

# Formulating a customer-driven marketing strategy for higher education institutions

**Sharon Gordon**  
**10804242**

Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree *Master of Business Administration* at the  
Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University

Supervisor: Prof CA Bisschoff

May 2016

It all starts here <sup>TM</sup>

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My sincere gratitude and appreciation to all whom supported me during the course of my studies. A special word of thanks goes out to the following people in particular:

- My Heavenly Father for awarding me an abundance of talent to be able to excel academically. Thank you for granting me the opportunity to further my studies.
- My husband James for his love and support. Several challenges crossed my path during the course of the three year qualification. You motivated me to persevere and complete my studies.
- My parents for believing in me. Your unconditional love and abundant support and encouragement carried me throughout. I dedicate this study to my father, who passed on during the course of my studies. I know he would have been extremely proud of me.
- My daughter Zheete for her love. Still so small, but you always understood when mommy could not play with you. For the hours you spent with me in the study and drawing multi-coloured flowers in all my textbooks and study guides. Thank you for happily granting me the freedom to continue with my studies.
- My extended family, friends and colleagues for frequently asking about my studies and offering encouragement throughout.
- Professor Christo Bisschoff for your advice and guidance. Also for sparking a newfound passion for consumer behaviour and marketing.
- Doctor Suria Ellis for the assistance with the statistical processing and analysis.
- Jomoné Müller for editing the final document.

## ABSTRACT

The education services environment has changed over the past few decades. The once safe havens are now experiencing extreme competition not only nationally but across the globe. The competition is based on acquiring students, resources and employees. The challenge is not only to acquire or recruit the students, but also to retain them.

Higher educational institutions should strategise to become not only locally relevant, but also globally competitive. Increased competition within the higher education sector compels change to the business model of the institutions. The changes encompass the organisation as an entity, the various small business units and the marketing departments. Attention should be paid to the brand and brand awareness initiatives of the institutions, the marketing efforts formulated to resonate with the customers' needs and product quality and service delivery to present value for money to the customer.

The main goal of this study was divided into three focus areas. The first was to determine the choice factors both learners and their parents consider when deciding on a future higher education institution. Additional to the already mentioned it aimed to evaluate the appropriateness and preference of communication platforms and media used by higher education institutions to disseminate institutional and product offering to prospective students. The third factor was to determine how involved Grade 10 and Grade 11 learners were with the decision making process of future higher education institution. Thus prior to them reaching the final year of formal high schooling.

The findings revealed from the study were formulated as recommended constructs or factors to be included in the institutional marketing mix which forms the foundation of the institutional marketing strategy.

The study adds to the national and international research on the topic. This is specific to support South African research which is rather limited compared to international research. The information can be used by other researchers as a basis for future research into the field of marketing in education.

**Key terms:** Higher education, Higher Education Institutions, choice factors, customer-driven marketing, strategic marketing, services, buyer decision-making process, consumer behaviour.

## OPSOMMING

Die opvoedkundige dienste omgewing het oor die afgelope paar dekades verander. Die eens veilige hawens ervaar nou uiterste mededinging. Die mededinging is nie net nasionaal nie, maar regoor die wêreld. Die kompetisie is gebaseer op die verkryging van studente, hulpbronne en werknemers. Die uitdaging is nie net om hul te werf nie, maar ook om die student te behou vir die totale tydperk wat dit neem om die kwalifikasie te voltooi.

Hoër opvoedkundige instellings moet hul strategieë aanpas om plaaslik relevant en wêreldwyd mededingend te wees. Groter mededinging in die hoër onderwys sektor vereis verandering aan die sake-model van die instansies. Die veranderinge sluit die organisasie as 'n entiteit, die verskeie klein sake-eenhede en die bemaking departemente in. Aandag moet gegee word aan die merk en merk bewustheid inisiatiewe van die instellings. Die bemaking pogings moet geformuleer word om aanklank by die kliënte te vind en in hul behoeftes te voorsien. Kwaliteit van die dienslewering moet resoneer met die kliënt se waarde vir geld verwagting.

Die hoofdoel van hierdie studie was verdeel in drie fokusareas. Die eerste was om te bepaal watter keuse faktore beide leerders en hul ouers oorweeg wanneer hul besluit op 'n toekomstige hoër onderwys instansie. Bykomend tot die reeds genoemde fokusarea, was die studie daarop gemik om die toepaslikheid en voorkeur van kommunikasie platforms gebruik deur hoër onderwys instellings te evalueer. Beide leerders en hul ouers het insae gelever oor die toepaslikheid van die verskeie kommunikasie platforms om inligting rakende hoër onderwys instansies en produkaanbieding te versprei. Die derde faktor was om te bepaal hoe betrokke Graad 10 en Graad 11-leerders was met die besluitneming proses van toekomstige hoër onderwys instansie.

Die bevindinge geopenbaar uit die studie is geformuleer soos aanbevelings van faktore wat instansies in hul institusionele bemakingsmengsel moet insluit. Die bemakingsmengsel vorm die grondslag van die institusionele bemaking strategie.

Die studie dra by tot die nasionale en internasionale navorsing oor die onderwerp. Spesifiek vir die Suid-Afrikaanse navorsing wat redelik mis is in vergelykend met internasionale navorsing wat beskikbaar is. Die inligting kan deur ander navorsers gebruik word as 'n basis vir verdere navorsing in die gebied van bemaking in die onderwys.

**Sluiteltermes:** Hoër onderwys, hoër onderwys instansies, keuse faktore, kliënt gedrewe bemaking, strategiese bemaking, dienste, koper besluitnemingsproses, verbruikersgedrag.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>OPSOMMING .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>14</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	14
1.2 Problem statement .....	16
1.3 Research objectives .....	16
1.4 Hypotheses .....	17
1.5 Research design .....	18
1.5.1 Literature study .....	18
1.5.2 Empirical study .....	18
1.5.2.1 Target population .....	19
1.5.2.2 Sample Size .....	19
1.6 Measuring instrument and data collection method .....	19
1.8 Ethical conditions and considerations .....	20
1.9 Division of chapters .....	20
1.10 Synopsis .....	21
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	22
2.2 Overview of the higher education landscape .....	23

2.2.1 Competition in South Africa .....	24
2.2.2 Increase in student numbers .....	25
2.2.3 Financial status of higher education .....	27
2.2.4 Increased fees.....	29
2.2.5 Technology in higher education .....	32
2.2.6 Transformation in higher education .....	33
<b>2.3 Strategic marketing .....</b>	<b>36</b>
2.3.1 Strategic marketing defined .....	36
2.3.2 Need for strategic marketing.....	43
<b>2.4 Education as a service .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>2.5 Marketing in education.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>2.6 Marketing research.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>2.7 Consumer behaviour.....</b>	<b>53</b>
2.7.1 Consumer behaviour defined.....	54
2.7.2 The buyer decision-making process .....	56
2.7.3 Consumer behaviour models .....	57
2.7.3.1 The economic model .....	57
2.7.3.2 Stimulus-response model .....	58
2.7.3.3 The learning model.....	59
2.7.3.4 Sociological model.....	60
2.7.3.5 Psychological model.....	60
2.7.3.6 Cognitive model.....	60
2.7.3.7 Engel, Blackwell and Miniard consumer behaviour model .....	60

2.7.3.6.1 Information input.....	61
2.7.3.6.2 Information processing .....	61
2.7.3.6.3 Decision process stage.....	62
2.7.3.6.4 Decision process variables .....	64
2.7.3.6.5 External influences .....	65
<b>2.8 Choice factors .....</b>	<b>65</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	 <b>68</b>
<b>3.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3.2 Defining the research problem and the research objectives.....</b>	<b>70</b>
3.2.1 Hypotheses formulated for the study .....	72
3.2.1.1 Hypothesis 1.....	73
3.2.1.2 Hypothesis 2.....	73
3.2.1.3 Hypothesis 3.....	73
3.2.1.4 Hypothesis 4.....	74
3.2.1.5 Hypothesis 5.....	74
<b>3.3 Selecting the research design.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>3.4 Sampling plan.....</b>	<b>76</b>
3.4.1 Sample population.....	76
3.4.2 Sample frame .....	76
3.4.3 Sample size.....	77
<b>3.5 Research design and data collection.....</b>	<b>78</b>
3.5.1 Questionnaire layout and question types .....	78

3.5.2 Validity and reliability of the questionnaire .....	85
<b>3.6 Data processing and analysis .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>3.7 Presenting the research findings .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>4.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>4.2 Participant response rate.....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>4.3 Descriptive data — Learner questionnaire .....</b>	<b>89</b>
4.3.1 Question 1 — Gender of learner respondents .....	89
4.3.2 Question 2 —Grade distribution of learner respondents .....	89
4.3.3 Question 3 — Age distribution of learner respondents .....	90
4.3.4 Question 4 — Home language distribution of learner respondents .....	91
4.3.5 Question 5 — Extent of consideration about future career options .....	91
4.3.6 Question 6 — Extent of decision-making about higher education institution of choice ....	92
4.3.7 Question 7 — Parental agreement with choice of higher education institution .....	92
4.3.8 Question 8 — Likelihood of change to choice of higher education institution .....	93
4.3.9 Question 9 — The influence of choice factors on the decision of a higher education institution .....	94
4.3.10 Question 10 – Preferred communication and media platform to communicate HEI information.....	96
<b>4.4 Descriptive data — Parent questionnaire .....</b>	<b>98</b>
4.4.1 Question 1 — Parent respondents’ distribution according to the child’s grade .....	99
4.4.2 Question 2 — Home language distribution of parent respondents .....	99
4.4.3 Question 3 — Extent of engagement with child’s future career options.....	100



4.4.4 Question 4 — Extent of decision-making about a child’s higher education institution of choice .....	100
4.4.5 Question 5 – Parental agreement with choice of higher education institution.....	100
4.4.6 Question 6 — Extent to which the parent makes the decision on a higher education institution .....	101
4.4.8 Question 8 — Preferred communication and media platform to communicate HEI information.....	104
<b>4.5 Exploratory data analysis — Research objectives and hypotheses results .....</b>	<b>106</b>
4.5.1 Research objective 1 .....	106
4.5.2 Research objective 2 .....	110
4.5.3 Research objective 3 .....	111
4.5.4 Research objective 4 .....	114
4.5.5 Research objective 5 .....	116
4.5.6 Research objective 6 .....	119
4.5.7 Research objective 7 .....	121
4.5.8 Research objective 8 .....	123
<b>CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>5.1 Conclusions.....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>5.2 Limitations .....</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>5.2 Recommendations .....</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>ANNEXURES.....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>Annexure A - Learner questionnaire.....</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Annexure B - Parent questionnaire.....</b>	<b>146</b>

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AET	Adult and Education Training
CHE	Council of Higher Education
CPI	Consumer price index
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FET	Further Education and Training
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
NDP	National Development
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1:	Post-school education and training institutions.....	25
Table 2.2:	Students enrolled at post-school education and training institutions.....	25
Table 2.3:	Government (DHET) funding for HEI's in 2011/2012 and 2012/2013.....	27
Table 2.4:	Total income of public universities (R Billions).....	28
Table 2.5:	CPI compared to Higher Education fees from 2009 to 2015.....	29
Table 2.6:	Marketing research defined.....	53
Table 3.1:	Participating school quintile classifications.....	77
Table 3.2:	Sample size and survey distribution.....	78
Table 3.3:	Choice factors identified in international and South African research.....	82
Table 3.4:	Communication techniques and platforms identified in previous research.....	84
Table 3.5:	Data categories and coding.....	86
Table 4.1:	Learner response rate.....	88
Table 4.2:	Parent response rate.....	88
Table 4.3:	Home language distribution of learner respondents.....	91
Table 4.4:	Extent of consideration about future career options.....	92
Table 4.5:	Extent of decision-making about higher education institution of choice.....	92
Table 4.6:	Parental agreement with choice of higher education institution.....	93
Table 4.7:	Likelihood of change to choice of higher education institution.....	93
Table 4.8:	The influence of choice factors on decision of higher education institution.....	95
Table 4.9:	Communication and media platforms.....	97
Table 4.10:	Respondent distribution according home language.....	99

Table 4.11:	Level of engagement with child's future career options.....	100
Table 4.12:	Decision of HEI.....	100
Table 4.13:	Parental agreement with choice of HEI.....	101
Table 4.14:	Parental decision making of HEI.....	101
Table 4.15:	The influence of choice factors on decision of higher education institution (Parental perspective).....	103
Table 4.16:	Communication and media platforms (parental perspective).....	105
Table 4.17:	Learner choice factors ranked in order of importance.....	107
Table 4.18:	Choice factor research findings compared to previously conducted studies.....	109
Table 4.19:	Parental choice factors ranked in order of importance.....	110
Table 4.20:	Learner and parent ranking of choice factors compared.....	112
Table 4.21:	Difference in ranking of choice factors between learners and parents.....	113
Table 4.22:	Relatedness between schools (Hierarchical linear modelling).....	115
Table 4.23	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test results.....	117
Table 4.24	Choice factors correlation clusters.....	118
Table 4.25	Mean values and results for different home language speakers.....	119
Table 4.26:	Level of engagement with career choices and choice of future HEI.....	120
Table 4.27:	Communication and media platforms ranking (Learners).....	121
Table 4.28:	Communication and media platforms compared to previous studies.....	122
Table 4.29:	Communication and media platforms ranking (Parents).....	123
Table 4.30:	Learner and parent ranking of choice factors compared.....	125

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1:	The higher education landscape.....	24
Figure 2.2:	Students enrolled at post school education and training institutions.....	26
Figure 2.3:	Total income of public universities (R Billions).....	28
Figure 2.4:	Annual inflation compared with higher education fee increase.....	30
Figure 2.5:	South African Rand exchange rate against most renowned currencies.....	31
Figure 2.6:	Levels of strategy.....	37
Figure 2.7:	Conceptual framework for defining marketing.....	40
Figure 2.8:	Conceptual framework for defining strategy.....	41
Figure 2.9:	Conceptual framework for defining strategic marketing.....	42
Figure 2.10:	The characteristics of service marketing.....	46
Figure 2.11:	The product and service marketing mix.....	48
Figure 2.12:	Consumer behaviour defined.....	54
Figure 2.13:	Factors influencing consumer behaviour.....	56
Figure 2.14:	Buyer decision-making process.....	56
Figure 2.15:	Stimulus-response model.....	59
Figure 2.16:	Engel, Blackwell and Miniard consumer behaviour model.....	61
Figure 2.17:	Types of buying decision behaviour.....	64
Figure 3.1:	Research process.....	69
Figure 4.1:	Gender of learner respondents.....	89
Figure 4.2:	Grade distribution of learner respondents.....	90
Figure 4.3:	Age distribution of learner respondents.....	90

Figure 4.4:	Parent respondents' distribution according to child's grade.....	99
-------------	--	----

# CHAPTER 1 NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

## 1.1 Introduction

The number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa has grown over the past two decades. HEIs can be described as institutions that offer education after senior school level, thus Grade 12, on a full-time, part-time and or distance learning. These institutions are registered and regulated by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). South African higher education is provided by 23 public universities and 119 registered and accredited private HEIs (DHET, 2015:3). Over the years a number of public universities have merged in order to accommodate a greater capacity to provide higher education to young South Africans. The number of registered and accredited private institutions have increased over the past decade. The changes and increasing number of institutions are the result of an ever-growing demand for higher education. The increasing demand for higher education brings about greater competition between HEIs.

Historically the choice of HEIs have been overshadowed by public institutions. The competition in this sector has however increased as more public universities and private institutions commenced with offering higher education. A global tendency is to study internationally. More and more students study at higher educations in a different country than their home country. In addition to the growing number of institutions and international opportunities and competition, the customers' expectations and requirements of HEIs have changed (Diedericks, 2012:1-4).

Changes in technology have created an online study environment that is inexpensive compared to face-to-face lecturing. The worldwide recession and amendments to government funding for public institutions contributed to changes in the way HEIs operate (HESA, 2011; Jordaan & Wiese, 2010:538-541; Le Roux, 2011). Private institutions do not receive any government funding. Both public and private institutions are managed and operated as income-generating organisations. The more paying students an institution can enrol, the greater the income and profit margin. The financial income of HEIs determines the sustainability of the institution.

Despite the challenges the higher education sector faces it remains a fast-growing service industry (Naidoo, 2011:1117). Khanna *et al.* (2014:122) states that higher education was once considered a safe haven. However with the challenges the sector faces and the ever-increasing competition, HEIs have to promote their brands. Customer-driven marketing strategies are required to ensure that the HEIs understand their market and maximise opportunities and resources. Marketing and branding have to become a main focus of the business strategies of HEIs (Hay & Gensen, 2008:78-79).

The higher education sector is a customer-driven service market. The needs of the customers are central to the business operations and act as catalysts when considering an institution (Dupaul & Harris, 2012:9). It has become a great requirement to be aware of the market, its needs and expectations and to incorporate it in the institutional strategy, the brand strategy and the brand promise. Various international studies pertaining to the marketing strategies of HEIs could be found while there is a dearth of research within the South African context. A leader in this field of study is South African, Melandie Wiese (2008). Wiese's studies along with various international studies, are part of the literature review. However, these studies were conducted with students within HEIs. The research pertains to the choice factors when deciding on a HEI. These participants of the mentioned studies could have been influenced by what they have experienced since enrolling at the institutions. A comparison are made between the mentioned outcomes and that of the school-going participant feedback gathered for this study.

It is required to understand the needs of prospective students when developing a customer-driven marketing strategy. The customers make decisions at the hand of choice factors. A choice factor is a factor or characteristic of a higher education institution that contributes to a student reacting positively towards an institution and ultimately deciding to study at the institution as a result of the reaction. Learners are making choices based on what they research and or experience about institutions. However, the learner or then prospective student of today, differs from the student that enrolled at an institution a few years ago. It is therefore important that institutional marketers frequently re-establish the needs of the customers and their primary choice factors. Once established the strategy needs to be amended if need be as to gain a competitive advantage.

The study was conducted among Grade 10 to Grade 12 learners. Most HEIs predominantly market to the Grade 12s. The study aims to determine the level of decision making and or interest that Grade 10 and Grade 11s may have in their future higher education institution. If it can be determined that students at this level already show interest in their future higher education institution it would be advisable that marketing strategy encompass exposure to the institution at an earlier schooling grade.

The South African culture and requirements vary from that of international institutions and students. This study aims to resolve the South African question of what prospective students consider when choosing a HEI. The study represents the factors and influential powers of various constructs that may lead to enrolment. Some attention are given to what marketing media is most effective when communicating these important factors to prospective learners, aged 15 to 20, and their parents. The study concludes with recommendations on what the customer-driven marketing strategy of a higher education institution should embrace.



## **1.2 Problem statement**

The higher education landscape is changing. The changes are eminent not only in the South African market but internationally as well. The competition within the market is much more competitive than a few decades ago. The competition is the result of international recruitment of students, and as a result of more institutions, public and private, entering the market. Institutions are in competition for students. Students bring with them the financial resources required for the institutions to sustain themselves. Public institutions receive funding from the government, however, the financial support has been decreasing year by year. Private institutions do not receive any funding and are solely reliant on student fees. All these institutions compete for scarce resources such as student fees. For institutions to survive they have to secure their competitive advantage meeting the target market's needs and have to ensure that the customer receive superior value to that of the competition.

The international changes increased financial pressure and heightened a demand for value for money from the customer which require HEIs to focus more on strategic marketing. Part of strategic marketing or a marketing strategy is to ensure that higher institutions become more market- and customer-oriented. Part of understanding the market is to be aware of the choice factors that prospective students consider when deciding on a future higher institution. Once the choice factors have been established, HEIs should incorporate these in their marketing and advertising campaigns or activities. Marketing is an expensive, yet crucial business construct. It is therefore imperative to understand the customers as to allocate time, money and other resources efficiently and effectively.

Marketing and communication media have evolved over the past decade and are ever-improving and innovating. Technology has brought about various new social, digital and telecommunication platforms. The study aims to determine which of these communication platforms and or tools, old or new, do prospective students and parents perceive as appropriate to communicate information pertaining to higher education.

## **1.3 Research objectives**

By focusing on learners from a number of schools from various quintiles, and their parents the study's research objectives are to:

- (i) Determine the importance of various choice factors for prospective students when making decisions regarding their HEI of choice.

- (ii) Determine the importance of various choice factors for prospective students' parents when making decisions regarding their HEI of choice.
- (iii) Determine whether there is a correlation between the choice factors considered by prospective students and parents.
- (iv) Determine whether learners from different schools differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.
- (v) Determine whether learners of different language groups differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.
- (vi) Determine the level of engagement with the choice of future HEI prior to Grade 12.
- (vii) Establish the most influential marketing media to communicate information pertaining to HEIs with learners.
- (viii) Establish the most influential marketing media to communicate information pertaining to HEIs with parents.

From the research objectives a total of five hypotheses will be tested.

#### **1.4 Hypotheses**

- H<sub>1</sub> Learners and their parents differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when making a decision about HEIs.
- H<sub>2</sub> Learners from different schools differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when making a decision about HEIs.
- H<sub>3</sub> Learners of different language groups differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when making a decision about HEIs.
- H<sub>4</sub> Learners from Grade 10 and 11 do engage with choices about HEIs prior to Grade 12.
- H<sub>5</sub> Learners and their parents differ regarding the preferred platform for communicating information about HEIs and qualifications on offer.

## **1.5 Research design**

The study comprises a literature review and an empirical study. The empirical study consisted of both qualitative and quantitative research.

### **1.5.1 Literature study**

The purpose of the literature review is to establish a theoretical framework for studying the perceived value proposition of HEIs in South Africa and the influence it has on the choices of prospective students. The literature review referenced national and international studies relating to the topic. The literature review reveals that very few studies within the South African arena have been conducted whereas numerous international studies were found. The literature reveals that a majority of the studies were conducted on sample groups that were already studying at a HEI. This study is aimed at establishing what high school learners look for when making a decision regarding their future studies.

### **1.5.2 Empirical study**

The empirical study consists of both qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative research was conducted by means of personal interviews with three small focus groups. However the qualitative contribution of the study was very small in nature, it was only an exploration of the choice factors that influenced current higher education students while choosing an institution. The focus groups' feedback were compared with the findings on choice factors as described by several of the national and international studies discussed in the literature review. The students were not given any options to rate or measure the strength of the choice factor, but merely asked what they recall were important decision-making factors considered when they had to decide on their current HEI.

From the choice factors mentioned by the focus groups, a list of 20 choice factors were compiled. These choice factors were also presented in the various national and international studies researched in this study. The choice factors were used to construct a survey to be used as part of a quantitative research plan by which data were collected. The study aimed to establish when prospective students start their decision-making process. It also investigated the marketing media most effective to supply prospective students and their parents with information of HEIs.

The collective dataset gathered as part of the study presents valuable information in certain aspects of a customer-driven marketing strategy for HEIs.

The empirical aspect of the study encompasses the following research methodological dimensions:

### **1.5.2.1 Target population**

The target population relevant to the study was Grade 10, Grade 11 and Grade 12 high school learners and their parents or guardians. This target population was decided upon as these learners either had to start planning future studies at a higher education institution, or make their final decision. The respondents could identify and rank the factors that they considered important and influential to their choice. The sample was representative of various cultures, genders and language speakers. The study is representative of the Vaal Triangle population. The study can be replicated in the greater South African population.

### **1.5.2.2 Sample Size**

A sample size of 400 participants was considered as representative of the population. This was in line with previously conducted research similar in nature.

## **1.6 Measuring instrument and data collection method**

A survey was used to gather data. Two versions of the survey were used, one for the prospective student and the second for the prospective student's parents. Questions represented possible influential factors or constructs. The participants had to rate the level of influence the factor had on his or her choice of higher education institution.

The survey questionnaires were handed to respondents at various high schools in the Vaal Triangle. The survey included a cover letter with an indemnity clause reiterating that participation was voluntary and that respondents could withdraw their participation at any time. The survey was completed anonymously.

Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners and their parents at seven schools in the Vaal Triangle area participated in the survey.

## **1.7 Statistical data analysis**

The frequency of the data and the level of the frequency were determined. The frequency of the factors ranked the influential constructs. The level of importance or influence represents the significance of including the given influential construct in the marketing strategy of HEIs. An external person or prospective student should be able to identify the influential component as part

of the brand promise or value proposition. Various other studies and correlations can be tested from the data set. IBM SPSS 2015 was used for statistical analysis.

### **1.8 Ethical conditions and considerations**

The questionnaires were completed by Grade 10, Grade11 and Grade 12 learners and their parents. As the learners were either younger than 18 years of age, or over 18 but still considered as vulnerable adults due to the fact that they were still at school, permission was requested from the school principals to administer the survey. The questionnaire included a cover letter with an indemnity clause reiterating that participation is voluntary and that respondents could withdraw their participation at any time. The questionnaire was completed anonymously thus no information was included in the questionnaire by which a respondent could be identified after participation.

Due to financial and time constraints, the research was only conducted in the Vaal Triangle area. It will therefore be representative of the Vaal Triangle population. The study could be replicated in schools across South Africa that will be a greater representation of the South African population.

### **1.9 Division of chapters**

Chapter 2 of the study provides the literature review of previous research conducted and findings that formed the basis of the study. The literature describes the higher education landscape in South Africa and analyses the importance of brand awareness and marketing as part of HEIs' strategy. Furthermore, it studies consumer behaviour and provides a brief description of factors consumers consider when deciding on a higher education institution. Chapter 2 also discuss the target market and the market needs. This is compared later on in the study to the findings of the survey to indicate changes in the target market's expectations.

Chapter 3 presents the research design and methodology applied in the study. The target population, sample size, sampling technique and measuring instrument and data collection method are discussed. The data analysis and other statistical procedures are reported on.

Chapter4 reports on the results of the empirical study. This chapter presents the analyses, interpretation and evaluation of the research findings.

Chapter 5 is the final review of the entire study and presents a conclusion of the study findings. Recommendations to HEIs are made based on the findings. The study limitations are presented and recommendations for future research opportunities are made upon complete conclusion.

### **1.10 Synopsis**

Competition within the HEI market is increasing with the entry of more institutions (Diedericks, 2012:1-4). In addition to the increasing number of service providers a number of environmental and external factors contribute to the changed behaviour of the HEI market and its needs (HESA, 2011; Jordaan & Wiese, 2010:538-541; Le Roux, 2011). The changes include the continued enhancement of technology and influential economic factors, to name but two.

Despite the challenges the HEI sector faces it is still labelled as one of the fastest growing service industries in South Africa (Naidoo, 2011:1117). The higher education was once considered a safe haven. However with the challenges the sector faces and the ever-increasing competition, HEIs have to promote their brand (Khanna *et al.*, 2014:122). A customer-driven marketing strategy is required to ensure that the HEI understand its market and maximise opportunities. Marketing and branding have to become central business strategies of HEIs (Hay & Gensen, 2008:78-79).

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

The education services environment has changed over the past few decades. The once safe havens are now experiencing extreme competition not only nationally but across the globe. The competition is based on acquiring students, resources and also employees. Competition in acquiring students and or prospective students is not unique to a specific phase within the educational environment. Schools compete as early as primary school level to enlist learners. The competition at primary school level is primarily localised (Immelman, 2013:3). As the learners progress to secondary school the competition expands primarily to a national level (Bateman, 2012:5). At tertiary education level, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) compete within an international market (Khanna, *et al.* 2014:122; Wiese, 2008:2).

Increased competition within the higher education sector compels change to the business model of the institutions. The changes encompasses the organisation as an entity, the various small business units and the marketing with specific reference to the brand and brand awareness initiatives of the institutions, the marketing efforts formulated to resonate with the customers' needs and product quality and service delivery to present value for money to the customer (Ernst & Young, 2011:6; Proctor, 2008:17; Jooste *et al.*, 2012:3).

It is evident from the above statement that HEIs have to market themselves and display their competitive advantages. By portraying the organisational competitive advantage, organisations, including HEIs, aim to present the advantages of making use of the products and or services on offer. By doing so, the organisations wish to attract and retain more customers. All of the above need to be included in the organisational and marketing strategy of the organisation. As HEIs operate within a service environment it is imperative to understand the distinctive aspects of services marketing.

The literature review explores strategic marketing, services marketing and present the current state of the higher educational landscape nationally and internationally. Strategic marketing and services marketing theory are discussed. The literature review reflects on consumer behaviour and the influence choice factors have on prospective students when deciding on a higher education institution. The choice factors as established by various international and national studies are also discussed.

## **2.2 Overview of the higher education landscape**

In recent years the educational services industry has developed into an ever-expanding international market. The expansion and growth brought about not only increased student numbers, but increased competition as more HEIs opened their doors over the last decade or two. The mentioned factors, among others, contributed to increased rivalry to gain greater student numbers and superior market share. Contributing to the increased competition was the high number of private HEIs entering the educational services industry. A trend seen more often in recent years were the recruitment of international students. Thus the local HEIs compete against international rivals as well (Naidoo and Wu; 2011:1117-1118).

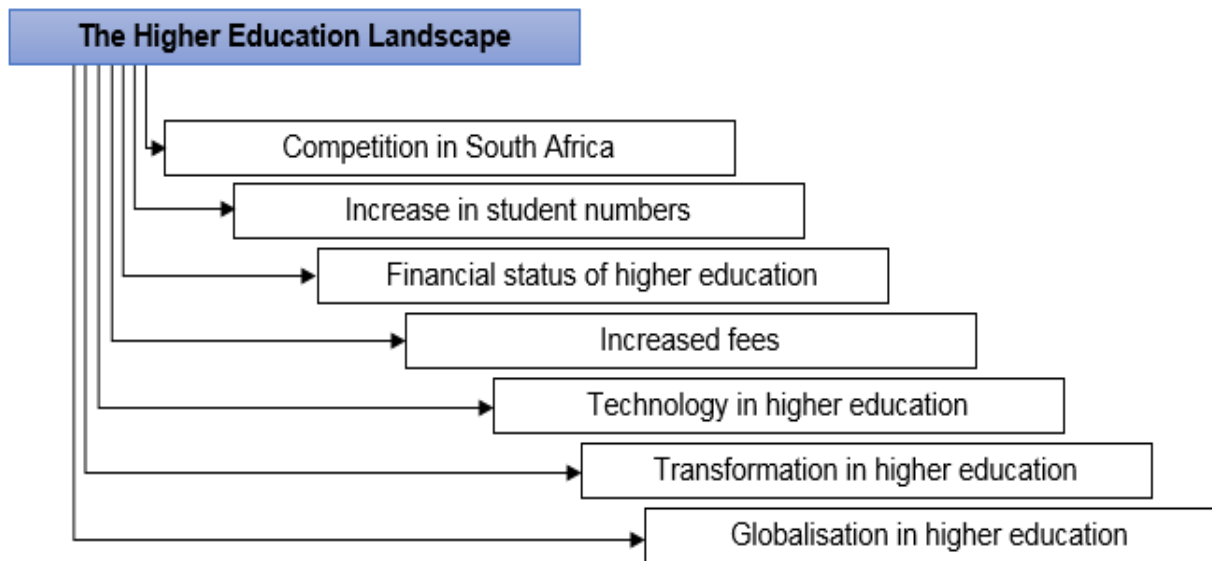
In recent years the higher education services industry has developed into an ever-expanding and ever-changing international market (Wiese, 2008:27). There are global trends within the sector that has an influence on the sector. For the purpose of this study detailed information about the higher education landscape in South Africa is presented. However, global trends that has a severe influence on the South African higher education landscape are also discussed. Figure 2.1 provides a summary of the greatest influential changes within the South African higher education sector. These are not the only changes, but are the ones that catalyse the greatest challenges and changes in the sector. It is important to realise that depending on where the institution finds itself in its lifecycle, the level and experience of change will vary from one institution to the next. In South Africa the difference between the public and private providers also influence the experience and the level of adjustment to the change.

A great challenge specifically in the South African context is the transformational requirements post 1994s democratic elections. Becoming a democratic country has necessitated change in the higher education sector. Since 1994 some change is evident, however extensive change is still required with specific reference to equality in access and provision. Even though the black South African population is in the majority, their representation at HEIs are not in line with their population representation (HESA, 2014:11).

Furthermore the changing environment, institutional government funding per capita has become less over the past few years. This had a great influence on how institutions provide educational offerings and how they operate (HESA, 2014:11-12).

These major challenges and changes within the higher education sector are discussed briefly.





**Figure 2.1: The higher education landscape**

### 2.2.1 Competition in South Africa

The South African post-school education and training system includes public and private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), public and private Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and Adult and Education Training (AET) centres.

HEIs offer qualifications on National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels 5 to 9. The qualifications on offer are dependent on the qualifications accredited by the Council of Higher Education (CHE).

TVET colleges offer programmes that integrate theory and practical application in specific industry fields. Students can achieve programme outcomes on NQF levels 2, 3 and 4. Level 4 is equivalent to a National Senior Certificate (NSC). Additional to the mentioned, TVET colleges also offer various higher education certificates and diplomas.

AET centres offers outcome-based programmes to assist adults and young people to complete their basic education.

The post-school educational environment, with specific reference to institutions that offer higher education qualifications, has grown over the past years. The growth has brought about increased competition among HEIs. Table 2.2.1 indicates the number of registered post-school institutions. Specific reference can be made to the increase in private HEIs and the private TVET colleges. Collectively the industry grew by 63%, introducing 332 new service providers across South Africa.

**Table 2.1: Post-school education and training institutions**

Institution type	2010 DHET Number of Institutions	2013 DHET Number of Institutions	Growth number of Institutions	Growth %
Public HEI	23	23	0	0%
Private HEI	109	113	4	4%
Public TVET	50	50	0	0%
Private TVET	344	672	328	95%
<b>Total</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>63%</b>
AET	3 083	3 212	129	4%

Source: DHET. (2015:3).

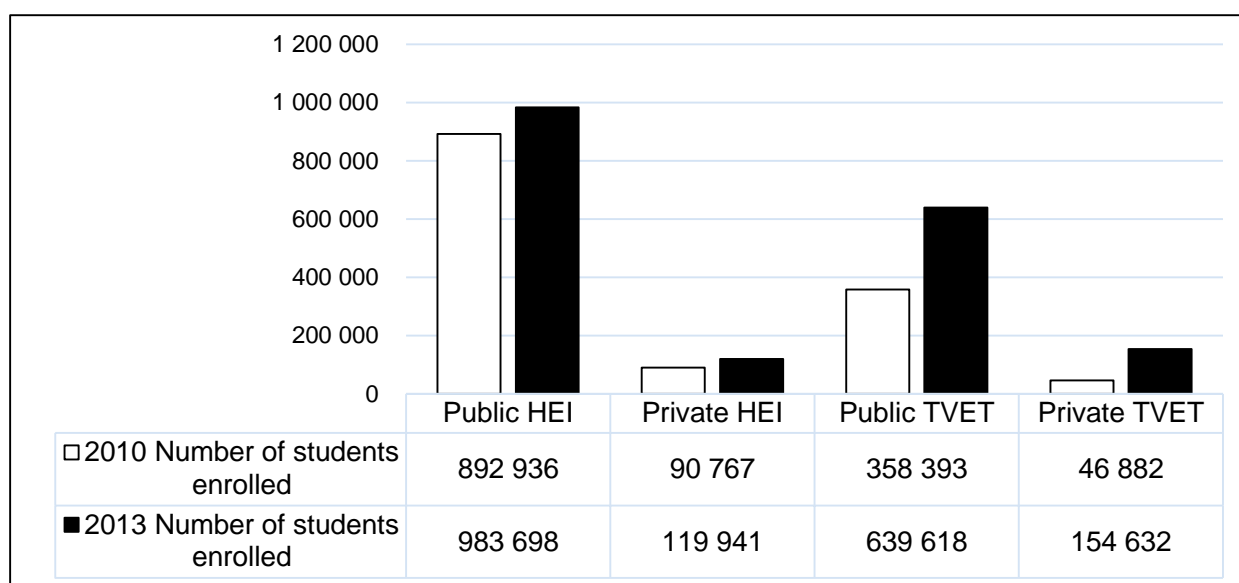
### 2.2.2 Increase in student numbers

As with the number of institutions that increased from 2010 to 2013, the number of students enrolled for post-school studies increased by 37%. Table 2.2.2 is an indication of the increase in students numbers enrolled at the various post-school institutions. As the TVET colleges are a combination of Further Education and Training (FET) and Higher Education (HE) qualifications it is difficult to account for the growth in numbers with specific reference to higher education. However the growth in the number of students enrolled at public and private HEIs increased with 42% collectively from 2010 to 2013. Student numbers at public institutions grew by 90 762 compared to the 29 174 at private institutions.

**Table 2.2: Students enrolled at post-school education and training institutions**

Institution type	2010 Number of students enrolled	2013 Number of students enrolled	Growth in student numbers	Growth %
Public HEI	892 936	983 698	90 762	10%
Private HEI	90 767	119 941	29 174	32%
Public TVET	358 393	639 618	281 225	78%
Private TVET	46 882	154 632	107 750	230%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 388 978</b>	<b>1 897 889</b>	<b>508 911</b>	<b>37%</b>
AET	297 491	257 823	-39 668	-13%

Source: DHET. (2015:3).



Source: DHET. (2015:3).

**Figure 2.2: Students enrolled at post school education and training institutions**

During Minister of Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande's 2015/2016 budget address (South Africa, 2015), he announced that the university enrolment headcount is expected to grow from the 983 698 students in 2013 to more than a million in 2019. Additional to the projected 2019 growth he stated that he feels confident that the growth target as per the National Development Plan (NDP) for 2030 will be achieved. The NDP for 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2012) depicts that the 2010 enrolment numbers at universities should increase by 70% by the year 2030, as to exceed 1,6 million enrolments in 2030.

The World Bank (2015) reported that the working-age population of South Africa has increased with 11 million from 1994 to 2015. The working-age population refers to people between 15 and 65 years of age and constitutes to 65% of the South African population. It is projected that the working-age population will increase with another 9 million over the next five decades.

World Bank (2015) Project Leader, Catriona Purfield states:

*"We see that education is the greatest priority for South Africa if it is to harness its demographic opportunity to propel growth. Getting basic schooling right is the first step to ensuring that school leavers and graduates have the foundational skills necessary to function in the modern workplace"*

The increasing working-age population requires an increase in availability and access to higher education. Higher education training and development is required not only for school leavers, but

also for the population already employed within the workforce but seeking to improve their qualifications and or skills.

### 2.2.3 Financial status of higher education

Public post-school education and training institutions are funded by government funds and student fees. Private institutions receive no government financial support and are solely reliant on student fees.

The government award money annually in the form of funding to the public HEIs, TVET colleges and AET centres. The allocation of these funds to public HEIs are based on a number of criteria and process planning. Table 2.3 is an average estimate of funds allocated to students studying at public HEIs. The average funding per student increased with only 4,67% from 2012 to 2013. This is not in line with the annual tuition fee increase of between 6% and 10%. Even though more funds are allocated to HEIs per year, the average funds per student is proportionally less than the annual course fee increases. Thus the students are having to pay more per academic year as the institutions' government financial support are becoming less (DHET, 2015:73; HESA, 2014:11-12; HRDC, 2013:6).

**Table 2.3: Government (DHET) funding for HEIs in 2011/2012 and 2012/2013**

Year	Funding for public HEIs	Student Numbers	Average per student	Increase in average funds per student
2011/2012	R 19 354 159 000,00	953 373,00	R 20 300,72	4,67%
2012/2013	R 20 902 779 000,00	983 698,00	R 21 249,18	

**Source:** DHET. (2015:73).

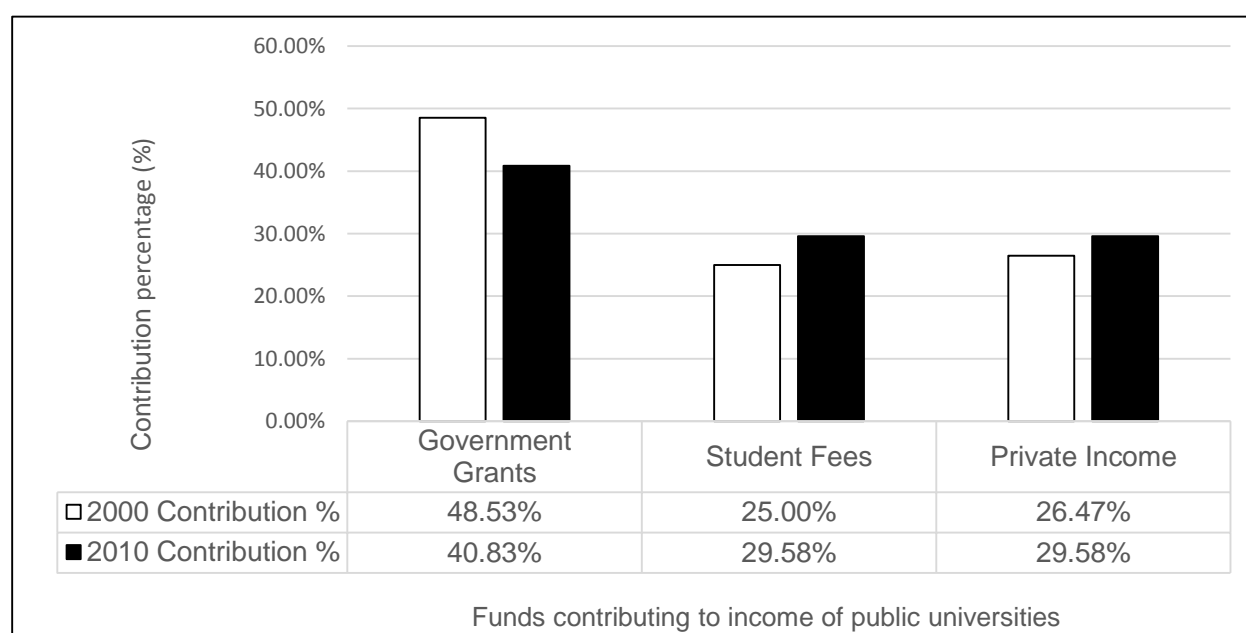
Research conducted by the Human Resource Development Council of South Africa (2013) quoted the 2012 Fiscal and Finance Commission's Budget Review of public universities. Table 2.4 is an extract from the quoted report. Table 2.4 portrays the total income of public universities with a breakdown of income streams. The income streams include governments funds/grants, student fees and private income generated through donations, investments and research or academic services provided.

The contribution percentage of government grants over the period from 2000 to 2010 decreased from 48,53% to 40,83%. The income generated by student fees increased from 25% in 2000 to 29,58% in 2010.

**Table 2.4: Total income of public universities (R Billions)**

Income Source	2000	% Contribution	2005	% Contribution	2010	% Contribution
Government grants	6,6	48,53%	9,9	41,42%	16,7	40,83%
Student fees	3,4	25,00%	7,4	30,96%	12,1	29,58%
Private income	3,6	26,47%	6,6	27,62%	12,1	29,58%
<b>Total income</b>	<b>13,6</b>	<b>100,00%</b>	<b>23,9</b>	<b>100,00%</b>	<b>40,9</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

Source: Poalses and Koyana (2013:7).



Source: Poalses and Koyana (2013:7).

**Figure 2.3: Total income of public universities (R Billions)**

It is evident that even though the rand value of the funds or grants annually increases, it does not increase in line with inflation, increased course fees, and increased student numbers. The percentage of the government's budget allocated towards funding HEIs are also declining (HESA, 2014:11-12).

National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is a loan and bursary scheme funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training. NSFAS support disadvantaged students who do

not have the financial means to fund their studies. The loans and or bursaries can only be used at public HEIs and TVET colleges (NSFAS, 2015:1; SARAU, 2012:11).

In 1999 NSFAS assisted 29 176 students with financial support by means of bursaries or loans. This equated to R441 million. R9 billion rand was availed in 2014 to assist 414 802 students with financial aid. The number of public HEIs amounted to 186 150 (NSFAS, 2015:1-20). It is evident from the presented numbers that the rand value and the number of students assisted are increasing. However, NSFAS is not able to meet the needs of all qualifying and eligible students. In addition to the increasing need for assistance, the higher education tuition fees are increasing at a rate higher than the NSFAS fund growth. The repayment of the loans and bursaries are very slow and low numbers of students are repaying this. This can be due to low employment rate and also lack of honouring of original credit agreements. Only 30% of the loans are being repaid. If a greater percentage of the students pay these funds back as contracted, more funds would become available more often for circulation to assist more students. The funds are slow to be released back into the system (NSFAS, 2015:126).

#### 2.2.4 Increased fees

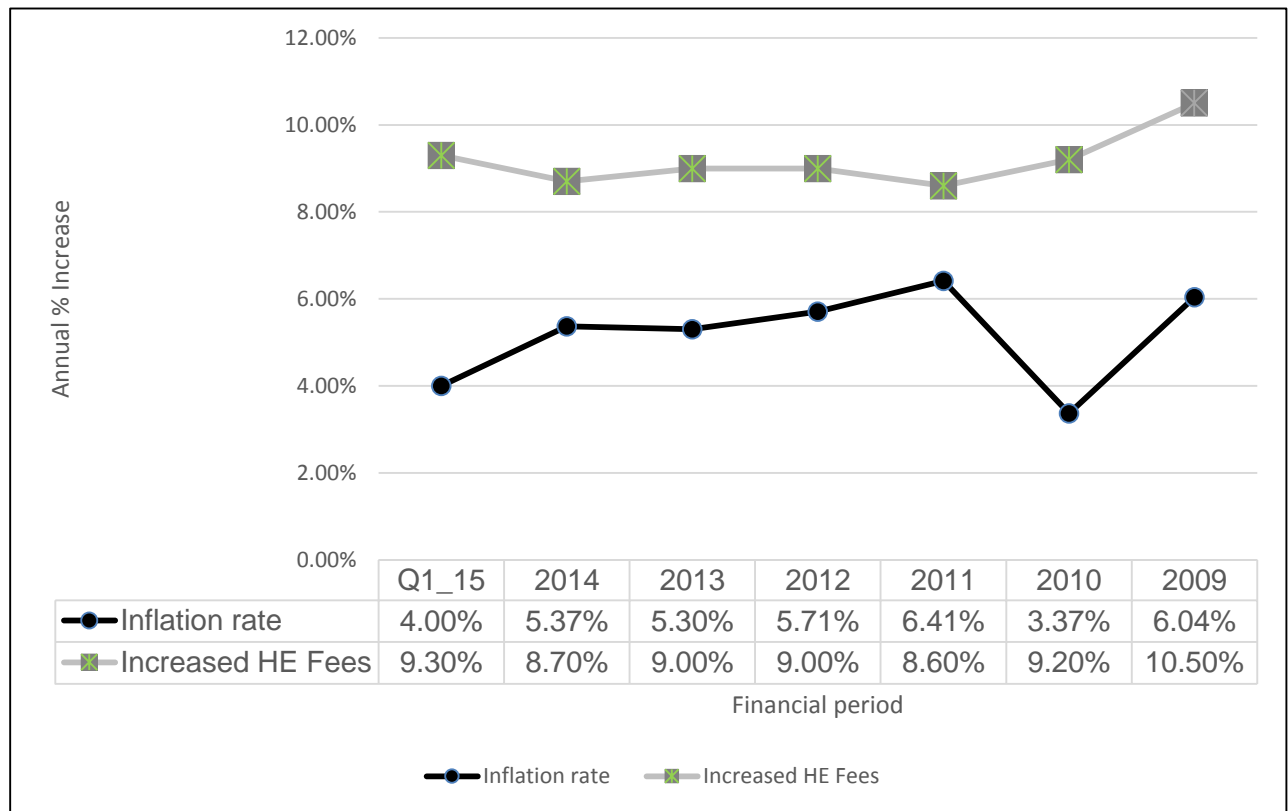
Student fees are increasing annually. The increase in student fees is necessitated as contribution from the government has become less. However the increase has not been in line with the consumer price index (CPI). See table 2.5.

**Table 2.5: CPI compared to Higher Education fees from 2009 to 2015**

<b>Consumer Price Index (CPI)</b>	<b>Inflation rate</b>	<b>Increased HE Fees</b>	<b>Variance (HE-CPI = %)</b>
Q1_15	4,00%	9,30%	5,30%
2014	5,37%	8,70%	3,33%
2013	5,30%	9,00%	3,70%
2012	5,71%	9,00%	3,29%
2011	6,41%	8,60%	2,19%
2010	3,37%	9,20%	5,83%
2009	6,04%	10,50%	4,46%
<b>Average</b>	<b>5,17%</b>	<b>9,19%</b>	<b>4,01%</b>

In order to quantify the fees increase dilemma, assume that the greater part of the South African workforce receives an annual salary increase and or salary adjustment that is in line with inflation. From 2009 to the end of 2015's first quarter, the average increase of higher education fees

exceeded inflation by a margin greater than 4%. Higher education is becoming more expensive and less affordable for the greater South African population. Figure 2.4 gives a clear picture of the variance between higher education annual price increase and the inflation rate (Stats South Africa, 2015).

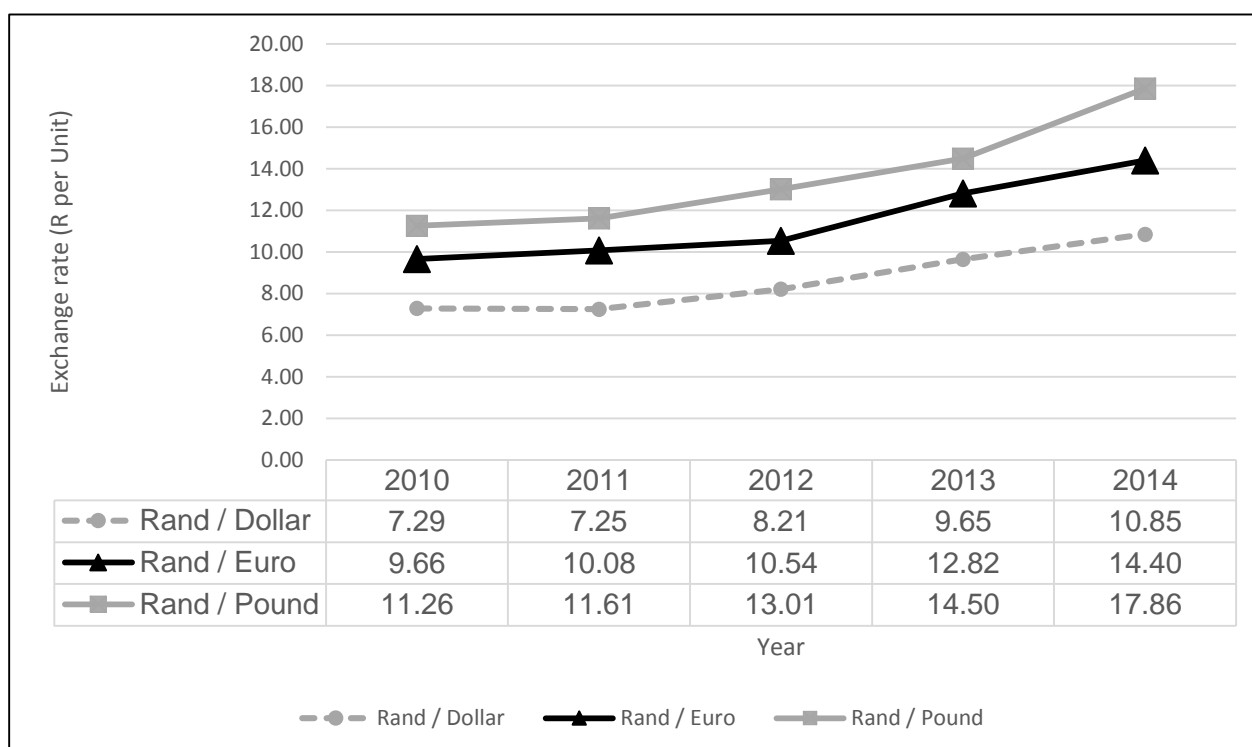


Source: Stats South Africa (2015).

**Figure 2.4: Annual inflation compared with higher education fee increase**

Rising fees present a barrier for accessibility. HEIs are forced to increase fees with increasing operational costs and reducing government funding. Higher operational costs are related to salaries, rising municipal costs (water and electricity), maintenance of infrastructure and facilities and the weak exchange rate specifically with the import of textbooks and other educational material.

See figure 2.5 for the average exchange rate for the South African rand to the dollar, euro and pound and sterling over the past five years.



Source: Standard Bank (2015).

**Figure 2.5: South African Rand exchange rate against most renowned currencies**

Higher enrolment rates can either be beneficial to reducing cost or be a cost driver. The following example explains the statement in a very simplistic manner:

If a lecture venue has the seating capacity for 100 students, but it is being used by groups smaller than 50 students, the resources are being underutilised. The resources in this scenario would be the facility or lecture venue and the lecturer. By focused planning and marketing strategies an increase in student numbers for the qualification as to fully utilise the 100 seat venue can increase the profit margin. Fees for 100 students will be collected, the facility cost will be the same and the lecture cost will be the same. The resource are thus better utilised. However with the increased student numbers, more administrative staff may be required. This sound very simplistic, but in actual fact the planning and business optimisation within this environment are very complex. Therefore the statement that increased enrolment rates can either be beneficial to reducing costs or be a costs driver.

Only the South African middle income households to more affluent households can afford the higher education fees. In light of annual increases and affordability there have been reoccurring student protests at institutions over the past years. These protests date as far back as 1994. The mostly violent protest actions go hand in hand with loss of tuition time and academic delivery and have an influence on the institutional reputation and service delivery (Makoni, 2014; SAHO, 2015).



### 2.2.5 Technology in higher education

The European Commission (2014) quoted David Warlick:

---

*“We need technology in every classroom and in every student and teacher’s hand, because it is the pen and paper of our time, and it is the lens through which we experience much of our world.”*

---

Technology is firmly imbedded in the make-up of higher education. Its presence in the academic environment over the past two decades has had an altering influence on the way in which education is presented and received. This will remain an ever-changing environment in years to come. The changes and tendency to incorporate more and more technology into the learning environment can be explained at the hand of a number of reasons. The working environment is calling for higher levels of skills to coincide with technological advancements. The student and lecturer groups are becoming more diverse. Nowadays, students’ attitude towards learning is substantially different than two or three generations before. More people are returning to further their studies and improve their abilities and skills in order to be more employable. It is imperative to become more employable within an environment with high unemployment rates such as South Africa. The competition within the workforce is extremely high and the best qualified and skilled will flourish (Statistics South Africa, 2010; European Commission, 2014:14). In a research report compiled by The Economist (2011:4), it was stated that technology became the core differentiator in attracting students and corporate role-players.

Technology not only changed the way in which lecturers present their classes and convey the information, but brought about flexibility in presentation thereof. Attendance online or virtual classroom sessions make it possible for students to study at an institution in another country without leaving the comfort of their own homes. More people have access to these type of learning environments. The academic presentation is more outcome-based. Students can frequently engage with fellow students and or lecturers on various technological platforms. They have greater access to academic material and other information. Academic textbooks are published more often in electronic format. Electronic textbooks (eBooks) are currently cheaper than traditional printed textbooks. In addition to the technological advances, publishers promote this as being more environmentally friendly and contribute to their social responsibility.

The technological advances come with its own disadvantages. Not all students are equipped to study with technology especially in South Africa. Teaching with technology is still a new horizon for the South African education. Students therefore first need to equip themselves with the

required technological acumen prior to being able to focus on their academic studies. This initially pose as a challenge. Students have been found to plagiarise more often. Cheating has become easier. Not all countries across the globe have the technological infrastructure to make this widely accessible. They either do not have the physical infrastructure, or the cost associated with this is extremely high (European Commission, 2014; The Economist, 2008). However, technology within the higher education arena is inevitable and to be competitive in the market, HEIs need to adapt accordingly.

## 2.2.6 Transformation in higher education

The negative effects of exclusion and discrimination against certain races during the apartheid era can be seen in all spheres of social life. The higher education system in South Africa has historically also been flaunted with discrimination and underrepresentation of certain cultural groups. Van Louw and Beets (2008:478) done research on the changing nature of knowledge creation in higher education. They referenced Waghid's (2002:459) summary of the legacy that apartheid left behind as follows:

- White South Africans were advantaged during the apartheid years. They had a greater chance to attend universities and technikons. Technikons are in the current higher education sector known as Universities of Technology.
- The success and completion rate of white students are better than that of black students.
- Unequal employment opportunities in HEIs. In 1994, 90% of permanent academic positions were taken by white academics.
- The student-lecturer ratio at historic white universities were substantially lower than at historic black universities. This made an impact on the quality of the education. Additional to unequal staffing resource distribution, the historically white universities received greater financial funding than others.
- Limited relevance of higher education qualifications to the needs of the majority in South Africa.

In 1993 black (African, Coloured and Indian) South Africans represented 89% of the South African population. Only 11% of the population was white South Africans. However black students only constituted to 52% of the enrolments at HEIs, whereas 48% was white South Africans (HESA, 2014:1-2). In 1994, the new South African democratic government committed itself to

transforming higher education as part of the inequalities that had to be resolved. The government intervened and required institutional change, looking at the purpose and goals of these institutions. Policies, laws and regulations were studied and amended and or completely replaced (Badat, 2010:2-3). The Education White Paper 3 of 1997 (DOE, 1997) emphasise the purpose of higher education. Higher education is essential to:

- Develop South Africans, their talents, intellectual abilities and aptitudes during the course of their lives. Higher education offers individuals the opportunity to develop their level of self-fulfilment.
- Address the requirements or development needs of society and train a labour force with competencies and skills. Competencies and skills are necessary for the growth and prosperity of the South African economy.
- Socialise and reflect on previous, current and new findings, ideas, policies and practices as to develop for the common good.
- Contribute to the creation and sharing of knowledge in all fields of human understanding, through research, learning and teaching.

The higher education system has changed over the past two decades (CHE, 2015:1). By 2011 black students constituted to 81% of the enrolled student population (HESA, 2014:2). There is still a long way to go to meet the moral, political, social and economic demands of South Africa. The plight for full transformation is still ongoing today. It is required to maintain the improvement of accessibility. Accessibility needs to be in line with affordability as well. High institutional fees prevent students from a lower income to have access to higher education. There is still a severe mismatch in the employee representation within the higher education sector and transformation is required. Language policies of some historic white universities are still negating the offering of classes in Afrikaans. This has been a catalyst for a number of student protests in the past. Another important factor to still receive attention is that of through-put rate with reference to the completion of studies. In 2010 the international graduation rate of a three year degree was 25%. The white South Africans' graduation rate was 22% whereas the black South African graduation rate was only 17%. Further to the mentioned statistics, HESA (2014:2) indicated that only 16% of students that started with a three year degree in 2005 completed the degree in the three year period, 41% graduated after 6 years and 59% dropped out during the course of the six year period.

Whereas 44% of white students completed the qualification in three years, 65% graduated after six years and only 35% dropped out during the six year tenure.

It is evident from the above that there are a number of inequalities still to be addressed by HEIs. However, it is important to acknowledge what has been accomplished thus far. HEIs need to include their transformational achievements and plans to address the remainder of the issues in their corporate image and marketing strategies. The South African population seek development in line with transformation and will favour an institution that can show positive progress towards equality.

#### 2.2.7 Globalisation in higher education

Altbach, *et al.*, (2009:23) describe globalisation as the trends in the economy, technology and other scientific advances that are inevitable contributors to the modern-day world. These trends have a direct impact on higher education. Globalisation is forcing HEIs to adapt their offerings as to better prepare students to function in the increasingly borderless global economy (Altbach, *et al.*, 2009: 171).

HEIs are no longer remote institutions operating in particular towns or cities, but global HEIs connected to the global world, irrespective of the country it operates in (Meyer, *et al.*, 2011: 6570).

HEIs stand to familiarise themselves with trends in the global market. Marketing research has now become required outside of the close proximity of the immediate market. The target market stretches across borders, countries and continents with globalisation. International recruitment of students are the norm as to better equip the students to operate in a global environment. South Africa is still a long way from total global adaption through an international offering by a global representative staff and a curriculum with global adaptations and simulations (Altbach, *et al.*, 2009: 174; Meyer, *et al.*, 2011:6577).

All of the trends discussed have an immense impact on each higher education institution and the way in which institutions market themselves. The landscape together with other factors like internal resources and the target market will influence the marketing strategies the institution will design, implement and evaluate in an attempt to achieve a competitive advantage. In light of the previous discussion, marketing strategy or else known as strategic marketing is discussed.

## 2.3 Strategic marketing

HEIs as organisations across the world are adopting market-driven strategies. The reason for the worldwide phenomenon is based on the increased competition within the markets they function in. Customers focus on best value for money and demand quality products and services. Strategic marketing underpins the importance of the various markets, the customers and the competitors within the represented market. Strategic marketing implies that organisations identify the customers' needs and apply solutions to satisfy these needs. Decisions made and solutions applied are not only to satisfy the needs of customers, but to achieve a competitive advantage and to reach organisational goals set out in the organisational strategy (Proctor, 2008:1-17).

The terminology strategic marketing and marketing strategy have been used interchangeably in literature (Varadarajan, 2010:120). In order to have a better understanding of strategic marketing various authors and researchers have examined both strategy and marketing as separate constructs and established touchpoints between the two to create a descriptive definition for strategic marketing. Other authors however studied and defined the concept of strategic marketing as an aggregate construct.

### 2.3.1 Strategic marketing defined

Wind and Robertson (1983:12) explain that a marketing strategy focuses unequivocally on the establishment and maintenance for long-term competitive and consumer advantage. They state that strategic marketing can be perceived as an integral part of the business strategy. Marketing strategy functions as an interactive link between an organisation, its customers, competitors and various other stakeholders.

In agreement with Wind and Robertson, Brennan *et al.* (2008:15) argue that strategic marketing focuses on the products and services, the market and customers relationships. But seeing that the customers are such an important part of an organisation, it overlaps with various other strategic business units and becomes an active part of the organisational strategy.

Jooste *et al.* (2002:5) identify four levels of strategy within an organisation: corporate strategy, business strategy, market strategy and functional strategy. They describe market strategy as "the organisation's endeavours to innovate, discover and break rules to create sustainable value for customers".



**Source:** Adapted from Jooste *et al.* (2008:3-5).

**Figure 2.6: Levels of strategy**

Jooste *et al* continues to explore strategic marketing as a three step process. The three step process echoes principles of strategic management:

- **Step 1 — Strategic Analysis.**

Prior to the development of strategy, analyses of the environment and role-players of the market must be performed. The sum total of the analyses are used as the platform on which to develop the strategies.

- **Step 2 — Strategy Formulation.**

Strategists are required to craft a strategy based on the strategic analysis. The organisation's vision, mission, corporate values and the organisational strategic intent play a vital role in the direction of the design. The marketing strategy and the corporate strategy should align in order to achieve greatest advantage and organisational growth. The marketing strategy can be single faceted or have more than one interrelated focus.

- **Step 3 — Implementation, Control, Measurement and Interventions.**

Implement the strategy and ensure that the implementation is well executed. The success of the strategy and the implementation should be measured and evaluated. If the expectation is not met, an intervention should be developed and implemented.

The levels of strategy described by Jooste *et al.*, resonate with and elaborate on the depiction made by Tanner *et al.* (2009:5-7). Tanner *et al.* refer to the strategy hierarchy. The firm's corporate strategy encompasses the plans and goals for the organisation as a whole. Once the corporate strategy is formulated, it is communicated to the organisation's various business units such as the marketing unit. The marketing business unit creates a strategy that aligns with the corporate strategy as to find a sustainable competitive advantage. The functional or operational team then develops a strategy to achieve the presented competitive advantage which is aligned with the corporate strategy. Much earlier in the field of study, Webster (1992:10) stated that marketing operates at three strategic levels. The strategic levels being organisational, business or small business units and operational units.

According to Proctor (2008:1-8), there are a number of features at the core of a marketing strategy. These are inclusive of the opening and closing of strategic windows. A strategic window is defined as the period at which the requirements or needs of a market and the ability of the organisation to meet the needs occur simultaneously. Therefore organisations continuously have to evaluate the market to find the optimal opportunity. Proctor (2008:1-8) indicates the influence of market drivers. Market drivers that influence the needs and requirements of the customers include political, economic, socio-economic and technological (PEST) factors. An important part of a marketing strategy is to understand where the organisation positions itself against its competitors and where in the industry life cycle an organisation finds itself. An organisation requires sufficient resources to act on the requirements of the customers. Proctor (2008:1-8) is of the opinion that strategic marketing looks beyond the customer and the competitors, it involves all stakeholders internally and externally. Imperative to the success is the ability to be proactive rather than reactive.

Varadarajan (2010:119-140) conducted research in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the field of study and to define strategic marketing or marketing strategy. Varadarajan specifies that the field of study has evolved over the past fifty years and continues to change. He referenced work from marketing leaders, strategists and strategic marketers. He found that the extent to which the mentioned leaders conceptualised the scope of the field of study ranged from a fairly narrow to immensely broad, influenced by their own expertise and focus. Varadarajan (2010:130)

defines marketing strategy as “... an organization's integrated pattern of decisions that specify its crucial choices concerning marketing activities to perform and the manner of performance of these activities and the allocation of marketing resources among markets, market segments and marketing activities toward the creation, communication and/or delivery of a product that offers value to customers in exchange with the organisation and thereby enables the organisation to achieve specific objectives”.

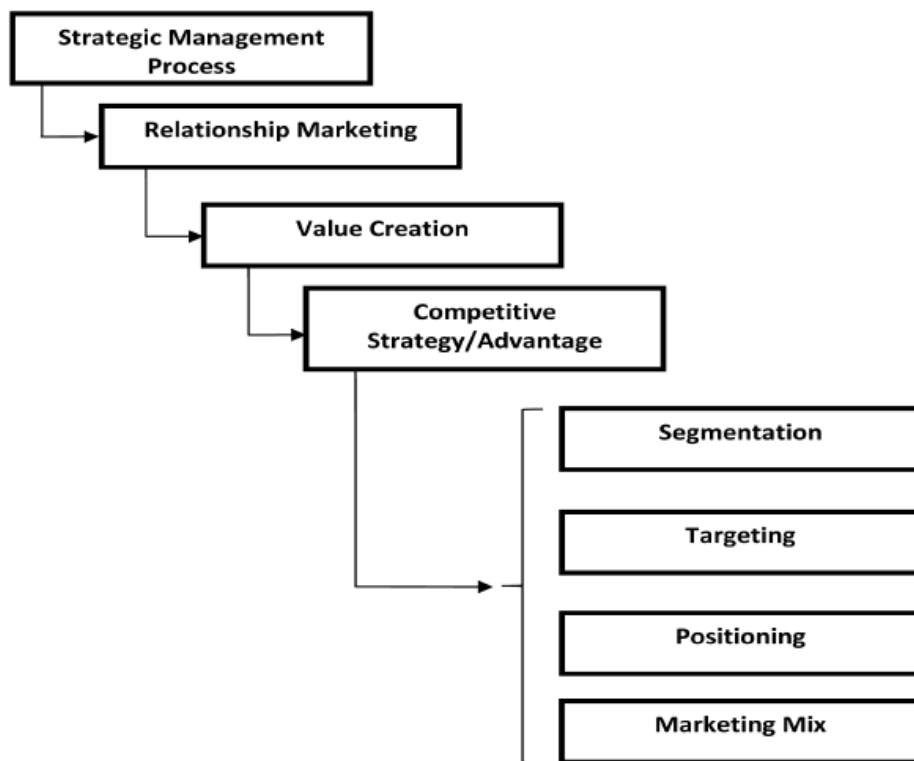
Research done by Barker (2014:44) in the field of marketing and marketing strategy over his years within the field, has been foundational work for researchers and academics after him. Barker simplifies his findings by stating that marketing strategy is the unique combination of marketing factors that are generally referred to as the 4P's of the marketing mix. This remains one of the foundational elements of all his findings and models.

Iyamabo and Otubanjo (2013:17-27) provide conceptual outlines for both marketing and strategy. They looked at literature and definitions for both subject matters. From the research a number of themes or terms were present in a number of definitions. Marketing had 32 themes that resounded over and over in subject literature. These themes were organised into six categories based on their relatedness:

- Relationship marketing
- Value creation
- Strategic management process
- Promotion
- Competitive strategy
- Profit maximisation

Figure 2.7 is a conceptual framework formulated from the literature, the themes and the categories of themes. This is representative of what the definition of marketing describes.





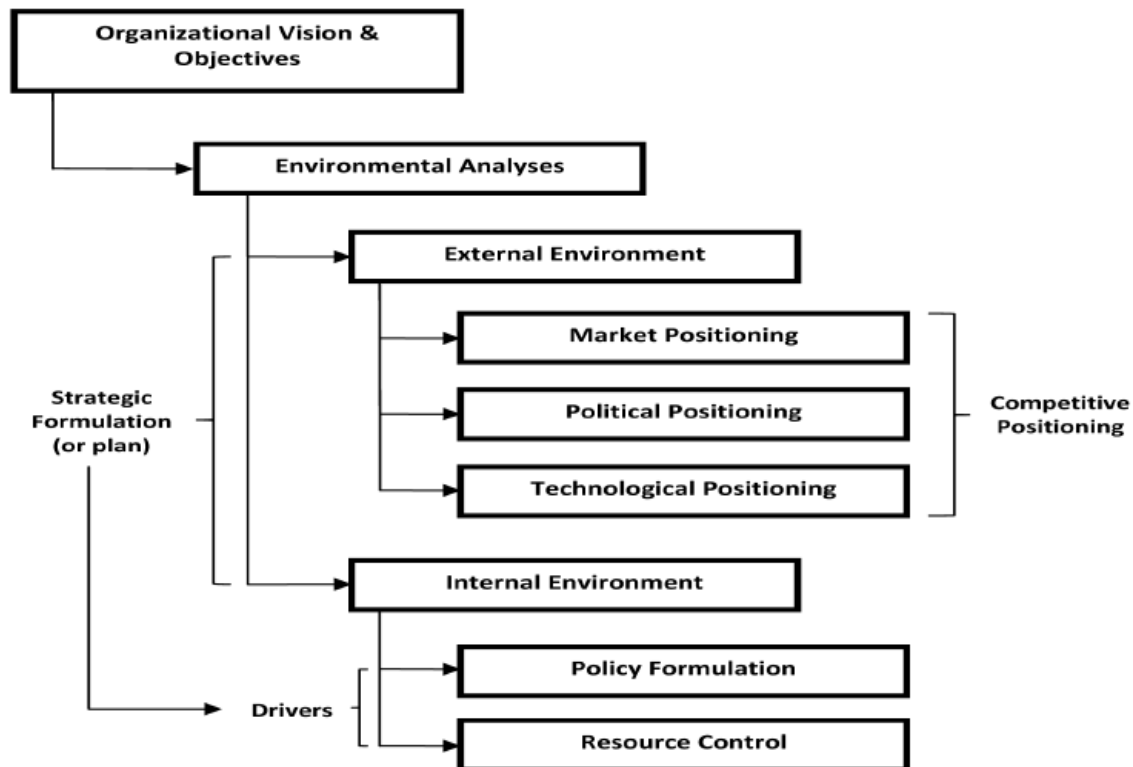
Source: Iyamabo, and Otubanko (2013:17).

**Figure 2.7: Conceptual framework for defining marketing**

Strategy had more than 40 themes that were ever present in the subject literature. These themes were organised into eight categories based on their relatedness:

- Competition and competitive advantage
- Environmental analysis
- Resource allocation
- SWOT analysis approach
- Policy formulation and planning process
- Rational thinking
- Positioning (Market and political)
- Management decision and process

Figure 2.8 is a conceptual framework formulated from the literature, the themes and the categories of themes. This is representative of what the definition of strategy describes.



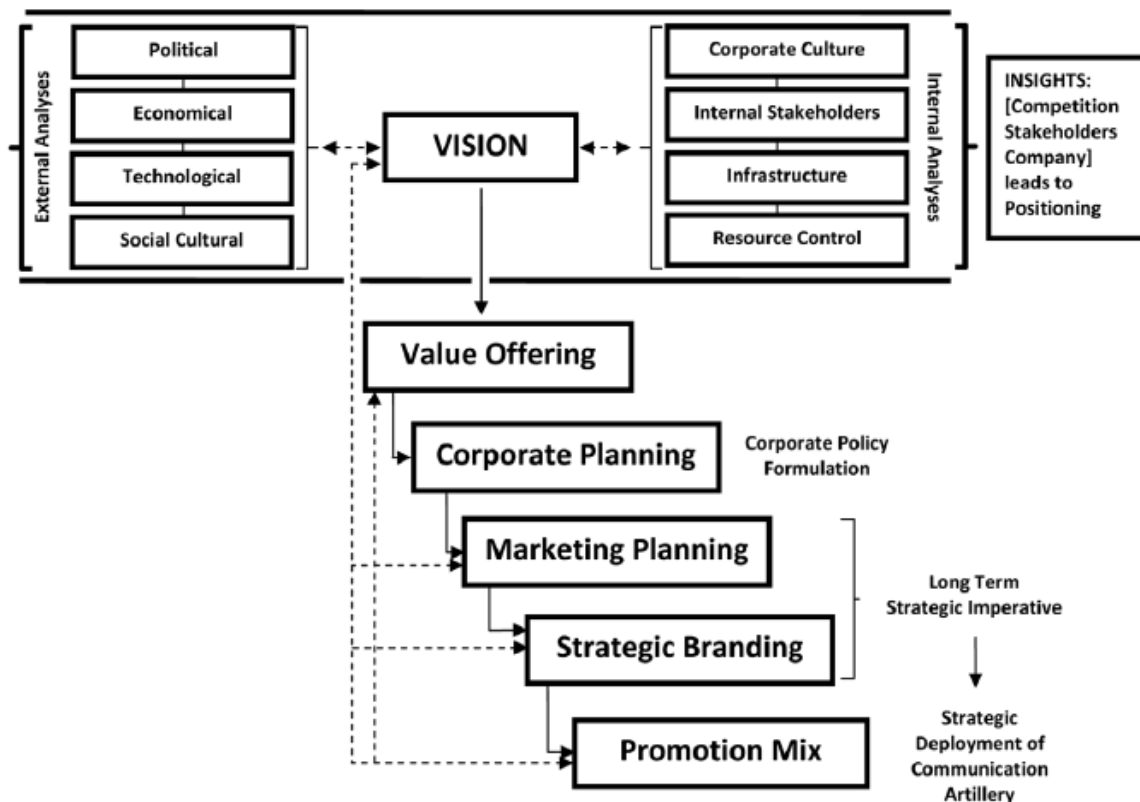
Source: Iyamabo and Otubanko (2013:17).

**Figure 2.8: Conceptual framework for defining strategy**

Various similarities within the literature unique to each subject matter were identified. These similarities or touchpoints indicated similar activities in level of importance or impact of the activity in an organisation. These touchpoints formed an integral part of their framework and definition of what strategic marketing is and what it entails as presented in Figure 2.7. The combined model was reviewed against marketing literature and strategic literature once again. The focus from marketing literature was on relationship building, as from strategy literature the focus was on environmental analysis and competitive advantage. These three components form the base and focus of their definition of strategic marketing.

Iyamabo and Otubanjo's (2013:27) encompassing framework defines strategic marketing as the "... firm's market positioning based on its vision and long-term objectives as well as its comprehensive analyses of multivariate environmental factors designed to deliver the required

*value-offerings to its stakeholders through policy formulation and effective deployment of its resources to maintain competitive advantage” .*



**Source:** Iyamabo and Otubanko (2013:28).

**Figure 2.9: Conceptual framework for strategic marketing**

For the purposes of this study the definition of Iyamabo and Otubanjo (2013:27) are used as platform for the design of a higher education marketing strategy. A complete marketing strategy cannot be compiled as part of this study as there are numerous factors unique to institutions, their environments and their resources that will determine the way in which they draft their marketing strategies. However the definition describes a number of factors, areas and influential drivers that can guide institutions in designing a marketing strategy. This study addresses the following influential aspects by means of a literature review and an empirical study:

- Changing higher education landscape (Literature review)
- Target market (Literature review and empirical study)
- Timing of marketing alignment with decision-making (Literature review and empirical study)
- Influential powers of choice factors (Literature review and empirical study)

- Preferred communication platform (Literature review and empirical study)

### 2.3.2 Need for strategic marketing

It is evident from the literature pertaining to the changing higher educational landscape that HEIs need to re-evaluate their strategic positioning in the vastly competitive environment that they are functioning in. Strategic marketing processes together with information provided by this study can assist HEIs in the process of adapting to the ever-changing and extremely competitive environment. A few decades ago the public universities had the monopoly within the industry. Both private and even public universities have to compete for students, staff and other resources with more private institutions, international competition and ever-increasing student numbers (Wiese, 2008:64-65).

Jooste *et al.* (2008:2-3) present a number of reasons for the increasing importance of strategic marketing. A number of these reasons are motivators for the increased need for strategic marketing within the higher educational environment:

- **The intensifying battle for market share** as a result of the increasing number of providers entering the market. The accredited public and private institutions are not only competing amongst one another, but there are frequently unaccredited providers entering the market. These unaccredited providers not only capitalise on the funds in the market, but leaves a trail of distrust with customers.
- **Ferocious competition in world markets** and the international recruitment of students across the seamless country borders.
- **Diversity** in race, language and gender of the South African population influence the products and services required from the higher education market. This has an immense influence on the marketing of these products and services. Previous studies conducted by Wiese, *et al.* (2009b) found that males and females differed in their reaction to certain choice factors. Additionally the study found that students from different language groups differ according to the selection of certain choice factors.
- The need to **create new and uphold competitive advantages** requires new inventive marketing strategies. Organisations should aim to lead rather than follow their competitors, customers, markets and trends. It is required to look and create beyond the conventional customer-product matrices or the traditional performance assumptions based on product and service prices.

- **Redesign of institutional organisation structures and strategy.** This is evident in the higher educational sector. HEIs are now operating as income generating organisations. The money is required for operations to continue. In line with superior value requirements of consumers, the institutions had to change the way in which they used to operate. As the competition is ever-increasing organisational redesign is eminent.
- **The shift to an integrated offer of superior value.** As the average South African consumers have to manage their finances carefully in the current economic climate, the consumer is evaluating best value propositions. Increased prices automatically demands greater value for money. The consumer is shopping for value and quality. Having a number of competitors in the market make it possible for the consumer to seek superior value at a price they can afford. This is no different for the higher education environment. Parents want to invest money in their children's future at an institution where they will receive the best education and employment opportunities as a result of the superior education.
- Marketing is a resource intensive component of every organisation. Resource intensive pertaining to the time and money it requires. Therefore it is becoming increasingly important to be able to **measure the performance of marketing initiatives**. Meaning that organisations need to realise that the marketing campaigns are ensuring a return on investment. In the case of HEIs a return on investment would be increased students numbers. Therefore the requirement to design the marketing initiatives to answer to the need of the student.
- The **South African economy** has radically influenced the average South African household. Households are required to invest their money better and plan better financially to cope with the downturn in the economy. Not only do households have to do this, but organisations as well. Therefore marketing initiatives need to be strategised as to do the right thing at the right time to attract the consumers able to afford their products or services. .
- Fixed **marketing planning cycles** are insufficient to deal with the increased competition and changing educational environment. HEIs must continuously create public awareness as there are no given time of the year when prospective students decide on future institution. They constantly gather information and a decision is made once sufficient information has been collected. Organisations continuously keep an eye on the market to seek opportunities to infiltrate and create awareness. Knowing and studying the market constantly adds to a better understanding of the consumers and their needs.

- **Market and industry boundaries** are often becoming blurred as more organisations are entering the market by means of similar products and or unfamiliar forms of competition. Recent online qualifications has changed the industry within the higher educational market. Online studying contributes to the ease of obtaining a qualification and the more traditional institutions are required to counter market that by informing the consumer of the advantages of studying at a more traditional institution (Jooste *et al.*, 2008:2-3).

Gajić (2012:31) summarises an education institution's marketing strategy as decisions on:

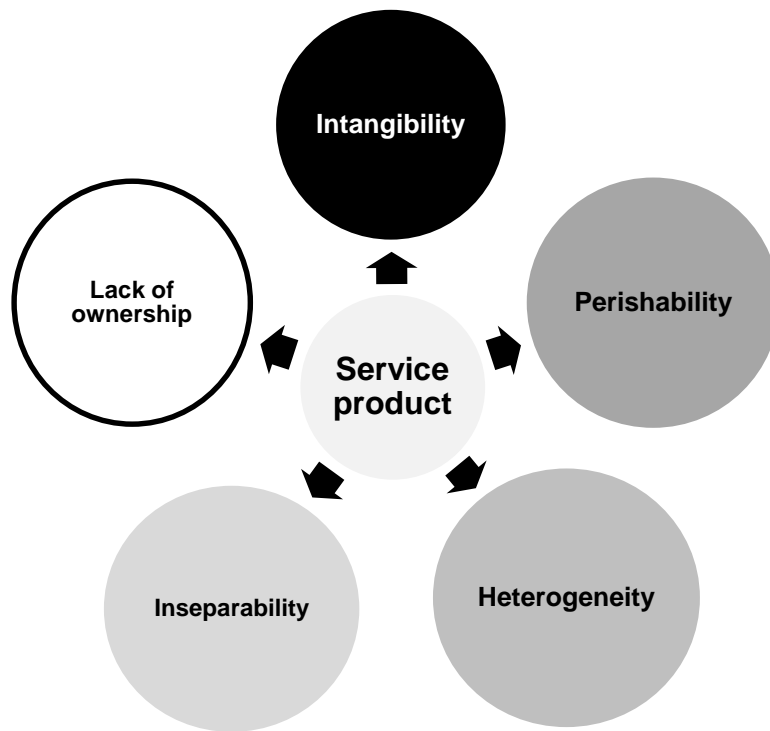
- The institution's current programme offerings and markets.
- Future new programme offerings and new market opportunities.
- Analysis of the competitors.
- Positioning of the institution in relation to competitors.
- Selection of the target markets and the designing of the marketing mix.

This coincides with Kotler and Fox's (1995:6) definition of marketing in education. They defined marketing in education as *"the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programmes designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of value with a target market to achieve organizational objectives"*.

Deriving from the above it is important to look at marketing in education and also the marketing mix as part of the marketing strategy.

## 2.4 Education as a service

HEIs operate in a services environment or market. Institutions offer a service to people by which they can develop their skills, increase their knowledge and further their qualifications. These services provide consumer value (Brassington & Pettitt, 2006:1053-1063; Wiese 2008:91-92). In order to understand the service market better, one has to be aware of the characteristics of what a service market is as presented in Figure 2.10.



**Figure 2.10: The characteristics of service marketing**

- **Lack of ownership**

No actual goods exchange hands therefore there is no change of ownership. In the higher education market, the service is the access, offering and experience the student has while studying.

- **Intangibility**

When a consumer purchases a product he can base his decision on what he found when he examined the product by means of touch, smell, listening and seeing. However, in the services industry such as the higher education market, there is no visual of the product. There are some aspects, such as the look and feel of the campus facilities, but the actual service can not be viewed or experienced until after the student has committed to the attend.

- **Perishability**

Services are rendered at the same time that the consumer are receiving the service. The service cannot be rendered and stored for later use. In the higher education market, the quality of the service is not only dependent on the lecturer in front of the class, but also by the students' level of participation. Students have to interact in class discussions, complete

assignments and study for tests and examinations to get the best from the service to be delivered.

- **Inseparability**

As mentioned, the consumer becomes involved with the service offering. Therefore the customer cannot be removed from the service delivery. There is direct contact between the service provider and the customer. HEIs need to ensure that the best possible academics are appointed to offer the service, but students have to engage to receive the full potential of the offering.

- **Heterogeneity**

The service experience is likely to be different from one customer to the next. This is due to the fact that the service is dependent on the service providers' and the customers' involvement. Each lecturer will have a different way in which lectures are presented and each student will accept and engage with the information differently.

## **2.5 Marketing in education**

Higher education has not always been prone to intense marketing campaigns. Some people and institutional management believed that by introducing market forces into education a feeling of mistrust was created and that it had potential to create major social and economic problems (Al-Fattal, 2010:11). In the ever-changing educational environment that is characterised by increased industry competition for various reasons already mentioned, marketing has become a necessity. Institutions are competing for resources such as students and the fees the students pay. The money is required to ensure the sustainability of the institution (Wiese, *et al.*, 2009b:39).

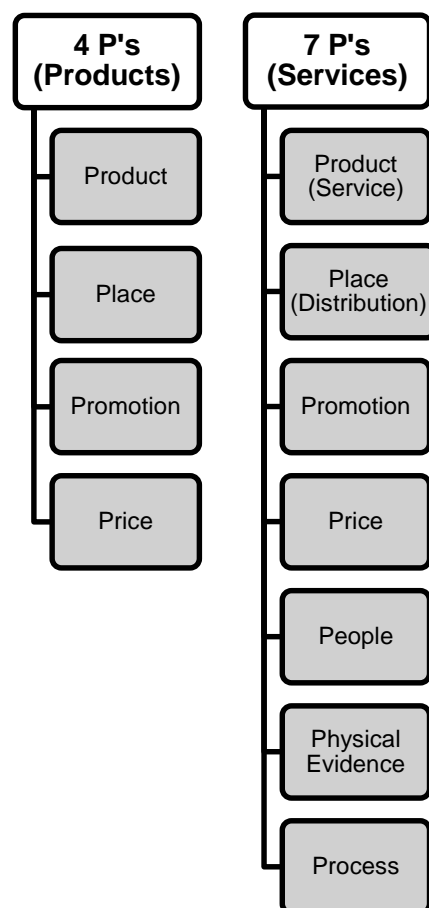
Marketing strategies for the higher education service industry are rather limited (Gajic, 2012:30). This is due to the newness of the necessity for marketing and also the fact that regulations around higher education previously controlled what could be advertised. Marketing models that primarily originated from non-academic organisations and or literature were initially proposed and used to market HEIs. However, seeing that the educational sector is completely different from other production and other service providing organisations, more and more research were conducted about marketing in an educational environment (Oplatka, 2004:417).

It is not conducive to have set marketing strategies in any industry at present due to the influences of the ever-changing environments in which they operate. Marketing strategies should be dynamic



and flexible as to adapt to changes within the market and the needs of the customers (Al-Fattal, 2010:11; Nicolescu, 2009:35).

The service sector marketing mix differs from the traditional four P's marketing mix of product marketing. The marketing mix refers to the set of tactical tools an organisation combines when wanting to create a buyer response and loyalty from the market. The marketing mix is thus everything the organisation can do to influence the demand for the product or service they offer. The services industry has more variables that can contribute to the influence it has on the customer. It has seven variables and are referred to as the seven P's of the service industry (Alipour & Darabi, 2011:69-72; Gajić, 2012:31; Kotler & Armstrong, 2013:75-76)



**Figure 2.11: The product and service marketing mix**

The seven P's are discussed briefly:

- **Service as product**

The service offered is based on the needs analyses of the consumers. In this study the service will be the higher education offering. The service is dependent on the resources the higher

education institution has available. The product or service also refers to the various qualifications the institution has on offer (Brassington & Pettitt, 2006:1063-1067; Wiese, 2008:101).

- **Place (Distribution)**

Distribution is making the service available to the consumer. The service distribution channel is short as the higher education institution offers the service direct to the student in the most convenient and accessible way. Currently within the market a lot of development is done regarding online studies. Marketers need to be aware of the various ways in which education can be offered and what the customers' needs are (Brassington & Pettitt, 2006:1067; Wiese, 2008:108-111).

- **Promotion**

Promotion refers to the communication of the product and service offering (Brassington & Pettitt, 2006:1068-1069). The promotion tools present the goals, activities and value of the service, thus the institutional offering in the case of higher educational institutions (Wiese, 2008:97). It is the information sent to the customer via advertising and promoting the service to them. In light of the increased competition in the higher education market, it is imperative that institutions engage with various forms of promotions and advertising. Various researchers have studied the best media platform to present information about HEIs to prospective students and their parents. Part of this study is to determine which media and communication platforms learners and parents prefer as source of information when communicating information about HEIs and qualification offerings. This is a changing paradigm due to the changes in technology. Advertising is expensive and therefore the correct platform should be decided upon in order to be more effective and efficient. HEIs should frequently evaluate the relevance of the advertising and communication tools they use (Bouwman, 2008:1-2; Wiese, 2008:97-107).

- **Price**

As services are intangible it is sometimes very complex to add a price tag to the offering. Consumers are reluctant to pay a high price as they cannot see the value yet. It is therefore important for HEIs to inform prospective students and their parents of the quality of their offerings. Quality in an educational environment refers to the academic offering, qualified lecturers, quality study material, whether the theory is related to practical application, employability after graduation, to name but a few concepts. Word of mouth of current students

and reviews of alumni can provide feedback on the offering, experience and the value proposition (Bezuidenhout & De Jager, 2013:66-67; Brassington & Pettitt, 2006:1066)

- **People**

Service provision is dependent on the interaction between the service provider and the customer. The customer plays an important role for many service providers in the establishment and delivering of the service. In the case of education provided by a higher education institution, the student will actually have to attend classes to gain value from the service delivered. The institution will ensure that there is a qualified well-prepared lecturer in front of the class to present the work. But if a student does not attend the class, submit assignments and write tests and exams, he will not receive the qualification he signed up for. There is a level of responsibility with both the students and the institution (Brassington & Pettitt, 2006:1070).

- **Physical evidence**

A service cannot be experienced prior to acquiring the service. This makes the buyer decision-making complex. Service providing organisations need to display the quality of their offering in the tangible elements that support the service delivery (Brassington & Pettitt, 2006:1070; CIM, 2009:7). The physical evidence contribute to the opinion a consumer creates of an organisation. A neat reception area where a customer is greeted friendly already gives a positive impression. A moving company with a run-down truck with dents and a faded paint-job may give the idea that the organisation does not care for their own assets why would they look after the assets of a customer. The state of the physical office or working space or vehicle or facilities influence the opinion of the prospective customer and will determine the assumption they make of the services provided. It can be assumed that in the case of the HEIs the campus facilities, safety on campus and lecture room facilities can influence prospective students (CIM, 2009:7). This was one of the choice factors presented to Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners in the survey. Chapter 4 discusses the importance of the physical appearance of a HEIs.

- **Process**

The systems and processes in place effects the service offering. Customers are involved in the offering of the service, therefore the offering should be as streamline and efficient as possible to ensure customer satisfaction. The pre- and post-service experience contribute to the overall service experience (Brassington & Pettitt, 2006:1071; CIM, 2009:7; Lin, 2011:10635). The lecturing of students is the main service within HEIs. However, there are a

magnitude of pre- and post-service processes that influence the overall experience of services delivered. Some of these pre- and post-services include the administration and finance support with registration and enrolment, the distribution of study guides, timetabling, availability of results, to name but a few. All of the mentioned activities and others, include processes. Institutions need to design these processes as to ensure a good student experience. Often institutions do not plan the execution of these processes and students can end up standing in long queues. Standing in long queues are inevitable, but institutions need to plan to minimise the waiting period and inform students of the fact that they will have to queue and therefore need to allocate sufficient time for such the activities.

In order to have a better understanding of what is the correct combination of the marketing mix to be used when promoting a product or a service, an organisation must have an understanding of the customers' needs and the market demand. It is imperative that organisations such as HEIs conduct thorough marketing research. Marketing research is discussed in the following section.

## **2.6 Marketing research**

Marketing research is necessitated within the corporate or business environment. A business either sells a product or provides a service to its customers. All businesses aim to be successful and profitable. In order to be successful companies need to provide benefits for which customers are willing to pay. This is where the marketing research plays a vital role in the determining:

- Who are the customers/target market?
- Where are they situated?
- What is their biographical descriptors — Influence of age, gender, culture, etc.?
- What are their preferences?
- How often do they require the product or service?
- What are the expenditure patterns of customers?
- Who are the competitors in the market?
- What does the market look like?
- How great is the demand?
- How does the organisation's product or service compare to others?
- How do customers prefer to be informed of products and services?

- What is the customers' perception of the quality and service delivery? How can this be improved?

All of the above questions are but a few of the pressing questions organisations ask on a daily basis. However, these can be answered at the hand of conducting market or marketing research. Literature interchangeably refer to market research and marketing research as the same construct. For the purpose of this study marketing research is used as preferred terminology (Berndt & Petzer, 2014:4).

There is no clear reference as to when the first marketing research as scientific process started. Dating back to the early twentieth century, there were not enough consumer goods for everyone. Thus people bought what was on offer. The need was great and the supply rather limited. After the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II, technological advances contributed to increased capacity of organisations to manufacture. Customers had a greater variety and better products to choose from with an increased ability to manufacture. Organisations had to listen to the needs of their customers and had to be familiar with what the competition was doing. This motivated organisations to research their products, markets and customers. Marketing research as a field of study was formally adopted in the late 1930s. Since the late 1930s, marketing research has evolved immensely and has since become part of the organisational strategy (CASRO, 2015; Brendt & Petzer, 2014:11).

Marketing research has been described and defined by various authors since its inception in 1930. Table 2.6 includes various definitions. There are certain core aspects identifiable in various marketing research definitions.

Some of the core aspects identifiable from definitions include the following:

- Customers
- Markets
- Marketing and marketing problems
- Information gathering/collecting, analysing
- Communicating
- Decision-making

**Table 2.6: Marketing research defined**

Year	Author	Definitions
1998	McDaniel, C. & Gates, R.	"...the planning, collection and analysis relevant to marketing decision making and the communication of the results to management" (1998:5).
2006	Burns, A.C. & Bush, R.F.	"...the process of designing, gathering, analysing and reporting information that is used to solve a marketing problem" (2006:7).
2007	Zikmund, W.G. & Babin, B.J.	"...the application of the scientific method in searching for the truth in marketing phenomena. These activities include defining marketing opportunities and problems, generating and evaluating marketing ideas, monitoring performance, and understanding the marketing process" (2007:5).
2009	Shiu, <i>et al.</i>	"...is a key element within the total field of marketing information. It links the consumer, customer and public to the marketer through information which is used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems; generate, refine and evaluate marketing actions; improve understanding of marketing as a process and of the ways in which specific marketing activities can be made more effective. Marketing research specifies the information required to address these issues, designs the method for collecting information; manages and implements the data collection process; analyses the results; and communicates the findings and their implications" (2009:5).
2012	Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G.	"...is the systematic design, collection, analysis and reporting of data relevant to a specific marketing situation facing and organization" (2012:127).
2012	Malhotha, N.K.	"...the systematic and objective identification, collection, analysis, dissemination, and use of information that is undertaken to improve decision making related to identifying and solving problems (also known as opportunities) in marketing" (2012:37).

The marketing research process for this study is addressed in Chapter 3.

## 2.7 Consumer behaviour

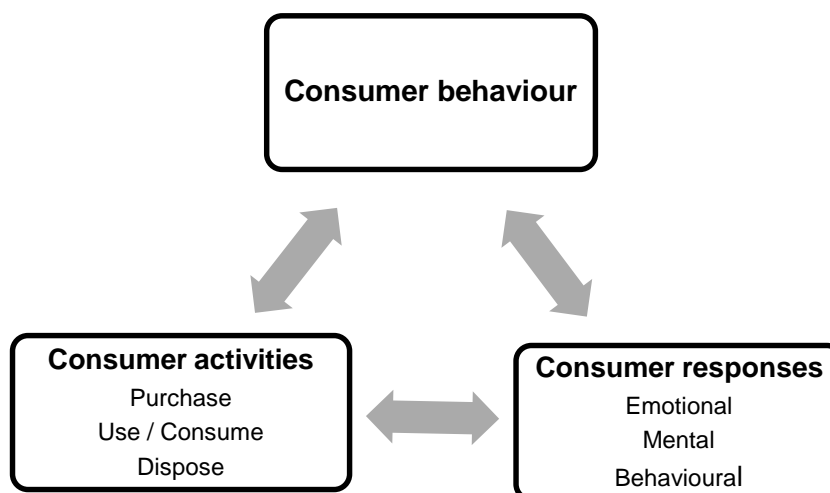
The higher education market has become extremely competitive. Institutions are reliant on student fees for its sustainability. In order to maintain a constant stream of income, the institution needs to ensure that students enrol for tertiary or higher education studies. In order to ensure this they need to remain the institution of choice thus the institutions need to understand the consumers' behaviour when choosing an institution. The field of consumer behaviour is

entrenched in the discipline of marketing. For any institution to successfully market themselves, they need to understand the market it functions in. This is no different for the higher education market. The consumers within the higher education market are the prospective students, current students, the parents of both prospective and current students and other external role-players such as cooperates or employers offering employees the opportunity to study further. The success of a company lies in the success with which a company's marketing strategy attract consumers (Schneider, 2014:105). Understanding the consumers' decision-making process and their requirements or needs, institutions can adapt their marketing strategies to meet their customers' needs or requirements. It is therefore important within the higher education market to determine how and based on which criteria, named choice factors, students decide on a HEI (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012:156-158).

### 2.7.1 Consumer behaviour defined

Consumer behaviour or consumer buyer behaviour is defined as the study of the procedures involved when individuals and/or groups select, purchase, utilise or dispose of products, services, ideas and experiences to gratify their desires and needs (Solomon, *et al.*, 2013:3).

Kardes, *et al.* (2015:7-8) defines consumer behaviour as “*consumer activities associated with the purchase, use and disposal of goods and services, including the consumer's emotional, mental and behavioural responses to precede, determine or follow the activities*”. They illustrate consumer behaviour graphically as presented in Figure 2.12.



**Source:** Kardes, *et al.* (2015:8)

**Figure 2.12: Consumer behaviour defined**

Kotler and Armstrong (2012:157) describe consumer behaviour as the buying behaviour of groups, individuals and households as the final consumer. They purchase goods and services for personal consumption or for others.

Schneider (2014:105) defines buying behaviour as the "... decision process and actions of people involved in buying and using products". Schneider (2014:105) describes consumer buying behaviour as the "... *buying behaviour of ultimate consumers — those who purchase products for personal or household family use. Consumer buying is not concerned with the purchase of items for business use*".

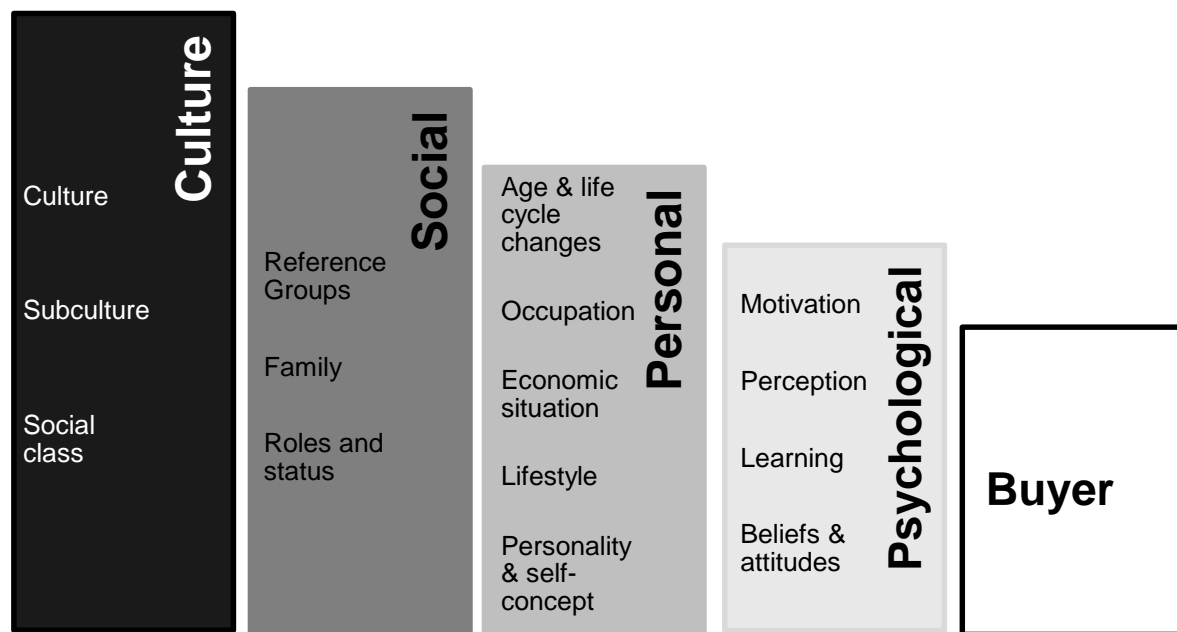
East *et al.* (2013:3) ask various questions about consumers. They state that the answers to these questions will assist marketers and organisations to better understand their customers and their buying behaviour. Some of the questions marketers should attempt to answer include:

- How do people purchase and consume products and services?
- How do people react to prices, advertisements and in-store displays?
- What underlying characteristics do the consumers have that influence their responses?

All the definitions have it that consumer behaviour is the result of needs, stimuli and personal characteristics that influence the consumer when evaluating, buying, using and disposing of a product or service.

Kotler and Armstrong (2012:159) graphically represented all the factors influencing consumer behaviour. These influencing factors include cultural, social, personal and psychological characteristics of consumers and are represented in Figure 2.13. Marketers cannot influence these consumer characteristics and need to be aware of them. These characteristics influence the way in which each consumer makes a decision to buy.





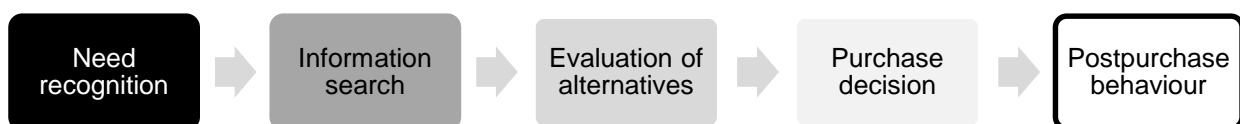
**Source:** Kotler and Armstrong (2012:159)

**Figure 2.13: Factors influencing consumer behaviour**

The mentioned characteristics are visible in various consumer behaviour models. Some of these models are discussed briefly.

### 2.7.2 The buyer decision-making process

Not only is it important to study the influential factors when it comes to consumer behaviour, but one should also be familiar with the buyer decision-making process. The buyer's decision-making process is illustrated in Figure 2.14.



**Source:** Kotler and Armstrong (2012:176-178)

**Figure 2.14: Buyer decision-making process**

The buyer decision-making process encompasses the process from realising the need to the acquiring and utilisation of the product or service. The process can be seen in the decision of higher education institution as well.

Kotler and Armstrong (2012:176-178) states that the process starts with the realisation of a need. The need can be triggered by internal stimuli when a normal need is not satisfied and reaches a level high enough to create a drive. It can also be as a result of external stimuli that drives a consumer to acquire something that has not been needed before.

Once the need has been identified, the consumer may or may not decide to seek more information about the product or service and alternatives. This will be determined by the level of urgency of the need, the complexity of the product or service to be acquired, and the resources available.

Once information has been gathered, the consumer will be evaluating, and most likely ranking the various options available to him. At this stage the intention to buy can also be influenced by the attitudes of people the consumer interact with and some situational factors such as a sudden drop in price by a competitor. The options will be weighed and the option most suitable to the consumer will be purchased.

Once the product has been obtained, the consumer will either be satisfied or dissatisfied. The level of satisfaction is a correlation between how the person perceive the product or service to meet the consumer's expectations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012:176).

### 2.7.3 Consumer behaviour models

Various consumer behaviour models can be found in literature. The variety of models and reasoning come from a variety of schools of thought. A number of models are briefly discussed:

#### 2.7.3.1 The economic model

The first formal theory of consumer behaviour was the result from research that economists did. Other influencing factors can be found in the management and psychology sciences (Cano, 2014:59). The findings of economists led to the so-called vision of the economic man. The vision was built on the following four premises:

##### **Rational behaviour**

The consumer is a rational being whom uses his money to derive the greatest level of satisfaction and utility from it.

## **Preferences**

Consumers have clear-cut preferences for certain goods and services. They also have an understanding of how much utility they will receive from a unit of the products they purchase. They have information about alternatives to their preferences.

## **Budget constraints**

The consumer has a fixed amount of money that can be spend on products and services. The money is generally income. The limited money resource is utilised to satisfy needs.

## **Prices**

Goods are scarce relative to the demand of them. This meaning that every product and service carries a price tag. The exchange of money for products and services are relatively free from other external influences.

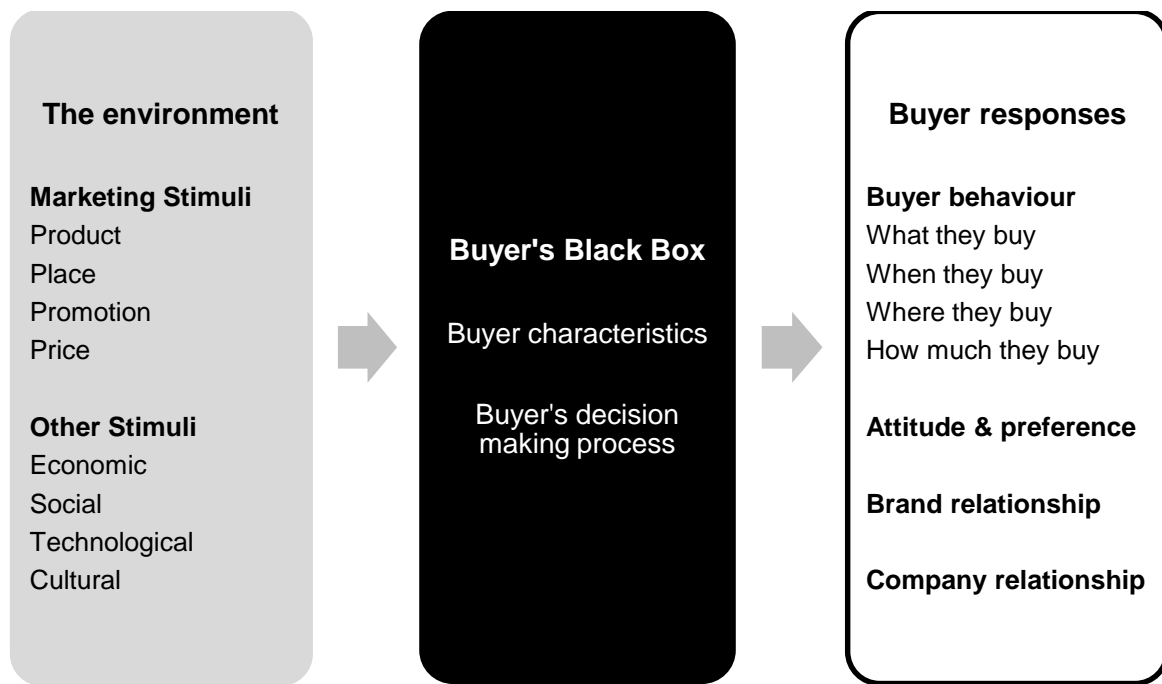
Not all four premises are identified in the following consumer behaviour theories. However, all theories suggest that the consumption of products and services are motivated by the value provided as well as the limitation of personal resources (Cano, 2015:59; Janse van Rensburg, *et al.*, 2011:97-102).

### **2.7.3.2 Stimulus-response model**

The model proposes that marketing stimuli and other stimuli are received and processed by the consumer and turned into buyer responses. Kotler (2012:158-159) states that the stimuli is taken up in the consumer's "black box". In the "black box" the stimuli is turned into buyer responses.

The marketing stimuli consists of the marketing mix's four P's namely product, place, price and promotion. The other stimuli is deranged from the consumers' direct environment such as political, economic, cultural and technological factors. The stimuli enters the "black box" and exits as responses to what they buy, when, where, how many and how often.

Marketers need to understand what happens in the consumer's "black box". Consumers' characteristics influence their perception of the stimuli. The perception influences the reaction or response, thus the buying process. For marketing campaigns and strategies to be successful, marketers have to acquire an understanding or information of the consumers' characteristics and how they make buying decisions (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012:158-159).



**Source:** Kotler and Armstrong (2012:158-159)

**Figure 2.15: Stimulus-response model**

### 2.7.3.3 The learning model

Learning can be described as the changes in an individual's behaviour as a result of experience. As per the Pavlovian learning model, learning occurs through the interplay between drives, stimuli, cues, responses and reinforcement (Naik & Reddy, 1999:7).

A drive is a strong internal stimulus that requires satisfaction or action to be taken. A drive becomes a motive when it is directed at a specific stimulus or need, thus awarding a concepts or name to it. The way in which a person responds to a specific stimulus is derived from cues. Cues are minor stimuli that determine the when, where and how a person responds. The way in which a person acts on stimuli is known as his response. If the response gives a person a rewarding feeling it will emanate as reinforcement. There is a likelihood that the person would act and or respond the same when faced with the same stimuli. Thus, within a marketing environment if a person received a positive reward or experience from a certain product or service, they are likely to choose the product or service again when faced with the need/drive/stimulus/clue (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012:173; Naik & Reddy, 1999:7).

#### **2.7.3.4 Sociological model**

A consumer's behaviour is influenced by social factors relating to the group in which the person functions. The consumer is influenced by his family, friends, other small groups, his social role and status within these groups (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012: 163-168; Naik & Reddy, 1999:12; Wiese, 2008:127).

#### **2.7.3.5 Psychological model**

A person's buying behaviour is influenced by psychological factors such as motivation, learning, perception, habits and belief and attitude (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012:171, Martin & Motich, 2011:491-492). Freud assumed that psychological forces shaping people's behaviour are on both conscious and unconscious levels. Therefore people do not fully understand their own motivations. People have a need and by blatant means such as supplication and intimidation they try to use others to satisfy their needs. Decisions are made on various levels of consciousness, therefore both the functional and symbolic aspect of products are important and influential when decisions are made (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012:171; Naik & Reddy, 1999:8-9).

#### **2.7.3.6 Cognitive model**

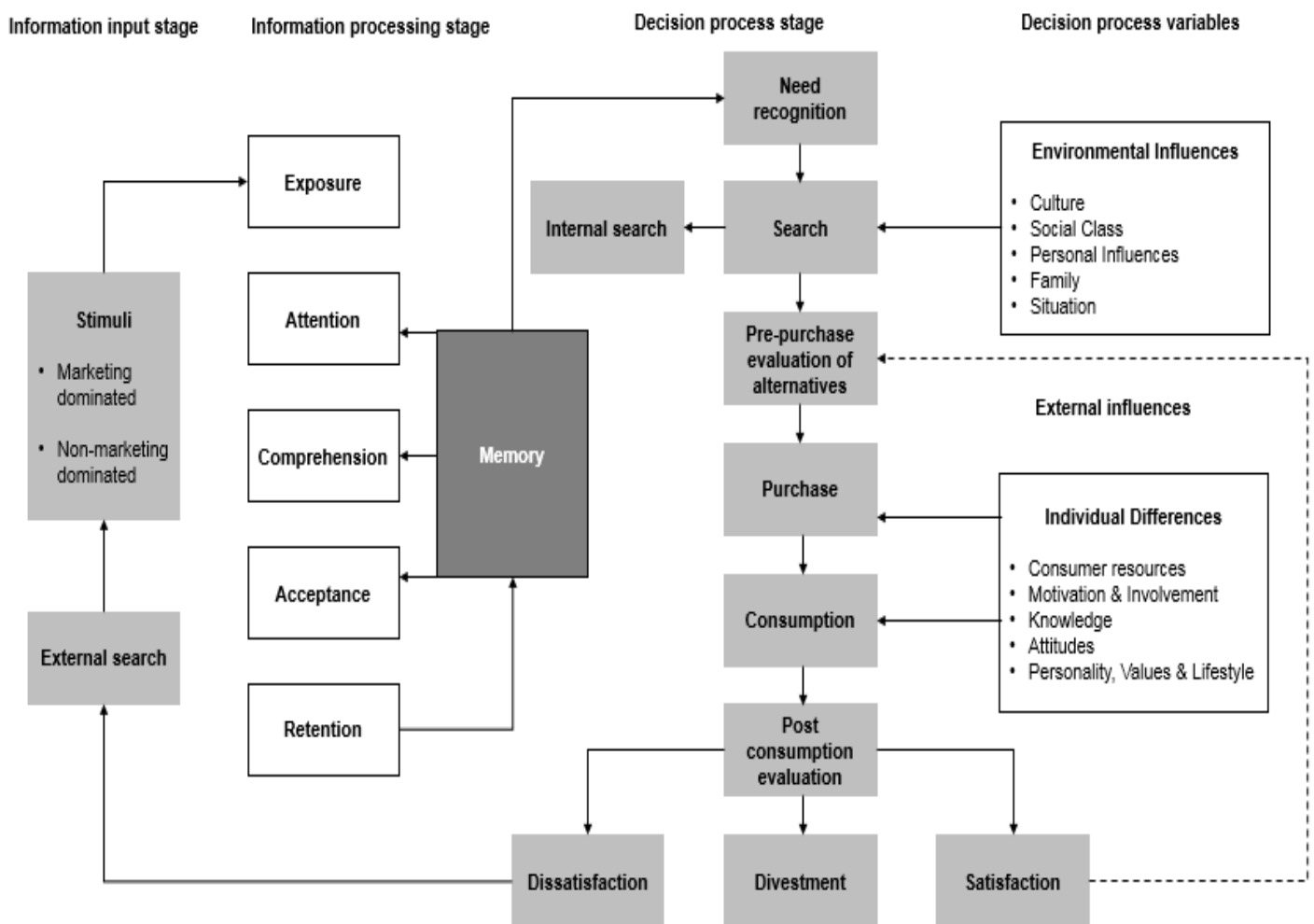
Consumers strive to be in a state of cognitive equilibrium or in agreement with what they have, or are content with. When a possible need arises it creates a state of dissonance. The consumer wishes to move back to the state of equilibrium and investigate reasons for the dissonance and solutions to reinstate the equilibrium. The model highlights the consumer's cognitive abilities to investigate and reason, weigh-up options and to make decisions (Martin & Morich, 2010:41-48)

The models set out various influential factors that influences consumers when making decisions. It is important to be aware of the actual buyer decision-making process. Understanding the process can assist marketers in the design of the perfect marketing strategy. During the process there is an opportunity for marketers to influence the consumer. The process is described briefly.

#### **2.7.3.7 Engel, Blackwell and Miniard consumer behaviour model**

For the purpose of this study, consumer behaviour and buyer decision-making are studied at the hand of the Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (EBM) consumer behaviour model. As per Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1995) consumer behaviour is the result of information input (stimuli), information processing (reaction created by the stimuli), decision process stage (decision-making process), decision process variables, and internal and external influences. The model looks at the interrelations and interactions among the various factors. It is evident that previous models

had influences on the earlier model (Hirschman, 1989:642; Theo & Young, 2003:350-351). The model was decided upon as it covers all factors, characteristics and activities of the consumer.



Source: Engel *et al.* (1995:92)

**Figure 2.16: Engel, Blackwell and Miniard consumer behaviour model**

#### 2.7.3.6.1 Information input

The information input pertains the various stimuli that consumers are exposed to. The stimuli prompts behaviour. The stimuli can be marketing by means of HEIs' marketing campaigns, or it can be non-marketing sources such as information presented by family, friends or fellow Grade 12s (Engel, *et al.*, 1995:92).

#### 2.7.3.6.2 Information processing

Stimuli received in the first stage is processed into information which the learner can use for decision-making. This stage entails exposure to the stimuli, the attention the consumer paid to the stimuli, the comprehension of what the stimuli presented, the acceptance of the information

and the retention of the information. The manner in which the information was engaged with will determine the level of storage within the memory. If the information pertaining to a higher education institution is not relevant to a consumer, he will most probably not be able to recall it from his memory later on. However, if the information was relevant, he engaged with the information and comprehended it thus he will be able to recall this later and it will become part of the decision-making process (Engel, *et al.*, 1995:92.)

#### 2.7.3.6.3 Decision process stage

The consumer can go into this stage at any given time. The decision process focuses on five basic process stages (Engel, *et al.*, 1995:92; Theo & Young, 2003:350-351). This describes the process when a decision is being made. The stages resonate with the stages of Kotler and Armstrong's model described in 2.6.2.

- **Need of recognition**

The learner realises their need to be accepted to an institution for higher education studies. The need is triggered by external stimuli such as his parents making him aware of the fact that it is time to decide on an institution. HEIs' marketing campaigns at schools or elsewhere can also act as the catalyst. The need is influenced by individual differences and situations and also information stored within the memory of the learner.

- **Search for information**

The information search is influenced by various external factors presented as a result of the consumer's culture, social standing and personal situation. Family and friends supply information that contributes to the gathering of information. Memory recalls important information that may have been stored from previous research on HEIs and from marketing initiatives.

- **Pre-purchase evaluation**

All the information that has been collected is evaluated at the hand of personal preferences. The personal preferences include the evaluation against the requirements of the learner. Choice factors play an important role at this point in time. These are the factors that influence the learner's choice of a higher education institution to study at.

- **Purchase and consumption**

This is the actual decision to register and enrol at a higher education institution for tertiary studies. The consumption refers to the enrolment at, attendance at and the graduation from the institution.

- **Post-consumption evaluation**

After consumption and in the case of HEIs, during the use of the services, the consumer will make a decision whether he is satisfied or dissatisfied with what he received in return for his investment. If the student is satisfied at a higher education institution, the possibility becomes apparent for post-graduate studies at the same institution. Satisfied consumers will propagate the institution to others.

- **Divestment**

This stage in the cycle deals with how a person will dispose of an acquired item. However within higher education, the student would want to apply the knowledge and skill obtained within the working environment.

The model also indicates that a consumer does not necessarily go through all the stages. It depends greatly on the complexity of the purchase. For example, the process a person would follow when buying a chocolate bar would differ from deciding on a HEI for degree studies. The time a person has available when shopping influence the process as does the level of required involvement. For further explanation refer to Figure 2.15. A consumer tends to take longer to decide when the decision is complex. Complexity can be determined by the influence it will have on the consumer and the price tag that it comes with, to mention but two determinants of complexity pertaining to buyer decision-making.

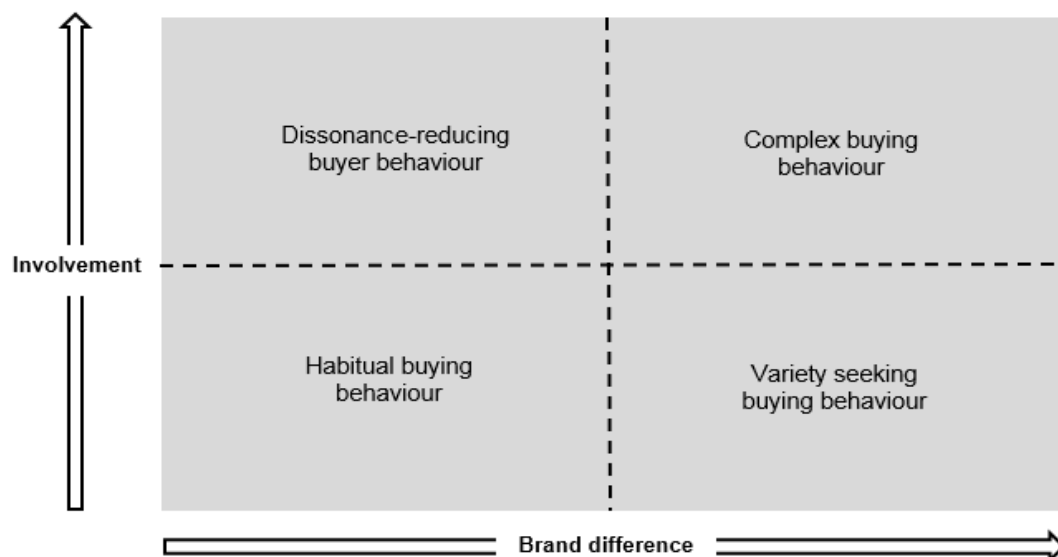
Consumers tend to have lower involvement with products that are inexpensive and which they require often. If they keep buying the same brand, they are displaying **habitual buying behaviour**. An example would be buying toothpaste. The consumer needs toothpaste and has a preferred brand based on a range of personal choice factors such as taste and the effectiveness of the product. However in the case of buying chocolate bars, the consumer is not too involved either, and tries out various brands. The consumer displays **variety-seeking buying behaviour** as he tries out various chocolate bars as his taste may differ from purchase to purchase.

**Dissonance-reducing buying behaviour** comes about when the consumer is highly involved due to the product being highly expensive or he buys it infrequent and or there is a level of risk



associated with the purchase. However, the consumer sees very little difference between brands. They will eventually decide on a specific brand for the best price or the most convenient.

When deciding on a HEI to attend, the consumer will most probably display **complex buying behaviour**. The consumer is highly involved because studies at a higher education institution are expensive. The decision will have an impact on the consumer for the rest of his life. He will have to spend the duration of his studies at the institution and thereafter be reliant on the quality of the education he received when seeking employment and climbing the corporate ladder. Therefore the prospective student will investigate all options available and gather as much information as possible. He will develop an opinion or perception about the various institutions. Personal influences like attitude and motivation will contribute and or influence the final decision (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:161-162).



Source: Kotler and Armstrong (2010:161-162)

**Figure 2.17: Types of buying decision behaviour**

#### 2.7.3.6.4 Decision process variables

The model further suggests that various individual influences such as individual characteristics such as demographic profiles, motivations, beliefs, attitude, personality, values, lifestyle, gender, to name but a few affect the stages of the decision-making process , (Engel, *et al.*, 1995:92).

#### 2.7.3.6.5 External influences

The model pays attention to environmental and situational influences that affect the decision-making process. The environmental influences include social influence resonating from one's culture, subculture, social class, reference groups, and family. Other situational influences can include the consumer's financial situation (Engel, *et al.*, 1995:92; Raab, *et al.*, 2010:148).

### 2.8 Choice factors

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2015), choice can be defined as:

- The act of choosing
- The act of picking or deciding between two or more possibilities
- The opportunity or power to choose between two or more possibilities
- The opportunity or power to make a decision
- A range of things that can be chosen

Choice factors are unambiguous characteristics of a product or service that may lead a consumer to choose one product over another. Choice is made based on the superior value required for the investment made in payment for a product and or service of choice. In most cases the investment is financial, thus paying for a service or product. Choice is a dynamic, multi-dimensional, interactive process of making decisions based on ever-changing choice factors and constant influences of internal and external factors (Levin & Milgron, 2004:1-6, Lubbe, 2014:122-123).

In the case of HEIs, prospective students have requirements that the institution should live up to and or offer as part of its service. These creates the pool of choice factors prospective students consider when making a decision on higher education. These choice factors play a vital role in the decision-making process. For HEIs to market themselves successfully, it is important to understand which of the choice factors are important and attempt to display and or portray these unique characteristics to the prospective students in various formats and or during contact with the prospective students. The aim of the study is therefore to see which range of choice factors influence prospective students and their parents when making a decision about the institution of choice. An elaboration of information on the choice factors tested in this study are set out in Chapter 3.

Various national and international studies have been conducted in this regard. Research conducted by Wiese *et al.* (2009b) determined the top five choice factors when deciding on a higher education institution, namely quality of teaching, employment opportunities, campus safety and security, academic facilities such as libraries and laboratories, and international alliances for further study and or employment opportunities. Wiese *et al.*'s (2009b) sample group consisted of students already enrolled for a degree qualification. The responses were therefore in retrospect.

Coetzee and Liebenberg (2004:71) identified the top five choice factors as being academic reputation, image, sporting facilities, friends studying at the same institution and location.

In studying private HEIs, Bezuidenhout and De Jager (2013:60) listed the top five choice factors as being; safety conditions on campus, employment opportunities after graduation, well-equipped computer facilities, spacious well-equipped classes, and international links for further study and or employment opportunities.

Lubbe (2014:351) found that the type of, variety of and reputation of the courses, together with the university's resources in the library, computer venues and lecturing venues were the most influential choice factor for Grade 12s making choosing an institution to study at.

Hayden (2000:61) studied the decision-making behaviour of African Americans at both predominantly white institutions and historically black institutions and for both groups the top ten choice factors included factors that directly related to academic quality, factors related to the social deterrents such as social activities, the campus population and the diversity of the student population and only one factor from the personal scale of influencers.

Ernst & Young (2011:10) conducted research with a group of students in Australia. From the research the top five choice factors included the quality of the academic offering, the employment opportunities on completion of studies, specific courses on offer, the flexibility of study options and the location of the institution.

Research conducted by Hoyt and Brown (2003:8) confirmed the importance of factors such as academic reputation, quality of faculty and offering, location, cost, scholarship offering, financial aid and employment opportunities. In addition their research highlighted the importance of flexibility in course offering times and mode of delivery with specific reference to part time, evening classes and distance education.

Maniu and Maniu (2014:39) conducted a comprehensive literature review and confirmed a number of choice factors that stood out as determinants for a large number of studies. The choice

factors they came across most often included choice factors such as institutional reputation, employment opportunities, cost, educational offering, location, influence of parents and others.

This study aims to determine the choice factors for Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners, and their parents within the Vaal Triangle area. The study tests whether there is a difference between the choice factors considered by learners from different grades and also between learners and their parents. The findings of this study are compared against the previously referenced research in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

Research can be explained as a systematic process of collecting scientific information by means of various objective methods and techniques. The word objective suggests that the results are not derived from personal feelings or emotions. It is the result of scientific methods with which data are gathered, analysed and interpreted (Welman *et al.*, 2005:2)

Goddard and Melville (2007:1) states:

---

*“In many ways research can be seen as expanding the boundaries of our ignorance... As people study the unknown (and as a result find new areas of ignorance), they often discover useful things. Everything we now know had to be discovered by someone at some time – without research you would be naked, homeless and penniless...”*

---

Research is inevitable in life. As new products, information, theories, and findings are made or discovered they give way to new research opportunities (Goddard & Melville, 2007:1). Research is required for progress (Kothari, 2006:4).

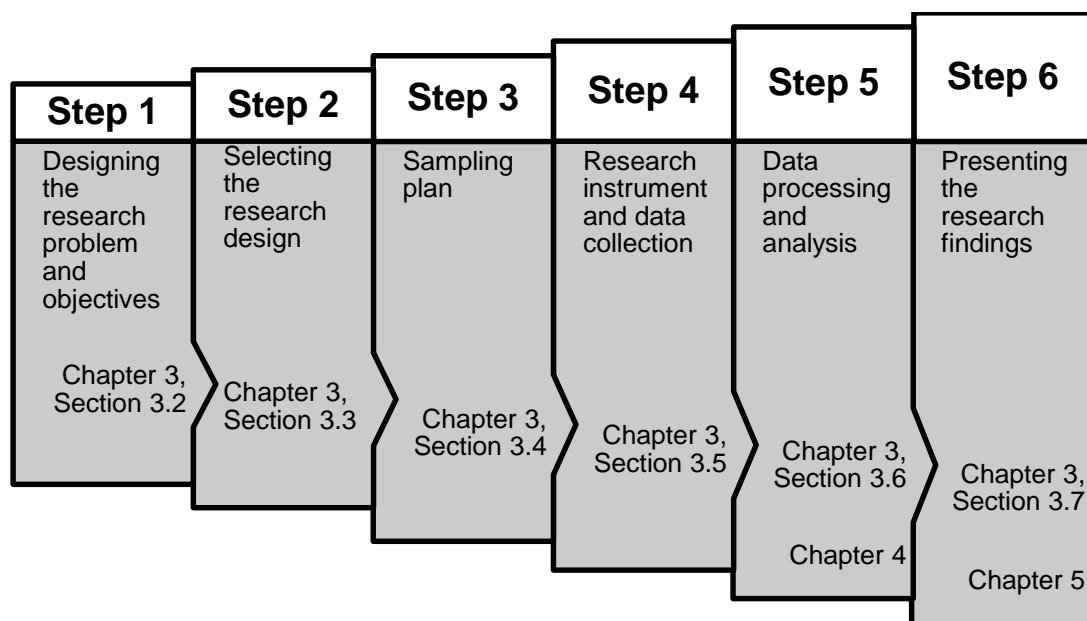
Various authors have written about research and research methodology. Goddard and Melville (2007), Kothari (2006), Rajesekar *et al.* (2013) and Welman *et al.* (2005) to name but a few. A number of reasons for research are offered from the mentioned authors' publications. Research can be utilised to:

- Answer questions
- Solve problems
- Gather new facts
- Reach conclusions
- Confirm non-subjective findings
- Establish cause and effect
- Seek solutions for scientific and non-scientific phenomenon
- Overcome or solve problems in everyday life

- Create something that does not exist yet

There is an array of research methods that researchers can use to gather information or data. The research methodology that is used is reliant on the aim and specifications of the research project. Research is systematic of nature, follows an organised plan or pattern and has a defined goal or direction (Welman *et al.* 2005:2).

The marketing research process for this study is addressed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. The marketing research six-step process is presented in Figure 3.1. This also serves as a visual guide for the remainder of the study.



**Source:** Adapted from Berndt and Petzer (2014:35)

**Figure 3.1: Research process**

Chapter 3 presents the research problem and the objectives. The research design is presented and elaborated on. The sampling plan includes information pertaining to the sample population, the sampling frame, the sampling unit, the sampling method and the sample size. Step 4 introduces the research instrument, the construction thereof and the administration of the instrument in order to gather data. The various data analysis techniques are discussed in Chapter 3. Detailed analyses and interpretation of the data are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 address the findings and make recommendations by means of a research report.

### 3.2 Defining the research problem and the research objectives

The research process starts when an organisation is in need of information that is not readily available. The organisation needs to determine whether the research is in fact necessary and will contribute to the organisation's growth. Resources to conduct research are required. Resources refer to time, money and people. Once the organisation has determined that research is necessary and the required resources are readily available, the objectives for the research should be defined. The objectives specify what it is that the organisation want to determine from the research, what the research should achieve (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:26-31; Kotler & Armstrong, 2013:127; Welman *et al.*, 2005:12-18).

The higher education landscape is changing. The changes are eminent not only in the South African market but internationally as well. The competition within the market is much higher than a few decades ago. The competition is the result of international recruitment of students, and as a result of more institutions, public and private, entering the market. Institutions are in competition for students. Students bring with them the financial resources required for the institutions to sustain themselves. Public institutions receive funding from the government. However the financial support has been lessening year by year. Private institutions do not receive any funding and are solely reliant on student fees. In order for institutions to survive they have to secure their competitive advantage by meeting the target market's needs and ensuring the value that the customer receive from them is superior to that of the competition.

The international changes, increased financial pressure and heightened a demand for value for money, which require HEIs to pay more attention to strategic marketing. Part of strategic marketing or a marketing strategy is to ensure that higher institutions become more market- and customer-oriented. Part of understanding the market is to be aware of the choice factors that prospective students consider when deciding on a future higher education institution. Once the choice factors have been established, HEIs should incorporate these in their marketing and advertising campaigns or activities. Marketing is an expensive, yet crucial business construct. It is therefore imperative to understand the customers as to allocate time, money and other resources efficiently and effectively.

Many international studies, Bailey, *et al.* (2014), Ernst & Young (2011), Hayden (2014), Hemsley-brown (2012), Hoyt and Brown (2003) Khanna, *et al.* (2014) and Ming (2010), to name but a few, have been conducted to establish which choice factors are considered by students when selecting a higher education institution. A few South African studies, Bezuidenhout and De Jager (2013), Cosser and Du Toit (2002), Lubbe (2013) and Wiese (2008) have also been conducted. However majority of the international research was conducted with students already attending HEIs. The

research was done retrospective to the decision-making process and may have been influenced by the time elapsed since making the decision or experience since entering a higher education institution. Bezuidenhout and De Jager (2013) collected choice factor data from students at three private HEIs. Wiese (2008) conducted her research with first year Economic and Management Science students. Both Lubbe (2013) and Cosser and Du Toit (2002) conducted research with Grade 12 learners. Research done by Batemenn (2012) and Immelman (2014) were not specific to the higher education environment, but their work pertains to the choice factors and the influence it has on decision-making, were valuable. The choice factors presented by both Batemenn (2012) and Immelman (2014) resonated with those used by Bezuidenhout and De Jager (2013), Cosser and Du Toit (2002), Lubbe (2013) and Wiese (2008). Immelman (2014) studied the choice factors influencing parents when deciding on a primary school. Whereas Bateman (2012) investigated the choice factors when moving from primary schooling to secondary schooling.

The sample population of this study represents the Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners and their parents. Grades 10, 11 and 12 are the last three years of formal high schooling in South Africa. All three years' students and their parents were approached to take part in the survey in an attempt to determine the most influential choice factors. Grade 10 and Grade 11 students were asked to establish whether prospective students started the decision-making process prior to Grade 12. Historically HEIs have primarily focused their marketing initiatives at Grade 12s. Should the study determine that there is prospective students that engage with the decision-making process and or make the decision earlier than at Grade 12 level, a recommendation should be made that earlier marketing engagement can be beneficial for the recruitment of prospective students.

As parents and/or sponsors are more often the persons responsible for the provision of financial support for the higher education studies, they play an active role in the decision-making process. This study aims to research the choice factors parents consider when deciding on an institution. The study further determines whether there is any correlation in level of importance of choice factors between prospective students and sponsors or parents.

Marketing and communication media have evolved over the past decade and are ever-improving and innovating. Technology has brought about various new social, digital and telecommunication platforms. The study aims to determine which of these communication platforms and or tools, old or new, do prospective students and parents perceive as appropriate to communicate information of higher education.



As mentioned before, marketing is an expensive business activity. Costs have to be incurred to reach the appropriate market at the right time, packaged in an appropriate format to ensure efficiency and effectiveness leading to a return on investment.

By focusing on learners from a number of schools from various backgrounds, and their parents the study's research objectives are to:

- (i) Determine the importance of various choice factors for prospective students when making a decision regarding their HEI of choice.
- (ii) Determine the importance of various choice factors for prospective students' parents when making decisions regarding their HEI of choice.
- (iii) Determine whether there is a correlation between the choice factors considered by prospective students and parents.
- (iv) Determine whether learners from different schools differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.
- (v) Determine whether learners of different language groups differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.
- (vi) Determine the level of engagement with the choice of future HEI prior to Grade 12.
- (vii) Establish the most influential marketing media to communicate information pertaining to HEIs with learners.
- (viii) Establish the most influential marketing media to communicate information pertaining to HEIs with parents.

### 3.2.1 Hypotheses formulated for the study

Hypotheses are statements or assumed guesses that a researcher make about theory or findings from other relating studies or research. When drawing conclusions or making assumptions about a population based on findings of a sample group, it can either be right or wrong. Researchers formulate hypotheses to test for correctness and compare it against data gathered during research. It is therefore important to formulate the hypotheses prior to collecting the data. The data are gathered and analysed to test the validity of the hypotheses (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:253; Singh, 2006:33).

Archetypally two hypotheses are stated, the null and the alternate hypotheses. The null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) presents no difference between the various groups. The alternate hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) indicates that there are differences between the two groups (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:30).

Hypotheses formulated for this study relate to the main constructs. Main constructs being the choice factors and an appropriate marketing platform when communicating information regarding higher education. Hypotheses were formulated from findings and shortcomings of some of the national and international studies on the subject matter.

Hypotheses to be tested as part of this study:

#### **3.2.1.1 Hypothesis 1**

- $H_0$  Learners and their parents do not differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.
- $H_1$  Learners and their parents differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a higher education institution.

#### **3.2.1.2 Hypothesis 2**

- $H_0$  Learners from different schools do not differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.
- $H_2$  Learners from different schools differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.

#### **3.2.1.3 Hypothesis 3**

- $H_0$  Learners from different language groups do not differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.
- $H_3$  Learners from different language groups differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.

#### **3.2.1.4 Hypothesis 4**

H<sub>0</sub> Learners from Grade 10 and 11 do not engage with choices about HEIs prior to Grade 12.

H<sub>4</sub> Learners from Grade 10 and 11 do engage with choices about HEIs prior to Grade 12.

#### **3.2.1.5 Hypothesis 5**

H<sub>0</sub> Learners and their parents do not differ regarding the preferred platform for communicating information about HEIs and qualifications on offer.

H<sub>5</sub> Learners and their parents differ regarding the preferred platform for communicating information about HEIs and qualifications on offer.

### **3.3 Selecting the research design**

The research design or research plan is the steps the researcher follows to ensure the research objectives are met. It is the structure of the research. The plan acts as a guide to collect all the required data and to analyse and present findings and make recommendations (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:31).

The research design of this study is descriptive of nature as the purpose is to primarily determine the relative importance of choice factors. The data was gathered from a number of participants. It was analysed and presented as descriptive of the population. In addition to the choice factors the study aimed to gather information about the usefulness of various sources of communication and information.

This study followed a three-stage research design:

- **Stage 1** - Literature research
- **Stage 2** - Qualitative research to explore choice factors
- **Stage 3** - Quantitative study

The first stage of the study consists of an extensive literature review. The literature review contains information pertaining to:

- The higher education landscape in South Africa and internationally
- Strategic marketing
- Education as a service
- Marketing in education
- Consumer behaviour
- Choice factors

In view of the above, the purpose of the literature review was to establish a theoretical framework for studying the choice factors that influence prospective students when choosing a HEI to study at. The literature review was based on secondary data and referenced various national and international studies addressing similar themes of study. The literature review revealed that very few studies within the South African arena have been conducted whereas numerous international studies were found. The literature revealed that majority of the studies conducted were conducted with sample groups that were already studying or making use of the academic services offered by a HEI. The literature review consisted of research reports, journal articles, personal emails, internet searches and textbooks.

Qualitative research was conducted in the form of personal interviews with three small focus groups. If both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used, the research can be referred to as mixed or pluralistic (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:45-49). However the qualitative contribution of the study was very small in nature. It was only an exploration of the choice factors that influenced current higher education students while choosing an institution. The focus groups were requested to advice on factors they considered when they decided on a HEI. The focus groups consisted out of 10 higher education students from the 1<sup>st</sup> year of study, 10 from the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study and 10 from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study. The focus groups' feedback were compared against the findings of choice factors as described by several of the national and international studies. The students were not given any option to rate or measure the strength of the choice factor, but merely asked what they recall to be important choice factors considered when they had to decide on their current HEIs. A list of 20 choice factors were established from the choice factors mentioned by the focus groups. The 20 choice factors were present in the various national and international studies researched for this study. Some of the choice factors presented by other research, but that were similar in nature were combined.

The third stage was a structured formal descriptive study. A structured, self-administered location-based survey was used. The survey questionnaire was handed to a random sample of

respondents at schools in the Vaal Triangle. They completed the questionnaires and returned it to the researcher. The questionnaire for the parents were given to the learners to take home. They had to return the completed questionnaires on a predetermined date for the researcher to collect. The survey was self-explanatory and could therefore be completed by learners and parents without guidance from the researcher (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:141-143).

The study represents a snapshot of the sample population at the specific time the survey was administered. It can therefore be stated that the study was cross-sectional (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:133; Welman *et al.*, 2005:95).

### **3.4 Sampling plan**

Once a researcher has established what the objectives of the study are the decision can be made on whom will be the best people to consult to get the most valuable and correct answers or opinions (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:33). The study want to establish the most important choice factors considered when deciding on a HEI.

#### **3.4.1 Sample population**

The greatest population of decision makers about future HEI are the school leavers, namely Grade 12 learners. The biggest cohort of new students are derived from Grade 12 learners. The question arose from the literature review and studying the recommendations from previous research that the decision-making process may start prior to Grade 12. Wiese *et al.* (2010:160) recommends that Grade 11 learners are included in follow-up research on the same topic. Therefore this study includes Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners and their parents. The Grade 10, 11 and 12 schooling years constitute the further education and training (FET) phase and the decision was made to include the entire FET phase population in the study.

The study can be of value if administered across South Africa. Due to time and costs the study was aimed at the Vaal Triangle population only.

#### **3.4.2 Sample frame**

The researcher was aware of 70 secondary schools in the Vaal Triangle area as per lists from the Gauteng Department of Education's (GPG, 2015) website. Private schools were not included in the population. Due to time and financial constraints only a sample population of the schools could be included. The researcher contacted the schools to establish their willingness to participate in the study. Seven schools were willing to participate. The survey questionnaire was distributed to

the seven schools. The schools represented quintiles 3, 4 and 5. Schools are divided into 5 quintiles. The poorest schools being quintile 1 and the more affluent schools in quintile 5. Quintiles 1 and 2 are no-fee schools. Quintile 3 includes no-fee and fee-paying schools.

Quintile classification of the schools willing to participate in the research as set out in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Participating school quintile classifications**

School	Quintile
School 1	4
School 2	4
School 3	4
School 4	3
School 5	4
School 6	3
School 7	5

For the purpose of the study a non-probability, convenience sample was decided upon. Non-probability is based on the premise that not all members of the population have the same chance of being included in the sample. The researcher went to the schools willing to participate. On arrival she was allowed to meet with classes and learners from Grades 10, 11 and 12 that were available at the specific time (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:177).

### 3.4.3 Sample size

The sample size was greatly influenced by the willingness of school participation and costs (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:177). A total of 1260 questionnaires were distributed of which 630 were for Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners. Each learner received a parent questionnaire to take home. The parents had to complete the survey and to return the survey to school. The researcher was anxious about the success of the parent surveys being returned to school. A breakdown of the questionnaire distribution can be seen in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Sample size and questionnaire distribution**

Sample size		Learner questionnaires per grade				Parent questionnaires per grade (Learner take home & return)			
School	Quintile	10	11	12	Total	10	11	12	Total
School 1	4	30	30	30	90	30	30	30	90
School 2	4	30	30	30	90	30	30	30	90
School 3	3	30	30	30	90	30	30	30	90
School 4	3	30	30	30	90	30	30	30	90
School 5	4	30	30	30	90	30	30	30	90
School 6	3	30	30	30	90	30	30	30	90
School 7	5	30	30	30	90	30	30	30	90
Total		210	210	210	630	210	210	210	630

### 3.5 Research design and data collection

Data were collected by means of a survey in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed with the objectives of this study in mind. As per Welman *et al.* (2005:174) a questionnaire should be compiled in line with hypothesis, theories and models as to achieve the objectives of the study.

It became apparent from the various studies researched in the literature study that there are some set choice factor questionnaires available. These included the Admitted Student Questionnaire (ASQ) and the Cooperative Institutional Research Programme Freshmen Survey (CIRP) (Wiese, 2008:195).

#### 3.5.1 Questionnaire layout and question types

Two questionnaires were designed for this study. One questionnaire was for the learners and the other for the parents. The questionnaires had minor differences. The learner questionnaire is discussed in detail for the purpose of the study. The minor differences between the learner and parent questionnaire are addressed after the detailed discussion. See Appendix A for a sample of the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of a cover letter, and two data-gathering sections, Section A and Section B.

**Section A** gathered information regarding the respondent's biographical detail. The information could not be used as a respondent identifier after completion of the questionnaire. The respondents' anonymity were ensured. It included information pertaining to gender, grade, age and home language. These questions were designed as closed or structured questions.

Respondents were offered a range of answers for each question to choose from. The respondent ticked the box representing their biographical detail (Welman *et al.*, 2005:175).

- **Question 1** measured the construct of gender. It is a dichotomous multiple choice factor question. Dichotomous refers to questions with one answer which can be selected from two options only. A person can be either male or a female. A nominal scale is used. A nominal scale is based on natural categories like gender. The question is included as to establish whether there is a difference in choice factors (Section B Question 9) which male and female respondents deem important when making a decision about a higher education institution (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:218; Brown, 2011:10).
- **Question 2** established the grade in which the respondent is. The grade was established using a multiple choice single response question. A learner can only be in one grade at a given time. A nominal scale is used. A nominal scale is based on natural categories like grade. The question is included to establish whether there is a difference in choice factors (Section B Question 9) which Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners consider when deciding on a HEI (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:218; Brown, 2011:10).
- **Question 3** determined the age of the respondents. The construct of age was established using a multiple choice single response question. A nominal scale was used. A nominal scale is based on natural categories like age. Average age to start formal schooling is the year in which a child turns seven years of age. In Grade 10 a learner can be 15 or 16 years of age. In Grade 11 a learner can be 16 or 17 years of age. In Grade 12 a learner can be 17 or 18 years of age. Should a learner's age deviate, the assumption may be made that the learner failed and had to repeat a grade during the course of his schooling. The educational performance can have an influence of the choice factors. The question was included in the questionnaire, however the construct was not tested in this study. The data can be used for future studies and analyses (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:218; Brown, 2011:10).
- **Question 4** determined the home language of the respondents. The construct of home language was established using a multiple choice single response question. All eleven official South African languages were included as a multiple choice option. An option for other was included for any language other than the eleven official languages. A nominal scale was used. A nominal scale is based on natural categories like home language. The question was included to establish whether there is a difference in choice factors (Section



B Question 9) for respondents from different home languages groups when choosing a HEI (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:218; Brown, 2011:10).

**Section B** gathered information about three constructs:

- The extent of engagement with the decision-making process to study further after the completion of Grade 12 (Questions 5, 6, 7 and 8).
- The extent of influence of each choice factor may have on the respondent's decision-making process (Question 9).
- To establish the level of appropriateness of various media and communication platforms (Question 10).

Questions 5 to 10 were measured with a 4-point Likert scale. The questionnaire either presents a statement or a question. The respondents respond to the statement or answer the question by choosing a response from a 4-point Likert scale. The 4-point scale values are interval scales labelled as to no extent, to some extent, to a moderate extent or to a large extent. A 4-point scale was decided upon as to eliminate a neutral or average score. Research has shown that some respondents are likely to choose a neutral scale option more often (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:218; Brown, 2011:10; Welman *et al.*, 2005:157).

- **Questions 5 and 6** measured the extent to which a learner have engaged with the decision of future career options and choice of HEI. The respondent's answers are a measurement of interval or extent of engagement and measured with a 4-point Likert scale. Both the questions should be evaluated in line with Question 2's grade descriptor. The aim is to establish at what point in schooling learners decide on the mentioned constructs. HEIs primarily market to Grade 12 learners. If this construct indicates that there is a substantial extent of decision-making prior to Grade 12, it would be advisable for HEIs to engage with learners at an earlier grade (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:218; Brown, 2011:10).
- **Questions 7 and 8** are to be completed only if there have been engagement to some extent, to a moderate extent or to a large extent with career and HEI choices as measured in Questions 5 and 6. The measures determine the strength of the decision that have been made. Research conducted by Bers and Galowich (2002:72) indicated that the greater part of their sample population of parents state that the decision of a HEI lies with the learner self. They support the choices made. However, they do have a level of influence that comes from gathering institutional information, discussions about institutions, evaluations of the institutions and the offerings and finally the financial means the parents

have available to fund higher education studies. The influence is thus during information gathering and evaluations of alternatives stages.

Noel-Levitz, an American consultancy that specialises in strategic planning for enrolment and student success in higher education released a report in 2009 that determined the influence parents have on the choice of a HEI. Their findings supported Bers and Galowich's findings of parental influence during the phases of gathering information and evaluating alternatives (Noel-Levitz, 2009:5).

The decision is stronger if parents agree with their child's institution of choice. Question 8 is a clear interval scale of the learners' certainty of an institution.

- **Question 9** measured the influence each of the 20 choice factors had on the learners' choice and or the importance of the factor when deciding on a HEI. The extent or strength of each factor or item is measured with a 4-point Likert scale. This should be analysed in conjunction with constructs measured in Questions 1, 2 and 4 regarding age, grade and home language (Brown, 2011:10).

The list of choice factors were determined from previous research on the topic. Table 3.3 presents the previous studies in which the choice factors were introduced and evaluated. International studies included: Bailey, *et al.*, (2014); Ernst & Young, (2011); Hayden, (2000); Hemsley-Brown (2012); Hoyt and Brown (2003); Khanna, *et al.* (2014); Maniu and Maniu (2014) and Ming (2010). South African studies included: Bezuidenhout and De Jager (2013); Coetzee and Liebenberg (2004); Cosser and du Toit (2002); Lubbe (2013) and Wiese (2008).

**Table 3.3: Choice factors identified in international and South African research**

Choice factor	Focus groups	International research	South African research
1. Quality academic teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ernst &amp; Young (2011)</li> <li>Bailey, <i>et al.</i> (2014)</li> <li>Hayden (2000)</li> <li>Maniu &amp; Maniu (2014)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cosser &amp; du Toit (2002)</li> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Lubbe (2013)</li> </ul>
2. Qualified and distinguished lecturers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bezuidenhout &amp; De Jager (2013)</li> </ul>
3. Academic reputation of the Higher Education Institution (Public Image)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Khanna, <i>et al.</i> (2014)</li> <li>Hemsley-Brown (2012)</li> <li>Ernst &amp; Young (2011)</li> <li>Hoyt &amp; Brown (2003)</li> <li>Ming (2010)</li> <li>Hayden (2000)</li> <li>Bailey, <i>et al.</i> (2014)</li> <li>Maniu &amp; Maniu (2014)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cosser &amp; du Toit (2002)</li> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Lubbe (2013)</li> <li>Bezuidenhout &amp; De Jager (2013)</li> <li>Coetzee &amp; Liebenberg (2004)</li> </ul>
4. Employability on completion of studies based on skills and knowledge acquired from the studies (Practical application)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Khanna, <i>et al.</i> (2014)</li> <li>Hemsley-Brown (2012)</li> <li>Ernst &amp; Young (2011)</li> <li>Ming (2010)</li> <li>Hayden (2000)</li> <li>Maniu &amp; Maniu (2014)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cosser &amp; du Toit (2002)</li> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Lubbe (2013)</li> <li>Bezuidenhout &amp; De Jager (2013)</li> </ul>
5. Fees per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Khanna, <i>et al.</i> (2014)</li> <li>Ernst &amp; Young (2011)</li> <li>Hoyt &amp; Brown (2003)</li> <li>Ming (2010)</li> <li>Hayden (2000)</li> <li>Maniu &amp; Maniu (2014)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Lubbe (2013)</li> <li>Bezuidenhout &amp; De Jager (2013)</li> </ul>
6. Flexibility of study mode (Face-to-face, distance and/or combination of the two)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hemsley-Brown (2012)</li> <li>Ernst &amp; Young (2011)</li> <li>Hoyt &amp; Brown (2003)</li> <li>Bailey, <i>et al.</i> (2014)</li> </ul>	
7. Safety and security when on campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hoyt &amp; Brown (2003)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Bezuidenhout &amp; De Jager (2013)</li> </ul>
8. Look and feel of the facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Khanna, <i>et al.</i> (2014)</li> <li>Hayden (2000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Lubbe (2013)</li> </ul>
9. Location of the institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Khanna, <i>et al.</i> (2014)</li> <li>Hemsley-Brown (2012)</li> <li>Ernst &amp; Young (2011)</li> <li>Hoyt &amp; Brown (2003)</li> <li>Ming (2010)</li> <li>Hayden (2000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cosser &amp; du Toit (2002)</li> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Coetzee &amp; Liebenberg (2004)</li> </ul>
10. Campus accommodation (Residence availability)	Levels 1,2,3 (2015)	Hayden (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Lubbe (2013)</li> </ul>
11. Lecturing language and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> </ul>

Choice factor	Focus groups	International research	South African research
12. Institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ernst &amp; Young (2011)</li> <li>Hoyt &amp; Brown (2003)</li> <li>Ming (2010)</li> <li>Hayden (2000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cosser &amp; du Toit (2002)</li> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Lubbe (2013)</li> </ul>
13. Extra mural activities such as sport, cultural and social events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ernst &amp; Young (2011)</li> <li>Hoyt &amp; Brown (2003)</li> <li>Hayden (2000)</li> <li>Bailey, <i>et al.</i> (2014)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cosser &amp; du Toit (2002)</li> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Lubbe (2013)</li> <li>Bezuidenhout &amp; De Jager (2013)</li> </ul>
14. Loyalty — Father, Mother or other siblings studied at the higher education institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Khanna, <i>et al.</i> (2014)</li> <li>Ernst &amp; Young (2011)</li> <li>Hoyt &amp; Brown (2003)</li> <li>Hayden (2000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Bezuidenhout &amp; De Jager (2013)</li> </ul>
15. Admissions/entry requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hoyt &amp; Brown (2003)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> </ul>
16. Friends going to the same Higher Education Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Khanna, <i>et al.</i> (2014)</li> <li>Ernst &amp; Young (2011)</li> <li>Hoyt &amp; Brown (2003)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Coetzee &amp; Liebenberg (2004)</li> </ul>
17. The institution offers additional academic support during studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>		
18. Multiculturalism on campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hayden (2000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wiese, (2008)</li> <li>Lubbe, (2013)</li> </ul>
19. Links with International Higher Education Institutions and/or associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Lubbe (2013)</li> <li>Bezuidenhout &amp; De Jager (2013)</li> </ul>
20. Financial funding/bursaries provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ming (2010)</li> <li>Hayden (2000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cosser &amp; du Toit (2002)</li> <li>Wiese (2008)</li> <li>Lubbe (2013)</li> </ul>

- **Question 10** measures the appropriateness of various communication techniques and platforms for the communication of information pertaining to HEIs and qualifications. The extent of appropriateness of each communication technique and platform are measured with a 4-point Likert scale (Brown, 2011:10). This can be evaluated in combination with constructs measured in Questions 1, 2 and 4. This determines whether there are any significant differences in preference between different genders, grade learners and learners of different language groups.

The list of communication techniques are presented in Table 3.4. The various techniques were derived from previous research conducted by Abbas (2014); Hay and Gensen (2008); Hanover Research (2014) and Wiese, *et al.* (2009a).

**Table 3.4: Communication techniques and platforms identified in previous research**

Communication technique	Reference in previous research
1. Newspaper editorials and advertisements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbas (2014)</li> <li>• Hay &amp; Gensen (2008)</li> <li>• Wiese, <i>et al.</i> (2009a)</li> <li>• Starck &amp; Zadeh (2013)</li> <li>• Starck &amp; Zadeh (2013)</li> </ul>
2. Magazine articles and advertisements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbas (2014)</li> <li>• Hay &amp; Gensen (2008)</li> <li>• Wiese, <i>et al.</i> (2009a)</li> </ul>
3. Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hay &amp; Gensen (2008)</li> <li>• Wiese, <i>et al.</i> (2009a)</li> <li>• Hanover Research (2014)</li> </ul>
4. Television	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbas (2014)</li> <li>• Hay &amp; Gensen (2008)</li> <li>• Wiese, <i>et al.</i> (2009a)</li> <li>• Starck &amp; Zadeh (2013)</li> </ul>
5. School visits where the institutions speak with learners about future studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hay &amp; Gensen (2008)</li> <li>• Wiese, <i>et al.</i> (2009a)</li> <li>• Hanover Research (2014)</li> </ul>
6. Newsletters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbas (2014)</li> <li>• Hay &amp; Gensen (2008)</li> <li>• Wiese, <i>et al.</i> (2009a)</li> </ul>
7. Institutional websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbas (2014)</li> <li>• Wiese, <i>et al.</i> (2009a)</li> <li>• Hanover Research (2014)</li> <li>• Starck &amp; Zadeh (2013)</li> </ul>
8. Open days at the Higher Education Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hay &amp; Gensen (2008)</li> <li>• Wiese, <i>et al.</i> (2009a)</li> <li>• Hanover Research (2014)</li> <li>• Starck &amp; Zadeh (2013)</li> </ul>
9. Life Orientation and career advise as part of the LO academic curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levels 1,2,3 (2015)</li> <li>• Wiese, <i>et al.</i> (2009a)</li> </ul>
10. Alumni — Graduate messages to the prospective students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbas (2014)</li> <li>• Wiese, <i>et al.</i> (2009a)</li> <li>• Hanover Research (2014)</li> </ul>
11. Career expos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wiese, <i>et al.</i> (2009a)</li> </ul>
12. Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbas (2014)</li> <li>• Wiese, <i>et al.</i> (2009a)</li> </ul>
13. Institutional marketing material (Brochures, pamphlets, qualification fact sheets)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbas (2014)</li> <li>• Hay &amp; Gensen (2008)</li> </ul>
14. Word-of-mouth (Inclusive of what friends tell you)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wiese, <i>et al.</i> (2009a)</li> <li>• Starck &amp; Zadeh (2013)</li> </ul>
15. Cell phone applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbas (2014)</li> <li>• Hanover Research (2014)</li> </ul>
16. Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hanover Research (2014)</li> <li>• Starck &amp; Zadeh (2013)</li> </ul>
17. Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hanover Research (2014)</li> <li>• Starck &amp; Zadeh (2013)</li> </ul>

The questionnaire was pre-tested with a group of five high school learners to identify any errors or problem areas. The respondents identified Question 8 as unclear. The question was rephrased and replaced prior to using the instrument to collect the data from the respondents.

### 3.5.2 Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

A measurement tool or questionnaire has to be valid and reliable to be deemed a good measurement instrument.

Validity refers to the instruments' ability to measure what it is designed to measure. Content validity tests whether the questions are relevant to the field of study. Concurrent validity is where the instrument can present a similar outcome as attained by other measuring tools used in previous research. The instrument as a measurement tool will only be valid if it is completed by a sample group with the corresponding characteristics to that of the population. The questionnaire designed for this study includes questions and information gathered from previous research. The outcome of the questionnaire addresses the objectives and hypothesis of the study. The questionnaire was completed by learners in Grades 10, 11 and 12 deciding on future HEIs. Their parents are also included in the sample group. Both the learners and parents are the appropriate target group to complete the questionnaire. Therefore it can be stated that the questionnaire has face validity, construct validity and consensus or concurrent validity (Field, 2009:11; Welman, *et al.*, 2005:142-145).

It is however not sufficient to only determine the validity. The reliability of the instrument must also be evaluated. Reliability can be defined as the ability of the instrument to produce the same results if administered again under the same circumstances (Field, 2009:12; Welman, *et al.*, 2005:145-147). Crombach Alpha testing was used to conclude the reliability of the measuring instrument of this study.

### 3.6 Data processing and analysis

Once the data has been collected the data were processed as to turn it into information usable to explain the findings. IBM SPSS 2015 was used to analyse the data collected.

The first step was to evaluate whether the questionnaires have been completed and whether the information is correct. Omission of answers or instances where two or more options were chosen

when one answer response was required will mark the data as erroneous and was not included in the data set. These questionnaires were removed.

The data were coded as to be able to conduct statistical evaluation. Coding was done as displayed in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5: Data categories and coding**

Question	Construct	Type of data	Scale	Variables	Code
Question 1	Gender	Nominal	Category	Female	1
				Male	2
Question 2	Grade	Nominal	Category	Grade 10	1
				Grade 11	2
				Grade 12	3
Question 3	Age	Nominal	Category	15	1
				16	2
				17	3
				18	4
				19	5
				20	6
Question 4	Home language	Nominal	Category	Afrikaans	1
				English	2
				Ndebele	3
				Pedi	4
				Sotho	5
				Swati	6
				Tsonga	7
				Tswana	8
				Venda	9
				Xhosa	10
				Zulu	11
				Other	12
Question 5	Career options	Interval	Likert scale	No extent	1
				Some extent	2
				Moderate extent	3
				Large extent	4
Question 6	Choice of HEI	Interval	Likert scale	No extent	1
				Some extent	2
				Moderate extent	3
				Large extent	4

Question	Construct	Type of data	Scale	Variables	Code
<b>Question 7</b>	Learner and parental consensus	Interval	Likert scale	No extent	1
				Some extent	2
				Moderate extent	3
				Large extent	4
<b>Question 8</b>	Strength of decision	Interval	Likert scale	No extent	1
				Some extent	2
				Moderate extent	3
				Large extent	4
<b>Question 9</b>	Choice factors	Interval	Likert scale	No extent	1
				Some extent	2
				Moderate extent	3
				Large extent	4
<b>Question 10</b>	Communication techniques	Interval	Likert scale	No extent	1
				Some extent	2
				Moderate extent	3
				Large extent	4

### 3.7 Presenting the research findings

Research findings are primarily presented in a research report. The research report reflects on the achievement of the research objectives of the study and the hypotheses that were to be tested. Findings from the study form the base of recommendations made about customer-driven marketing strategies for HEIs (Brendt & Petzer, 2014:264-281). The data analysis and research report are covered in Chapters 4 and 5.



## CHAPTER 4 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the data collected during the study. The data were analysed and used to evaluate the achievement of the objectives and to determine the validity of the hypothesis presented in Chapter 3.

### 4.2 Participant response rate

A total of 630 questionnaires were handed out to learners from seven participating schools in the Vaal Triangle area. A total of 456 respondent questionnaires were received back. Only 452 questionnaires could be used for further analysis. Four questionnaires were spoiled and could therefore not be used. The response rate of 71,75% is calculated on the workable data. Table 4.1 provides an outline of the respondents per school.

**Table 4.1: Learner response rate**

School	Quintile	Handed out	Received back	Workable data	Response rate
School 1	4	90	55	54	60,00%
School 2	4	90	81	80	88,89%
School 3	3	90	64	64	71,11%
School 4	3	90	82	82	91,11%
School 5	4	90	50	49	54,44%
School 6	3	90	64	64	71,11%
School 7	5	90	60	59	65,56%
		630	456	452	71,75%

The response rate of the parent questionnaire was only 8,73% while 630 questionnaires were distributed. The learners took the questionnaires home for parents to complete. Only 55 of the questionnaires were returned to the researcher. Table 4.2 provides an outline of the parent response rate.

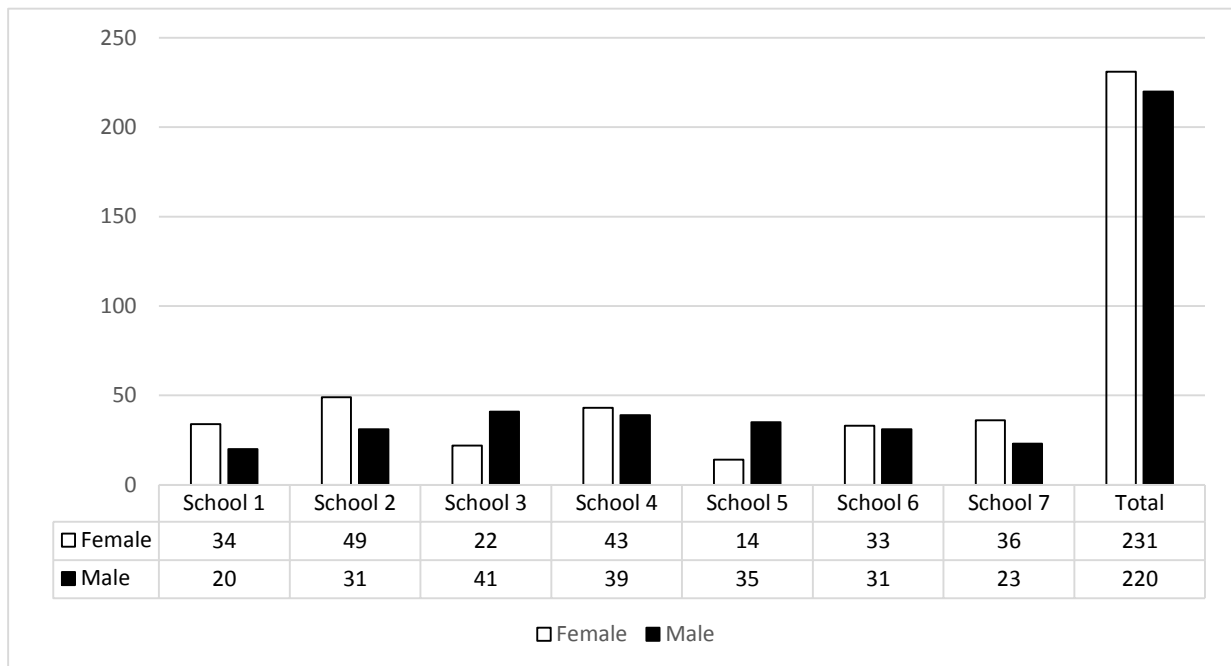
**Table 4.2: Parent response rate**

Handed out	Received back	Workable data	Response rate
630	55	55	873%

### 4.3 Descriptive data — Learner questionnaire

#### 4.3.1 Question 1 — Gender of learner respondents

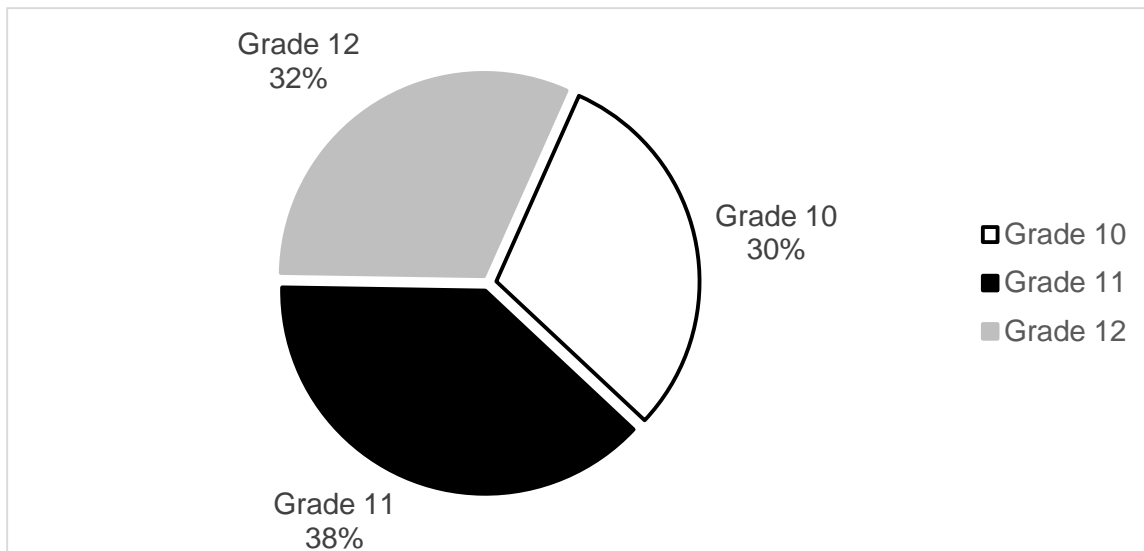
One respondent did not complete the question. Therefore the sample presented as 451 respondents. Fifty one percent (231) of the respondents were females while 220 males completed the questionnaire which represented 49% of the sample group. Figure 4.1 indicates the outline of respondents per gender per school.



**Figure 4.1: Gender of learner respondents**

#### 4.3.2 Question 2 —Grade distribution of learner respondents

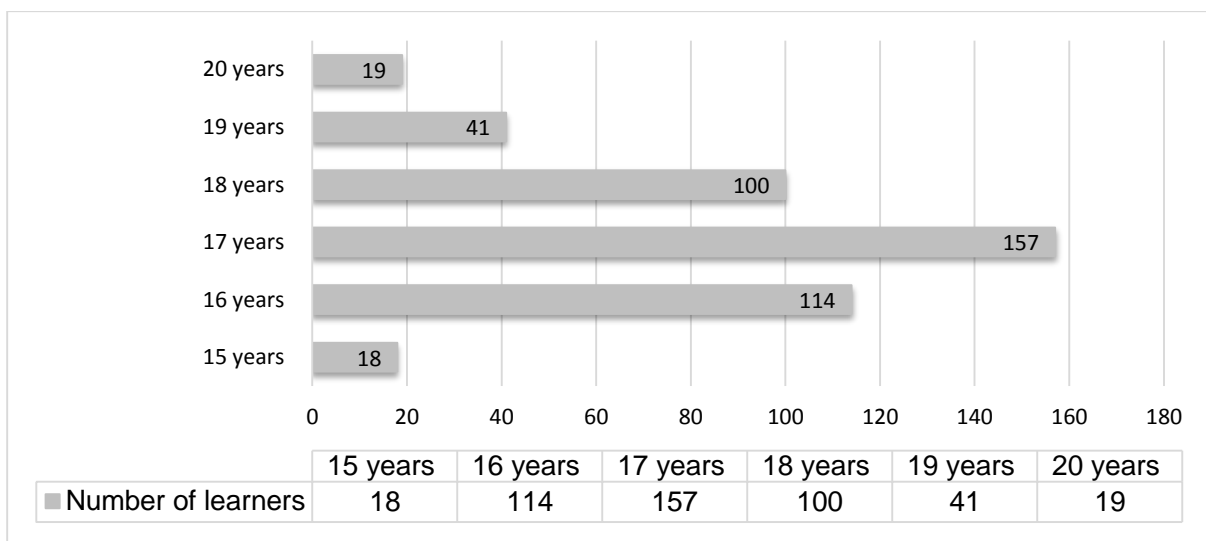
Learners from Grades 10, 11 and 12 were requested to complete the questionnaire. All workable data sets were completed for this question. The Grade 11 learners constituted the greatest representation of the sample group with 38% (173 learners). The least represented was the Grade 10 learners with 30% (137 learners). The Grade 12 learners had a 32% (142 learner) representation. Figure 4.2 represent the grade distribution of the sample group.



**Figure 4.2: Grade distribution of learner respondents**

#### 4.3.3 Question 3 — Age distribution of learner respondents

Three respondents did not complete their age. The seventeen-year-olds has the greatest representation in the sample group with 157 respondents (35%) while 114 of the respondents are sixteen-year-olds (25,4%), 100 respondents are eighteen-year-olds (22,3%), 41 of the respondents are nineteen-years-old (9.1%), 19 respondents are twenty-years-olds (4,2%) and only 18 respondents are fifteen-year-olds (4%). Figure 4.3 presents the age distribution of the respondents.



**Figure 4.3: Age distribution of learner respondents**

#### 4.3.4 Question 4 — Home language distribution of learner respondents

Learners with Sotho as home language have the greatest representation in the sample group. They constitute to 35,57% of the sample group with Afrikaans speaking learners being 31,87% of the sample group. English learners were 11,78%. The remaining eight languages all represented less than 10% of the sample group. The eight languages (Xhosa, Venda, Tsonga, Pedi, Zulu, Tswana, Ndebele and Swati) had a combined representation of 20,78%. Only 433 from 452 respondents completed the question pertaining to their home language. Table 4.3 describes the sample group by their home language.

**Table 4.3: Home language distribution of learner respondents**

Home language	Number of learners	Percentage of sample
Sotho	154	35,57%
Afrikaans	138	31,87%
English	51	11,78%
Xhosa	32	7,39%
Venda	22	5,08%
Tsonga	13	3,00%
Pedi	11	2,54%
Zulu	6	1,39%
Tswana	4	0,92%
Ndebele	1	0,23%
Swati	1	0,23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

Home language	Number of learners	Percentage of sample
Sotho	154	35,57%
Afrikaans	138	31,87%
English	51	11,78%
Other	90	20,78%
<b>Total</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

#### 4.3.5 Question 5 — Extent of consideration about future career options

The question aimed to determine the extent to which the learners have considered future career options. A number of 450 respondents completed the question. Table 4.4 summarises the extent to which future career options stimulated thought processes. A group of 44,22% of the respondents stated that they have been considering future career options to a large extent while 42% indicated that they started thinking about future options to a moderate extent. Less than 1% of the sample group have not engaged with any activities or thought processes about future career options.

**Table 4.4: Extent of consideration about future career options**

Extent of consideration about future career options (Learner perspective)	Number of learners	Percentage of sample
No extent	4	0,89%
Some extent	58	12,89%
Moderate extent	189	42,00%
Large extent	199	44,22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

#### 4.3.6 Question 6 — Extent of decision-making about higher education institution of choice

The question aimed to determine the extent to which the learners have made a decision about higher education institution to study at. Table 4.5 presents the extent to which the decision was made. The measure reflects whether learners have made a choice. The strength of the decision process can be determined with the question. A group of 33,1% of the sample group indicated that they have decided on higher education institution while 36,4% indicated that they have made a decision to a moderate extent. They have decided on options and may be resolving the last one or two questions. Only 6% of the sample indicated that they have not engaged with a decision at all.

**Table 4.5: Extent of decision-making about higher education institution of choice**

Extent of decision-making about HEI of choice (Learner perspective)	Number of learners	Percentage of sample
No extent	27	6,00%
Some extent	110	24,40%
Moderate extent	164	36,40%
Large extent	149	33,10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

#### 4.3.7 Question 7 — Parental agreement with choice of higher education institution

The question determined the level of perceived parental agreement with the learner's choice of a higher education institution. Only students that answered that they have to some, moderate or large extent decided on a higher education institution should have completed the question. A group of 442 students completed the question. The interrelation between Question 6 and 7 are therefore questioned. The assumption can be made that the 27 students whom have not decided

on a higher education institution falls into the respondents that answered that their parents are to no extent in agreement with their choice of higher education institution. The factor is rather small. A total of 71,7% of the sample group are of the opinion that their parents are in agreement with their choice of a higher education institution. Table 4.6 is a representation of the extent of parental agreement.

**Table 4.6: Parental agreement with choice of higher education institution**

Parental agreement with choice of HEI (Learner perspective)	Number of learners	Percentage of sample
No extent	39	8,80%
Some extent	86	19,50%
Moderate extent	123	27,80%
Large extent	194	43,90%
<b>Total</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

#### 4.3.8 Question 8 — Likelihood of change to choice of higher education institution

The question determines the strength of the decision of a higher education institution and whether there is a likelihood that the choice may change. The question is specific to change out of own free will. It is important to realise that the final choice of a higher education institution can change due to external factors such as not meeting entry requirements, or an institution decides not to offer the qualification due to low enrolment numbers, not getting accommodation in the area of the institution, to mention but a few reasons. The question therefore determines learners' certainty about the institution of choice. A group of 24,7% of students indicated that they will not change the choice of institution out of own free will while 41,7% indicated that there may be some possibility of change. Combining the two groups 66,4% were rather certain of their choice with a slim possibility of change out of own free will while 9,4% indicated that there is a great likelihood that the choice may change.

**Table 4.7: Likelihood of change of choice of higher education institution**

Likelihood of change to choice HEI (Learner perspective)	Number of learners	Percentage of sample
No extent	110	24,70%
Some extent	186	41,70%
Moderate extent	108	24,20%
Large extent	42	9,40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

#### 4.3.9 Question 9 — The influence of choice factors on the decision of a higher education institution

Question 9 determines the influence various choice factors have on the decision-making process. Choice factors refer to certain characteristics of HEIs that are of importance to the learners and influence the learners' decision of a HEI. From the data, as presented in Table 4.8, the following findings are of importance:

- The language of lecturing and teaching was the most important choice factor. A total of 59,2% of the respondents indicated that the language of learning and teaching influenced their decision to a large extent while 86,5% of the respondents stated that the language to a moderate to large extent would influence their decision. The low standard deviation of 0.82 is also an indication that respondents were to a large extent in agreement about the influence of the choice factor.

The questionnaires were completed in August and September of 2015. Since April of the same year, there media reported on students protesting against language policies at various South African public universities. During August, these debates and public inquest reached new heights when a documentary, titled "*Luister*" was aired on social media platforms and received national and international interest (Mortlock, 2015). The documentary included interviews with students whom account for instances of racial prejudice and the challenge they face due to Afrikaans being used as the language of teaching at the Stellenbosch University. This ignited similar discussions at other public universities around the country and received a lot of media coverage. The researcher therefore poses the question whether the media awareness around the matter may have influenced the students' perception about the importance of the language of lecturing and learning. The data only reflected this once processed and analysed, therefore follow-up questions to substantiate the importance thereof could not be asked.

- Learners noted that the loyalty choice factor, based on the fact that learners' fathers, mothers or siblings studied at the institution had the least influence on their choice of institution. Only 30,6% of the respondents indicated that the factor influenced them to no extent while 29,9% of the respondents stated that the fact that their friends were going to attend the institution did not influence them.
- The respondents' responses differed the most, based on the standard deviations, with regard to friends going to the same HEI (1,02), extramural activities (1,02), campus

accommodation (1,03) and loyalty (1,09). The wider spread of the data are an indication that there is a low agreement level about the importance of the factor.

- The five choice factors with the greatest extent of influence chosen by the most learners were the lecturing language and learning (59,2%), safety and security when on campus (56,9%), financial funding/bursaries provided (52,5%), quality academic teaching (47,3%) and qualified and distinguished lecturers (46,5%). All five factors had a low standard deviation indicating that the respondents were in agreement with the level of influence.
- The five factors respondents chose as having the least influence were the loyalty factor (30,6%), friends going to the institution (29,9%), campus accommodation (12,8%), multiculturalism on campus (11,2%) and extra mural activities such as sport, cultural and social events (11%).

The choice factors are compared against the choice factors of the parents at a later stage. This are also compared to the findings made by other national and international studies.

**Table 4.8: The influence of choice factors on decision of higher education institution**

Choice factors (Learners)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent	Number of respondents (N)	Mean	Standard deviation
1. Quality academic teaching	21 4,7%	60 13,3%	156 34,7%	213 47,3%	450	3.25	0.86
2. Qualified and distinguished lecturers	32 7,2%	68 15,3%	142 31,9%	203 45,6%	445	3.16	0.93
3. Academic reputation of the Higher Education Institution (Public Image)	17 3,9%	78 17,8%	193 44,1%	150 34,2%	438	3.09	0.82
4. Employability on completion of studies based on skills and knowledge acquired from the studies (Practical application)	8 1,8%	72 16,1%	168 37,5%	200 44,6%	448	3.25	0.78
5. Fees per year	43 9,6%	89 20,0%	172 38,6%	142 31,8%	446	2.93	0.95
6. Flexibility of study mode (Face-to-face, distance and/or combination of the two)	35 7,9%	98 22,2%	182 41,3%	126 28,6%	441	2.9	0.9
7. Safety and security when on campus	25 5,6%	54 12,0%	115 25,6%	256 56,9%	450	3.34	0.89



Choice factors (Learners)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent	Number of respondents (N)	Mean	Standard deviation
8. Look and feel of the facilities	26	75	191	157	449	3.07	0.86
	5,8%	16,7%	42,5%	35,0%			
9. Location of the institution	29	87	168	163	447	3.04	0.9
	6,5%	19,5%	37,6%	36,5%			
10. Campus accommodation (Residence) availability	57	78	139	171	445	2.95	1.03
	12,8%	17,5%	31,2%	38,4%			
11. Language of lecturing and learning	17	44	123	267	451	3.42	0.82
	3,8%	9,8%	27,3%	59,2%			
12. Institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications	21	68	156	201	446	3.2	0.87
	4,7%	15,2%	35,0%	45,1%			
13. Extra mural activities such as sport, cultural and social events	49	100	129	169	447	2.94	1.02
	11,0%	22,4%	28,9%	37,8%			
14. Loyalty — Father, mother or other siblings studied at the Higher Education Institution	137	107	122	81	447	2.33	1.09
	30,6%	23,9%	27,3%	18,1%			
15. Admissions/entry requirements	22	86	177	162	447	3.07	0.86
	4,9%	19,2%	39,6%	36,2%			
16. Friends going to the same Higher Education Institution	134	136	118	60	448	2.23	1.02
	29,9%	30,4%	26,3%	13,4%			
17. The institution offers additional/extra academic support during studies	33	76	182	159	450	3.04	0.9
	7,3%	16,9%	40,4%	35,3%			
18. Multiculturalism on campus	50	119	165	111	445	2.76	0.95
	11,2%	26,7%	37,1%	24,9%			
19. Links with International Higher Education Institutions and/or associations	42	108	167	128	445	2.86	0.94
	9,4%	24,3%	37,5%	28,8%			
20. Financial funding/bursaries provided	36	68	110	237	451	3.22	0.97
	8,0%	15,1%	24,4%	52,5%			

#### 4.3.10 Question 10 – Preferred communication and media platform to communicate HEI information

The question intends to determine the most appropriate communication platforms to receive information pertaining to HEIs and higher education qualifications. From the data, as presented in Table 4.9, the following findings are of importance:

- School visits were noted as the most appropriate communication platform to disseminate information pertaining to HEIs and academic offerings. A group of 53,3% of the respondents indicated this as appropriate to a large extent while 82% indicated this as moderate to largely appropriate. The low standard deviation (0.87) is an indication that the respondents were in agreement about the appropriateness of the communication platform.
- Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook were identified as the least appropriate for the communication of institutional information. Twitter has been identified as the least appropriate by 26,4% of the respondents. The high standard deviation (1.06) is an indication, however that the respondents were not completely in agreement with their opinion in this regard. In total 54,8% of the respondents regarded Twitter as not appropriate at all or to some extent appropriate.
- The five most appropriate communication platforms were identified as institutional visits to the high school (53,3%), open days at the institutions (52%), institutional website (44,6%), career expos (42,4%) and television. Three of the top five communication platforms were based on face-to-face engagement between learners and the institutions.
- The factors chosen by the most respondents as being appropriate to the least extent, were indicated as Twitter (26,4%), Facebook (14,9%), word of mouth (14,9%), radio (14,8%) and newspaper editorials and advertisements (12,4%).

The opinion relating to the appropriateness of communication platforms and media are compared against the opinions posed by parents at a later stage. This are also compared to the findings made by other national and international studies.

**Table 4.9: Communication and media platforms**

Communication and media platforms (Learners)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent	Number of respondents (N)	Mean	Standard deviation
1. Newspaper editorials and advertisements	56	144	166	85	451	2.62	0.93
	12,4%	31,9%	36,8%	18,8%			
2. Magazine articles and advertisements	47	147	175	79	448	2.64	0.89
	10,5%	32,8%	39,1%	17,6%			
3. Radio	66	146	145	90	447	2.58	0.97
	14,8%	32,7%	32,4%	20,1%			
4. Television	52	88	134	173	447	2.96	1.02
	11,6%	19,7%	30,0%	38,7%			

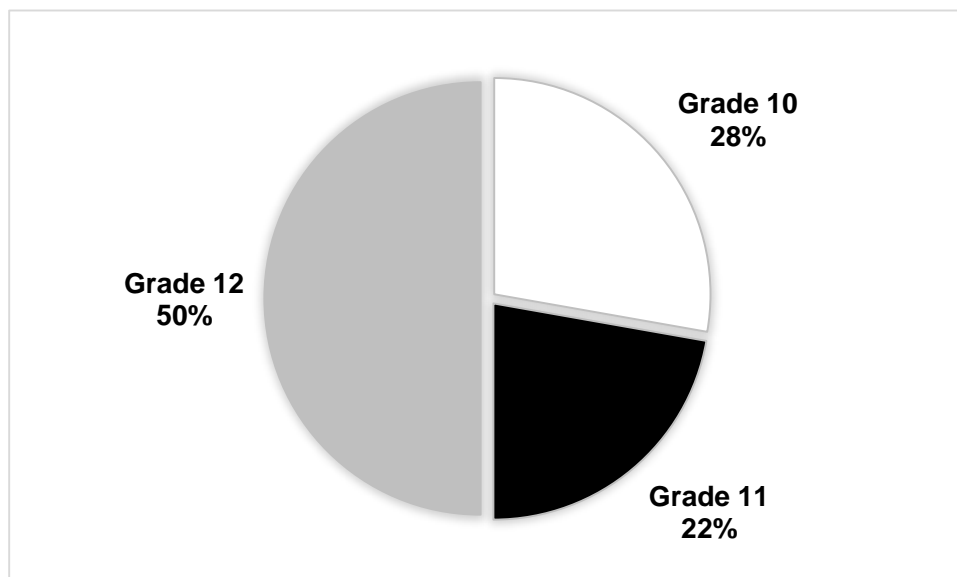
Communication and media platforms (Learners)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent	Number of respondents (N)	Mean	Standard deviation
5. School visits at which the institutions speak with learners about future studies	21	59	129	239	448	3.31	0.87
	4,7%	13,2%	28,8%	53,3%			
6. Newsletters	47	166	125	112	450	2.67	0.96
	10,4%	36,9%	27,8%	24,9%			
7. Institutional website	26	62	159	199	446	3.19	0.88
	5,8%	13,9%	35,7%	44,6%			
8. Open days at the Higher Education Institution	23	70	123	234	450	3.26	0.9
	5,1%	15,6%	27,3%	52,0%			
9. Life Orientation and career advise as part of the LO academic curriculum	33	89	164	165	451	3.02	0.92
	7,3%	19,7%	36,4%	36,6%			
10. Alumni — Graduate messages to the prospective students	49	119	173	98	439	2.73	0.93
	11,2%	27,1%	39,4%	22,3%			
11. Career expos	16	80	164	191	451	3.18	0.84
	3,5%	17,7%	36,4%	42,4%			
12. Parents	42	115	125	167	449	2.93	1
	9,4%	25,6%	27,8%	37,2%			
13. Institutional marketing material (Brochures, pamphlets, qualification fact sheets)	29	122	184	109	444	2.84	0.87
	6,5%	27,5%	41,4%	24,5%			
14. Word of mouth (Inclusive of what friends tell you)	66	135	152	90	443	2.6	0.97
	14,9%	30,5%	34,3%	20,3%			
15. Cell phone applications	52	103	148	142	445	2.85	1
	11,7%	23,1%	33,3%	31,9%			
16. Facebook	67	107	129	146	449	2.79	1.06
	14,9%	23,8%	28,7%	32,5%			
17. Twitter	119	128	108	95	450	2.4	1.09
	26,4%	28,4%	24,0%	21,1%			

#### 4.4 Descriptive data — Parent questionnaire

Only 55 parent respondents completed the questionnaire. This is a very small representation of the population. However, the findings for the questionnaire are discussed as it will still have value. One of the later recommendations are to conduct the survey with a group of parents again.

#### 4.4.1 Question 1 — Parent respondents' distribution according to the child's grade

Half (50%) of the parent respondents represented parents of Grade 12 learners. The respondent distribution pertaining to grade representation can be seen in Figure 4.4:



**Figure 4.4: Parent respondents' distribution according to child's grade**

#### 4.4.2 Question 2 — Home language distribution of parent respondents

The greatest representation, at 59,18% of the respondents spoke Sotho as a home language. The language representation is similar to that of the student respondents. This is in line with the three home languages most spoken in the Vaal Triangle (Gauteng Speaker Forum, 2015). These being Sotho, Afrikaans and English.

**Table 4.10: Respondent distribution according to home language**

Home Language	Number of parents	Percentage of sample
Sotho	29	59,18%
Afrikaans	13	26,53%
English	4	8,16%
Xhosa	2	4,08%
Pedi	1	2,04%
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

#### 4.4.3 Question 3 — Extent of engagement with child's future career options

More than 90% of the respondents indicated that they have, in consultation with their children been considering future career opportunities to a moderate or large extent.

**Table 4.11: Level of engagement with child's future career options**

Level of engagement with child's future career options (Parent perspective)	Number of parents	Percentage of sample
No extent	0	0,00%
Some extent	5	9,43%
Moderate extent	20	37,74%
Large extent	28	52,83%
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

#### 4.4.4 Question 4 — Extent of decision-making about a child's higher education institution of choice

A larger portion of the sample (45,28%) indicated that they have made a decision about the institution at which their children will study in future.

**Table 4.12: Decision of HEI**

Extent of decision-making about child's choice HEI (Parent perspective)	Number of parents	Percentage of sample
No extent	5	9,43%
Some extent	12	22,64%
Moderate extent	12	22,64%
Large extent	24	45,28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

#### 4.4.5 Question 5 – Parental agreement with choice of higher education institution

Half of the parent respondents (50,98%) indicated that they were to a large extent in agreement with the HEI their child chose. Less than 10% of the parent respondents indicated that they did not agree with the choice made by their children.

**Table 4.13: Parental agreement with choice of HEI**

Parental agreement with choice of HEI (Parent perspective)	Number of parents	Percentage of sample
No extent	5	9,80%
Some extent	4	7,84%
Moderate extent	16	31,37%
Large extent	26	50,98%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

#### 4.4.6 Question 6 — Extent to which the parent makes the decision on a higher education institution

A group of 57,69% of parent respondents stated that they are the final decision makers about the institution their children would attend. This is a large portion of the sample population. It is therefore important that the marketers include the parents in the marketing strategy as well.

**Table 4.14: Parental decision-making of a HEI**

Extent to which parent makes the final decision on HEI (Parental perspective)	Number of parents	Percentage of sample
No extent	2	3,85%
Some extent	7	13,46%
Moderate extent	13	25,00%
Large extent	30	57,69%
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

#### 4.4.7 Question 7 — Parental perspective - The influence of choice factors on decision of HEI

Question 7 investigated the influence various choice factors have on the decision-making process. Choice factors refer to certain characteristics of HEIs that are of importance to the parents of prospective students and may influence their decision of a HEI. From the data, as presented in Table 4.15, the following findings are of importance:

- The safety and security of their children when on campus is of great importance to the parents. A group of 86,5% of parent respondents indicated that this is to a large extent an

influential factor. The low standard deviation of 0.47 is also an indication that respondents were to a large extent in agreement about the influence of the choice factor.

- Parents noted that the loyalty choice factor, based on the fact that they, the learners' fathers, mothers or siblings studied at the institution had the least influence on their choice of institution. A group of 29,4% of the respondents indicated that the factor influenced them to no extent while 27,5% of the respondents stated that the fact that their children's friends were going to attend the institution did not influence them.
- The respondents' responses differed the most, based on the standard deviations, with regard to the loyalty factor (1.14) and campus accommodation (1.04). The wider spread of the data are an indication that there is a low agreement level about the importance of the factor.
- The five choice factors with the greatest extent of influence chosen by the most parents were the safety and security when on campus (86,5%), qualified and distinguished lecturers (76,9%), employability on completion of studies (69,2%), language of lecturing and learning (63,5%) and the fact that the institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications (62%). All five factors had low standard deviations indicating that the respondents were in agreement with the level of influence the factors possessed.
- The two factors that stood out as having the least influence on decision of HEI were the loyalty factor (29,4%) and friends going to the institution (27,5%).

The opinion relating to the most influential choice factors are compared against the opinions posed by learners at a later stage. This will also be compared to the findings made by other national and international studies.

**Table 4.15: The influence of choice factors on decision of a higher education institution (Parental perspective)**

Choice factors (Parents)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent	Number of respondents (N)	Mean	Standard deviation
1. Quality academic teaching	2	4	14	32	52	3.46	0.8
	3,8%	7,7%	26,9%	61,5%			
2. Qualified and distinguished lecturers	0	1	11	40	52	3.75	0.48
	0,0%	1,9%	21,2%	76,9%			
3. Academic reputation of the Higher Education Institution (Public Image)	0	3	18	30	51	3.53	0.61
	0,0%	5,9%	35,3%	58,8%			
4. Employability on completion of studies based on skills and knowledge acquired from the studies (Practical application)	0	3	13	36	52	3.63	0.59
	0,0%	5,8%	25,0%	69,2%			
5. Fees per year	2	4	25	20	51	3.24	0.76
	3,9%	7,8%	49,0%	39,2%			
6. Flexibility of study mode (Face-to-face, distance and/or combination of the two)	1	7	19	22	49	3.27	0.78
	2,0%	14,3%	38,8%	44,9%			
7. Safety and security when on campus	0	2	5	45	52	3.83	0.47
	0,0%	3,8%	9,6%	86,5%			
8. Look and feel of the facilities	0	4	19	28	51	3.47	0.64
	0,0%	7,8%	37,3%	54,9%			
9. Location of the institution	1	1	23	27	52	3.46	0.63
	1,9%	1,9%	44,2%	51,9%			
10. Campus accommodation (Residence) availability	6	8	13	24	51	3.08	1.04
	11,8%	15,7%	25,5%	47,1%			
11. Language of lecturing and learning	1	4	14	33	52	3.52	0.72
	1,9%	7,7%	26,9%	63,5%			
12. Institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications	1	3	15	31	50	3.52	0.7
	2,0%	6,0%	30,0%	62,0%			
13. Extra mural activities such as sport, cultural and social events	1	15	17	17	50	3	0.85
	2,0%	30,0%	34,0%	34,0%			
14. Loyalty — Father, mother or other siblings studied at the Higher Education Institution	15	8	16	12	51	2.49	1.14
	29,4%	15,7%	31,4%	23,5%			
15. Admissions/entry requirements	2	13	16	21	52	3.08	0.9
	3,8%	25,0%	30,8%	40,4%			



Choice factors (Parents)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent	Number of respondents (N)	Mean	Standard deviation
16. Friends going to the same Higher Education Institution	14	15	16	6	51	2.27	0.99
	27,5%	29,4%	31,4%	11,8%			
17. The institution offers additional/extra academic support during studies	0	7	16	29	52	3.42	0.72
	0,0%	13,5%	30,8%	55,8%			
18. Multiculturalism on campus	4	4	23	21	52	3.17	0.87
	7,7%	7,7%	44,2%	40,4%			
19. Links with International Higher Education Institutions and/or associations	1	5	20	25	51	3.35	0.74
	2,0%	9,8%	39,2%	49,0%			
20. Financial funding/bursaries provided	2	7	12	31	52	3.38	0.86
	3,8%	13,5%	23,1%	59,6%			

#### 4.4.8 Question 8 — Preferred communication and media platform to communicate HEI information

The question intends to determine which communication platforms and media forms parents interpret as most appropriate to receive information pertaining to HEIs and higher education qualifications. From the data, as presented in Table 4.9, the following findings are of importance:

- School visits were noted as the most appropriate communication platform to disseminate information pertaining to HEI and academic offerings. A group of 76,5% of the respondents indicated this as appropriate to a large extent while 96,1% indicated this as moderate to largely appropriate. The low standard deviation (0.53) is an indication that the respondents were highly in agreement about the appropriateness of the communication platform.
- Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook were identified as the least appropriate for the communication of institutional information. Twitter has been identified by 32,7% of the respondents as the least appropriate . The high standard deviation (1.10) is an indication however that the respondents were not completely in agreement with their opinion in this regard.
- The five most appropriate communication platforms were identified as institutional visits to the high school (76,5%), institutional website (65,4%), open days at the institutions (59,6%), Life Orientation and career advise as part of the LO curriculum (56,9%), information parents gathered and disseminated to the learners (55,8%) and career expos

(51,9%). Five of the six communication platforms rated as most appropriate were based on face-to-face engagement between learners, their parents and the institutions.

The opinion relating to the appropriateness of communication platforms and media are compared against the opinions posed by learners and against other studies at a later stage. This are also compared to the findings made by other national and international studies.

**Table 4.16: Communication and media platforms (Parental perspective)**

Communication and media platforms (Parents)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent	Number of respondents (N)	Mean	Standard deviation
1. Newspaper editorials and advertisements	3	9	21	19	52	3.08	0.88
	5,8%	17,3%	40,4%	36,5%			
2. Magazine articles and advertisements	4	12	16	19	51	2.98	0.97
	7,8%	23,5%	31,4%	37,3%			
3. Radio	3	15	16	17	51	2.92	0.94
	5,9%	29,4%	31,4%	33,3%			
4. Television	4	11	16	21	52	3.04	0.97
	7,7%	21,2%	30,8%	40,4%			
5. School visits at which the institutions speak with learners about future studies	0	2	10	39	51	3.73	0.53
	0,0%	3,9%	19,6%	76,5%			
6. Newsletters	2	7	22	21	52	3.19	0.82
	3,8%	13,5%	42,3%	40,4%			
7. Institutional website	0	6	12	34	52	3.54	0.7
	0,0%	11,5%	23,1%	65,4%			
8. Open days at the Higher Education Institution	1	4	16	31	52	3.48	0.73
	1,9%	7,7%	30,8%	59,6%			
9. Life Orientation and career advise as part of the LO academic curriculum	1	6	15	29	51	3.41	0.78
	2,0%	11,8%	29,4%	56,9%			
10. Alumni — Graduate messages to the prospective students	4	6	22	19	51	3.1	0.9
	7,8%	11,8%	43,1%	37,3%			
11. Career expos	0	9	16	27	52	3.35	0.76
	0,0%	17,3%	30,8%	51,9%			
12. Parents	5	6	12	29	52	3.25	1.01
	9,6%	11,5%	23,1%	55,8%			
13. Institutional marketing material (Brochures, pamphlets, qualification fact sheets)	2	3	21	26	52	3.37	0.77
	3,8%	5,8%	40,4%	50,0%			

Communication and media platforms (Parents)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent	Number of respondents (N)	Mean	Standard deviation
14. Word of mouth (Inclusive of what friends tell you)	2	16	21	13	52	2.87	0.84
	3,8%	30,8%	40,4%	25,0%			
15. Cell phone applications	3	11	21	17	52	3	0.89
	5,8%	21,2%	40,4%	32,7%			
16. Facebook	10	17	11	14	52	2.56	1.09
	19,2%	32,7%	21,2%	26,9%			
17. Twitter	17	14	12	9	52	2.25	1.1
	32,7%	26,9%	23,1%	17,3%			

#### 4.5 Exploratory data analysis — Research objectives and hypotheses results

The research objectives were formulated from literature review conducted as part of the research. From the research objectives hypotheses were formulated to be tested. A null and alternative hypotheses were formulated for each hypothesis. The objective and the corresponding hypothesis are discussed in the following sections:

##### 4.5.1 Research objective 1

**Determine the importance of various choice factors for prospective students when making a decision regarding their HEI of choice.**

From the data collected, the choice factors rated by the learner respondents as important factors to consider when deciding on a HEI were determined by the mean value of the responses. Table 4.17 displays the choice factors in order of importance.

Lecturing language and lecturing were identified as the most important choice factor. As indicated in Section 4.3.9 the questionnaires were completed in August and September 2015. Since April of the same year, media reporting on students protesting against language policies at various South African public universities increased. During August, these debates and public inquest reached new heights when a documentary, titled “*Luister*” was aired on social media platforms and received a lot of national and international coverage (Mortlock, 2015). The documentary included interviews with students whom account for instances of racial prejudice and the challenge they face due to Afrikaans being used as the language of teaching at the Stellenbosch University. This ignited similar discussions at other public universities around the country and received a lot of media coverage. The researcher therefore poses the question whether the heightened media awareness around the matter may have influenced the students’ perception about the importance thereof. The data only reflected this once processed and analysed,

therefore follow-up questions to substantiate the importance could not be asked. However, for the purpose of the study the respondents' responses propelled this as most important choice factor. In the study conducted by Melanie Wiese (2008) in 2007, the language policy of an HEI ranked sixth on the list of important choice factors. This confirms that language policies and implementation thereof at HEIs do play an important role in choice of an institution.

Safety and security on campus was listed as second most important choice factor. This resonated with findings of Bezuidenhout and De Jager (2013). Their research established this choice factor as most important factor to consider when making a decision pertaining to HEI.

**Table 4.17: Learner choice factors ranked in order of importance**

Rank	Choice factors (Learners)	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Language of lecturing and learning	3.42	0.82
2	Safety and security when on campus	3.34	0.89
3	Quality academic teaching	3.25	0.86
4	Employability on completion of studies based on skills and knowledge acquired from the studies (Practical application)	3.25	0.78
5	Financial funding/bursaries provided	3.22	0.97
6	Institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications	3.2	0.87
7	Qualified and distinguished lecturers	3.16	0.93
8	Academic reputation of the Higher Education Institution (Public image)	3.09	0.82
9	Look and feel of the facilities	3.07	0.86
10	Admissions/entry requirements	3.07	0.86
11	Location of the institution	3.04	0.9
12	The institution offers additional/extra academic support during studies	3.04	0.9
13	Campus accommodation (Residence) availability	2.95	1.03
14	Extra mural activities such as sport, cultural and social events	2.94	1.02

Rank	Choice factors (Learners)	Mean	Standard deviation
15	Fees per year	2.93	0.95
16	Flexibility of study mode (Face-to-face, distance and/or combination of the two)	2.9	0.9
17	Links with International Higher Education Institutions and/or associations	2.86	0.94
18	Multiculturalism on campus	2.76	0.95
19	Loyalty — Father, mother or other siblings studied at the Higher Education Institution	2.33	1.09
20	Friends going to the same Higher Education Institution	2.23	1.02

Ranked third on level of importance was the academic quality offered by the institutions. Research conducted by Wiese (2008) established this as the most important factor as did international research conducted by Ernst & Young (2011). Research done by Lubbe (2013) indicated reputation as most important factor. The factor was descriptive of the institutional reputation based on quality of the academic offering.

Employment opportunities on completion of studies ranked fourth on the list of choice factors. This choice factor ranked as second most important factor in the research conducted by Wiese (2008), Lubbe (2013), Bezuidenhout and De Jager (2013) and Ernst & Young (2011).

Table 4.18 presents the top ten factors identified by the four mentioned studies compared to the findings of this research. Nine of the ten factors were present in the top 10s of the other institutions. The factor of admission requirement was ranked tenth. The factor was included in combined constructs used in other research.

The loyalty factor ranked 19 for this study. This choice factor investigates the importance of the factor that their parents and or siblings studied at the institution. At rank position 20 was the factor looking at the importance of friends going to attend the same institution. For studies conducted by Wiese (2008) and Bezuidenhout and De Jager (2013) these two factors also ranked as least important choice factor. Ernst & Young (2011) also ranked the factor as having a very small level of influence on the choice of HEI.

Looking at the correlation between this study and previously conducted research, it can be stated that the choice factors are relevant in their levels of importance as displayed in Table 4.17.

**Table 4.18: Choice factor research findings compared to previously conducted studies**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Choice factors (Current study)</b>	<b>Wiese (2008)</b>	<b>Lubbe (2013)</b>	<b>Bezuidenhout &amp; De Jager (2013)</b>	<b>Ernst &amp; Young (2011)</b>
<b>1</b>	Language of lecturing and learning	Quality of teaching	Reputation (Institutional and academic)	Security/safety conditions on campus	Quality of education
<b>2</b>	Safety and security when on campus	Employment prospects	Future employability	Employment prospects	Career opportunities
<b>3</b>	Quality academic teaching	Campus safety and security	Physical evidence	Well-equipped computer facilities	Specific courses offered
<b>4</b>	Employability on completion of studies based on skills and knowledge acquired from the studies (Practical application)	Academic facilities	Cultural acceptance	Spacious, well-equipped classes	Flexibility of study options
<b>5</b>	Financial funding/ bursaries provided	International links	Accessibility — Location	International links (Study and job opportunities)	Location
<b>6</b>	Institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications	Language policy	Accessibility - Price	Academic staff approachable and informed	Affordability
<b>7</b>	Qualified and distinguished lecturers	Image of higher education institution	Prestige/Prominence	Reputation of the study programme	Reputation
<b>8</b>	Academic reputation of the Higher Education Institution (Public image)	Flexibility of study mode		Reasonable class fees (Not too expensive)	Social family connection
<b>9</b>	Look and feel of the facilities	Academic reputation		Academic reputation of the institution	Lifestyle
<b>10</b>	Admissions/entry requirements	Wide choice of subjects		Availability of information about the institution	Facilities

#### 4.5.2 Research objective 2

**Determine the importance of various choice factors for prospective students' parents when making decisions regarding their HEI of choice.**

Suggested by the research findings the most important choice factor for a parent when deciding on a HEI is the safety of their child at the institution of choice. The academic abilities of the lecturers also plays an important role and is listed as the second most important factor. Employability on completion of the qualification was ranked third. Parents do not want to invest money in higher education and not be able to see the result of their investment upon completion. It is imperative that the qualification will equip the student to seek employment opportunities upon completion. The 20 choice factors as found by the responses of the parents are presented in Table 4.19.

**Table 4.19: Parental choice factors ranked in order of importance**

Rank	Choice factors (Parents)	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Safety and security when on campus	3.83	0.47
2	Qualified and distinguished lecturers	3.75	0.48
3	Employability on completion of studies based on skills and knowledge acquired from the studies (Practical application)	3.63	0.59
4	Academic reputation of the Higher Education Institution (Public image)	3.53	0.61
5	Language of lecturing and learning	3.52	0.72
6	Institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications	3.52	0.7
7	Look and feel of the facilities	3.47	0.64
8	Quality academic teaching	3.46	0.8
9	Location of the institution	3.46	0.63
10	The institution offers additional/extra academic support during studies	3.42	0.72
11	Financial funding/bursaries provided	3.38	0.86

Rank	Choice factors (Parents)	Mean	Standard deviation
12	Links with International Higher Education Institutions and/or associations	3.35	0.74
13	Flexibility of study mode (Face-to-face, distance and/or combination of the two)	3.27	0.78
14	Fees per year	3.24	0.76
15	Multiculturalism on campus	3.17	0.87
16	Campus accommodation (Residence) availability	3.08	1.04
17	Admissions/entry requirements	3.08	0.9
18	Extra mural activities such as sport, cultural and social events	3	0.85
19	Loyalty — Father, mother or other siblings studied at the Higher Education Institution	2.49	1.14
20	Friends going to the same Higher Education Institution	2.27	0.99

#### 4.5.3 Research objective 3

**Determine whether there is a correlation between the choice factors considered by prospective students and parents.**

This research objective also tested the first research hypothesis as presented in Section 3.2.1.1.

#### **Hypothesis 1**

- $H_0$  Learners and their parents do not differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.
- $H_1$  Learners and their parents differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a higher education institution.

Table 4.20 and 4.21 represent comparisons of choice factors of learners and their parents ranked in level of importance. It is concluded from the data that learners and their parents differ regarding the importance they attach to the choice factors when choosing a higher education institution. The null hypothesis that learners and their parents do not differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted.



**Table 4.20: Learner and parent ranking of choice factors compared**

Choice factors (Learners)	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Choice factors (Parents)	Mean	Standard deviation
Language of lecturing and learning	3.42	0.82	1	Safety and security when on campus	3.83	0.47
Safety and security when on campus	3.34	0.89	2	Qualified and distinguished lecturers	3.75	0.48
Quality academic teaching	3.25	0.86	3	Employability on completion of studies based on skills and knowledge acquired from the studies (Practical application)	3.63	0.59
Employability on completion of studies based on skills and knowledge acquired from the studies (Practical application)	3.25	0.78	4	Academic reputation of the Higher Education Institution (Public image)	3.53	0.61
Financial funding/bursaries provided	3.22	0.97	5	Language of lecturing and learning	3.52	0.72
Institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications	3.2	0.87	6	Institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications	3.52	0.7
Qualified and distinguished lecturers	3.16	0.93	7	Look and feel of the facilities	3.47	0.64
Academic reputation of the Higher Education Institution (Public image)	3.09	0.82	8	Quality academic teaching	3.46	0.8
Look and feel of the facilities	3.07	0.86	9	Location of the institution	3.46	0.63
Admissions/entry requirements	3.07	0.86	10	The institution offers additional/extra academic support during studies	3.42	0.72
Location of the institution	3.04	0.9	11	Financial funding/bursaries provided	3.38	0.86
The institution offers additional/extra academic support during studies	3.04	0.9	12	Links with International Higher Education Institutions and/or associations	3.35	0.74
Campus accommodation (Residence) availability	2.95	1.03	13	Flexibility of study mode (Face-to-face, distance and/or combination of the two)	3.27	0.78
Extra mural activities such as sport, cultural and social events	2.94	1.02	14	Fees per year	3.24	0.76
Fees per year	2.93	0.95	15	Multiculturalism on campus	3.17	0.87

Choice factors (Learners)	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Choice factors (Parents)	Mean	Standard deviation
Flexibility of study mode (Face-to-face, distance and/or combination of the two)	2.9	0.9	16	Campus accommodation (Residence) availability	3.08	1.04
Links with International Higher Education Institutions and/or associations	2.86	0.94	17	Admissions/entry requirements	3.08	0.9
Multiculturalism on campus	2.76	0.95	18	Extra mural activities such as sport, cultural and social events	3	0.85
Loyalty — Father, mother or other siblings studied at the Higher Education Institution	2.33	1.09	19	Loyalty — Father, mother or other siblings studied at the Higher Education Institution	2.49	1.14
Friends going to the same Higher Education Institution	2.23	1.02	20	Friends going to the same Higher Education Institution	2.27	0.99

#### 4.21: Difference in ranking of choice factors between learners and parents

Choice factor	Student rank	Parent rank	Parents' rank higher or lower
Language of lecturing and learning	1	5	Lower
Safety and security when on campus	2	1	Higher
Quality academic teaching	3	8	Lower
Employability on completion of studies based on skills and knowledge acquired from the studies (Practical application)	4	3	Higher
Financial funding/bursaries provided	5	11	Lower
Institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications	6	6	Same
Qualified and distinguished lecturers	7	2	Higher
Academic reputation of the Higher Education Institution (Public image)	8	4	Higher
Look and feel of the facilities	9	7	Higher
Admissions/entry requirements	10	17	Lower

Choice factor	Student rank	Parent rank	Parents' rank higher or lower
Location of the institution	11	9	Higher
The institution offers additional/extra academic support during studies	12	10	Higher
Campus accommodation (Residence) availability	13	16	Lower
Extra mural activities such as sport, cultural and social events	14	18	Lower
Fees per year	15	14	Higher
Flexibility of study mode (Face-to-face, distance and/or combination of the two)	16	13	Higher
Links with International Higher Education Institutions and/or associations	17	12	Higher
Multiculturalism on campus	18	15	Higher
Loyalty —Father, mother or other siblings studied at the Higher Education Institution	19	19	Same
Friends going to the same Higher Education Institution	20	20	Same

However, it is important to point out that eight of the top ten choice factors are present in both the learner and the parents' top ten choice factors. The level of importance may differ, but are important to both parties and can be determined as strong choice factors based on the high mean scores and the low standard deviations. It can be suggested to marketers of higher education institutions that the top ten items on the list should receive attention and be presented to the prospective students and their parents.

#### 4.5.4 Research objective 4

**Determine whether learners from different schools differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.**

This research objective also tested the second research hypothesis as presented in Section 3.2.1.2

## Hypothesis 2

- $H_0$  Learners from different schools do not differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.
- $H_2$  Learners from different schools differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.

Hierarchical linear modelling refers to the nesting of data into natural clusters and the relatedness in the responses of the respondents within the cluster (Hancock & Mueller, 2010:123; Woltman, *et al.*, 2012:52). In the case of this study, the researcher aims to determine whether there are relatedness pertaining to importance of choice factors within the schools and a differentiation between schools.

This can be tested by means of the statistical measurement *Cramér's V*. The test results vary between 0 and 1. On the scale 0 is a reflection of no association between the clusters pertaining to variables whereas 1 is a complete association between variables. Table 4.22 is a summary of the schools V results per choice factor.

**Table 4.22: Relatedness between schools (Hierarchical linear modelling)**

Choice factor	Value	Approximate significance
Language of lecturing and learning	0.126	0.256
Safety and security when on campus	0.126	0.256
Quality academic teaching	0.196	0
Employability on completion of studies based on skills and knowledge acquired from the studies (Practical application)	0.14	0.093
Financial funding/bursaries provided	0.159	0.013
Institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications	0.145	0.065
Qualified and distinguished lecturers	0.165	0.005
Academic reputation of the Higher Education Institution (Public image)	0.148	0.045
Look and feel of the facilities	0.156	0.018

Choice factor	Value	Approximate significance
Admissions/entry requirements	0.177	0.001
Location of the institution	0.159	0.012
The institution offers additional/extra academic support during studies	0.185	0
Campus accommodation (Residence) availability	0.094	0.85
Extra mural activities such as sport, cultural and social events	0.096	0.82
Fees per year	0.161	0.01
Flexibility of study mode (Face-to-face, distance and/or combination of the two)	0.17	0.003
Links with International Higher Education Institutions and/or associations	0.187	0
Multiculturalism on campus	0.174	0.002
Loyalty — Father, mother or other siblings studied at the Higher Education Institution	0.204	0
Friends going to the same Higher Education Institution	0.164	0.006
Average	0.157	0.123

The V scores are low and of no significance. Therefore it can be concluded that the responses from learners from the same schools do not show degrees of relatedness. No influential factors specific to one school can be identified as influential to the decisions learners make. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted. The learners from different schools differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.

#### 4.5.5 Research objective 5

**Determine whether learners of different language groups differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.**

This research objective also tested the third research hypothesis as presented in Section 3.2.1.3

#### Hypothesis 3

- H<sub>0</sub> Learners from different language groups do not differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.
- H<sub>3</sub> Learners from different language groups differ regarding the importance they attach to choice factors when choosing a HEI.

As presented in section 4.3.4 the distribution of participants based on home language indicated that majority of the participants were Sotho, Afrikaans or English. Smaller representation of other African languages were present. To compare the influence home language might have on the importance of choice factors, the sample group were clustered as African language speakers, Afrikaans language speakers and English language speakers.

The choice factors were clustered together. The clustering was done as the factor analysis, based on the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, indicated that there existed patterns of correlation amongst some of the factors and that the correlations were rather compact. Therefore the factors could be distinct and reliable if investigated further. The Bartlett score is an indication of significance. For this study it was high and an indication of appropriateness of factor analysis.

**Table 4.23: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test results**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.878
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1884.685
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

The choice factors were clustered together as presented in Table 4.24.

The academic factor clustered together choice factors related to academic offering and quality as constructs of value for money offering at the institution.

The attributes presented the institutional attributes such as the look and feel of the institution, the safety aspect and the language of the institution.

Additional value propositions included choice factors that respondents could interpret as additional value added.

**Table 4.24: Choice factors correlation clusters**

	Choice Factor	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Academic qualities as value for money descriptors (Cronbach's Alpha .781)	Quality academic teaching	18.79	11.947	.546	.362	.745
	Qualified and distinguished lecturers	18.88	11.201	.611	.419	.730
	Academic reputation of the Higher Education Institution (Public image)	18.96	12.423	.480	.238	.758
	Employability on completion of studies based on skills and knowledge acquired from the studies (Practical application)	18.79	12.365	.524	.294	.750
	Fees per year	19.12	12.382	.394	.170	.777
	The institution offers additional / extra academic support during studies	18.83	12.074	.516	.290	.751
	Admissions / entry requirements	18.97	12.287	.472	.235	.759
Attributes of the higher education institution (Cronbach's Alpha .692)	Flexibility of study mode (Face-to-face, distance and / or combination of the two)	15.87	8.539	.418	.182	.653
	Safety and security when on campus	15.44	8.186	.508	.302	.624
	Look and feel of the facilities	15.72	8.410	.479	.287	.634
	Location of the institution	15.74	8.567	.412	.198	.655
	Campus accommodation (Residence) availability	15.83	8.452	.346	.128	.682
	Language of lecturing and learning	15.34	9.062	.387	.160	.663
Additional value add (Cronbach's Alpha .590)	Friends going to the same higher education institution	11.87	6.491	.236	.067	.598
	Institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications	8.84	4.122	.411	.184	.498
	Multiculturalism on campus	9.11	4.397	.287	.088	.590
	Links with International Higher Education Institutions and / or associations	9.01	4.023	.409	.168	.498
	Financial funding / bursaries provided	8.66	3.934	.400	.180	.505

These factors were analysed for the three representative language groups. Findings presented in Table 4.25.

**Table 4.25: Mean values and results for different home language speakers**

		N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max	F	Sig.
Academic	Afrikaans	138	3.1767	.58480	.04978	3.0783	3.2752	1.14	4.00	0.719	0.488
	English	51	3.1844	.47588	.06664	3.0506	3.3182	1.86	4.00		
	African Languages	238	3.1121	.58268	.03777	3.0377	3.1865	1.43	4.00		
	Total	427	3.1416	.57145	.02765	3.0873	3.1960	1.14	4.00		
Attributes	Afrikaans	138	3.1457	.56895	.04843	3.0499	3.2414	1.00	4.00	0.038	0.916
	English	51	3.1242	.49983	.06999	2.9836	3.2648	2.17	3.83		
	African Languages	238	3.1203	.58873	.03816	3.0451	3.1955	1.00	4.00		
	Total	427	3.1290	.57130	.02765	3.0746	3.1833	1.00	4.00		
Additional	Afrikaans	138	3.0127	.62587	.05328	2.9073	3.1180	1.00	4.00	0.252	0.302
	English	51	2.8513	.64038	.08967	2.6712	3.0314	1.50	4.00		
	African Languages	238	2.9727	.63995	.04148	2.8910	3.0544	1.00	4.00		
	Total	427	2.9711	.63579	.03077	2.9106	3.0316	1.00	4.00		

It can therefore be stated that there are no significant difference between the different home language speakers pertaining to the importance they attach to choice factors tested in this study. Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted.

#### 4.5.6 Research objective 6

##### **Determine the level of engagement with the choice of future HEI prior to Grade 12.**

This research objective also tested the fourth research hypothesis as presented in Section 3.2.1.4

##### Hypothesis 4

H<sub>0</sub> Learners from Grade 10 and 11 do not engage with choices about HEIs prior to Grade 12.

H<sub>4</sub> Learners from Grade 10 and 11 do engage with choices about HEIs prior to Grade 12.

A post hoc Tukey test was conducted to determine whether there is a difference in the extent to which Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners have started with the engagement process of possible future



career options (Question 5 of the questionnaire) and whether they have decided on a HEI (Question 6 of the questionnaire). Post hoc tests are follow-up tests that examine differences between values. Table 4.26 indicated the outcomes for Grades 10, 11 and 12 relevant to the involvement level with career choices and choice of HEI .

**Table 4.26: Level of engagement with career choices and choice of future HEI**

<b>Question 5 — To what extent have you started thinking of future career options?</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Grade 10	137	3.16
Grade 11	172	3.33
Grade 12	141	3.38
<b>Question 6 — Have you already decided on a higher education institution to study at after school?</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Grade 10	137	2.82
Grade 11	172	2.96
Grade 12	141	3.12

The extent of the engagement for both the questions were measured against a four point Likert scale (1 = No extent, 2 = Some extent, 3 = Moderate extent, 4 = Large extent). As per Table 4.23 it is evident that Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners have engaged with the thought process pertaining to future career options to a moderate extent. The Grade 12 average mean is higher than that of the Grade 10 and Grade 11 learners.

The average mean for Grade 10 and Grade 11 learners with regards to the extent to which they have decided on a HEI is not as high as that of the Grade 12 learners. It falls within the level two descriptor of some extent. It is very high at 2.82 for the Grade 10 learners and 2.96 for the Grade 11 learners. It is evident from the above that learners start thinking about future career choices and higher education institutions prior to their final year of school. It is important that HEIs incorporate this in their marketing strategy. By providing better institutional information earlier in their decision-making process, the greater the possibility of being the institution of choice. This can contribute to the institutional competitive advantage from an organisational success perspective.

Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted. Learners from Grade 10 and 11 do engage with choices about HEIs prior to Grade 12.

#### 4.5.7 Research objective 7

##### **Establish the most influential marketing media to communicate information pertaining to HEIs to learners.**

From the data collected, the communication and media platform of preference to communicate information about HEIs and qualification were determined by the mean value of the responses. Table 4.27 displays the communication and media platforms in ranking order of appropriateness and preference as deemed by the learner respondents.

School visits where the HEIs speak with learners about future studies are deemed the most appropriate and preferred platform of communication. Four of the top five communication platforms or media were based on face-to-face communication. The mean values fall within the range of moderate extent of appropriateness and preference. The standard deviation for all the factors are low. This is an indication that the respondents were in agreement with the appropriateness and preference.

The institutional website was ranked in third position and was described as appropriate and preferable to a moderate extent. The standard deviation is low, thus an indicator of agreement among the respondents. The least appropriate was Twitter. However, it had a higher standard deviation which is an indicator that the respondents were not in agreement about this.

**Table 4.27: Communication and media platforms ranking (Learners)**

Rank	Communication and media platforms (Learners)	Mean	Standard deviation
1	School visits at which the institutions speak with learners about future studies	3.31	0.87
2	Open days at the Higher Education Institution	3.26	0.9
3	Institutional website	3.19	0.88
4	Career expos	3.18	0.84
5	Life Orientation and career advise as part of the LO academic curriculum	3.02	0.92
6	Television	2.96	1.02
7	Parents	2.93	1
8	Cell phone applications	2.85	1
9	Institutional marketing material (Brochures, pamphlets, qualification fact sheets)	2.84	0.87
10	Facebook	2.79	1.06

Rank	Communication and media platforms (Learners)	Mean	Standard deviation
11	Alumni — Graduate messages to the prospective students	2.73	0.93
12	Newsletters	2.67	0.96
13	Magazine articles and advertisements	2.64	0.89
14	Newspaper editorials and advertisements	2.62	0.93
15	Word of mouth (Inclusive of what friends tell you)	2.6	0.97
16	Radio	2.58	0.97
17	Twitter	2.4	1.09

The findings were compared against the research conducted by Wiese (2008). See Table 2.28. Most important communication engagements were established in both studies as engaging face-to-face with prospective students. Institutional websites were determined as an important source of information about HEIs in both studies.

**Table 4.28: Communication and media platforms compared to previous studies**

Rank	Communication and media platforms	
	(Current studies)	Wiese (2008)
1	School visits at which the institutions speak with learners about future studies	Campus visits and open days
2	Open days at the Higher Education Institution	University websites
3	Institutional website	University publications
4	Career expos	Word of mouth (Friends and other people)
5	Life Orientation and career advise as part of the LO academic curriculum	Alumni
6	Television	Events on campus (Music festivals, rag, sports events)
7	Parents	School visits by university staff
8	Cell phone applications	High school teachers
9	Institutional marketing material (Brochures, pamphlets, qualification fact sheets)	Parents
10	Facebook	Advertisements in magazines/Newspapers

Rank	Communication and media platforms (Current studies)	Wiese (2008)
11	Alumni — Graduate messages to the prospective students	Advertisements of radio
12	Newsletters	Advertisements on TV

#### 4.5.8 Research objective 8

#### **Establish the most influential marketing media to communicate information pertaining to HEIs with parents.**

The communication and media platform of preference to communicate information about higher education institutions and qualification were determined from the data collected by the mean value of the responses. Table 4.26 displays the communication and media platforms in ranking order of appropriateness and preference as deemed by the parent respondents.

School visits at which the HEIs speak with learners about future studies are deemed the most appropriate and preferred platform of communication. Three of the top five communication platforms or media were based on face-to-face communication. The mean values fall within the range of moderate extent of appropriateness and preference. The standard deviation for all the factors are low. This is an indication that the respondents were in agreement with the appropriateness and preference.

The institutional website was ranked in second position and was described as appropriate and preferable to a moderate extent. The standard deviation is low, thus an indicator of agreement among the respondents. The least appropriate was Twitter. Thus, it had a higher standard deviation which is an indicator that the respondents were not in agreement about this.

**Table 4.29: Communication and media platforms ranking (Parents)**

Ranking	Communication and media platforms (Parents)	Mean	Standard deviation
1	School visits at which the institutions speak with learners about future studies	3.73	0.53
2	Institutional website	3.54	0.7
3	Open days at the Higher Education Institution	3.48	0.73
4	Life Orientation and career advise as part of the LO academic curriculum	3.41	0.78

Ranking	Communication and media platforms (Parents)	Mean	Standard deviation
5	Institutional marketing material (Brochures, pamphlets, qualification fact sheets)	3.37	0.77
6	Career expos	3.35	0.76
7	Parents	3.25	1.01
8	Newsletters	3.19	0.82
9	Alumni — Graduate messages to the prospective students	3.1	0.9
10	Newspaper editorials and advertisements	3.08	0.88
11	Television	3.04	0.97
12	Cell phone applications	3	0.89
13	Magazine articles and advertisements	2.98	0.97
14	Radio	2.92	0.94
15	Word of mouth (Inclusive of what friends tell you)	2.87	0.84
16	Facebook	2.56	1.09
17	Twitter	2.25	1.1

Research objectives 7 and 8 test the fifth research hypothesis as presented in Section 3.2.1.5

#### Hypothesis 5

$H_0$  Learners and their parents do not differ regarding the preferred platform for communicating information about HEIs and qualifications on offer.

$H_6$  Learners and their parents differ regarding the preferred platform for communicating information about HEIs and qualifications on offer.

Table 4.30 presents the comparison of communication and media platforms as ranked by learners and parents. It can be concluded from the data that learners and their parents differ regarding the preferred communication and media platform used to disseminate information about HEIs and qualifications. The null hypothesis that learners and their parents do not differ regarding the preferred platform for communicating information about HEIs and qualifications on offer is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 4.30: Learner and parent ranking of choice factors compared**

Communication and media platforms (Learners)	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Communication and media platforms (Parents)	Mean	Standard deviation
School visits at which the institutions speak with learners about future studies	3.31	0.87	1	School visits at which the institutions speak with learners about future studies	3.73	0.53
Open days at the Higher Education Institution	3.26	0.9	2	Institutional website	3.54	0.7
Institutional website	3.19	0.88	3	Open days at the Higher Education Institution	3.48	0.73
Career expos	3.18	0.84	4	Life Orientation and career advise as part of the LO academic curriculum	3.41	0.78
Life Orientation and career advise as part of the LO academic curriculum	3.02	0.92	5	Institutional marketing material (Brochures, pamphlets, qualification fact sheets)	3.37	0.77
Television	2.96	1.02	6	Career expos	3.35	0.76
Parents	2.93	1	7	Parents	3.25	1.01
Cell phone applications	2.85	1	8	Newsletters	3.19	0.82
Institutional marketing material (Brochures, pamphlets, qualification fact sheets)	2.84	0.87	9	Alumni — Graduate messages to the prospective students	3.1	0.9
Facebook	2.79	1.06	10	Newspaper editorials and advertisements	3.08	0.88
Alumni — Graduate messages to the prospective students	2.73	0.93	11	Television	3.04	0.97
Newsletters	2.67	0.96	12	Cell phone applications	3	0.89
Magazine articles and advertisements	2.64	0.89	13	Magazine articles and advertisements	2.98	0.97
Newspaper editorials and advertisements	2.62	0.93	14	Radio	2.92	0.94
Word of mouth (Inclusive of what friends tell you)	2.6	0.97	15	Word of mouth (Inclusive of what friends tell you)	2.87	0.84
Radio	2.58	0.97	16	Facebook	2.56	1.09
Twitter	2.4	1.09	17	Twitter	2.25	1.1

It is important to point out that four of the top five appropriate and preferred communication and media platforms are present in both the learners' and the parents' top five preferences. The level of importance differs slightly, but are important to both parties and can be determined as definite preferred communication platforms on the high mean scores and the low standard deviations. For marketers of higher education institutions it can be suggested that the top five items on the list should be considered as very strong communication platforms and should be included in the marketing strategy.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

Marketing strategies are very comprehensive, multifaceted business constructs. This study investigated some influential elements important to the marketing strategy of higher education institutions. These elements are presented as factors within the seven P's marketing mix for service providers. As the educational landscape and market have changed immensely over the past two decades, as described in Chapter 2, change in the way in which HEIs promote themselves have become crucial. It is critical as to establish a competitive advantage and to warrant continuous growth or at a minimum sustainability of the institution within the market.

This study aimed to primarily determine the following in an attempt to advise higher education institutions on the important elements of a customer-driven marketing strategy:

- whether learners start investigating future educational institutions prior to Grade 12,
- the list of the most important choice factors considered by learners and their parents when deciding on future HEIs.
- to determine the preferred way in which students wish to receive information pertaining to HEIs and their qualification offerings.

It was determined that learners and sponsors regard different choice factors as important when making a decisions about a higher education institution. There are factor similarities in their lists of choice factors, however the extent and or ranking of importance varied. There are similarities between sponsor and leaners preferred method of receiving information about higher education institutions.

In attempt to develop a customer-driven marketing strategy the findings of the study are compared against the seven P's of marketing mix of the service industry.

- **Product**

Parents and learners indicated that academic quality is a very important choice factor when deciding on a HEI. Therefore sufficient information pertaining to the various qualifications, detail of the quality of the offerings, the employability aspect on completion of the qualification, academic support offered and international academic alliances should be incorporated into the marketing strategy. The strategy is not only for external display, but needs to become truly part of the institutional offering and operations.



- **Place/distribution**

Higher education institutions distribute their offerings in various forms such as full-time and part-time classes. Distance education has been an important distribution channel for several of the South African institutions like UNISA, to name but one. More institutions have endeavoured to provide distance offerings over the past few years. The newest distribution point added to the distribution channel of HEIs is the online offering of academic delivery. For institutions in South Africa to capitalise on the new form of education, gain market share and competitive advantage, they need to strive to be part of the forth runners in this field. More students are looking into this as an option with the ever-increasing educational cost. By doing so people can work and complete a qualification.

- **Promotion**

The study found that the most appropriate and preferred mode of communication pertaining to the dissemination of information about HEIs are face-to-face contact. This includes school visits, open days and career expos. Another important source of information was the information LO teachers provide learners with as part of the Life Orientation curriculum. HEIs should endeavour to have more face-to-face or rather personal contact information sessions. This relates to relationship building initiatives.

The institutional website was an important source of information. It is therefore imperative that marketers utilise this platform to its fullest extent. Make sure that information is up to date at all times. Outdated information reflects negatively on the institution. This can have a few implication. Students can judge the institution and expect to receive certain characteristics portrayed in the online information. Should the learners not receive this, it can be interpreted as false advertising and damage the brand. Marketers need to attempt to incorporate the choice factors in an informative way on the website.

The study determined that Grade 10 and 11 students are already engaging in activities regarding career choices and decision-making pertaining to a future HEI. Therefore HEIs need to extent their reach of marketing initiatives as to include marketing to Grade 10 and 11 learners. If HEIs can engage with the learners at an earlier stage, they will have a greater influence. The incorporation of a structured marketing strategy around Grade 10 and 11 learners will result in an increase in student numbers if exposed to the correct stimuli over a period of three years.

- **Price**

Learners and parents ranked funding and bursaries as sixth and eleventh on their rating scales. In line with external influential factors such as frequent riots and protests about fees and the lack of money to pay the increasing academic costs, institutions should inform students of funding options available within the institution, but also external bursaries. The HEIs should study available industry bursaries and inform learners of these. Imperative for future growth and to be the choice provider in a competitive markets, institutions have to focus on relationship building with industry partners. The relationship needs to establish mutually beneficial grounds for awarding funding or bursaries to institutions and in return have access to highly qualified graduates. This brings into play the crucial importance of good quality academic product offerings and work integrated learning component to the product offering to ensure the development of highly employable graduates. This is a clear indication of the interrelatedness of the marketing mix components. For the best marketing strategy the components should not be studied and strategies should not be developed independently but should be integrated. The interrelatedness of the constructs should be evaluated in line with internal and external changes of the institution.

- **People**

Higher education involvement is about more than the learner and the institution. Parental involvement remains an important people factor that needs to be incorporated. The study identified that a large percentage of the parent respondents were of the opinion that they are the final decision maker in the choice of HEI. Studies conducted by various international researchers also indicated the importance of parents in the decision-making process. Students rated parents as a valuable source of information. By getting parents involved with the information dissemination they will actively participate in discussions about institutions. When there is agreement about the institution of choice, the parent will be likely to allocate funds towards the fees, or assist with seeking other finance offers. Research has shown that students that study at an institution of choice perform better academically. The marketers need to sell the unique selling points to not one of the parties, but both as to ensure higher recruitment and retention of students.

Other important people involved in the strategic marketing is the internal role-players that offer the service. This includes administrative staff, academic support staff and lecturing staff. Good customer service and quality service delivery are dependent on the staff of the institution. The staff should see their roles not only as lecturers, or administrative and or support staff, but as internal marketers of the good quality service required by the customer. This needs to be included in the marketing strategy. In a greater organisational strategy, this should be included in all staff's

key performance activities measured with key performance indicators with reference to customer service.

As per the previous statement, the involvement of external role-players in industry is becoming a requirement. The marketing strategy should include material with which the marketers can build these relationships such as institutional profiles. The institutional profiles should include information pertaining to who the institution is, its achievements and future strategies and goals. In line with the current South African educational environment, institutions should present information about their transformational progress. This is important for the students wanting to study at the institution, but also for the prospective funders or bursars.

- **Physical evidence**

Academic offering is a service and intangible. Institutions cannot hand students a sample of the service as one would with a product, in an attempt to indicate the quality to convince them to choose the institution.

However, from the study various choice factors can be interpreted as evidence of proposed quality of service or required elements of the service. Both learners and parents listed safety and security on campus as a very important choice factor. Most institutions have security on campuses. They should mention this in their marketing material and include it in discussions with both students and parents.

Both learners and parents listed the institutional look and feel as important choice factors that ranked within the top ten factors. Part of the marketing strategy should tie in with the organisational strategy to ensure the upkeep of the institutional facilities.

- **Process**

Two choice factors were studied as determinants of the process of the service offering. The one being the language of lecturing and learning and the other the admissions or entry requirements. As the study indicated the study determined that the language of lecturing and learning is an extremely controversial topic currently within the South African higher education environment. The institution that best seek solutions to the process of offering education as to not exclude any students will gain a competitive advantage. This is greater than only the marketing strategy and filters from the institutional strategy and goals.

## 5.2 Limitations

The study had certain limitations:

- The study was limited to schools in the Vaal triangle area. The findings are relevant as could be determined through the statistical analysis and from comparison to similar research conducted by various other researchers. This excluded students from the greater South African population.
- The study only included respondents from quintile 3, 4 and 5. Schools from quintiles 1 and 2 were approached, but they opted not to participate. Therefore they were excluded. It would be recommended for future research to attempt to include quintile 1 and 2 respondents as well.
- Only a small sample of parents completed the questionnaire. It would be recommended that a bigger representative group is used in future studies.

Despite the limitations, valuable observations were made that will contribute to higher education institutions formulating a customer-driven marketing strategy.

## 5.2 Recommendations

As an end result of the study the following future research can be recommended:

- A similar study can be conducted with a representative sample of the South African population as well as with international learners enquiring information about studying at a South African institution.
- A study can be conducted with prospective bursars and or funders to choice factors they would consider when wanting to invest money in a higher education institution.
- A longitudinal study to measure whether the importance of certain choice constructs change pertaining to level of importance as a learner/student progress through the following stages of the higher educational lifecycle — As a high school learner (Grades 10, 11 & 12) , as a first year student, as a final year student and three years after their graduation (employed citizen).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alipour, M. & Darabai, E. 2011. The Role Of Service Marketing Mix And Its Impact On Marketing Audit In Engineering And Technical Service Corporations. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*. 11(6):69-77.
- Altbach, P.G., Reisberg, L. & Rumbley, L.E. 2009. Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an Academic Revolution. A Report Prepared for the UNESCO 2009 World Conference on Higher Education.
- Badat, S. 2010. The Challenges of Transformation in Higher Education and Training Institutions in South Africa Paper Commissioned by the Development Bank of Southern Africa.  
<https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/vc/documents/The%20Challenges%20of%20Transformation%20in%20Higher%20Education%20and%20Training%20Institutions%20in%20South%20Africa.pdf> Date of Access: 12 July 2015.
- Bailey, M., Ifenthaler, D., Gosper, M. & Kretzschmar, M. 2014. Factors influencing tertiary students' choice of study mode. <http://ascilite.org/conferences/dunedin2014/files/fullpapers/211-Bailey.pdf> Date of Access: 12 July 2015.
- Baker, M.J. 2014. Marketing strategy and management. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Palgrave.
- Bassington, F. & Pettitt, S. 2006. Principles of marketing. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Enhanced media edition. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Bateman, E.J. & Bisschoff, C.A. 2012. Perceptions of Learners, Parents and Teachers in the Selection of a Government Secondary School in South Africa. Paper presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> International Business Conference, 28-29 August 2012, Mombassa, Kenya.
- Berndt, A. & Petzer, D. 2014. Marketing Research. Cape Town: Heinemann.
- Bers, T.H. & Golowich, P.M. 2002. Using survey and focus group research to learn about parents' roles in the community college choice process. *Community College Review*. 29(4):67-83.
- Brennan, R., Baines, P., Garneau, P. & Vos, L. 2008. Contemporary Strategic Marketing. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Brown, J.D. 2011. Likert items and scales of measurement. *SHIKEN: JALT Testing & Evaluation SIG Newsletter*. 15(1):10-14.

Burns, A.C. and Bush, R.F. 2006. Marketing research. New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Cano, J.G.E. 2014. Dialectical Model of Marketing versus Trends and Fashions. *Journal of Business and Management Sciences*, 2(3):58-68.

CASRO. 2015. When did marketing and public opinion research start... and why?  
<https://www.casro.org/?page=ForThePublic> Date of Access: 2 October 2015.

Coetzee, M.D. & Liebenberg, E. 2004. The influence of corporate reputation on the choice of the University of Pretoria as a preferred HEI: a survey of high-school learners in the Pretoria region. Unpublished honours dissertation, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

Cosser, M. & du Toit, J. 2002. From school to higher education: factors affecting the choice of Grade 12 learners. South Africa, Cape Town: HSRC Publishers.

Council of Higher Education. 2015. Transformation in higher education. Discussion paper prepared for the second national Higher Education Transformation Summit, 2015.  
[http://www.dhet.gov.za/summit/Docs/2015Docs/Annex%206\\_CHE\\_Transformation%20in%20Higher%20Education.pdf](http://www.dhet.gov.za/summit/Docs/2015Docs/Annex%206_CHE_Transformation%20in%20Higher%20Education.pdf) Date of Access: 2 November 2015.

Department of Education. 1997. Education White Paper 3. A programme for the transformation of higher education. Notice 1196 of 1997. Pretoria.

DHET. 2015. Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2013.  
<http://www.dhet.gov.za/DHET%20Statistics%20Publication/Statistics%20on%20Post-School%20Education%20and%20Training%20in%20South%20Africa%202013.pdf> Date of Access: 15 June 2015.

Diedericks, R. 2012. Students' perception of service quality at two South African higher education institutions. Vaal Triangle: North-West University (Thesis – MCom).

Dupaul, S. & Harris, M. S. 2012. Secret Shoppers. The Stealth Applicant. Search for Higher Education. *Journal of College Admission*. Spring 2012. <http://www.nacacnet.org>. Date of Access: 15 April 2015.

East, R., Wright, M. & Vanhuele, M. 2013. Consumer behaviour. Applications in Marketing. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: SAGE Publications Limited.

Engel, J.F., Blackwell, R.D. & Miniard, P.W. 1995. Consumer behaviour. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Fort Worth: The Dryden Press.

Ernst & Young. 2011. Higher Education and the power of choice. Reform, competition and the consumer-driven market in Australian higher education.

[http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Higher\\_education\\_and\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_choice\\_Australia/\\$File/Higher%20education%20and%20the%20power%20of%20choice%20Australia.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Higher_education_and_the_power_of_choice_Australia/$File/Higher%20education%20and%20the%20power%20of%20choice%20Australia.pdf)

Date of Access: 9 June 2015.

European Commission. 2014. High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education. Report to the European commission on; New modes of learning and teaching in higher education. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Field, A. 2009. Discovering statistics using SPSS. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Gajić, J. 2012. Importance of Marketing Mix in higher education institutions. *Singidunum Journal of Applied Sciences*. 9(1):29-41.

Gauteng Speaker Forum. 2015. [http://www.gsf.gov.za/en/?\\_44&&l=151](http://www.gsf.gov.za/en/?_44&&l=151) Date of Access: 15 October 2015.

Goddard, W. & Melville, S. 2007. Research methodology. An Introduction. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Lansdowne: Juta.

GPG. 2015. Gauteng Department of Education. Schools.

<http://www.education.gpg.gov.za/Schools/Pages/default.aspx> Date of Access: 15 June 2015.

Hancock, G.R. & Mueller, R.O. 2010. The reviewer's guide to quantitative methods in the social sciences. New York: Routledge.

Hanover Research. 2014. Trends in Higher Education. Marketing, Recruitment and Technology. <http://www.hanoverresearch.com/media/Trends-in-Higher-Education-Marketing-Recruitment-and-Technology-2.pdf> Date of Access: 12 October 2015.

Hay, H.R. & Van Gensen, G.A. 2008. A model for the branding of higher education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 22(1):78-99.

Hayden, M.L. 2000. Factors that influence the college choice process for African American students. Virginia: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. (Thesis – Masters of Arts in Education).

Hemsley-Brown. J. 2012. 'The best education in the world': reality, reputation or cliché? International students' reasons for choosing an English University. *Studies in Higher education*, 37(8):1005-1022.

HESA. 2011. Higher Education Funding in South Africa. Report to the ministerial committee: Review of the funding of universities.

HESA. 2014. South African higher education in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of democracy: Context, achievements and key challenges. Cape Town, 5 March 2014.

Hirschman, E.C. 1989. Consumer behaviour theories as heroic quest. *Advances in Consumer Research*. 16:639-646.

Hoyt, J.E. & Brown, A.B. 2003. Identifying college choice factors to successfully market your institution. *College & University Journal*, 78(4):3-5.

Immelman, R. 2014. Choice factors for parents selecting independent primary schools in Gauteng. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg. (Thesis – PhD in Marketing Management).

Iyamabo, J. & Otubanjo, O. 2013. A three component definition of strategic marketing. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*. 5(1):16-33.

Janse van Rensburg, J., McConnell, C.R. & Brue, S.L. 2011. Economics. Southern African Edition. Berkshire:McGraw-Hill Higher education.

Jordaan, Y. & Wiese, M. 2010. The role of ethnicity in the higher education institution selection process. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 24(4):538-554.

Kardes, F.R., Cronley, M.L. & Cline, T.W. 2015. Consumer Behavior. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Stamford: Cengage Learning.

Khanna, M., Jacob, I. & Yadav, N. 2014. Identifying and analysing touchpoints for building a higher education brand. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 24(1):122-143.

Kothari, C.R. 2006. Research methodology. Methods and techniques. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New Delhi: New age international (p) limited publishers.

Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. 2010. Principles of marketing. Global and South African perspective. Cape Town: Pearson Education South Africa.

Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. 2012. Principles of Marketing. 14<sup>th</sup> ed. England: Pearson Education Limited.



Kotler, P. & Fox, K. 1995. Strategic Marketing for educational institutions. New Jersey: Prentice Hill.

Le Roux, A.A. 2011. Integrated customer experience management at the North-West University. Potchefstroom: NWU (Thesis – PhD).

Levin, J. & Milgrom, P, 2004. Introduction to choice theory.  
<http://web.stanford.edu/~jdlevin/Econ%20202/Choice%20Theory.pdf> Date of Access: 15 August 2015.

Lin, S. 2011. Marketing mix (7P) and performance assessment of western fast food industry in Taiwan: An application by associating DEMATEL and ANP. *African Journal of Business Management*. 5(26):10634-10644.

Lubbe, I. 2013. Choice factors and the perceived value that influence prospective university students' intention to enrol - A choice model. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg (Thesis – PhD in Marketing Management).

Maniu, I. & Maniu G.C. 2014. Educational marketing: Factors influencing the selection of a university: Literature review. *SEA – Practical application of science*. 2(3):39.

Mokhoni, M. 2014. Higher education is not cheap. *University World News*. 340.  
<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=2014102313130139> Date of Access: 18 August 2015.

Malhotra, N.K. 2012. Basic marketing research, integration of social media. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education International.

Martin, N. & Morich, K. 2011. Unconscious mental processes in consumer choice: Toward a new model of consumer behaviour. *Journal of Brand Management*. 18(7):483–505.

McDaniel, C. & Gates, R. 1998. Marketing Research Essentials. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. USA: Thomson South-Western.

Merriam-Webster. 2015. Online dictionary. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/choice>  
Date of Access: 2 October 2015.

Meyer, M., Bushney, M. & Ukepere, W.I. 2011. The impact of globalisation on higher education: Achieving a balance between local and global needs and realities. *African Journal of Business Management*. 5(15):6569-6578.

- Ming, J.S.K. 2010. Institutional factors influencing students' college choice decision in Malaysia: A Conceptual Framework. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*. 1(3):53-58.
- Mortlock, M. 2015. Open Stellenbosch releases racism documentary. Eyewitness News. <http://ewn.co.za/2015/08/22/Open-Stellenbosch-releases-racism-documentary> Date of Access: 8 October 2015.
- Naidoo, V. & Wu, T. 2011. Marketing strategy implementation in higher education: A mixed approach for model development and testing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(11-12):1117-1141.
- Naik, C.N.K. & Reddy, L.V. 1999. Consumer Behaviour. New Delhi:Discovery Publishing House.
- Nicolescu, L. 2009. Applying marketing to higher education: Scope and Limits. *Management and Marketing*. 4(2):35-44.
- Noel-Levitz. 2009. Institutional brand and parental influence on college choice. A Noel-Levitz benchmark psychographic study. [https://www.ruffalonl.com/documents/shared/Papers\\_and\\_Research/2009/InstitutionalBrandParentalInfluence.pdf](https://www.ruffalonl.com/documents/shared/Papers_and_Research/2009/InstitutionalBrandParentalInfluence.pdf) Date of Access: 12 March 2015.
- NSFAS. 2015. 2014/2015 Annual report. NSFAS towards a student-centred approach. <http://www.nsfas.org.za/staticfiles/NSFAS/Internet/static%20files/pdf/NSFAS%20AR%202014-15.pdf> Date of Access: 14 August 2015.
- Oplatka, I. 2004. Marketing informal education institutions in Israel: the centrality of customers' active involvement in service development. *International Journal of Educational Management*. 18(7):417-424.
- Poalses, J. & Koyana, S. 2013. Status of the bursary/scholarship funding landscape in South Africa. Research commissioned by Human Resource Development Council of South Africa (HRDC). <http://www.hrdcsa.org.za/sites/default/files/Status%20of%20the%20bursary%20scholarship%20funding%20landscape%20in%20SA%202013.pdf> Date of Access: 14 June 2015.
- Proctor, T. 2008. Strategic Marketing: An introduction. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Raab, G., Goddard, G.J., Ajami, R.J. & Unger, A. 2010. The Psychology of Marketing. Cross-Cultural Perspective. England: Gower Publishing Limited.

- Rajasekar, S., Philominathan, P. & Chinnathambi, V. 2013. Research Methodology. <http://arxiv.org/pdf/physics/0601009.pdf> Date of Access: 12 October 2015.
- SAHO. 2015. South African History Online. Student protests in democratic South Africa. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/student-protests-democratic-south-africa> Date of Access: 22 October 2015.
- SARUA. 2012. SARUA 2012 Higher education data: A profile of higher education in Southern Africa. Volume 1. A regional perspective. <http://www.sarua.org/files/publications/SARUA%20leadership%20Dialogue%20Series/SARUA%20Profiles%20of%20HE%20Vol%201.pdf> Date of Access: 12 August 2015.
- Shiu, E., Hair, J., Bush, R. & Ortinau, D. 2009. Marketing research. UK: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Singh, Y.K. 2006. Fundamental of research methodology and statistics. New Delhi: New Age International (P) Limited, Publishers.
- Schneider, G. 2014. E-Business. Hampshire: Cengage Learning EMEA.
- Solomon, M.R., Russell-Bennett, R. & Previte, J. 2013. Consumer Behaviour. Buying, having, being. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Australia: Pearson
- South Africa. 2015. Minister Blade Nzimande: Higher Education and Training Dept Budget Vote 2015/16. <http://www.gov.za/speeches/minister-blade-nzimande-higher-education-and-training-dept-budget-vote-201516-13-may-2015> Date of Access: 13 September 2015.
- Standard Bank. 2015. Exchange Rates. <http://ws9.standardbank.co.za/research/> Date of Access: 2 October 2015.
- Statistics South Africa. 2014. Labour market dynamics in South Africa, 2014 report. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=4445> Date of Access: 28 April 2015.
- Statistics South Africa. 2015. Education cost continue to outstrip inflation. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=4460> Date of Access: 15 October 2015.
- The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM). 2009. Marketing and the 7Ps. A brief summary of marketing and how it works. <http://www.cim.co.uk/files/7ps.pdf> Date of

The Economist. 2008. The future of higher education: How technology will shape learning. A report from the Economist Intelligence Unit Sponsored by the New Media Consortium.  
[http://www.nmc.org/pdf/Future-of-Higher-Ed-\(NMC\).pdf](http://www.nmc.org/pdf/Future-of-Higher-Ed-(NMC).pdf) date of Access: 11 April 2015.

The National Planning Commission. (2012). National Development Plan. 2030. Executive Summary. Our future – make it work.  
<http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Executive%20Summary-NDP%202030%20-%20Our%20future%20-%20make%20it%20work.pdf> Date of Access: 13 September 2015.

Theo, T.S.H. & Yeong, Y.B. 2003. Assessing the consumer decision process in the digital marketplace. *Omega*. 31: 349-363.  
[http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Thompson\\_Teo/publication/222825926\\_Assessing\\_the\\_consumer\\_decision\\_process\\_in\\_the\\_digital\\_marketplace/links/0c96051f25cff4e73a000000.pdf](http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Thompson_Teo/publication/222825926_Assessing_the_consumer_decision_process_in_the_digital_marketplace/links/0c96051f25cff4e73a000000.pdf)  
Date of Access: 14 August 2015.

Triami Media BV. 2015. Inflation.eu. Worldwide Inflation Data. Historic Inflation South Africa – CPI Inflation. <http://www.inflation.eu/inflation-rates/south-africa/historic-inflation/cpi-inflation-south-africa.aspx> Date of Access: 23 September 2015.

Varadarajan, R. 2010. Strategic marketing and marketing strategy: domain, definition, fundamental issues and foundational promises. *Journal of the academic marketing science*. 38:119-140.

Van Louw, T. & Beets, P.A.D. 2008. The transformation of higher education: Context of the establishment of the Centre for Leadership and Management in Education at Stellenbosch University. *South African Journal of Higher Education*. 22(3):473-483.

Webster, F.E. 1992. The changing role of marketing in the corporation. *Journal of marketing*. 54(4):1-17.

Welman, C., Kruger, S.J. & Mitchell, B. 2005. Research methodology. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Wind, Y. & Robertson, T.S. 1983. Marketing Strategy: New directions for theory and research. *Journal of Marketing*, 47(2):12-25.

Wiese, M. 2008. A higher education marketing perspective on choice factors and information sources considered by South African first year university students. Pretoria: University of Pretoria (Thesis – PhD Marketing Management).

Wiese, M. 2015. Choice factors when deciding on HEI's. [Email]. 11 Aug. Vanderbijlpark.

Wiese, M., Jordaan, Y. & van Heerden, C.H. 2009a. Communicating to prospective students through appropriate sources of information: a comparative study of selected public higher education institutions. *Communicare: Journal for Communication Sciences in Southern Africa*, 28(1):68-87.

Wiese, M., van Heerden, N., Jordaan, Y. & North, E. 2009b. A marketing perspective on choice factors considered by South African first year students in selecting a higher education institution. *Southern African Business Review*. 13(1):39-60.

Wiese, M., van Heerden, N. & Jordaan, Y. 2010. The role of demographics in students' selection of higher education institutions. *Acta Commercii*.  
[http://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/15491/Wiese\\_Role%282010%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/15491/Wiese_Role%282010%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) Date of Access: 11 July 2015.

Woltman, H., Feldstain, A., MacKay, J.C. & Rocchi, M. 2012. An introduction to hierarchical linear modelling. *Tutorials in Quantitative Methods for Psychology*. 8(1): 52-69.

World Bank. 2015. South Africa's changing demographic could lift growth to 5.4% by 2030. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/08/17/south-africa-demographic-lift-growth> Date of Access: 13 October 2015.

Zikmund, W.G. & Babin, B.J. 2007. Exploring marketing research. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Mason: Thomson Higher Education.

## **ANNEXURES**

## Annexure A – Learner questionnaire

Learner\_English



**Dear Participant**

You are invited to participate in a research study titled '***A customer-driven marketing strategy for Higher Education Institutions***'. The study is being conducted by Sharon Gordon, a final year MBA (Masters of Business Administration) student at the **Potchefstroom Business School (PBS)** of the **North-West University (NWU)**.

The research will assist Higher Education Institutions in understanding the choice factors high school learners and their parents or sponsors consider when making a decision about an academic institution at which to further their studies. Additional to the mentioned, the research will determine whether there is a correlation or disconnect in perceived importance of choice factors between the learners and their parents or sponsors.

A Higher Education Institution (HEI) can be either public or private institutions and be registered and accredited as universities, colleges or other higher education service providers.

In this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. The questionnaire should take only 10 minutes to complete. Responses will be completely anonymous; your name will not appear anywhere on the questionnaire. Completing and returning the questionnaire constitutes your consent to participate.

If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire or this research project in general, please contact the researcher, **Sharon Gordon** at [sgordon192@gmail.com](mailto:sgordon192@gmail.com) or her study leader **Prof. CA Bisschoff** at [Christo.Bisschoff@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Christo.Bisschoff@nwu.ac.za).

Thank you in advance for taking time to participate in the research study.

Kind Regards

**Sharon Gordon**  
[sgordon192@gmail.com](mailto:sgordon192@gmail.com)

### Section A - Demographic Detail

1. Gender	1) Female	2) Male					
2. Grade	1) Grade 10	2) Grade 11	3) Grade 12				
3. Age	1) 15	2) 16	3) 17	4) 18	5) 19	6) 20	
4. Home Language	1) Afrikaans	2) English	3) Ndebele	4) Pedi	5) Sotho	6) Swati	7) Tshonga
	8) Tswana	9) Venda	10) Xhosa	11) Zulu	12) Other _____		

### Section B - Questionnaire

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
5. To what extent have you started thinking of future career options?	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
6. Have you already decided on a Higher Education Institution to study at after school?	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
7. If you have decided, are your parents in agreement with your choice of Higher Education Institution?	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
8. What is the likelihood that you will change your choice of Higher Education Institution out of own free will?	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent



9. A **choice factor** can be defined as an important characteristic about an HEI which will influence your decision to choose one institution above another. **To what extent will or did each of the following choice factors influence your decision of Higher Education Institution (HEI) to study at in future?**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1. Quality academic teaching	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
2. Qualified and distinguished lecturers	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
3. Academic reputation of the Higher Education Institution (Public Image)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
4. Employability on completion of studies based on skills and knowledge acquired from the studies (Practical application)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
5. Fees per year	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
6. Flexibility of study mode (Face-to-face, distance and / or combination of the two)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
7. Safety and security when on campus	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
8. Look and feel of the facilities	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
9. Location of the institution	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
10. Campus accommodation (Residence) availability	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
11. Language of lecturing and learning	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
12. Institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
13. Extra mural activities such as sport, cultural and social events	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
14. Loyalty - Father, Mother or other siblings studied at the Higher Education Institution	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
15. Admissions / entry requirements	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
16. Friends going to the same Higher Education Institution	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
17. The institution offers additional / extra academic support during studies	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
18. Multiculturalism on campus	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
19. Links with International Higher Education Institutions and / or associations	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
20. Financial funding / bursaries provided	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent

Other important choice factors not mentioned:

---



---



---

10. To what extent do you consider the following **communication techniques and platforms as appropriate and preferable** to convey information pertaining to Higher Education Institutions and the qualifications on offer?

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1. Newspaper editorials and advertisements	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
2. Magazine articles and advertisements	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
3. Radio	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
4. Television	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
5. School visits at which the institutions speak with learners about future studies	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
6. Newsletters	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
7. Institutional website	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
8. Open days at the Higher Education Institution	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
9. Life Orientation and career advise as part of the LO academic curriculum	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
10. Alumni - Graduate messages to the prospective students	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
11. Career Expos	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
12. Parents	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
13. Institutional marketing material (Brochures, pamphlettes, qualification fact sheets)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
14. Word-of-Mouth (Inclusive of what friends tell you)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
15. Cell phone applications	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
16. Facebook	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
17. Twitter	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent

Other communication tools not mentioned:

---



---



---

**Thank you for taking time to complete the survey. Your contribution is highly appreciated!**

## Annexure B Parent questionnaire

Parent\_English



**Dear Participant**

You are invited to participate in a research study titled '**A customer-driven marketing strategy for Higher Education Institutions**'. The study is being conducted by Sharon Gordon, a final year MBA (Masters of Business Administration) student at the **Potchefstroom Business School (PBS)** of the **North-West University (NWU)**.

The research will assist Higher Education Institutions in understanding the choice factors high school learners and their parents or sponsors consider when making a decision about an academic institution at which to further their studies. Additional to the mentioned, the research will determine whether there is a correlation or disconnect in perceived importance of choice factors between the learners and their parents or sponsors.

A Higher Education Institution (HEI) can be either public or private institutions and be registered and accredited as universities, colleges or other higher education service providers.

In this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. The questionnaire should take only 10 minutes to complete. Responses will be completely anonymous; your name will not appear anywhere on the questionnaire. Completing and returning the questionnaire constitutes your consent to participate.

If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire or this research project in general, please contact the researcher, **Sharon Gordon** at [sgordon192@gmail.com](mailto:sgordon192@gmail.com) or her study leader **Prof. CA Bisschoff** at [Christo.Bisschoff@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Christo.Bisschoff@nwu.ac.za).

Thank you in advance for taking time to participate in the research study.

Kind Regards

**Sharon Gordon**  
[sgordon192@gmail.com](mailto:sgordon192@gmail.com)

### Questionnaire

1. Grade of child

1) Grade 10	2) Grade 11	3) Grade 12
-------------	-------------	-------------

2. Home Language

1) Afrikaans	2) English	3) Ndebele	4) Pedi	5) Sotho	6) Swati	7) Tshonga
8) Tswana	9) Venda	10) Xhosa	11) Zulu	12) Other _____		

3. To what extent have you and your child started considering future career options for him / her?

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent

4. Have you and your child already decided on a Higher Education Institution to study at after school?

No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
-----------	-------------	-----------------	--------------

5. If you have decided, to what extent are you in agreement with the choice of Higher Education Institution your child would prefer to attend?

No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
-----------	-------------	-----------------	--------------

6. To what extent do you have the final decision about the choice of Higher Education Institution?

No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
-----------	-------------	-----------------	--------------

7. A **choice factor** can be defined as an important characteristic about an HEI which will influence your decision to choose one institution above another. **To what extent will or did each of the following choice factors influence your decision of Higher Education Institution (HEI) for your child to study at in future?**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1. Quality academic teaching	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
2. Qualified and distinguished lecturers	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
3. Academic reputation of the Higher Education Institution (Public Image)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
4. Employability on completion of studies based on skills and knowledge acquired from the studies (Practical application)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
5. Fees per year	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
6. Flexibility of study mode (Face-to-face, distance and / or combination of the two)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
7. Safety and security when on campus	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
8. Look and feel of the facilities	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
9. Location of the institution	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
10. Campus accommodation (Residence) availability	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
11. Language of lecturing and learning	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
12. Institution offers a wide range of qualifications and specialised qualifications	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
13. Extra mural activities such as sport, cultural and social events	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
14. Loyalty - Father, Mother or other siblings studied at the Higher Education Institution	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
15. Admissions / entry requirements	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
16. Friends going to the same Higher Education Institution	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
17. The institution offers additional / extra academic support during studies	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
18. Multiculturalism on campus	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
19. Links with International Higher Education Institutions and / or associations	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
20. Financial funding / bursaries provided	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent

Other important choice factors not mentioned:

---



---



---

8. To what extent do you consider the following **communication techniques and platforms as appropriate and preferable** to convey information pertaining to Higher Education Institutions and the qualifications on offer?

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1. Newspaper editorials and advertisements	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
2. Magazine articles and advertisements	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
3. Radio	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
4. Television	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
5. School visits at which the institutions speak with learners about future studies	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
6. Newsletters	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
7. Institutional website	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
8. Open days at the Higher Education Institution	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
9. Life Orientation and career advise as part of the LO academic curriculum	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
10. Alumni - Graduate messages to the prospective students	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
11. Career Expos	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
12. Parents	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
13. Institutional marketing material (Brochures, pamphlettes, qualification fact sheets)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
14. Word-of-Mouth (Inclusive of what friends tell you)	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
15. Cell phone applications	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
16. Facebook	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
17. Twitter	No extent	Some extent	Moderate extent	Large extent

Other communication tools not mentioned:

---



---



---

**Thank you for taking time to complete the survey. Your contribution is highly appreciated!**