Bush (2000: 443) found that role models have an important effect on the career aspirations and educational choices of young adults. The study will also try to establish the influence that Reference groups have as sources of information to prospective students.

- **Family influence**

Shiffman and Kanuk (2000: 275) describe family as a group of people that stay together and interact to satisfy their personal and mutual needs. Family is a primary reference group and play a crucial role in attitude formation, structuring and conditioning behaviour and making an early decision concerning a higher education institution (Harmrick and Stages 2004: 151). Family also provides helpful channels for information concerning higher education. Cabrera and Steven (2000: 7) regard parental encouragement as one of the powerful factors. The family's levels of education plays a role in influencing the child's education. There is an initiator (such as a guidance teacher), the influencer (parents, teachers and friends), the decider (student or parent), the buyer (the person who will make the decision and pay the tuition fees) and the user (student). This shows that it is crucial for higher education institutions to develop marketing strategies that create linkages with parents. Cosser and du Toit (2002: 3) mention that learners who have links with higher education institutions through peer or sibling connections are mostly slightly to be the interested group to enter a higher education institution than those learners who do not have peers or siblings at higher education institutions.

The external influences have a power to influence the decision making of prospective students. Students are exposed to various external factors and higher education marketers have no control over these factors. Mostly students rely and trust their families when they are making decisions such as choosing higher education institutions. In the absence of family and visible promotional tools by higher education institutions, the student will consider advice from reference groups and social class.

4.4 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND MARKETING STRATEGY

Marketing strategy must be relevant to the consumer behaviour and fit the target market. Therefore, marketing activities must be directed at prospective students in order to influence them to attend their institutions.

▪ Awareness

It is crucial for higher education institutions to understand how prospective students view them and know the processes involved when making a choice. Higher education Institutions also need to be aware that it may not be every student who knows about the institution. Creating awareness about the institution at all times by developing constant communication strategies may be of advantage to the institution. The marketing strategy gives direction on how the institution will approach the market place, and consists of elements like target market selection, value propositions and the marketing mix (Bonnema, 2007: 46).

▪ Knowledge

Higher education institution marketing specialists must produce communication material that the target market will access for information about the institution. Russel and Lane (2002: 175) are of the view that it is impossible for a marketing communication strategy to be effective if the primary target market is not identified properly. Therefore, the suggestion is that the market must be segmented to homogeneous groups so that information can be communicated to the right target market.

▪ Liking

Once the information has been communicated to the right audience, it is important for marketing specialists to establish how the prospective students feel about the institution. The target market can have negative feelings about the institution based on a number of factors such as campus safety, shortage in educational programmes and lack of funding opportunities. The institution will have the obligation to correct the shortfalls and improve whatever factor that has been mentioned and communicate that information back to the target audience. Understanding how the target audience feel about the higher education institution will help set the university brand apart in the mind of the prospective student so that it can be considered superior to competing alternatives.

- **Preference**

The target market may like the institution but do not rate it as an institution of high standards. This is where marketing specialists will have a task to use the positive attributes of the institution to emphasize its quality, value and performance.

- **Conviction**

The target market may like the institution but may lack confidence about the institution. The institution has a task to convince the prospective student that they are the best at what they do. Using integrated marketing communication is crucial for installing the confidence of prospective students.

- **Commitment**

The target market may develop confidence about the institution, although it may not be ready to be part of it. It is the communicator's task to persuade the prospective student to make a choice. The prospective student's commitment to enrol at the institution is the final step in client acceptance.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The focus was on the decision making process of consumers and the selection of higher education institutions. Internal and external factors influencing the consumer decision making process were discussed. Choice factors considered by students when choosing a higher education institution were identified. The stages that students have to go through during the decision making process were identified as follows:

- Need recognition;
- Information search;
- Evaluation of alternatives;
- Decision implementation; and
- Post purchase evaluation;

The study of consumer decision making process will assist higher education institution to understand their target audience and create marketing strategies that will appeal to the market.

Chapter 5 discusses the research methodology of the study, provides the description of the research objectives and justify the research design and the sampling method of the study.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 identified the research problem and the objectives of this study. Secondary research was conducted, and has served as background information for formulating the research problem and identifying the research objectives. This chapter will address the research process, which includes the research objectives, research design, sampling method, questionnaire design, target population as well as data analysis.

The fieldwork of this study aimed at gathering information about promotional tools used at selected universities in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region. According to Cooper and Schilinder (2003: 6), the research methodology provides the knowledge and skills required to solve problems and meet the challenges represented by the fast-paced decision making environment. The study will focus on the factors that students consider in their decision making, information sources used by students and the effectiveness of promotional tools for student recruitment at higher education institutions.

5.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Research objectives give direction on what the study will explore and measure. This study strives to identify the criteria that students use when selecting a higher education institution.

- The primary objective of this research study is to evaluate the promotional tools used by public higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan region from a student perspective.

The sub objectives of the study include:

- To determine the factors that influence students' decision making process when choosing an institution; and
- To determine the role of demographics (language, residential area) in the decision making process.

5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design explains the structure of the study in a way that will address research questions and objectives. According to Cooper and Schilinder (2006: 146 and 762) research design is made up of the structure of design, focus, time dimension and conditions. Thus adopts a quantitative approach in which collection was through secondary data and questionnaires. Torriola (2006) describes data collection sources such as oneself, literature, observations, interviews and questionnaires as data triangulations. For the purpose of this study, only two data sources will be used, literature and questionnaires. The secondary data consisted of textbooks, journal articles, internet searches and research reports. The literature viewed the landscape of higher education in South Africa, the consumer decision making process, the promotional tools used by higher education institutions and the students' sources of information.

This study has a descriptive focus to find out about the use of promotional tools at higher education institutions and the decision making process of students. The survey approach was adopted as it is the most convenient for collecting data from a large number of respondents within a limited time frame. The study was cross-sectional as participants were surveyed only on one occasion. A structured questionnaire was distributed to selected 1st year students at selected higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region.

5.4 TARGET POPULATION

According to Cooper and Schilindler (2006: 146 and 762), the population means the overall number of elements/unit of analysis from which the researcher wishes to draw conclusions. The study focused on two public higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan, namely, Tshwane University of Technology and the University of Pretoria. The target population was first year students in the faculty of Science, Engineering and Management Sciences who enrolled at these institutions in January 2011. The population size of students who enrolled at this institution was not known at the time of collecting data. Data was collected in May and June 2011.

Sekaran (2003: 294) states that if the population size is very large, a sample size of 384 should be adequate to support research findings and ensure that group comparisons could be done when analyzing research findings. The sampling size was determined by practical concerns such as time and other resources. According to Tustin et al (2005: 361), a non-probability method has no statistical formula for prior calculation of the size of the population.

5.5 SAMPLING METHOD

Schmidt and Hollensen (2006: 156-160) state that sampling involves the identification of a group of individuals or households who can be contacted by mail, by telephone or in person and has the information that is relevant from the one needed to solve a marketing problem. There are two ways of sampling: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling ensures that each member of the population has a definite chance of being selected. In non-probability sampling, there is no guarantee that each member of the population has a chance of being included (Diamantopoulos and Schegelrich 2000: 11-13).

Non-probability sampling was used for this study as this sampling method has a particular appeal due to financial and time constraints. According to Tustin et al (2005: 344), a major challenge of using this sampling method is that sampling error cannot be undertaken. Convenience sampling was chosen for this study as it involves voluntary participation by respondents. Convenience sampling was used to obtain data from the 1st year students in the faculties of Engineering, Sciences, and Management sciences. This study made use of non-probability sampling method, a total of 216 learners from the selected programmes were chosen due to limited resources, in terms of finances, time, research assistants, and the number of respondents that were available in class. In order to avoid potential bias of using non-probability sampling, the questionnaire for the study was administered at two higher education institutions at different times (Wiese 2008: 192).

5.6 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Data was collected using a survey method. According to Torriola (2006: 8), a quantitative survey is aimed at collecting data through questionnaires, interviews, normative surveys,

job analysis and developmental studies. Quantitative methods are systematic and structured, and seek to obtain information from respondents in a direct, open manner. Wiese (2008: 193) states that quantitative methods have a potential of producing results that have a high degree of accuracy and are easily quantifiable. According to Tustin (2005: 184), a self-administered questionnaire is a traditional paper questionnaire used for surveys. Measures to avoid errors associated with self administered questionnaire were followed by ensuring the availability of field workers to assist the students to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was first administered to students in the classroom and then the field worker explained how to complete the questionnaire and the objectives of the study. The collection of data using questionnaires is fast, cheap, convenient and easy to process and the response rate is usually high. Only students from the Faculty of Engineering and Management Sciences participated in the study as the researcher could not get assistance from the Faculty of Science. This did not affect the sample size as there were more students in the Faculty of Management Sciences. After the students completed the questionnaire, they handed it back to the field worker.

The researcher collected at both primary and secondary data concerning the promotional tools used at higher education institutions. Du Plessis and Rousseau (1999: 280) maintain that secondary data looks at present customer feedback and reports, existing company information on sales and distribution figures, previous research findings, information from government structures such as the Bureau of Statistics and information obtained from magazines, newspapers and other literature. The secondary data looked at the landscape of South African higher education, academic articles, previous research studies, textbooks, journals and articles.

5.6.1 Quantitative method survey

Ary, Jacob and Razavieh (2002: 465) assert that data analysis is a process in which researchers systematically gather data and arrange it in order to enhance their understanding of the subject matter and also be able to present the data to the public and stakeholders. There are various survey methods, such as personal interviews, telephone interviews, mail surveys, questionnaires and fax surveys (Aaker, Kumar, Day and Lawley 2005: 233). Quantitative surveys can be utilized in any kind of situation as they are very flexible and can be used to address any research question.

According to Du Plessis and Rousseau (1999: 28), data quantitative methods include the following:

- Attitudes, interests, and opinions: effectiveness of promotional tools at higher education institutions;
- Past, previous and intended behaviour: consumer decision making process of students was investigated;
- Classification of demographic variable such as: age, sex, home language, course of study and institution were determined; and
- For the purpose of this study self-administered questionnaires were used. Data collection, through written questionnaires provided the opportunity for the participants to respond to the questions in writing. Non-response rate and participants not understanding the questions are highly associated with this type of survey method. Punch (2003: 42) recommends that researchers must try to obtain a response rate of 60 percent. About 300 questionnaires were distributed for this study and 216 questionnaires were completed and returned. At Tshwane University of Technology, lecturers acted as field workers as they distributed the questionnaires on behalf of the researcher. Research assistants were used to collect data from students at University of Pretoria sports field. This data collection method was cheap, convenient, and fast.

5.7 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Mc Daniel and Gates (2001: 289) state that, questions in a questionnaire are designed in manner that generates data necessary to provide answers to the objective of the research study. According to Webb (2002: 89) a questionnaire is designed for four purposes:

- To maximize the accuracy and relevancy of information to be obtained;
- To facilitate the gathering of information;
- To meet research objectives; and
- To maximize the participation of relevant elements in the sample.

The questionnaire was directed at 1st year students currently enrolled at Tshwane University of Technology and University of Pretoria. The questionnaire investigated various areas such as the following:

- Student demographics,

- Factors that students consider when choosing a higher education institution;
- The decision making process of students;
- The information sources used by students; and
- The perception of students regarding the effectiveness of promotional tools for student recruitment at higher education institutions.

Struwig and Stead (2001: 89-90) provide the following guidelines for developing a questionnaire:

- Must give clear instructions on how to fill in the questionnaire or answer questions;
- Be divided into logical sections by subjects;
- Start with questions that are easy to respond to;
- Move to specific questions;
- Ask sensitive or personal questions at the end; and
- Minimize the number of questions to avoid participant's fatigue.

According to Schmidt and Hollensen (2006: 151), two types of questions can be identified. The first type of questions is open-ended questions which require unstructured responses whereby respondents can answer questions anyhow. The challenges associated with this kind of responses is coding and processing as the questions could have confused the respondents. The open-ended questions were only used in situations whereby respondents were expected to indicate "other" responses that were not specified in the questions.

The questionnaire contained close-ended questions in which respondents had to make a choice from the alternatives provided. The close-ended questions have structured close ended responses. Response categories provided for such questions should be mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Likert scale was used to structure questions because Likert scales are easy to administer, tabulate and analyze. Structured responses provide more appropriate responses and also make it easy to compare responses from students. According to Aaker, Kumar and Day (2004: 317), comparability of responses is a critical step for the use of analytical methods. The fixed alternative question is useful mostly when possible responses are known, limited in number and straight to the point (Gilbert and Churchill 2001: 258).

The questionnaire was amended from Wiese (2006) and Bonnema's (2006) studies: A higher education marketing perspective on choice factors and information sources considered by South Africa's first year university students and Bonnema's study (2006) needs and source preference of prospective learners at tertiary institutions: an integrated marketing communication approach.

5.8 PILOT STUDY

The questionnaire was pre-tested in March 2011 on three groups of students who were representatives of the study population. The first group was based at the Tshwane University of Technology and were 10 black first year students of both sexes. The second group was made of 10 white first year students also based at the Tshwane University of Technology. The third group was based at the University of Pretoria and it consisted of six black female students and four white male first year students. Respondents were requested to give feedback on the content of the questionnaire and the clarity of the questions, and indicate any challenges that they may have experienced during the study. A total of 30 questionnaires were used for the pre-testing exercise.

The respondents took between 20-25 minutes to fill in the questionnaire. The respondents indicated that the language used in the questionnaire was easy and understandable. The respondents though did not understand the difference between section C (Which information sources influenced your decision to study at your current institution?) and section D (which important promotional tools are used at HEI?). The researcher had to restructure the questions in section D to make the students understand their purpose clearly. An amended questionnaire was, therefore, used to collect data from the target population.

5.9 ETHICAL ISSUES

The first step was to seek official permission from the higher education institutions involved in the study. Letters of request, copy of the questionnaire and the approved research proposal were sent to the higher education institutions by email, to seek the institutions' consent before the questionnaire could be distributed. When the permission was granted by the Tshwane University of Technology, the questionnaires were distributed to the

targeted population. The questionnaire was distributed at the University of Pretoria at the FC Deviliers sport field as the attempt of obtaining approval was delaying the study. In the questionnaire, confidentiality of the information and of the participants was assured.

5.10 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is a two-way process that requires sample elements to be selected and information gathered from those elements (Schmidt and Hollensen 2006: 170). Du Plooy (2002: 171) states that the advantages of a group administered survey are comparatively low in cost, have a high response rate, brief data collection time and the standardization of responses.

Before the data was collected from students, the higher education institutions had to first grant permission to the researcher/field worker to distribute questionnaires. The researcher utilized 8 field workers to administer 384 questionnaires in both institutions. The data was collected over a period of seven weeks, which was from 04 May 2011– 27 June 2011. In the front page of the questionnaire, instructions were given on how to fill the questionnaire. The field workers were available for clarifying any questions that would have arisen. The field worker had to collect the questionnaires after all the students have filled them in and returned them to their lecturers.

5.11 THE SAMPLE REALIZATION

The data was collected in group setups as the questionnaires were distributed in work classes. At the University of Pretoria, data was collected from the students at the AC Devilius stadium after their sport training sessions. Du Plooy (2002: 171) highlighted the advantages of group administered questionnaires as low cost, provide high response rate, data collection time is brief and responses are standard. The total number of students who participated in the study was 216 against the 384 that was targeted.

5.12 DATA PROCESSING

After data was collected it was then manipulated, or processed. According to Zikmund and d' Amico (2001: 142), the process of data processing consists of three sections;

5.12.1 Editing

Shao (1999: 76) states that editing consists of checking completed questionnaires or the data collection forms for omissions, incomplete, or otherwise unusable responses, illegibility, and obvious inconsistencies. The researcher checked all the questionnaires to ensure that all the questions were properly filled and completed. Questionnaires to be found invalid can be withdrawn or the respondents can be contacted again. The researcher has four options if the questionnaire does not meet the requirements of the study. The options are relevance, comprehensiveness, legibility, consistency and uniformity, (Jarboe 1999: 108).

- Evaluate the quality of questionnaires and interviewers;
- Go back to the respondents;
- Have questions completed or corrected by the editor;
- Disregard part of the questionnaire; and
- Disregard unsatisfactory questionnaires.

Once the researcher has checked all questionnaires and ensured that data contained were legible and accurate, the researcher moved to the next step.

5.12.2 Coding

Cooper and Schilinder (2003: 456) describe coding as an assignment of numerals or other symbols that allow responses to be collected into a limited number of categories. Pre-coding was used and it reduced the chances of coding errors as the information needed from respondents was readily available in the data collection instrument and responses could be anticipated. Data is coded in order to ease the capturing process (Wiese 2008: 211). Once coded, data was captured into a software package by statistics services at the Durban University of Technology. The captured data was then assessed to determine any errors that may have occurred.

5.12.3 Data cleaning

Diamantopoulos and Schlegemilch (2000: 40) define data cleaning as a process performed after data entry and before data analysis to identify omissions and errors that could have occurred during data entry. Data cleaning is necessary and very important as it ensures that no mistakes happened.

5.13 DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected was analyzed in order to obtain the required information to solve the research problem. Data was analysed using PASW version 18, which is a computer programme used by social scientists. Data obtained will be presented in charts, figures and tables as part of analysis. Relevant statistical calculations will also be applied.

5.13.1 Validity and Reliability of measuring instrument

Toriola (2006:32) defines validity as the extent to which a test or instrument measures what it is supposed to measure and that particular measure is free from systematic random errors. This research emphasizes the content validity by means of which the content of the items adequately represents the universe of all relevant items (Cooper and Schindler 2006: 349). Toriola (2006: 32) also suggests that validity is the degree to which the researcher obtains access to the respondent's knowledge and experience on the subject. The questionnaire for the study was adopted from a previous study done by Wiese (2006) and it is appropriate for the research problem and purpose. The questionnaire is appropriate for the study purpose and it was approved by a panel of experts. The instrument administration practices were standardized to ensure the content validity of the information gathered from the questionnaire. According to Toriola (2006: 32), validity addresses conclusions about casual relations, such as when a link between variables yields a statically significant coefficient of correlation.

O'Leary (2004: 59) explains reliability as the extent to which an instrument gives related results for related inputs of repeated trials. Reliability refers to the degree of consistency from one administration to the next by the same participants. More specifically, alpha is a lower bound for the true reliability of the survey. Reliability is computed by taking several measurements on the same subjects. Therefore, the results of reliability should be consistent results. When measurements are repeated, reliability is concerned with consistency, accuracy and predictability of the results (Toriola 2006: 32). Cronbach's alpha testing was used to measure the internal consistency and 0.7 was used as a cut-off point (Cooper and Schindler, 2006: 349). Field (2005: 668) states that a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered as "acceptable".

5.13.1.1 Inferential statistics

Inferential statistical analysis is concerned with the testing of hypothesis and the estimation of parameters. Inferential statistical analysis allows the researcher to draw conclusions about populations from sample data. According to Bluman (2004: 7), inferential statistics generalize from samples to populations, execute various tasks, test hypothesis, determine relationships between variables and make predictions.

5.13.1.2 Descriptive statistics

Data findings were presented using tables, charts and descriptive statistics such as mean, percentages and frequencies of responses. Descriptive statistics summarised the results of the research questions, namely; socio demographical profile of respondents, factors influencing students' decision making process, the information sources used by students and the effectiveness of promotional tools. Data findings were presented using tables, charts and descriptive statistics such as mean, percentages and frequencies of responses (Phelps, Fisher and Ellis 2007: 218). For the purpose of this study, the mean was used to measure the rate of recurrence. Howell (2004: 5) defines descriptive statistics as a set of data that has been obtained. According to Tustin et al (2005: 523), descriptive statistics use data collection and analysis techniques that measure central tendency, variation and correlation.

5.13.2 Cross tabulations

According to Kellee (2006: 557), cross tabulations is a technique for describing a set of relationships between two different related categorical variables (bivariate). Cross tabulations can be summarised by means of a table, called a two-way frequency table or contingency table (Howell 2004: 488). For this study, cross-tabulations include demographic variables such as gender, home language, higher education institution of enrolment and field of study.

5.13.2.1 Chi- square test of independence

The intention of a chi-square test is to assess statistically the significance of the association between the two variables. If the value of the statistic for the chi-squared test of independence is large, it shows that there is a poor relationship between the observed and predicted frequencies and the null hypothesis is rejected. Reporting of results require a

statement of statistical significance. A p-value is generated to report from a test statistic. A significant difference is indicated with " $p < 0.05$ " where p represents a probability of less than 5% in 100 responses. When the p-value is less than 0.05, the association between two variables is regarded as significant. A p-value that is more than 0.05 suggests that there is no relationship between the measured variables (Churchill, Brown & Suter 2010: 440-441).

5.13.3 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis can be used to reduce data, explain relationships, test hypothesis, develop theories and classify factors believed to be important by respondents. Factor analysis is a statistical technique whose main goal is data reduction. Factor analysis could be used in survey research, where a researcher desires to represent certain questions with less hypothetical factors.

The purpose of factor analysis in this study is to identify the factors that students consider as the most important during the decision making process of choosing a higher education institution, identify the most important promotional tools for student recruitment at higher education institutions and also establish the sources of information considered to be critical by students. For the purpose of this study, factor analysis will also test the validity of the questionnaire. Factor analysis/loading identifies inter-correlations between variables. Objects of questions with related weights suggest measurement along a related factor.

5.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter described the empirical study that was conducted. The research problem and research objectives were used to develop the study design. Non-probability sampling was used to select first year students from two public institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan region. A questionnaire adapted from Wiese's (2008) study was used to collect data from participants. The data was captured, coded and analyzed.

Chapter 6 will discuss in detail the research findings and the analysis technique.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 described the research design and the method used to determine the criteria used by students selecting a higher education institution. Non-probability sampling was used to select first year students from two public higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region. Descriptive, inferential and qualitative statistical tests were undertaken using the Analytical Software (PASW) version 18.0. Data received from respondents were quantitative. The quantitative findings will be presented followed by inferential statistics. The data was drawn from the responses provided by students on criteria they use when choosing higher education institutions. The research questions were divided into four sections in the questionnaire, namely, 'student demographics', 'factors that students consider in their decision making', information sources used by students and the 'effectiveness of promotional tools' for student recruitment at higher education institutions.

This chapter presents the results in the form of basic background information, graphs, cross tabulations and other figures. First year students at two higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan region were targeted for this study. Two hundred and sixteen students participated in the study and completed the questionnaires in both institutions. Although the response rate was high, availability sampling was used to obtain data from the students present in class and training sessions during data collection. Hence, there is a difference in the composition of the two institutions.

6.2 RESPONSE RATE AND REPRESENTATIVENESS

Three hundred and eight six questionnaires were distributed by research assistants trained by the researcher. Table 6.1 shows that two hundred and sixteen responses from the structured questionnaire were obtained from the targeted higher education institutions.

Table 6.1: Response Rate at selected institutions

Institution	Planned sample	Realised sample	Response rate
Tshwane University of Technology	193	137	71
University of Pretoria	193	79	41
Total	386	216	56

Table 6.1 indicates that a majority of the respondents (71%) was from Tshwane University of Technology and 42% from University of Pretoria. Although the overall response rate (56%) was above average; differences in the composition of students at the Tshwane University of Technology and University of Pretoria were noted. At Tshwane University of Technology data were collected in lecture venues and at the University of Pretoria, data was collected during sport lessons.

6.3 DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Descriptive research is used for data analysis and uses frequencies and percentages to describe the data. Research results will be presented in the form of tables, figures and cross tabulations. The aim of using descriptive research in this study is to produce statistical information about socio-demographic profile of respondents, consumer decision making process, sources of information and preferred promotional tools for student recruitment.

6.3.1 Socio demographic profile of respondents

The demographic data was collected to provide an understanding of the sample. Section A of the questionnaire focused on personal details of the respondents. The demographic dimensions that were used in this study include, gender, race group, home language, and university attending. The objective of collecting demographic data is to give an understanding of the respondent groups. The tables and graphs that follow below are a summary of the demographic data of the sample.

6.3.1.1 Gender

Figure 6.1 Gender of the respondents

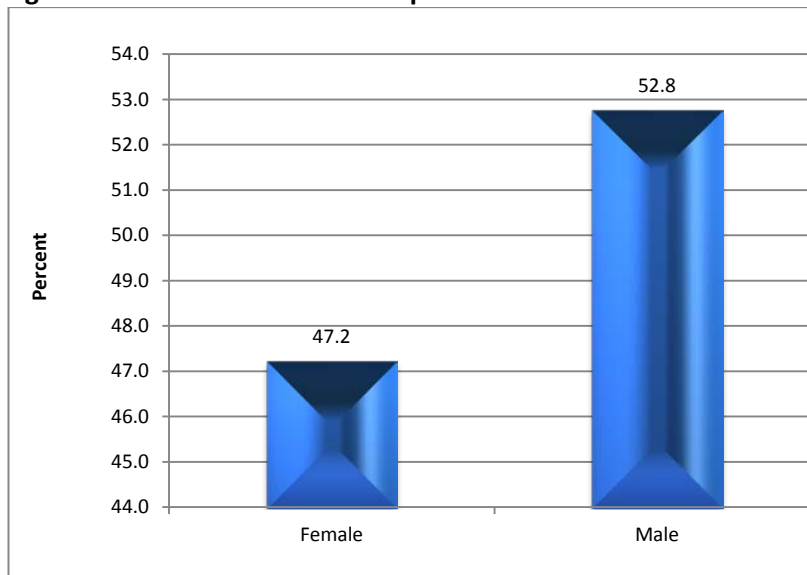


Figure 6.1 shows that the majority of respondents were males (52.8%) and 47.2 % were females. The sample consisted of a gender ratio that was approximately 1:1 (47.2: 52.8).

6.3.1.2 Province

Figure 6.2 Home Province of the respondent

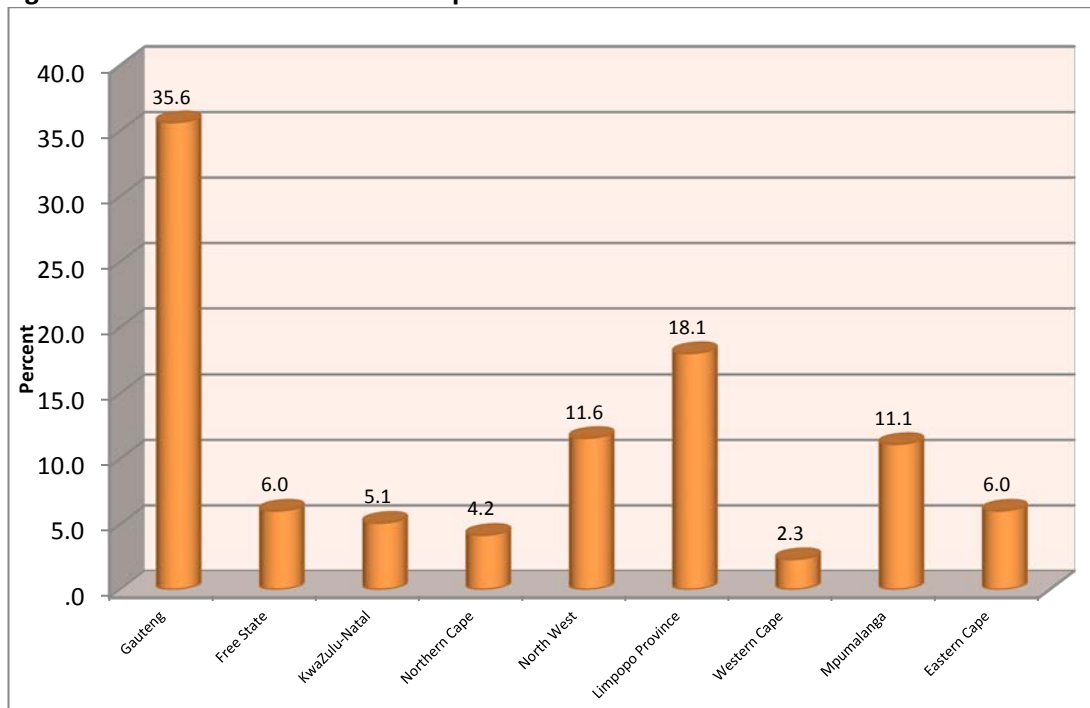


Figure 6.2 illustrates that 35.6% of respondents (majority) come from Gauteng which is the home Province of the institution, and followed by 18.1% from Limpopo Province and North West at 11.6%.

6.3.1.3 Language

Figure 6.3 Language of the respondents

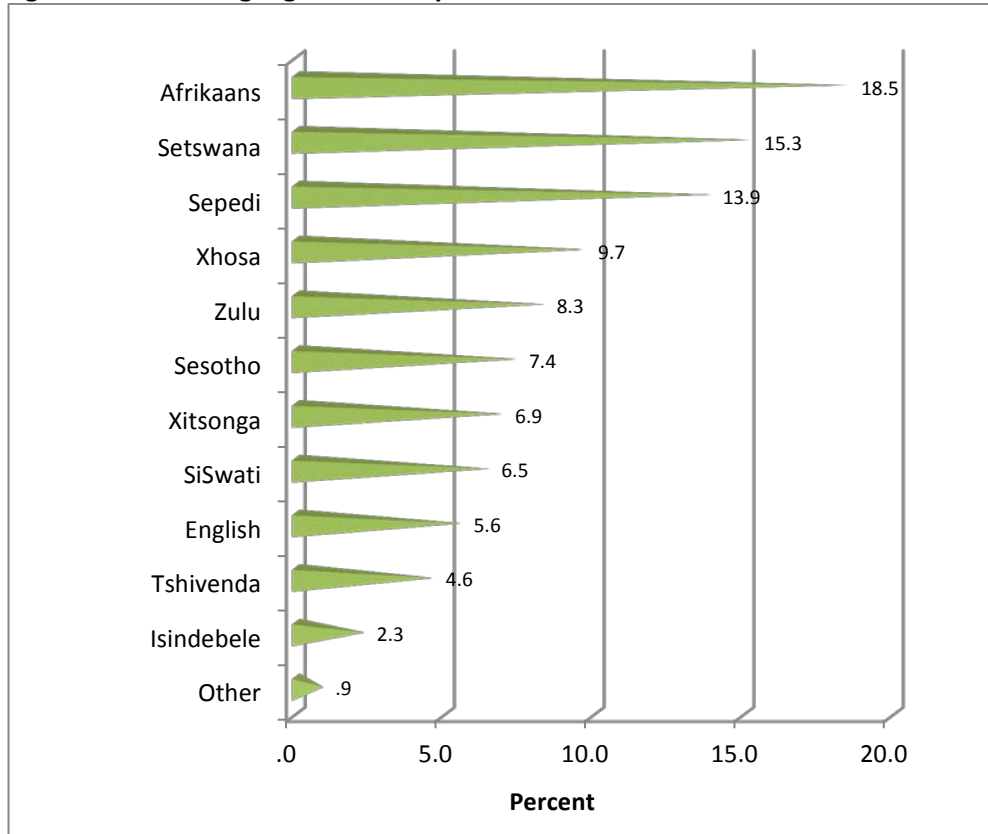


Figure 6.3 shows that the majority of the respondents speak the home language Afrikaans (18.5 %), 15.3% Setswana, 13.9% speak Sepedi, whilst 25.4% speak other official languages (Xhosa, Zulu, and Sesotho).

6.3.1.4 Institution

Table 6.2 Current institution of the respondent

Dimension	N	%
Tshwane University of Technology	137	63.4
University of Pretoria	79	36.6
Total	216	100

Table 6.2 shows that 216 students completed the questionnaire out of the 384 that were targeted. Tshwane University of Technology had the highest participation of 63.4% respondents and the University of Pretoria had 36.6%.

6.3.1.5 Faculty

Table 6.3 Field of study

Dimension	N	%
Engineering	41	19.0
Science	47	21.8
Management sciences	128	59.2
Total	216	100

Table 6.3 indicates that most respondents (59.2%) that participated in the study are registered with the Faculty of Management Sciences, whilst 21.8% registered with Faculty of Science and 19 % of the respondents were registered with Faculty of Engineering.

6.4 FACTORS STUDENT CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Table 6.4 Factors students considered in their decision making

Dimension	Rank	Mean	Not important at all		Of little important		Uncertain		Important		Very important	
			N	%	N	%	N		N	%	N	%
Qualifications recognized world wide	4	3.56	58	26.9	7	3.2	6	2.8	46	21.3	99	45.8
Location of the institution	15	2.75	101	46.8	7	3.2	10	4.6	48	21.3	50	23.1
Ease of finding employment during and after the study	3	3.59	107	26.5	109	27.4	10	4.6	28	13.0	62	28.7
wide variety of courses / programmes offered	7	3.00	90	41.7	3	1.4	6	2.8	50	23.1	67	31.0
Academic reputation (prestige)	13	2.81	59	26.9	57	26.7	14	6.5	37	17.1	49	22.7
Parents / Siblings attended this institution (tradition)	17	2.13	86	39.5	76	35.5	14	6.5	21	9.7	19	8.8
Good image of the University	11	2.87	55	25.7	52	24.7	14	6.5	47	21.8	46	21.3
Language policy	9	2.93	56	25.7	51	23.9	14	6.5	37	17.1	58	26.9
Financial assistance (bursary & loans)	2	3.66	53	24.6	8	3.7	10	4.6	34	15.7	111	51.4
Quality of teaching	1	3.86	74	34.1	63	29.0	14	6.5	34	15.7	91	42.1
Campus safety and security	12	2.83	57	27.1	58	27.6	10	4.6	31	14.4	57	26.4
Multi-cultural/ diversity	16	2.60	62	28.7	64	29.6	16	7.4	46	21.3	28	13.0
Flexible study mode (evening classes, use of computers)	10	2.87	59	27.5	60	27.6	8	3.7	29	13.4	60	27.8
On campus housing/ hostels	6	3.01	46	21.3	66	30.6	6	2.8	35	16.2	63	29.2
Sport and recreation programs	5	3.24	48	22.0	44	20.6	9	4.2	39	18.1	76	35.2
Campus life/ atmosphere	8	2.99	52	24.3	54	24.8	11	5.1	43	19.9	56	25.9
Links with the industry	14	2.81	58	26.9	57	26.4	16	7.4	39	18.1	46	21.3

Table 6.4 highlighted the information sources that the student considered when choosing a higher education institution. The results presented in Table 6.4 focuses on the factors that students considered in their decision making using a 5 point Likert scale rating.

The factors influencing the choice of the higher education institution in descending levels of importance are as follows:

- **Quality of teaching** was rated the most important factor by 86.8% (42.1+15.7+29%) of respondents. However, 31.4% of the respondents indicated that quality of teaching was not important at all. Quality of education was regarded as the important dimension with a highest mean value = 3.86.
- **Financial assistance:** The majority of the respondents, 67.1% (51.4% + 15.7%) of the considered the availability of financial aid, bursaries and scholarships as very important dimensions, whilst 24.6% respondents indicated that financial assistance was not important at all. Furthermore, the mean value was 3.66, ranking financial support second.
- **Ease of finding employment:** The majority of respondents (69.1%) attached a high level of importance to job prospects during and after completion of qualification. Interestingly, 26.5% of the respondents indicated employment opportunities as not important at all. With a mean value 3.59, this dimension was rated third.
- **Qualification recognition:** Table 6.4 also reveals that the majority of respondents (45.8%) rated course qualifications as being very important and 21.3% as important. However, 26.9% of the respondents considered course qualifications as not being important at all. Thus, the mean was 3.56 and this dimension attained the fourth rank.
- **Sport and recreation findings:** The majority of respondents 73.9% (18.1%+35.2+20.6%) considered sporting and recreational opportunities offered by the indicated higher education institutions as very important whilst 22% of the respondents indicated that they did not consider this factor at all. The majority of the respondents rated this factor as important with a mean value 3.24.
- **Availability of accommodation** is depicted district criteria as 75.6% (16.2%+29.2%+30.6%) of respondents rated the availability of accommodation and student residences as important, with the mean value of 3.01.
- **Wide variety of courses offered:** A number of respondents (41.7%) indicated that the assortment of courses was not important at all, with the majority of respondents 54.1% (23.1%+31%) indicating that it was an important factor. The mean value was 3.00.

- **Social activities/campus life:** From table 6.4 it can be deduced that social activities/campus life is regarded as important by 70.6% (24.8%+19.9%+25.9%) of the respondents, with a mean score 2.99.
- **Language policy:** The majority of respondents 67% (23.9%+17.1%+26.9%) rated language of instruction used by the institution as being important. However, 25.7% of the respondents indicated that it was not important at all with a mean value of 2.93.
- **Flexibility of study modes:** Table 6.4 reveals that 68.8% (27.6%+13.4%+27.8%) of the respondents regarded the flexibility of study modes as important whilst 27.6% indicated that it was not important at all. The mean score was 2.87
- **Good image:** The reputation of the higher education on behaviour, professionalism and proper administration of the institution was rated by 67.8% of the respondents as important whilst 25.7% rated it as not being important at all. Furthermore, the mean value was 2.87.
- **Campus security policies:** Respondents (21.7%) indicated that campus security policies for the safety of students, staff, and university equipment were not important at all. However, 68.4% (27.6% +14.4% +26.4%) of respondents rated this factor as important. The mean value was 2.83.
- **Academic reputation** based on success and pass rate of the students was rated by 66.7% respondents as important whilst 26.9% of the students did not believe that the academic reputation was an important factor in the decision making process. Furthermore, the mean value was 2.81.
- **Links with the industry:** Table 6.4 illustrates that 55.8% of respondents considered links formed by the higher education institution with communities, corporate sector, other institutions of higher learning and the government as important. However, 26.9% of the respondents indicated this was not important at all. The mean value was 2.81
- **Location of the institution:** Responses regarding the location of the institution differed with 44% respondents indicating that they considered the location of the institution as an important factor while 46.8% disagreed. Furthermore, the mean value was 2.75.
- **Multi-cultural/ diversity:** The results presented in table 6.4 led to the finding that 63.9% of the respondents indicated that multi-cultural/diversity in student and staff composition was important whilst 27.8% respondents considered it as not important at all. The mean value was 2.60.

- **Family tradition:** The five point likert scale questionnaire also established that 39.5% respondents did not consider the fact that their parents and siblings studied at that particular institution as an important factor. However, 54% of the respondents indicated that this factor was important. Furthermore, this factor scored the lowest mean value of 2.13.

6.5 INFORMATION SOURCES USED BY STUDENTS

Table 6.5 Information sources

Dimension	Mean	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Uncertain		Agree		Strongly agree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
		I attended a career exhibition /Open day/ campus visits	2.32	79	36.6	70	32.4	7	3.2	38	17.6
Word of mouth (Parents, friends, teachers, alumni)	3.13	45	21.1	45	20.6	12	5.6	64	29.6	50	23.1
I responded to an advertisement on (the radio/ TV/ news papers)	1.86	99	45.9	81	37.6	13	6.0	14	6.5	9	4.2
I attended an event at the campus music festivals /sport events)	2.36	75	34.5	73	34.0	11	5.1	30	13.9	27	12.5
I browsed the university website	3.15	48	22.5	43	19.7	7	3.2	64	29.6	54	25.0
I read the university prospectus	3.58	32	15.0	30	13.7	9	4.2	71	32.9	74	34.3
University staff visited my school	2.01	97	44.9	78	36.1	6	2.8	12	5.6	23	10.6

Table 6.5 reflects the results of the information sources that had an influence in the students' decision making process. The most important sources will be indicated by their highest mean values. The mean scores range from 3.58 to 1.86 against a maximum attainable score of five.

The mean values are presented in a descending order as follows:

- **University printed material:** The highest ranking statement shows that 67.2% respondents agreed that they read university information material like prospectus, leaflets, fliers, and course brochures and the mean value of 3.58 is the highest.
- **University website:** Web presentation to access university and course information; the majority of respondents 54.6% (29.6%+25%) agreed that the university website was a good source of information. However, 42.2% (22.5%+19.7%) of the respondents disagreed to this statement. The mean value was 3.15.

- **Word of mouth:** 52.7% respondents agreed that they used word of mouth. The findings from Table 6.5 also reveal that 41.7% of the respondents disagreed that they looked for information through word of mouth by parents, siblings and friends. The mean score was 3.13.
- **Campus events:** The results presented in Table 6.5 depicts that 26.4% of the respondents agreed that they became aware of the institution through attending sport events and festivals at the campus. However, the majority (64.5%) of respondents disagreed that they attended any events at the institutions with the mean value of 2.36.
- **Educational visits:** refers to the physical experience with the institution gained through attending career exhibition, Open days and campus visits received a 27.8% ranking, and an overwhelming majority 69% revealed that students never visited the university campus. The mean score was 2.32.
- **Student recruitment:** An overwhelming majority of students (81%) did not agree that student recruitment initiatives by university staff (visiting high schools) were the source of information. Only 16.2% respondents agreed that student recruitment initiatives were their source of information. The mean value was 2.01.
- **Advertisements on media:** The study also identified that 83.5% of the students did not use advertising commercials on radio, TV and newspapers as information sources. Only 10.7% of the respondents indicated that they used print and electronic media as a source of information with the lowest mean value of 1.86.

6.6 EFFECTIVENESS OF PROMOTIONAL TOOLS

Table 6.6 Promotional tools

Dimension	Rank	Mean	Not important at all		Of little importance		Uncertain		Important		Most important	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Compiling a data base of all Matric students and sending direct mails, sms's and emails	1	4.41	3	1.4	12	5.6	0	0	80	37.0	121	56.0
Open days and Exhibitions organised by institutions	2	4.40	3	1.4	8	3.7	0	0	93	43.1	112	51.9
Internet (using Social media such as twitter, face book, YouTube)	3	4.25	5	2.3	17	7.9	0	0	102	47.2	92	42.6
The use of student recruitment agents	4	4.07	7	3.3	24	11.1	0	0	102	47.2	83	38.4
Billboards	5	3.94	14	6.5	30	13.9	0	0	132	61.1	34	15.7
Browsing the University website	6	3.93	1	0.5	5	2.3	0	0	92	42.6	116	53.7
Sport Camps organised by SASCOC at the higher education institution	7	3.89	10	4.6	28	13.0	0	0	111	51.4	66	30.6
University publications (newsletters and brochures)	8	3.84	7	3.3	32	14.8	0	0	127	58.8	50	23.1
Radio advertisements and radio slots given to higher education institutions	9	3.77	5	2.3	34	15.7	0	0	109	50.5	68	31.5
Advertisements in newspapers and magazines	10	3.69	11	5.1	34	15.7	0	0	123	56.9	45	20.8
Other, specify: Visiting schools	11	0.29	2	0.9	3	1.4	0	0	2	0.9	8	6.9

Table 6.6 illustrates the effectiveness of the promotional tools used for student recruitment. The results indicate that the various promotional tools differ in their characteristics and capacity in communicating with the target audience. With regard to compiling of all matric students contact details and sending of direct mails, short message systems (sms) and electronic mails (email) the respondents rated this dimension as the most effective promotional tools. The other promotional tools they rated as effective include open days and exhibitions, the use of student recruitments agents, internet (using social media such as twitter, face book, you tube), billboards, and browsing the university website. Table 6.6 clearly indicates that each promotional tool was essential to some certain extent.

The order of importance for the promotional tools is listed as follows:

- **Compiling a database:** The highest ranking statement of compiling the database of all matric students and sending mails, sms's was rated by 98.6 % (37%+56%+5.6%) of the respondents as an effective promotional tool, with the highest mean of 4.41.
- **Open days and exhibitions** were rated by overall majority of respondents (98.7%) [51.9%+43.1%+3.7%] as a very critical promotional tool with the mean value of 4.40.
- **Internet:** Table 6.6 depicts that 97.4% (7.9% 47.2%+42.6%) of the respondents regard Internet tools (using Social media such as twitter, face book, YouTube) the third most effective promotional tool with a mean of 4.25.
- **Student recruitment:** Table 6.6 also indicates that a positive attitude towards the student recruitment is effective with 96.7% (11.1%+47.2%+38.4%) of the respondents rating it as important with the mean value of 4.07.
- **Billboards:** The results indicate that 96.2 % (61.1%+15.7%+13.9%) of the respondents view billboards as an important promotional tool for higher education institutions with the mean value was 3.94.
- **University website:** Another significant finding is that 96.3% of the respondents believe university website can be an effective promotional tool with approximately 53.7% majority viewing university website as a very important promotional tool. Furthermore, the mean value was 3.93.
- **University publications:** Table 6.6 depicts that 96.7% (14.8%+58.8%+23.1%) of the respondents rated university publications as an important promotional tool for student recruitment. The mean value was 3.84
- **Radio advertisements and radio slots** given to higher education institutions were rated as important by 96.7% (14.8%+58.8%+23.1%) of the respondents. Furthermore, mean value was 3.84.
- **Print media advertisements:** Table 6.6 illustrates that advertisements in newspapers and magazines were viewed by 93.4% (15.7%+56.9%+20.8%) of the respondents as important. Furthermore, the mean value was 3.69.
- **School visits:** The respondents were asked to indicate and specify other promotional tools that were not included in the list; only 10.8 % respondents identified school visits by higher education institutions with the lowest mean value of 0.2.

6.7 INFERENCE STATISTICS

Table 6.7 Chi-Square test of demographics and factors students consider when selecting a university

Dimension	Gender	Which Province do you come from?	What is your home language?	Which institution are you currently studying at?	Which field of study are you currently in?
Qualifications recognized worldwide	0.141	0.812	0.746	0.083	0.012*
Location of the institution	0.716	0.385	0.586	0.362	0.159
Ease of finding employment during and after the study	0.006*	0.701	0.203	0.512	0.885
Wide variety of courses / programmes offered	0.017*	0.773	0.636	0.09	0.091
Academic reputation (prestige)	0.565	0.978	0.614	0.398	0.263
Parents / Siblings attended this institution (tradition)	0.163	0.409	0.366	0.000*	0.045*
Good image of the University	0.435	0.466	0.172	0.817	0.376
Language policy	0.633	0.006*	0.179	0.041*	0.835
Financial assistance (bursary & loans)	0.5	0.97	0.033*	0.042*	0.125
Quality of teaching	0.107	0.62	0.302	0.585	0.096
Campus safety and security	0.124	0.948	0.291	0.853	0.681
Multi-cultural/ diversity	0.791	0.726	0.025	0.373	0.722
Flexible study mode (evening classes, use of computers)	0.583	0.706	0.601	0.713	0.757
On campus housing/ hostels	0.423	0.036	0.021*	0.010*	0.153
Sport and recreation programs	0.339	0.457	0.862	0.707	0.846
Campus life/ atmosphere	0.281	0.974	0.673	0.797	0.857
Links with the industry	0.308	0.527	0.212	0.020*	0.213

Table 6.7 depicts the relationship between the demographic profile of students and factors student consider when selecting a university. The chi-square test measured the level of significance (p-value between <0.05 and 0.01).

The following statistical significant relationships were identified as factors students consider when choosing a university:

- **Gender of respondents & employment opportunities and variety of programmes offered**

Table 6.7 indicates that there is a significant relationship between gender and employment opportunities at 1% level of significance and under variety of programmes offered at the HEI's at 5% level of significance, respectively. It is important to note that Figure 6.1 reveals that the majority of the respondents are male. It is therefore, apparent that the respondents attach a very high level of importance to employment opportunities and variety of programmes offered by higher education institutions in the decision making process.

- **Relationship between province of origin and language policy and campus housing at the selected higher education institutions**

It was also noted that a significant relationship exists between the province of origin and campus housing at 1% level of significance and with regard to language policy at 5% level of significance. It is important to note that Figure 6.2 reveals that the majority of respondents came outside the Gauteng Province and did not speak English or Afrikaans. Hence there is a significant relationship between province of origin and language policy and campus housing.

- **Relationship between home language and factors (financial assistance, campus housing facility at higher education institutions and multi-cultural diversity)**

It was also observed that a significant relationship exists between the respondents' home language and financial assistance, on campus housing and cultural diversity at 5% level of significance. Figure 6.3 shows that the majority of respondents speak South African indigenous languages and therefore it may be concluded that within this group financial assistance, on campus housing and cultural diversity play a critical role in the students' selection of universities in Pretoria.

- **Relationship between the current Institution of study and factors (parents tradition, language policy, financial assistance, on campus housing and links with the industry)**

Table 6.7 shows a significant relationship between the respondents' current education institution and parents attending the same institution and on campus housing at the 1%

level of significance. Furthermore, the current institution of study and selection dimensions (language policy, financial assistance and links with the industry) reported a relationship at 5% level of significance, respectively. In addition, Table 6.2 indicates that the majority of respondents enrol at Tshwane University of Technology and therefore there is a significant relationship between institution of choice and selection dimensions.

▪ **Relationship between field of study and qualifications recognized worldwide and tradition**

Table 6.7 depicts a significant relationship between the respondents' field of study and worldwide recognition of qualifications at the 1% level of significance and the parents' tradition at 5% level of significance. Furthermore, Table 6.3 shows that the majority of respondents were registered with Faculty of Management Sciences and therefore, the respondents attach higher level of importance to the field of study and world-wide recognition of their selected qualification.

Table 6.8 Chi-Square test of demographic variables and information sources

Dimension	Gender	Which Province do you come from?	What is your home language?	Which institution are you currently studying at?	Which field of study are you currently in?
I attended a career exhibition /Open day/ campus visits	0.075	0.456	0.259	0.061	0.677
Word of mouth (Parents, friends, teachers, alumni)	0.165	0.836	0.048*	0.005*	0.622
I responded to an Advertisement on the radio/ TV/ news papers	0.102	0.034*	0.050	0.000*	0.015*
I attended an event at the campus (music festivals/sport events)	0.141	0.701	0.63	0.000*	0.003*
I browsed the University website	0.691	0.672	0.059	0.000*	0.001*
I read the university prospectus	0.687	0.266	0.315	0.007*	0.345
University staff visited my school	0.029*	0.729	0.637	0.056	0.174
Other: Parents	0.112	0.609	0.263	.	.

▪ **Relationship between gender of respondents and university visits to school**

The results in Table 6.8 show a significant relationship between gender of respondents and university visits to school at 5% level of significance. It is important to note that

Figure 6.1 shows that the majority of respondents were males and therefore there is a relation between gender of respondents and university visit to schools.

- **Relationship between province of origin and advertisements on television, radio and newspapers**

Table 6.8 shows a significant relation between province of origin and advertisements at the 5% level of significance. Furthermore, Figure 6.2 indicates that the majority of respondents came from the other South African Provinces besides the Gauteng province. Hence, there is a significant relationship between the provinces of origin and advertisements on print and electronic media.

- **Relationship between word of mouth and home language**

Table 6.8 depicts a significant relationship between home language and word of mouth at the 5% level of significance. In addition, Figure 6.3 indicates that the majority of respondents speak Afrikaans as their home language and therefore, there is a significant relationship between this source of information (word of mouth) and the home language of the respondents.

- **Relationship between current Institution of study and all specified information sources (word of mouth, advertisements, campus events, university website, university prospectus, and university staff visits to school)**

Table 6.8 depicts a significant relationship between the current institution and staff visits to schools at 5% level of significance. Furthermore, a significant relationship exists between the institution of study and mentioned factors (word of mouth, advertisements, campus events, and university website) at the 1% level of significance. It was also observed that a significant relationship exists between the respondents' institution of study and the use of the university prospectus at 10% level of significant. In addition, Table 6.2 indicates that the majority of respondents were from Tshwane University of Technology and therefore, there is a significant relationship between Tshwane University of Technology and the specified information sources.

- **Relationship between field of study and information (advertisements, campus events, and university website)**

Table 6.8 depicts a significant relationship between the respondents' field of study and the higher education institutions' promotional tools (advertisements on media, campus events and university website) at the 1% level of significance. It is interesting to note

that Table 6.3 indicates that the respondents attach a higher level of importance to promotional tools in their respective fields of study.

Table 6.9 Chi-Square of demographic variables and promotional tools

Dimension	Gender	Which Province do you come from?	What is your home language?	Which institution are you currently studying at?	Which field of study are you currently in?
Open days and Exhibitions organised by institutions	0.866	0.265	0.98	0.030*	0.016*
Billboards	0.072	0.996	0.82	0.015*	0.022*
Radio advertisements and radio slots given to higher education institutions	0.293	0.455	0.636	0.105	0.675
Internet (using Social media such as twitter, face book, YouTube)	0.125	0.478	0.531	0.008*	0.238
The use of student recruitment agents	0.206	0.827	0.489	0.041*	0.314
Sport Camps organised by SASCOC at the higher education institution	0.723	0.985	0.618	0.018*	0.941
Compiling a data base of all Matric students and sending direct mails, sms's and emails	0.402	0.837	0.856	0.004*	0.332
Browsing the University website	0.418	0.77	0.148	0.108	0.041*

▪ **Relationship between the current institution of study and promotional tools except radio advertisements and browsing the university website**

Table 6.9 depicts significant relationships between the respondents' current institution of study and social media and compiling a database of all matric students at the 1% level of significance. Table 6.9 also shows a significant relationship between the current institution and the promotional tools (open days, billboards, recruitments agents and sport events) at the 5% level of significance. Furthermore, Table 6.2 shows that the majority of respondents were students from Tshwane University of Technology and therefore, there was a significant relationship between the Tshwane University of Technology and the selected promotional tools.

▪ **Relationship between field of study an open days and exhibitions organised by institutions billboards and browsing the university website**

Table 6.9 the cross indicates significant relationships between the students' field of study and career exhibitions, billboard and browsing the university website at 5% level of significance. Furthermore, Table 6.3 indicates that there is a relationship between

respondents in the various fields of study and open days and exhibitions, billboards and browsing university websites.

6.8 CROSS TABULATIONS

A cross tabulation test was done where demographic variables were tested against each other to establish whether there is an association between two different linked variables.

Table 6.10 indicates, in percentages, the field of study of the respondents in terms of gender.

Table 6.10 Cross- tabulation of gender and field of study

Dimension		Gender		Total	
		Female	Male		
Which field of study are you currently in?	Engineering	Count	26	15	41
		% within Which field of study are you currently in?	63.4%	36.6%	100.0%
		% within Gender	26.8%	13.8%	19.9%
		% of Total	12.6%	7.3%	19.9%
	Science	Count	15	32	47
		% within Which field of study are you currently in?	31.9%	68.1%	100.0%
		% within Gender	15.5%	29.4%	22.8%
		% of Total	7.3%	15.5%	22.8%
	Management	Count	56	62	118
		% within Which field of study are you currently in?	47.5%	52.5%	100.0%
		% within Gender	57.7%	56.9%	57.3%
		% of Total	27.2%	30.1%	57.3%
Total	Count	97	109	206	
	% within Which field of study are you currently in?	47.1%	52.9%	100.0%	
	% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	47.1%	52.9%	100.0%	

The results on Table 6.10 reveal that the majority of respondents that enrolled for engineering (12.6%) were females (63.4%). On the other hand, the majority of respondents (68.1%) registered with Faculty of Science were male students (15.5%). However, the majority of respondents (57.7%) were registered in the Faculty of Management. Furthermore, the results on Table 6.10 indicate that males (52.9%) were a majority in these three faculties.

Table 6.11 Field of study and current institution

Dimension		Which institution are you currently studying at?		Total	
		Tshwane University of Technology (TUT)	University of Pretoria (UP)		
Which field of study are you currently	Engineering	Count	6	35	41
		% within Which field of study are you currently in?	14.6%	85.4%	100.0%
		% within Which institution are you currently studying at?	4.6%	46.7%	19.9%
		% of Total	2.9%	17.0%	19.9%
	Science	Count	42	5	47
		% within Which field of study are you currently in?	89.4%	10.6%	100.0%
		% within Which institution are you currently studying at?	32.1%	6.7%	22.8%
		% of Total	20.4%	2.4%	22.8%
	Management	Count	83	35	118
		% within Which field of study are you currently in?	70.3%	29.7%	100.0%
		% within Which institution are you currently studying at?	63.4%	46.7%	57.3%
		% of Total	40.3%	17.0%	57.3%
Total	Count	131	75	206	
	% within Which field of study are you currently in?	63.6%	36.4%	100.0%	
	% within Which institution are you currently studying at?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	63.6%	36.4%	100.0%	

Table 6.11 shows that the majority (63.6%) of the respondents attended the Tshwane University of Technology whilst the remaining 36.4% of the respondents attended the University of Pretoria. Most of the respondents (85.4%) enrolled for Engineering were at the University of Pretoria, while Tshwane University of Technology has larger enrolments for Science with (89.4%) of respondents and Management Science consisted of 70.3% respondents. The number of engineering students at University of Pretoria constituted 17% of the sample.

6.9 FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor results are presented in a table form and are used to explain various patterns that have been identified. With reference to table 6.7, 6.8 and 6.9, the results show:

6.9.1 The rotated component matrix on factors considered by students

Table 6.12 The rotated component matrix of factors considered

FACTORS STUDENTS' CONSIDER IN THEIR DECISION MAKING WHEN CHOOSING A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION (HEI)	component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Qualifications recognized world wide	0.009	-0.054	-0.040	-0.085	0.752
Location of the institution	0.492	-0.226	0.033	0.506	-0.312
Ease of finding employment during and after the study	0.091	0.177	0.055	0.584	0.553
Wide variety of courses / programmes offered	0.307	-0.106	0.293	0.482	0.208
Academic reputation (prestige)	-0.020	0.185	0.109	0.810	-0.107
Parents / Siblings attended this institution (tradition)	-0.212	-0.263	0.643	0.067	0.202
Good image of the University	0.199	0.102	0.512	0.474	-0.015
Language policy	-0.140	0.759	0.022	-0.052	-0.125
Financial assistance (bursary & loans)	0.590	0.535	0.203	-0.096	-0.040
Quality of teaching	0.320	0.552	-0.037	0.165	0.505
Campus safety and security	0.080	0.819	0.134	0.184	0.211
Multi-cultural/ diversity	0.114	0.180	0.752	0.066	0.047
Flexible study mode (evening classes, use of computers)	0.136	0.248	0.635	0.044	-0.339
On campus housing/ hostels	0.461	0.276	0.325	0.498	-0.107
Sport and recreation programs	0.798	-0.017	-0.135	0.124	0.094
Campus life/ atmosphere	0.607	-0.060	0.395	0.143	0.330
Links with the industry	0.427	0.217	0.290	0.042	0.474

Table 6.12 depicts seventeen variables that students consider in the choice of HEI's. The rotated component matrix test reduced the seventeen factors considered by students in the decision process into five main factors. A value of greater than 0.5 was selected as a cut-off point.

- Factor 1: was identified as **psychographic segmentation factors** (financial assistance, sport and recreation programs and campus life).
- Factor 2: was identified as **institutional/situational factors**. The three factors; language policy, quality of teaching, and campus safety were grouped into one category by respondents.
- Factor 3: the four factors; tradition, image, cultural diversity, and flexible study mode were identified as **external factors** influencing consumer decision-making process.

- Factor 4: was identified as **career development incentives** (Locations of the institution, job opportunities, image of the institution).
- Factor 5: was identified as **career advancing factors** (worldwide recognition of academic qualification and ease of finding employment) influencing the consumer decision making with specific reference to choice of HEI's in Pretoria.

6.9.2 The rotated component matrix on information sources used by students

Table 6.13 The rotated component matrix on information sources

INFORMATION SOURCES USED BY STUDENTS	Component		
	1	2	3
I attended a career exhibition /Open day/ campus visits	0.376	0.618	0.048
Word of mouth (Parents, friends, teachers, alumni)	-0.113	0.787	0.003
I responded to an advertisement on the radio/ TV/ news papers	0.388	0.608	0.141
I attended an event at the campus(music festivals / sport events)	0.793	0.346	-0.046
I browsed the university website	0.869	-0.055	0.078
I read the university prospectus	0.165	-0.140	0.857
University staff visited my school	-0.136	0.381	0.719

The seven factors on table 6.1 were reduced into three main factors.

- Factor 1: was identified as **a search of information stage** of decision making initiated by students (attended recreational events and browsed university websites).
- Factor 2: exhibitions, word of mouth and advertising were identified as **promotional tools** by higher education institutions.
- Factor 3: the two factors (university prospectus and university staff visiting schools) were identified as **marketing incentives** of higher education institutions.

6.9.3 The rotated component matrix on promotional tools

Table 6.14 The rotated component matrix on promotional tools

EFFECTIVENESS OF PROMOTIONAL TOOLS	component		
	1	2	3
Open days and Exhibitions organised by institutions	0.520	0.053	0.221
Billboards	0.498	0.599	-0.238
Radio advertisements and radio slots given to higher education institutions	0.704	0.427	-0.159
Internet (using Social media such as twitter, face book, YouTube)	0.669	0.068	0.357
The use of student recruitment agents	0.668	0.041	0.278
Sport Camps organised by SASCO at the higher education institution	0.291	0.233	0.081
Compiling a data base of all Matric students and sending direct mails, sms's and emails	0.250	0.129	0.655
Browsing the University website	0.121	0.077	0.794
University publications (newsletters and brochures)	0.133	0.822	0.312
Advertisements in newspapers and magazines	0.107	0.874	0.125

Table 6.14 depicts ten variables that respondents indicated as effective promotional tools. The rotated matrix test reduced these factors into three major factors that represent this category with a value of greater than 0.5 was selected.

- Factor 1: was identified as **university marketing activities** (open days, radio advertisements, internet, sport camps, and recruitment agents).
- Factor 2: billboards, university print, and advertising in magazines and newspapers were identified as **print media advertising**.
- Factor 3: the two factors (compiling data base of matric students and browsing university website) were identified as **direct marketing/electronic marketing communication activities**.

6.10 RELIABILITY OF THE RESULTS

Cronbach's alpha test was used to measure the internal consistency and reliability of the research questions.

Table 6.15 Reliability of the results

SECTION	CRONBACH'S ALPHA
Factors students' consider in their decision making when choosing a higher education institution	0.751
Information sources used by students	0.633
Effectiveness of promotional tools	0.798
Overall	0.734

The overall reliability score of 0.734 shows a high measure of acceptable, consistent scoring for the various categories for this study. Two of the categories have satisfactory scores whilst the second category has a value (0.633) which indicates medium internal consistency and reliability. The instrument was therefore deemed reliable.

6.11 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.11.1 Socio demographic profile of respondents

▪ Gender

Figure 6.1 reveals that the respondents' student composition at selected higher education institutions is male dominated at 52.8% and females at 47.3%. The high number of male representative in the study may not be necessarily a reflection of the student composition at higher education institutions in general. Previous research studies by Redmond (2010) and Wiese (2008) revealed that some higher education institutions had more female students (64%) than male students (36%) participants in their respective studies. The findings of this study may be due to the fact that more males may have participated in the study because of the sample selection:

- More males play sport at selected higher education institutions in Pretoria;
- In the Faculty of Management Sciences more males that participated in the study were in the Department of Sport Management and Marketing.

The results of the cross tabulation on Table 6.7 present the association between the respondents gender and field of study. The gender of respondents' influences respondents' view of the importance of programmes offered by the university and employment opportunities. Maringe's (2006: 269) study also depicts a major difference between male and female students and the importance they attach to choice in the decision making process of students. Furthermore, according to Hoyer and MacInnis (2001: 384), the role of gender is changing and male and females have different views of consumer traits, information processing, and decision making styles and buying patterns. Furthermore, Arnould et al (2004: 516) also established that gender influences buying patterns of males and females due to their physiological differences.

▪ Province of origin

Figure 6.2 also indicate that the highest number of respondents come from Gauteng (35.6%) and Limpopo (18.1%). This may be due to the fact that Gauteng is the home province of both higher education institutions. Although 35.6% of the students were from Gauteng Province, the rest of the students came from all the other eight provinces

in South Africa. This finding justifies why students would be concerned with campus housing as they had travelled great distance to study in Gauteng. The results on figure 6.2 suggest that Limpopo and North West were also major sources of recruitment for Pretoria higher education institutions.

- **Language**

Figure 6.3 reveals that the majority of respondents' spoke Afrikaans (18.8%) and Setswana (15.3%) as home languages. The dominance of Afrikaans and Setswana speaking respondents' at the selected higher education institutions is an indication of race and ethnic composition of Pretoria. Even though there was a higher number of Afrikaans speaking respondents', it is important to note that only the University of Pretoria still uses Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. According to Yeld (2006), many students still have challenges in dealing with language of instruction at academic level, even though some still communicate effectively in a social environment. A study conducted by Cosser and Du Toit (2002) revealed that population groups with similar demographic characteristic revealed specific trends towards education. In short, a relationship between the socio demographic profile of respondents and selection factors exists. The respondents' province of origin also influenced the importance that respondents' attached to universities' language of instruction and the availability of student residences. A research study by Bers and Galowich (2002: 70) suggested that the selection process of higher education institutions differ among ethnic groups with different home languages. Based on the findings of Wiese (2008: 286) and Wiese, Cornelius, Van Heerden and Jordaan (2010: 1295), most the African students attach a high importance to the availability of financial assistance. This may be linked to the government's proposal that higher education institutions target students who come from the previously disadvantaged areas.

- **Institution of study and field of study**

Two hundred and sixteen students participated in the study and completed the questionnaires in both institutions. The response rate was high as respondents' were present in class and training sessions during data collection. Tshwane University of Technology had the highest participation due to the fact that the study was conducted during their lecture times, unlike the University of Pretoria. Most (59.2%) students that participated in the study were from the Management Sciences Faculty. This may due to

the fact that the other two Faculties, Engineering and Science do not have large number of students' enrolment.

6.11.2 Factors student consider when choosing higher education institutions in descending order of importance

This section highlighted ten of the most important factors that the students consider when choosing a higher education institution and the findings were compared to the results of similar previous studies. In this study, the following factors were identified in terms of mean scores (1-5): the quality of teaching was rated (1), availability of financial assistance was rated at number (2), and ease of finding employment during and after the study was rated at (3), qualifications recognized worldwide (4) and sport and recreation programmes (5), on campus housing/hostels.

Least considered factors during a consumer decision making process: (6), wide variety of courses /programmes offered (7), campus life/atmosphere (8), language policy (9), and flexible study mode (evening classes, use of computers) (10). Good image of the University (11), Campus safety and security (12), Academic reputation (prestige) (13), Links with the industry (14), Location of the institution (15), Multi-cultural/diversity, (16), and Parents/Siblings attended this institution (tradition) (17).

University dimensions in previous studies were also identified in order of importance as follows:

Both studies by Wiese (2008: 262) and Wiese, van Heerden, Jordaan and North (2009: 49) revealed that the quality of teaching was rated (1), as the most influential factor, followed by employment prospects (2), campus safety and security (3), academic facilities (4), and international links (5).

In a recent study by Redmond (2010: 65), the influential factors were rated as follows: standard of education provided (1), programmes offered (2), likely employment once graduated (3), location (4), and work integrated learning (5).

- **Quality of teaching** received a highest mean score 3.86 which means there is a high agreement within respondents on this factor. The findings of Ivy's (2001) local study are

supported by the findings in this study as quality of teaching, variety of courses, and availability of bursaries received mean values between 3.00- 3.86. With regards to Ivy's UK study, the results of this study also indicate an agreement on this factor as quality of teaching also received a high mean score of 3.86.

An international study by Petruzel and Romannazzi (2010: 147) identified emotional value, price/quality, social value, and functional value as the effective choice factors that students consider in their decision making. The results of this research study also agree with the previous studies by Bonnema (2006), Wiese (2008), Wiese et al (2009) and Redmond (2010) that respondents are consistent in terms of how they view the importance of quality of teaching and employment prospects, although in terms of being rated in order of importance, the factors received a different scaling.

- **Financial assistance** was rated the second best factor 67.1% of respondents indicated that financial assistance is the second influencing factor. In Wiese's (2008: 234) study, fees were ranked at number thirteenth place with a high mean score of 3.7, which is similar to a mean score of 3.66 that was obtained in this study. This finding indicates that there may be a large number of students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds who enrol at these institutions. Jones (2002) study also revealed that students consider financial assistance in their decision making. Though in the case of the quality of teaching, and academic recognition the findings of Ivy's (2001) study prove to be similar, there is a contradiction when it comes to financial assistance as international higher education institutions indicate that they do not consider the availability of bursaries and other choice factors during their decision making process
- With regard to **ease of finding employment**, findings indicate that students are concerned about their future especially after completing their studies. This concern may arise from the need to improve lifestyles and receive a return in investment. A study conducted by Bonemma (2006: 133) identified employability, course content, student life, sport and money as important information needs that students consider when selecting an institution.
- **Worldwide recognition of academic qualification** was rated as the third most influential factor. With regards to Ivy's (2001: 278) UK study, the results of this study indicate an agreement on qualifications recognised worldwide. This urge of qualifications being recognised worldwide may arise from the fact that respondents

may later on in life have ambitions to further their studies in other countries. Therefore, when the interest to further their studies arises the respondents would like the current qualifications to be able to open doors and opportunities for them at any higher education institution across the world.

- The results on table 6.2 show that **sport and recreation programmes** were rated fifth in the top ten of the considered factors. A study by Coetzee and Liebenberg (2004: 71) noted that reputation, image, sporting facilities, friends attending the same institution, and the location of the institution were regarded as the most influential factors. However, the results of this study are only in agreement with one factor (sport and recreation programmes). Other previous findings by Cosser and Du Toit (2002) and Bonnema (2006) also recognized the importance of sport and recreation facilities.
- **On-campus housing** was only rated the sixth most influential factor in the decision making process with a mean value of 3.01. However, this factor should also be considered to be very important as the findings in Table 6.2 show that 64.4% of the respondents came outside of Gauteng Province (Pretoria). The above mentioned finding could be the reason that on- campus housing was rated in the top 10 of the most influential factors during the decision making process.
- **Word of mouth** was rated as the last influencing factor during the decision making process. The findings of the study may be an indication that the respondents know what they want or that they do not want family to influence major decisions in their lives. Most of the above mentioned studies reveal a significant agreement that reference groups (family, friends) exerted little influence when it comes to the decision making. An international study by Haikins (2006: 43), respondents indicated that they preferred personal opinions from friends, family or work colleagues and this is contrary to the findings of this study and other local studies as the results indicate that this factor was rated as the least considered factor during the decision making process. Only findings by Jones (2002: 173) indicate that 75.7% of respondents indicated that the family had influenced their decision to study at a particular institution.

The study also reduced the seventeen choice factors used by students into five major categories.

- Factor one was identified as **psychographic segmentation factors**. This shows that personality and self esteem play a major role in the decision making process of prospective students. Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that psychogenic needs arise from uncertainty or tension that arises from an individual (Rix 2006: 150).
- The second factor was identified as **institutional factors**. These factors are temporal factors that a consumer may face in the buying environment.
- The third factor was identified as **external factors influencing consumer decision-making process**. According to Martin and Bush (2000: 443), role models have an important effect on the career aspirations and educational choices of young adults. Cosser and du Toit (2002: 3) mention that learners with siblings with higher education connections are mostly the interest group to enter a higher education institution than those learners who do not have siblings at higher education institutions.
- Factor four was identified as **career development incentives**. According to Cosser and du Toit (2001: 3), students' motivation to enrol at higher education institutions is motivated by their belief that it is the gateway to employment. Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2004: 288) state that consumers' goals and motivations depend on how consumers take macro environmental factors, local content, and social networks within their own personal history, circumstances and values.
- The last factor was identified as **worldwide recognition of academic qualifications and employment factors**. According to Jones (2002: 88), good academic programmes, leadership opportunities and job placement determine perceived quality after graduation.

6.11.3 Information sources used by students

- **University printed material** received the highest ranking with the highest mean value of 3.58. The results show that most respondents utilised university information print material like prospectus, leaflets, fliers, and course brochures to look for information. In a study conducted by Wiese (2008: 228) at Tshwane University of Technology and University of Pretoria the results reveal that respondents at the University of Pretoria rated the use of university publications in the fifth place and respondents at Tshwane

University of Technology rated university publications in the second place. A study by Wiese et al (2009: 55) reveals that university publications were rated the most useful sources of information. Wiese et al (2009) and Wiese's (2008) findings and the findings in this study show consistency as the respondents on this study also rated university publications in the first place and university websites were rated in the second place.

- Electronic sources like the **University websites** were also used to access university and course information by the majority of respondents. A study by Wiese, van Heerden, Jordaan and North (2009: 55) show that 60% of the respondents searched for information using university websites. A previous study by Wiese (2008: 228) at Tshwane University of Technology and University of Pretoria reveals that students at the University of Pretoria rated websites as a second useful source of information and respondents at Tshwane University of Technology rated university websites in the third place. A study by Hoyt and Brown (2003: 4) also identified university websites as most important sources of information.
- **Word of mouth** was rated the third used source of information in this study while in Wiese et al (2009) study, word of mouth was rated as the second useful source of information. The study by Wiese (2008: 308) shows that respondents at the University of Pretoria rated word of mouth as the third useful source of information and it was rated the sixth useful source of information by respondents at Tshwane University of Technology. A study by Jones (2002: 143) shows that word of mouth was ranked as the most effective source of information by respondents.
- Interestingly, **campus events** were rated fourth in this study in agreement with Wiese (2008) findings where respondents at University of Pretoria rated campus events at fourth place contrary to the findings at Tshwane University of Technology where campus events were rated on the eleventh place.
- Physical experience with the institution gained through **educational visits** like attending career exhibition, open days and campus visits received a 27.8% ranking, and an overwhelming majority of 69% revealed that they never visited the university.

The study also reduced the seven sources of information used by students into three major factors.

- Factor one was identified as a **search of information stage** initiated by students. According to Wiese, Cornelius, van Heerden and Jordaan (2010: 1291), during this stage, prospective students search for information from brochures, websites, talking to friends and attending open days at higher education institutions.
- The second factor was identified as **promotional tools** by higher education institutions. According to Goff, Patino, and Jackson (2004: 795), improved advertising, promotions and other marketing elements should be made visible in the higher education sector. Interactive marketing communication involves the messages that the staff relay to students through personal selling, which involve exhibitions, school visits, classroom interaction and customer service centres (Jones 2002: 43).
- Factor three was identified as **marketing incentives** of higher education institutions. Maringe (2005: 569) mentions that public relations office, the external relations office, publicity and publications office, and the press release office are believed to be the pedestal of marketing worldwide.

6.11.4 Effectiveness of promotional tools

Table 6.6 Indicates that respondents regarded compiling a database of all matric students and sending direct mails, sms's and emails as the most effective promotional tools with the highest mean score of 4.41. The five other promotional tools they rated as effective include open days and exhibitions (4.40), internet (using social media such as twitter, face book, you tube) (4.25), the use of student recruitments agents (4.07), billboards (3.94), and browsing the university website (3.93).

- As a promotional tool, the **compiling of database of all matric students and sending direct mails, sms's and emails** was rated the first effective promotional tool by the respondents. This may be due to the fact that the personalized information to prospective students will build a strong relationship between the student and institution and that will encourage the prospective student to pay more attention to the message that has been sent. Weidelich (2001) suggests that the use of email for student recruitment is a relationship building tool and may save costs. Larsson (2003: 1) is of

the view that these devices provide the users the opportunity to be organized in their lives and prioritizes information that is relevant to them. The findings support the theory by Duncan (2002: 427) that email has been found the fastest growing interactive media. Most students have access to emails through their cell phones or personal computers. This sending of messages, emails, and mails directly to a student will increase the relationship between the student and the institution. Messaging allows the institution to connect with the target audience instantly and this is known as direct marketing.

- Although **career exhibitions, open days, and campus visits** received a low ranking (27.8%) in Table 6.5, respondents (94.9%) found it necessary to have physical contact with the institutions by attending open days and exhibitions. This finding shows that students believe open days and career exhibitions may be an effective promotional tool for student recruitment. The results of this study are in agreement with the findings made by Jones (2002: 174), where students regarded open days and career exhibitions as important sources of information which meant they were effective promotional tools. Another study by Coetzee and Liebenberg (2004: 70-71) also revealed that open days and career exhibitions were the most used information sources which prospective students consulted.
- Data analysis shows that 89.5% respondents regard **the internet (using Social media such as twitter, Face-book, YouTube)** the third most effective promotional tool. These results support the findings of a study by Redmond (2010: 72) where the majority of respondents (96%) indicated that they use the internet. Social media can be used by higher education institutions for public relations and personal selling (Kichatov and Mihajlovski 2010: 35). The main focus of social media is to reach individuals and groups and promoting the higher education institution. Kirp (2003: 19) describes the internet as a considerable marketing advance as most higher education institutions depend on the internet to have an interactive relationship with their target market. A study by Redmond (2010: 3) states that, in a social media marketing industry, 88% of marketers are using some form of social media as a promotional tool. Social media is used to create strong brands by higher education institutions. Using social media as promotional tool is advantageous as the internet is accessible for 24 hours a day and

can reach a broader market.

- The use of **student recruitment agents** were rated as the fourth most effective promotional tool. The use of student recruitment agents may be very crucial as the majority (98.6%) of respondents have indicated that they prefer direct interaction with the institution. Student recruitments agents can be deployed at schools and are able to give all relevant information to the learners and are able to immediately respond to any questions that may be posed by learners. An international study by Ivy (2001: 280) revealed that new UK universities use promotional tools such as school career counsellors, direct mail, open days on campus and recruiters visiting schools.
- **Billboards** were rated as the first five effective promotional tools. The study results indicate that the use of non-personal communication tools may also be important promotional tools. Duncan (2002: 401) suggests that electronic billboards can create effective exposure if placed strategically as it is an out of home media that reaches the target audience outside their homes.
- The evidence in the results indicates that 53.8% respondents attached use of **university websites** as very important and these are different from Redmond's (2010: 114) findings where 86% of respondents indicated to have used the website of their institution. Furthermore, a study by Wiese, van Heerden, Jordaan and North (2009: 55) reveals that 60% of the respondents rated university websites as good or excellent, suggesting that they view university websites as effective promotional tools. Poock and Lefond (2003: 19) warn that higher education institutions that rely on websites for student recruitment may be in trouble as prospective students may ditch the search efforts due to challenges in locating the relevant information in a short period of time. This may be due to the fact that these are non-contact promotional tools and prospective students prefer direct contact with the institutions. An International study by Bennet (2006) reveals that students do not consider promotional tools such as the website, prospectus and other written material as effective promotional tools. The respondents in the study indicated that they use the internet to search for information and website access information through the internet. However, websites are not regarded an effective promotional tool. Therefore, higher education institutions should design websites that are fast, simple and user friendly.
- **Radio slots** given to higher education institutions and advertising on **newspapers and**

magazines were rated 9 and 10, respectively, as the effective promotional tools. This is contrary to the theory by Duncan (2002: 394) that radio is considered the most persuasive medium, as it is available to a large audience at any time and place. A study by Redmond (2010: 107) suggests otherwise from these results as respondents indicated that print media supplied helpful information to prospective students.

The study also reduced the ten promotional tools and identified three major promotional factors that are important for student recruitment:

- The first factor was identified as **universities marketing communication activities**. Respondents viewed compiling a database of all matric students and sending of direct mails, sms's and emails as the most effective promotional tools (1). Student recruitment agents were viewed as the fourth effective promotional tool by respondents. Students were given a choice to add their preferred promotional tools and school visits were identified by 6.9% of the respondents as a preferred promotional tool. Therefore, this is an indication that some students may not have understood the role of student recruitment agents visiting schools was more of the same thing as school visits. However, the respondents' suggestion of school visits clearly show how important is personal communication and direct interaction with students is for higher education institutions. As mentioned by Enslin (2003: 26), the power of personal selling lies in the ability to tailor the product offering and communicate an appeal to deliver an instant response to customer feedback. Furthermore, Jones (2002: 58) explains that open days, social events, career exhibitions, winter or summer schools are successfully used by higher education institutions who strive to improve and maintain the relationship.
- Factor two was identified as **print media advertising**. According to Blomster and Nyberg (2005: 20), print media should provide accurate information that the customer can control as the customer is able to use a preferred type. A study by Redmond (2010: 107) also suggests that print media supplied helpful information to prospective students. Furthermore, newspapers are targeted at broader markets, as they carry valid and updated information and have a flexible geographical location. Magazines are targeted to specific readers. Therefore, it makes it easy for the higher education institution to geographically target the market they want to reach through newspapers or magazines. However, an international study by Bennet (2006) reveals that students do not consider promotional tools such as web-site, prospectus, and other written

material as effective promotional tools.

- **Direct marketing/electronic marketing communication activities** were identified as the third factor. Belch and Belch (1998: 13) state that the development of direct marketing, as opposed to mass media communication, can be attributed to its relationship building potential. This may be due to the fact that it has become easier for students to get direct access to sms's and emails. According to Duncan (2002: 427), emails have become the fastest growing interactive media. Furthermore, Wiese (2008: 104) states that higher education institutions can utilize mail and telemarketing as direct marketing tool. Direct marketing also plays a crucial role in building strong brands as more and more people become aware of the brand attributes.

6.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the results obtained from the research questions. The chapter revealed the statistical methods that were used to analyse the data. The results obtained from cross tabulations and factor analyses were also presented. The role played by information sources and promotional tools has been identified as being very important. The factors that students consider during their decision making were also identified in their order of importance. The findings of the study revealed that students from diverse backgrounds used different sources of information during their search for a higher education institution for enrolment. The results of the survey also identified the preferred promotional tools for student recruitment, revealing the importance the respondents attached to each promotional tool. Data analysis also identified quality of teaching and availability of financial assistance as the most considered factors by students during the decision making process.

The next chapter will conclude this study, summarise the findings, draw conclusions and make recommendations for improvements and future research.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reported the research results and demonstrated the relevance of the results to the research questions. This chapter summarises the main findings and discusses the conclusions and implications drawn from the study. Conclusions will be drawn from research objectives and the research problem. The limitations of the study will also be highlighted and suggestions for future studies will be made.

Chapter 1 introduced the research problem and the objectives of the study. The study was aimed at evaluating the impact of the promotional tools in the students' decision making process with specific reference to the choice of institution to study. The delimitations and assumptions of the study were also revealed. The structure of the research project and the methodology were also declared.

Chapter 2 gave the overview of the South African higher education landscape that has been going through a major restructuring over the years. The chapter was aimed at revealing the transformation of South African higher education landscape and the government policies that led to the transformation.

Chapter 3 discussed marketing communication strategies for higher education and previous research findings. The communication processes for higher education institutions were explored. It was revealed that higher education and institutions operate as businesses with marketing challenges and that students are customers and, therefore, higher education institutions had a responsibility to understand their customers and their decision making process.

In chapter 4, previous research studies were explored as part of the literature to reveal the common trends and considerations in the consumer decision making process. Internal and external factors influencing the consumer decision making process were discussed. The psychological, situational and social factors that influenced decision making were also explored.

Chapter 5 provided a description of the research design and method utilized for the study. The research instrument and the sampling method were identified. A questionnaire was designed to collect data from the students at the Tshwane University of Technology and the University of Pretoria.

Chapter 6 presented the analysis of data and the explored the research findings. The chapter discussed the influences that the respondents identified as their factors that play a role in their decision making process. The study findings regarding the effectiveness of promotional tools were also reported in detail on how the students viewed them as being important.

7.2 MAIN FINDINGS REGARDING RESEARCH PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

The results suggest that the South African education landscape has evolved rapidly towards a market-orientated system in which higher education institutions operate as businesses with marketing challenges. The data was collected using a survey method which gathered information on the main research objectives; the effectiveness of promotional tools. Two higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan were surveyed for the purpose of this study:

7.2.1 Conclusions regarding research primary objective:

To evaluate promotional tools used by public higher education institutions in the Tshwane Metropolitan region from a student perspective

The results indicate that every promotional tool differs in their characteristics and capacity in communicating with the target audience. Respondents from both institutions characterize:

- **Personal communication**

Respondents viewed **compiling a database of all matric students and sending of direct mails, sms's and emails** as the most effective promotional tools (1). **Student recruitment agents** were viewed as the fourth effective promotional tool by respondents. **School visits** by higher education institutions came in as an inadequate want as it was not included in the questionnaire. Students were given a choice to add their preferred promotional tools and school visits were identified by 6.9% of the respondents as a preferred promotional tool. The study also reduced the ten promotional tools and identified three major promotional

factors that are important for student recruitment. The first factor was identified as **universities marketing communication activities**. As stated in the literature, higher education institutions can utilize mail and telemarketing as direct marketing tools. Factor three was identified as **direct marketing or electronic marketing communication activities**. Both these two factors demonstrate a need by the target market to form a relationship with the prospective higher education institution. The advantage of direct marketing is that an organization develops a relationship with the target audience on a named individual basis with the projected message and the response is easily measurable (Wiese 2008: 104). Belch and Belch (1998: 13) state that the development of direct marketing, as opposed to mass media communication, can be attributed to its relationship building potential.

▪ **Mass communication**

Career exhibitions, open days and campus visits were rated as the second most effective promotional tools. Open days, social events, career exhibitions, winter or summer schools are successfully used by higher education institutions which strive to improve and maintain the relationship (Jones 2002: 58). Respondents regard the **internet (using Social media such as twitter, face book, YouTube)** as the third most effective promotional tool and **billboards** were rated in the first five of effective promotional tools. Respondents attached the use of **university websites** as the sixth important promotional tool and **campus events (sport events and music festivals)** were rated as the seventh effective promotional tools. Radio slots given to higher education institutions and print media advertising were rated 9 and 10, respectively, as the effective promotional tool. Higher education institutions use both print and electronic media to advertise their institutions. Factor two was identified as print media advertising. Strydom (2004: 146) emphasizes that listening, reading, viewing and buying habits of the target audience and target marketing segment play a crucial role when choosing a specific advertising media.

7.2.2 Implications regarding research primary objective: Promotional tools

The results of the study indicate that prospective students would prefer to have personal communication with the higher education institutions Table 6.5 shows that it is not currently happening with institutions of higher learning in South Africa. According to Maringe (2005: 571) the coordination of a marketing function amongst higher education

institutions is poor as a result of limited budget and undefined roles on who undertakes the task of promotional activities.

The demand for higher education enrolment by secondary school students and the intensive promotional strategies by higher education institutions may lead to excessive number of applicants for one institution. Strategic planning on student recruitment is still needed at higher education institutions for institutions to attract the quality of students they want. It is crucial for higher education institutions to communicate with prospective students in various ways to ensure that the message is effectively received by the target market (Haikins 2006: 17). Marginson and Considine (2000) are of the view that there is a lack of strategy planning models to guide an effective competitive strategy at higher education institutions. The study contributed to theory by proving that personal communication can be a tool for delivering information to prospective students.

7.2.3 Recommendations regarding research primary objective: Promotional tools

- **Personal communication:** Compiling data base of matriculants of entire South Africa. Higher education institutions can get database from Department of Basic Education. Then HEI'S should send direct mails, sms's and e-mails for students to contact the university and supply them with relevant information. The database should also be used to invite students and schools to open days, career exhibitions and campus events. Universities must have a **database of graduates working** and job held by graduates. The information must be uploaded on the university website. Universities can also invite their alumni to do presentations during career exhibitions and open days. To process school visit initiatives, universities should obtain a database of schools, more especially rural schools from the Department of Basic Education. Higher education institutions promotional strategies should integrate social media with direct communication strategies. The higher education institutions may also organise community outreach programmes where alumni students from the identified communities are invited are make presentation in their own communities.
- **Mass communication media** (newspapers, television and radio) can be used to advertise the university's website, financial support, housing facilities and social activities. Future studies may attempt to establish whether the current promotional activities address the government requirements of targeting students from previously

disadvantaged areas. A future research study may aim at establishing whether the current promotional tools used by universities **consider and address the needs of students** living with various special needs (disabilities). Higher education institution should integrate their websites with a 24 hour access to information at anytime of the day. Higher education institutions can install **electronic bill boards** in all the major highways and roads in targeted regions.

7.3 MAIN FINDINGS RELATING TO RESEARCH SUB-OBJECTIVE 1

To determine factors that influence students' decision making process when choosing an institution.

As stated that higher education institutions operate as businesses with marketing challenges. Therefore, it is critical for HEI's to understand the **factors** that play a role in the student decision making process.

7.3.1 Conclusions regarding research sub objective 1: factors that influence students' decision making process.

The important variables were identified as follows:

- **Core product**

Core product is made-up of the main benefits that a customer expects in a product. The focus is the type of university itself and the uniqueness in the study programme the student is interested in. The university qualification is the principal benefit sought by the student. The results in Table 6.4 show that qualification recognized worldwide (4) was one of the key influential factors for the respondents.

- **Expected product**

Expected product can be described in terms of the attributes the students expect when they enrol at a particular education institution. The expected attributes identified by respondents as important factors include quality of teaching (1), financial assistance (2), campus housing (6), wide variety of courses (7), language policy (9).

- **Augmented Product**

The augmented product refers to additional tangible and intangible items that are purchased by students during the course of study. The physical environment of the institution is a crucial augmented product. Augmented product includes, ease of finding

employment (3) sport and recreation programmes (5), campus life (8) and multicultural diversity (16).

- **Product image**

Product image is established from the augmented and tangible attributes of the product. Good image of the institution was rated at eleven and academic reputation was rated as the thirteenth factor considered by students during their decision making process. Strydom (2004: 106) stated that quality and reputation of an institution play a vital role in student recruitment. Even though image was not rated as an important influential factor, the results in Table 6.5 indicate that respondents had utilized the university promotional material (university printed material, website and word of mouth) that is designed to enhance the image of the university.

The findings of this study show that respondents were concerned with the core product and had certain expectations of the product and were also concerned with the augmented aspects of the product. The importance of the core product was rated in the first five factors that students consider in the decision making process. Two important factors (quality of teaching and financial assistance) that are features of the expected product were identified in the first five of the most important factors considered by students. Ease of finding employment, sport and recreation programmes were also rated in the first five of the most considered factors which show that students were also interested in the product augmented characteristics. The results indicate that product image did not play a role in influencing the respondents' choice.

7.3.2 Implications regarding research sub-objective 1: factors that influence students' decision making process.

- **Review existing promotional strategy**

Findings of this study raised a number of issues concerning the choice factors that influence the decision making. The findings of the study clearly indicate that higher education institutions need to re-examine their strategy models and develop new ones that will consider students' needs. This study has shown that higher education marketers must consider the results of this study will help to develop a decision making model that takes into consideration the identified choice factors. Prospective students' understanding or lack of understanding about the requirements in the application form

and how the application will be assessed may have a big impact on the students' decision making (James 2002: 1).

- **Target market**

The findings of this study may be tested again in another empirical research in order to determine if the results are consistent before higher education institutions can reconsider the choice factors. This study and other recent studies (Redmond 2010) indicate a vast difference on the importance students attach to choice factors. A future study may be conducted in all nine provinces in an attempt to establish the availability of information gathering resources for prospective students to make informed decisions. According to James (2002: 1), prospective students are supplied with information that is complicated to make sense of. Higher education institutions may need to consider geographical market segmentation to identify the needs of the diverse target market. The findings of this study show that respondents differ from what was identified by Redmond's, (2010) study as to what it considers as important in their decision making.

- **Employment opportunities**

The findings of the previous studies (Jones 2002, Bonnema 2006, Wiese 2008, and Redmond 2010) and this study reveal the fears that students have when it comes to employability. Higher education institutions need to form strategic alliances with both the public and the private sector in order to address the respondents' concern about finding employment after qualification and also the availability of financial assistance as the results indicate that it is a worrying factor for a majority of respondents. Higher education institutions also need to look at how they address issues surrounding features of the tangible product as some of its attributes have been regarded as some of the most important factors. It is also important for higher education institutions to establish what it is that students consider as quality teaching from both the prospective students and the students already enrolling at higher education institutions.

- **Recreational facilities**

The results of this study and previous studies (Bonnema 2006 and Coetzee and Liebenberg 2004) also suggest that there is a need to investigate the role played by the availability of sport and recreation programmes and facilities in the decision making process.

- **Admission requirements**

Most of the studies that have been conducted have overlooked the role played by qualification requirements during the decision making process. James (2002: 2) is of the view that, for most of the high school leavers, the main concern is entry requirements.

7.3.3 Recommendations regarding research sub objective 1: factors that influence student's decision making process when choosing an institution

- **Nationwide study:** The research can be made a nationwide study in an attempt to bridge the gap between the higher education institutions and the needs of their target market.
- **Special needs:** The next research study could be targeted at students with special needs to establish the factors that they consider as important during their decision making process.
- **Resources:** Higher education institutions must employ qualified educators; provide relevant course content, libraries, laboratories and the latest technology used for presentation to address the needs of functional value.
- **Collaboration with the public and private sector:** An in-depth survey must be conducted to establish whether there is a relationship between employability and financial assistance and the role of the employment sector. The relationship can be utilized to create a competitive advantage for the institution.
- **Professional bodies' registration:** Higher education institutions must register all their courses or qualifications with professional bodies of higher education both in the country and worldwide.
- **Sport facilities:** South African higher education institutions must create world class sporting facilities to ensure that talent is identified, developed and nurtured. The well-known athletes of the institutions, who have achieved nationally and internationally, can be used as ambassadors of the institutions for recruitment and forming partnerships.
- **Admission requirements:** Higher education institutions should investigate the role played by admission requirements in the decision making process of prospective students. This will help the HEI's to be reasonable in setting admission requirements in order to meet government requirements to provide access to students from previously

disadvantaged backgrounds. It can be recommended that institutions must have special programmes to equip those students who did not qualify for the main programme.

- **Housing facilities:** Higher education institutions should investigate how high and urgent is the need of more hostels in their institutions as students from various provinces will consider this factor as being crucial in their decision making process.

7.4 MAIN FINDINGS REGARDING RESEARCH SUB-OBJECTIVE 2

7.4.1 Conclusions regarding research sub objective 2: The role of demographics in the decision making process

The following eight demographic variables were identified as key in the decision making process:

Table 7.1 The role of demographics in the decision making process

Demographic factors	Role in influencing the decision making process
Gender	Figure 6.1 depicts that the majority of the respondents in this study were males and their gender did play a role in influencing how the respondents viewed the importance of career development (finding employment after the study and a wide variety of courses) during the decision making process .
Language and Province of origin	Figure 6.3 shows that the overall majority (76.9%) of students were from the black ethnic group and 65.4% came from provinces outside Gauteng (figure 6.2). This finding clearly justifies why home language and home province of the respondents had a major influence on the physiological factors (financial assistance and the availability of on campus housing and language policy of the HEI) that students considered during the decision making process. Therefore, students considered physiological needs such as money, shelter and food hence they were also concerned about accommodation and financial prospects.
Family tradition	Table 6.7 shows that word of mouth by family and reference group played an influential role on individual factors (choosing the higher education institution and the field of study) during the decision making process.
Availability of financial assistance and employment opportunities	There was an influential relationship between the Students psychographic factors (financial and employment concerns) and the students' personal factors (gender, language and institution) during the decision making process, (table 6.7).
Institution and field of study	Table 6.7 shows that the respondents' current institution and field of study had an influence in determining situational factors (family tradition, language used by the institution, availability of financial assistance, qualification recognition, availability of campus housing and university links with the industry) to consider during the student the decision making.

7.4.2 Implications regarding research sub objective 2: the role of demographics in the decision making process

Higher education institutions should to develop a marketing strategy that integrates the seven most considered demographic variables. Although this study generalized its findings on this aspect, higher education institutions should aim at segmenting its markets in order to determine needs and wants of groups that may exist within the target market. The findings suggest that the demographics of the students' played a role during the decision making process. Higher education institutions must understand governments' requirements of diversity and inclusion of students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and also understand the demographics of the target market as prescribed by government's policies.

7.4.3 Recommendations regarding research sub objective 2: to determine the role of demographics in the decision making process

- **Partnership with private/financial sector:** Forming partnership with both the private and public sector will play a crucial role for the university as the majority of the respondents (males) stated they want a university that will offer them employment opportunities. Higher education institutions may develop marketing strategies must mention partnerships between their universities and financial sectors that fund the university.
- **Niche marketing strategy:** Higher education institutions should segment their target markets into niche markets to identify which factors are preferred by each identified niche market.
- **Home language communication to prospective students:** The results reveal that 44% of the respondents also considered the language policy of the higher education institution. This indicates that the higher education institutions should also base their information sources around languages, especially Afrikaans, Setswana and Sepedi.
- **Word of mouth:** Universities must include their alumni in their marketing strategies as results reveal that word of mouth by family and friends played an influential role in the students' decision making.

7.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There were various limitations associated with this research study. The major challenge to the study was obtaining approval for collecting data at both higher education institutions. The questionnaire had to be submitted to the ethics committees of these higher education institutions and this delayed the process. The study had targeted to survey 364 students but, due to the delays, the total number of respondents who participated in the study was 216. Although there was a large number of a respondent's, they are still quite limited for the total higher education market.

The study was restricted to two public higher education institutions in the Tshwane metropolitan. An alternative way for the research assistants to collect data at the University of Pretoria was to go to their high performance centre and request those who were present to complete the questionnaire. To avoid complete diversion from the target audience, the research assistants still had to target the students from the three targeted faculties. Another limitation is associated with demographics; the study did not directly compare the subgroups that exist within the market to establish the relationship between home language and value attached to each choice factor.

7.6 CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicates the importance of higher education institutions employing suitable qualified academic staff that will be able to respond to quality of teaching. The study also established that, although most students agreed that quality of education was important, but there was no 100% agreement amongst the respondents. This finding indicates that the needs of the target market are diverse hence the higher education institution should also consider niche marketing.

The results of the research provide marketing practitioners at higher education institutions as to which promotional tools to use for student recruitment. Besides the open days and career exhibitions that both higher education institutions use as their promotional tools, the findings of the study have revealed how direct communication with prospective students would put the institutions at a competitive advantage. Compiling a data-base of matric students was rated as the most effective promotional tool due to its nature of

interactive marketing and that is what students need and want from the recruitment offices of any higher education institution. The results of the study show the growth and advancement of social media in South Africa. In their marketing strategies, higher education institutions need to incorporate social media as one of the promotional tools with the greatest strength to create a competitive advantage.

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APPENDIX A



23 March 2011

To whom it may concern

I, Samkele Konyana, student no. 20354561, am currently undertaking a research study towards the completion of a Master's Degree in Technology (Marketing) at the Durban University of Technology. The qualification requires a complete dissertation. The dissertation title is: **"Promotional tools at selected Universities in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region"**. The challenges represented by the restructuring of higher education and the implementation of the National qualification framework have created new opportunities for tertiary institutions. Competition for higher education has increased over the past few years due to an increased number of private education service providers that have entered the market. This has resulted in intense competition among universities and universities of technology to attract high quality students.

As a result of these changes I would like to investigate the influence of promotional tools employed by the selected higher education institutions in the Tshwane metropolitan region from a student perspective. I would also like to investigate the factors that students consider in their decision making process when choosing a higher education institution. My sample for the study targets first year students studying a qualification in Engineering, Science and Management Sciences.

In light of the above, I would appreciate if you would grant me permission to distribute questionnaires to the first year students so that they can complete them. The questionnaire will help me as the researcher to draw conclusions and make informed recommendations. The findings of the study will be available on request. Participation in this survey is voluntary. Should a participant wish to withdraw from the survey, kindly

inform the researcher or the person nominated by the researcher to assist.

Yours sincerely

.....

Konyana Samkele (Miss)

Date: 23/03/2011

For enquiries contact me Email: medicine2005hpe@yahoo.com Cell: 0724578529 or my supervisors;

Prof S Penceliah Email: pencilid@dut.ac.za or Dr. M Maharaj Email: maharama@dut.ac.za

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire: Criteria used by students when selecting a Higher Education Institution

Questionnaire no.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Please read the questions carefully and make sure you answer all the questions.
2. Please note that your response will be regarded as strictly confidential and will only be used for research purposes only.
3. Indicate your answer by putting a cross (X) next to the appropriate number:
Example 1(X)

Section A

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

1.1 Gender	
Female	1
Male	2

1.2 Which Province do you come from?	
Gauteng	1
Free State	2
KwaZulu-Natal	3
Northern Cape	4
North West	5
Limpopo Province	6
Western Cape	7
Mpumalanga	8
Eastern Cape	9

1.3 What is your home language?	
Afrikaans	1
English	2
Sesotho	3
SiSwati	4
Xitsonga	5
Setswana	6
Tshivenda	7
Xhosa	8
Zulu	9
Sepedi	10
Other specify	11

1.4 Which institution are you currently studying at?	
Tshwane University of Technology	1
University of Pretoria	2

1.5 Which field of study are you currently in?	
Engineering	1
Science	2
Management sciences	3

Section B

2. FACTORS STUDENTS CONSIDER IN THEIR DECISION MAKING WHEN CHOOSING A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION (HEI).

From the list, select the factors that you considered when choosing your current institution. (Answer all the options provided in order of importance). Example: Most important, 5 (X)	Not important At all	Of little Important	Uncertain	Important	Very important
2.1. Qualifications recognized worldwide	1	2	3	4	5
2.2. Location of the institution	1	2	3	4	5
2.3. Ease of finding employment during and after the study	1	2	3	4	5
2.4. Wide variety of courses / programmes offered	1	2	3	4	5
2.5. Academic reputation (prestige)	1	2	3	4	5
2.6. Parents / Siblings attended this institution (tradition)	1	2	3	4	5
2.7. Good image of the University	1	2	3	4	5
2.8. Language policy	1	2	3	4	5
2.9. Financial assistance (bursary & loans)	1	2	3	4	5
2.10. Quality of teaching	1	2	3	4	5
2.11. Campus safety and security	1	2	3	4	5
2.12. Multi-cultural/ diversity	1	2	3	4	5
2.13. Flexible study mode (evening classes, use of computers)	1	2	3	4	5
2.14. On campus housing/ hostels	1	2	3	4	5
2.15. Sport and recreation programs	1	2	3	4	5
2.16. Campus life/ atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5
2.17. Links with the industry	1	2	3	4	5

Section c

3. INFORMATION SOURCES USED BY STUDENTS

Which of the following information sources influenced your decision to study at your current institution? (Answer all the options provided). Example: strongly agree, 5 (X)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree
3.1. I attended a career exhibition /Open day/ campus visits	1	2	3	4	5
3.2. Word of mouth (Parents, friends, teachers, alumni)	1	2	3	4	5
3.3. I responded to an advertisement on the radio/ TV/ news papers	1	2	3	4	5
3.4. I attended an event at the campus (music festivals / sport events)	1	2	3	4	5
3.5. I browsed the University website	1	2	3	4	5
3.6. I read the university prospectus	1	2	3	4	5
3.7. University staff visited my school	1	2	3	4	5
3.8. If other, specify					

4. Section D
EFFECTIVENESS OF PROMOTIONAL TOOLS

Which promotional tools would you consider the most effective for student recruitment at HEI? NB (Answer all the options provided in order of importance). Example: Most important, 5 (X)	Not important At all	Of little Important	important	Most important
4.1 Open days and exhibitions organised by institutions	1	2	3	4
4.2. Billboards	1	2	3	4
4.3. Radio advertisements and radio slots given to higher education institutions	1	2	3	4
4.4. Internet (using Social media such as twitter, face book, YouTube)	1	2	3	4
4.5. The use of student recruitment agents	1	2	3	4
4.6. Sport Camps organised by SASCOG at the higher education institution	1	2	3	4
4.7. Compiling a data base of all Matric students and sending direct mails, sms's and emails	1	2	3	4
4.8. Browsing the University website	1	2	3	4
4.9. University publications (newsletters and brochures)	1	2	3	4
4.10. Advertisements in newspapers and magazines	1	2	3	4
4.11. Other, specify	1	2	3	4

Thank you

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