Assessing the Marketing Communication Plan for student recruitment at the North-West University

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ABSTRACT

The competition for quality students has become a marketing challenge for universities which has led to the implementation of different student recruitment practices. Fierce competition between Higher Education Institutions in South Africa, increased government pressure to transform and declining government subsidies have forced Universities to increase the number of students as a means of increasing their income. The merger of the University of the North West and the Potchefstroom University into the NWU in 2004 resulted in the systematic growth into a diverse multi-campus university which may have an effect on how the Marketing and Recruitment Departments at the three campuses of the NWU approach student recruitment.

Some research has been conducted in the fields of student recruitment marketing (Drori *et al.*, 2013; Maringe, 2006), relationship marketing (Beneke & Human, 2010; Mowery & Sampat, 2005), branding of universities and reputation management (Beneke, 2011; Ivy, 2001; Waeraas & Solbakk, 2008). Similarities may occur regarding the content of the literature in the above-mentioned studies, but the study is unique in its focus on the North-West University's marketing communication plan for prospective students, especially in the context of a multi-campus institution of higher education.

The primary purpose of this study is to assess what the marketing communication plan for student recruitment at NWU should entail. This was instituted through a mixed-method research approach, namely qualitative research and quantitative research. Firstly, semi-structured interviews were conducted to establish which marketing communication plan was applied by the Directors at the three campuses of NWU with regard to student recruitment. Secondly, an electronic questionnaire was completed by prospective students at all three campuses of NWU to establish what their perceptions are of the marketing communication plan applied by the three campuses of NWU. This research attempts to provide guidelines towards a marketing communication plan for NWU for prospective student recruitment.

The findings indicated that a marketing communication plan is being utilized by NWU which includes the marketing communication mix and elements in the recruitment of students. Although present to a certain degree at all three campuses, it is the most visible and measurable on the Potchefstroom campus. The new strategy of a unitary approach that was implemented on 1 July 2017 by NWU resulted in the establishment of one Marketing and Student Recruitment department which will largely address recruitment for all three campuses.

It is increasingly evident that new technological innovations and advances, especially in the field of digital media marketing which mostly includes websites and social media and direct contact

and database marketing, will be a critical component in any marketing communication plan. The research clearly illustrated that direct contact and database marketing is very much preferred by the campus directors and prospective students as a marketing communication tool. It will thus be to the benefit of NWU to develop and implement a database and data-driven computerised marketing system by using artificial intelligence to curate and create marketing content and personalize messages to connect with and understand the target audience.

KEY TERMS

Higher education, integrated marketing communication, marketing, marketing communication, positioning, recruitment strategy, relationship marketing, segmentation, social media, student recruitment

OPSOMMING

Die werwing van studente in die hoëronderwyssektor het toenemend mededingend geword en hedendaagse universiteite het verskillende bemarkingstrategieë geïmplementeer in hul werwingsveldtogte ten opsigte van die kommunikasie met en bestuur van verhoudings met belanghebbendes. Hierdie verhoogde kompetisie vir aansoeke is 'n bemarkingsuitdaging vir universiteite wat gelei het tot die implementering van verskillende studentewerwingspraktyke. Die samesmelting van die Universiteit van Noordwes en die Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys tot die Noordwes-Universiteit in 2004 het gelei tot die sistematiese groei in 'n diverse multikampusuniversiteit wat 'n effek kan hê op die benadering van die Bemarking- en Studentewerwingsdepartemente op die drie kampusse van die NWU met betrekking tot studentewerwing.

Navorsing is gedoen op die gebied van studentewerwing (Drori et al., 2013; Maringe, 2006), verhoudingsbemarking (Beneke & Human, 2010; Mowery & Sampat, 2005); handelsmerkvestiging van universiteite en reputasiebestuur (Beneke, 2011; Ivy, 2001; Waeraas & Solbakk, 2008). Ooreenkomste kan met betrekking tot die inhoud van die literatuur in bogenoemde studies voorkom, maar die studie is uniek deurdat dit fokus op die Noordwes-Universiteit se bemarkingskommunikasie-plan vir voornemende studente, veral in die konteks van 'n multikampusuniversiteit.

Die primêre doel van hierdie studie is om te bepaal wat die bemarkingskommunikasie-plan vir studentewerwing by die Noordwes-Universiteit moet behels. Dit is uitgevoer deur 'n gemengde navorsingsbenadering te volg naamlik kwalitatiewe navorsing en kwantitatiewe navorsing. Eerstens is semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude gevoer om vas te stel watter bemarkingskommunikasie-plan deur die Direkteure op die drie kampusse van NWU toegepas is vir studente-werwing. Tweedens is 'n elektroniese vraelys deur voornemende studente op al drie die kampusse van die NWU voltooi om vas te stel wat hulle persepsies van die bemarkingskommunikasie-plan is wat deur die drie kampusse van die NWU toegepas word. Hierdie navorsing poog om riglyne te verskaf vir 'n bemarkingskommunikasie-plan vir die NWU met die oog op die werwing van voornemende studente.

Die bevindings het aangedui dat 'n bemarkingskommunikasie-plan deur die NWU aangewend word, wat die bemarkingskommunikasie-mengsel en elemente in die werwing van studente insluit. Alhoewel dit op al drie kampusse in 'n sekere mate teenwoordig is, is dit meer sigbaar en meetbaar op die Potchefstroomkampus. Die nuwe unitêre benadering wat op 1 Julie 2017 deur die NWU geïmplementeer is, het gelei tot die oprigting van een Bemarking- en Studentewerwingsdepartement wat studentewerwing op al drie kampusse sal ondervang.

Dit word toenemend duidelik dat die ontwikkeling van nuwe tegnologiese innovasies, veral op die gebied van digitalemedia-bemarking, wat webwerwe en sosiale media en direkte kontak en databasisbemarking insluit, 'n kritieke komponent in enige bemarkingskommunikasie-plan sal uitmaak. Die navorsing het duidelik geïllustreer dat direkte kontak- en databasisbemarking voorkeur geniet by die kampusdirekteure en voornemende studente as 'n bemarkingskommunikasie-instrument. Dit sal dus tot voordeel van NWU strek om 'n databasis en datagedrewe gerekenariseerde bemarkingstelsel te ontwikkel en te implementeer deur kunsmatige intelligensie te gebruik om die boodskap meer persoonlik te maak en die teikengehoor te verstaan.

SLEUTELTERME

Bemarking, bemarkingskommunikasie, geïntegreerde bemarkingskommunikasie, hoër onderwys, posisionering, segmentering, sosiale media, studentewerwing, verhoudingsbemarking, werwingstrategie

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the new democracy in South Africa in 1994 has been characterized by major restructuring of the higher education landscape which ushered in a new era for South African universities. In the last two decades universities were exposed to new challenges such as globalisation and internationalization, environmental changes, privatization, diversification, institutional mergers, changes in government funding and broadening access to higher education (Lubbe & Petzer, 2013:921; Maringe, 2006:468; Schofield *et al.*, 2013:51; Silva, 2013:52; Shrivastava & Shrivastava, 2014:809; Wiese *et al.*, 2009:40).

Three specific aspects that impacted on institutions of higher learning were the mergers of institutions of higher learning, government funding and broadening access to higher education. Government Gazette (No. 1689. 14:2003) states that the profile of state universities in South Africa and the realities before the mergers were that the country had 21 universities and 15 Technicons. From this compilation, 14 universities emerged with the addition of Sol Plaatje University, the University of Mpumalanga and Sefako Makghato Health Sciences University in 2015. The aim of the mergers was to address the fragmentation and inequality in the distribution of academic resources which involved the incorporation of previously disadvantaged universities and Technicons to form comprehensive universities (Arnolds *et al.*, 2013:1; Bleazard & Lourens, 2015:40; Mothobi, 2013:1; South Africa, 2003:14).

State funding forms a large portion of income for higher education institutions and is key in providing quality teaching and learning. Government has substantially decreased the amount allocated to state funding for higher education forcing universities to increase their tuition fees and self-generated or third-stream income. Several studies have shown that compared to other societies, the underfunding of universities is considerable (Pouris & Inglesi-Lotz, 2014:1-5; Styger, 2015:1).

In its efforts to transform the higher education system, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has required universities to submit three enrolment plans. The first enrolment plan was for the period from 2005 to 2009, the second from 2010-2013 and the last one was produced for the period from 2014 to 2019. These enrolment plans have caused a dramatic increase in student registrations at universities, especially from previously disadvantaged communities (Bleazard & Lourens, 2015:40; Lubbe & Petzer, 2013:921; South Africa, 2017).

The fact that more students now have access to universities has brought about changes in students' decision-making when choosing a university. These characteristics are accessibility, family income, financial aid, parents' educational experience and students' achievement, aspirations and expectations.

In addition to this is the location of the university, safety, overall reputation and student life, academic reputation, image, teaching facilities and availability of programmes (Han, 2013:254; 2014:121; Lubbe & Petzer, 2013:921; Wiese *et al.,* 2009:40).

The historic background and the tradition of a university with the affinity of a parent or family member towards a specific university as well as academic performance as the only application requirement is no longer important. Similarly, public relations exercises such as compiling news releases, developing brochures and advertising campaigns seem to no longer be successful (Beneke & Human, 2010:436; Han, 2014:122; Wiese *et al.*, 2009:40).

Institutions must constantly be on the lookout for new opportunities to achieve their goals and objectives which need to be supported by the functional objectives of the marketing department. The opportunities for and threats to the realisation of these objectives are found in the institution's external environment which needs to be continually evaluated and the data scanned to identify new opportunities and plan for the future. The main stakeholders of a university are prospective students and the fact that more students have now access to universities has brought about changes in students' decision-making when choosing a university. Behind the visible act of making a choice, lies an important decision-making process a prospective student undergoes in making a choice concerning which university or programme to apply for (Kerin *et al.*, 2013:64; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:35). The decision-making process will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Apart from knowing the influences on student's decision-making, universities must identify their unique selling propositions (USPs) and distinguish them from the USPs of their competitors which are other universities and institutions of higher learning. The principles of marketing, namely strategic planning, , marketing planning, segmenting, positioning and target marketing must be implemented to communicate and convey these USPs which can be in the areas of academics, campus appearance and student life, campus safety, alumni, and sport and career opportunities. By ascertaining and communicating their UPS will support the university's recruitment strategy with a view to establish and build long-term relationships with prospective students (Fill, 2009:16; Han, 2014:124; Wiese *et al.,* 2009:40).

This process of identifying the USPs of an institution and comparing them with those of competing institutions is called positioning which is a technique for developing marketing and recruitment plans. Positioning involves the institutional image, market segmentation and communication to targeted markets and assumes that stakeholders compare services based on important features (Han, 2014:124; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:234; Wiese *et al.*, 2009:41).

The perspective set out above on the changes in the higher education sector is directly influencing universities' ability to attract new students, and universities are competing strongly for quality students in

the recruitment pool. Competition with other universities is intense and higher education institutions need to be innovative and creative to market themselves and need to adopt a marketing approach in their recruitment of students to adapt to the changing environment. The university has to position itself, which means it has to develop a specific marketing mix to influence prospective students' overall perceptions of the university's brand and other unique selling propositions. Marketers therefore need to constantly review existing marketing practices and design custom marketing plans if they are to meet the new information needs of prospective students (Bonnema & Van der Waldt, 2008:315; Han, 2014:124; Lubbe & Petzer, 2013:921; Maringe, 2006:468; Schofield *et al.*, 2013; Silva, 2013:52).

Student recruitment implies relationships**,** and sound stakeholder relations form a crucial component of a university's strategy and if affected successfully it will have a profound result on the advancement of the institution. Hence the focus now is on relationship-driven student recruitment marketing which implies a marketing communication plan focussed on building and maintaining relationships with prospective students (Beneke, 2011:412; Brendt & Tait, 2012:4; Kurtz, 2014:7).

In today's difficult economic times, especially with regard to funding for universities and the increase in student numbers it has become increasingly more important for institutions to understand and influence their market through innovative communication practices because if they do not, their competitors might. This process of communicating with your market is referred to as marketing communication. The role of marketing communication is to enable an institution to apply an essential marketing communication plan by means of which it can sell its services when recruiting potential clients (students, in the context of this current study) so as to inform its specific target market about the benefits and value of the offering (USPs), where it can be found and what the costs involved are. To be competitive in the recruitment race with other institutions, universities must inform and convince its stakeholders that their services offer better value, and persuade the target market to at least try it, which is the function of marketing communication (Berndt & Tait, 2012:4; Khan, 2014a:109; Koekemoer, 2014:1-2; Kurtz, 2014:6;).

Although traditional marketing communication strategies based on mass communication and direct messages to targeted audiences may still be relevant, the emphasis has shifted to a more personalized, stakeholder-oriented and very important technology-driven approach, which is referred to as Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). Some of the factors that led to this new era of marketing communication include the empowerment of stakeholders, significant social and political changes and, as mentioned earlier on, technological development. Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram and the introduction of the different smart phone choices and tablets available on the market have brought an entirely new dimension to marketing communication (Berndt & Tait, 2012:10; Fill, 2009:257; Koekemoer, 2014:3-4). IMC will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

In order to provide a better understanding to the reader, the main terminology that will be used in this study namely, marketing, relationship marketing, marketing communication and the marketing communication plan will be defined.

- *Marketing* can be described as the management of products and services on the one hand, and on the other hand, the management of relations and satisfying stakeholder needs that will be beneficial to both parties (Armstrong & Kotler, 2013:32).
- *Relationship marketing* comprises a relationship, networks and interaction, and relationships between multi-parties from networks, and interaction is the result when different networks enter into contract with one another (Sweidan *et al.*, 2012).
- *Marketing communication* can be regarded as a subset of marketing which should be an audience-centred activity with messages that focus on the needs and environment of the target audience through one-way, two-way, interactive and dialogic communication (Lamb *et al.*, 2015:381).
- *The marketing communication plan* identifies the main communication issues, it informs al the interest groups that form part of the communication process, it integrates all the marketing communication efforts, top management is informed about the money that will be spent and it compares actual results with the plan and measure deviations (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2011:22).

The concepts of marketing and marketing communication are subsequently discussed in the context of the three campuses of NWU.

1.2   INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY

The previous section dealt with the context of the higher education sector in South Africa over the past two decades and the challenges universities faced, especially with regard to the mergers, decreasing government funding and broadening access to a university. Further to this, the afore-mentioned section also dealt with the fact that the higher education sector has recognised the increasing important role marketing is playing in the recruitment of students and that the demand for services are receiving much more attention. Universities have also acknowledged that prospective-student recruitment is to a large extent a marketing task resulting in the appointment of a seasoned marketing specialist who holds a senior position in administration (Boyer, 2012:298; Toope, 2013).

The restructuring of the higher education sector in 2004 witnessed the merger of two diverse universities on 1 January 2004, University of North West (formerly known as the University of Bophuthatswana) and Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education as well as the incorporation of the Vista Sebokeng campus into NWU. NWU consisted of 4 business units. An Institutional Office which mainly dealt with management and coordination of the three campuses and was situated in Potchefstroom. The two largest campuses, namely the Mafikeng campus and the Potchefstroom campus are situated in the North West province with a distance of approximately 220 km separating them. The Vaal Triangle

campus is situated in the industrial hub of the country in Vanderbijlpark in the Gauteng province and is situated approximately 100 km from Potchefstroom. This merger resulted in the systematic growth of NWU into a multi-campus university which was unique in its diversity in terms of demographics, socio-economic background, status and socio-cultural viewpoints. The three-campus model, namely the Mafikeng campus, Potchefstroom campus and Vaal Triangle campus, each functioned as an entity on its own taking responsibility of its own processes and operations including recruitment campaigns. In effect this had led to NWU having three different approaches to the recruitment of students (Mothobi, 2013:2; Sebolai, 2010:1).

With specific focus on marketing, each campus of NWU had a Marketing and Communication department taking responsibility for marketing communication with a director as head of the department. At each campus a marketing and recruitment team took responsibility for the recruitment of students. At the Institutional Office a Corporate Relations and Marketing department, headed by an Executive Director, supervised and coordinated the activities at the campuses.

Although the target market differed due to the location and historical background of the campuses, similar recruitment practices such as direct marketing, digital media marketing, personal selling and advertising were utilized although not at the same level. Broadly the recruitment activities of the three campuses of NWU focused on school visits, career exhibitions, campus tours, open days, sponsoring of sporting events, outdoor advertising in large identified cities and towns, advertising in school newspapers and direct marketing through email and sms to prospective students. All three campuses also strongly emphasised social media campaigns with dedicated first-year Facebook pages, a YouTube channel and a Twitter and Instagram account. The NWU website was also used as a marketing tool which provides prospective students with information on faculties, programmes, admission requirements, bursaries, accommodation, student life and online applications. Each campus also had its own virtual tour on the website which gives prospective students an idea of what the campus looks like and what to expect (see: www.nwu.ac.za). It can thus be appreciated that NWU, through its recruitment campaigns, were concentrating on establishing a relationship by employing many activities to interact and engage with prospective students.

NWU recently experienced a restructuring process moving towards a unitary university without three campuses. The NWU Council approved a new strategy until 2025 on a meeting held on 19 and 20 November 2015 which was to transform and position NWU as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence, with a commitment to social justice (NWU, 2015). A new structure was formulated, reducing the 15 faculties to 8 with one Executive Dean per faculty reporting to the Vice-Chancellor. The three-campus model was demolished and replaced by three delivery sites, one in Mahikeng, one in Potchefstroom and one in Vanderbijlpark. The NWU's statute also had to be amended and the new statute was approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training during February 2017 and

published in the Government Gazette on 24 March 2017. The new structure officially took effect on 1 July 2017.

The new structure had led to one Marketing and Student Recruitment department for NWU replacing the previous Marketing and Communication departments at the campuses which has to assist NWU in reaching their strategic goals. The focus no longer was on the recruitment of students per campus, but on the recruitment of students for NWU which implies one marketing strategy for NWU. Offices are operating at all the three delivery sites with the manager responsible for undergraduate student recruitment situated in Potchefstroom who coordinates all recruitment activities to ensure that recruitment is no longer campus-driven, but is aimed at prospective-student recruitment for NWU which implies one marketing strategy.

This current research for the study was conducted before the implementation of the unitary approach; therefore the focus was still centred on the three-campus model. As the three delivery sites are at the same geographical locations, the unitary approach should not have any influence on the outcome of the study.

As all aspects of the university, both internal and external, are interconnected it is also necessary to look at it from a systems approach. Strydom *et al.* (2015:366) explain that the systems approach is the idea that organisations are made up of interdependent parts that can only be understood by looking at the organisation as a whole. Organisations, with the focus of this study on universities, are scientifically managed to attain predetermined goals and objectives. The key element of the systems theory approach is the emphasis on the functional integration of system units in the accomplishment of their activities. Universities can thus also be seen as social systems that operate within broader systems from which they receive energy and other resources (Mulder & Niemann-Struweg, 2015:9). According to Littlejohn (1989:18), theories such as the systems theory stress the inter-correlation of events.

The model acknowledges the constant influx and outflow of energy and information between the various parts of the system. There is also recognition that all systems consist of a supra-system (the environment) as well as a subsystem of organisational functions.

As indicated earlier, NWU consists of three delivery sites at Mahikeng, Potchefstroom and Vanderbijlpark. Part of this structure is that NWU has an overarching marketing strategy for the recruitment of students, taking into account the differences at each delivery site. The result is that each campus uses its own unique selling propositions to position itself. Due to the unique compilation of NWU, it seems that the marketing strategy of the institution comprises various components which influence one another.

The implementation of a marketing strategy for NWU proposes that the interaction between the various parts of the system should be based on building a relationship with prospective students (see guiding

arguments 1 and 2, paragraphs 1.6.1 and 1.6.2). It furthermore proposes that the marketing communication mix elements can be used to influence attitudes and behaviour to achieve the marketing communication objectives (see guiding argument 3, paragraph 1.6.3). Further to this, management has to implement a consistent, integrated and targeted marketing communication plan for recruiting students (see guiding argument 4, paragraph 1.6.4).

The responses obtained from the directors at the three campuses on how they apply the marketing communication plan and also how prospective students perceive the marketing communication plan, will be subjective information. It can thus be said that the marketing communication plan of NWU as the supra-system can only be improved through feedback from the directors and the prospective students and that the marketing communication plan can be adapted by means of feedback and evaluation.

1.3   ORIENTATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Higher Education landscape in South Africa has changed dramatically over the past two decades with increased government pressure to transform, declining government subsidies and higher enrolment targets. Universities are forced to increase the number of students as a means of increasing their income, which has led to fierce competition for students. For institutions to survive, they have to secure their competitive advantage by meeting the prospective students' needs and have to ensure that they receive value superior to that of the competition. For prospective students, as the main stakeholders of NWU, decision-making in choosing a university has changed from what it was a decade ago. NWU has to position itself in the market and identify its unique selling propositions (USPs) and distinguish its USPs from those of other institutions of higher learning to give them an advantage in the market. It has to generate a unique position in the minds of prospective students for the USPs they offer and utilise the marketing mix to support and sustain that position in prospective-student recruitment. This is made possible by implementing well-researched plans and new technology such as social and digital platforms to engage and interact with the target market.

NWU undertook a restructuring process in 2015 which came into effect on 1 July 2017 which brought about the implementation of a unitary institution without three campuses. The unitary approach resulted in one Marketing and Student Recruitment department taking responsibility for student recruitment. The strategy for the recruitment of students is to build a relationship with prospective students from an early age in their high school careers. In practice it meant the management of these marketing tools without truly exploring the nature of the company's market relationships and providing in the real needs and desires of its stakeholders (Khan, 2014a:97; Schofield *et al.*, 2013:51). A paradigm shift has taken place in marketing by which the focus has now shifted from transactions to relationships (Cosic & Djuric, 2010:57; Sweidan *et al.*, 2012).

The problem is therefore that NWU previously functioned as separate entities. The new strategy means that they have to merge their plans and activities into a unitary approach while there is no guidelines

available to give direction in which the merging of the different strategies should take place to contribute to an effective marketing communication plan for the recruitment of prospective students at NWU.

Given the above background and problem statement, the following general research question arises:

What should the marketing communication plan for prospective-student recruitment at NWU entail?

1.4   SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1   What does marketing communication with the aim of recruiting prospective students entail according to marketing literature?

1.4.2   Which marketing communication plan is applied by the respective directors for recruiting students?

1.4.3   What are prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication plan applied by the three campuses of North-West University?

1.5   SPECIFIC RESEARCH AIMS

1.5.1   To explore by means of a theoretical investigation, the nature of marketing, relationship marketing, marketing communication and the marketing communication plan with regard to student recruitment in Higher Education.

1.5.2   To determine the marketing communication plan followed by the directors of the three Marketing and Communication departments of NWU for recruiting prospective students (by means of semi-structured interviews).

1.5.3   To establish what prospective students' perceptions are of the marketing communication plan applied by the three campuses of NWU (by means of a quantitative questionnaire).

1.6   GUIDING ARGUMENTS

1.6.1   Relationships are regarded as fundamental assets of an institution's recruitment strategy and are rooted in building stakeholder loyalty and lasting engagements with learners. The implementation of a relationship marketing approach of engaging and interacting with prospective students should form a connection with NWU's target market for mutual long-term benefits. The marketing mix is instrumental in utilizing relationship marketing as a strategy for student recruitment (Boshoff, 2014:344; Cosic & Djuric, 2010).

1.6.2   The marketing communication mix and elements can be divided into eight disciplines directed at stakeholders to influence their attitudes and behaviour, namely, advertising, personal selling, shopper marketing and sales promotion, direct response and database marketing, public relations and word-of-mouth, sponsorship and event marketing, digital media marketing and alternative communication channels.   Each of these elements play a unique role and must be synchronised and coordinated to achieve the marketing communication objectives of the organisation (Koekemoer, 2014:11-12, Lamb *et al.*, 2015:395).

1.6.3 The implementation of a consistent, integrated, timely and highly targeted marketing communication plan should lead to a competitive advantage for NWU and an increase of prospective students (Du Plessis *et al.;* 2011:23, Kim & Hyun, 2011:423-424).

1.7   RESEARCH APPROACH

A mixed-method research approach was followed in this study consisting of the qualitative research approach and the quantitative research approach.

1.7.1   Mixed-method research approach

For purposes of this study a mixed-method research design was adopted. Creswell (2009:4) describes the mixed-method research approach as an inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms, which involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches and the mixing of both approaches in a study. Hence it is more than simply collecting and analysing both kinds of data, as it also involves the use of both approaches in harmony to strengthen the overall outcome of the study.

The mixed-method research developed from the realistic worldview that it is not committed to any one system of philosophy, which allows researchers different assumptions, the use of multiple methods and diverse forms of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009:10-11).

1.7.1.1   Qualitative research approach

Qualitative research is interpretative and aims at providing a high degree of understanding. It is based on words, perceptions and feelings and can be experiments, interviews, focus groups and questionnaires with open-ended questions (Monette *et al.*, 2005:428). Leedy and Ormond (2010:95) define qualitative research as a concept that combines a wide variety of non-numerical data collection and analysis techniques and involves looking into characteristics or qualities that cannot easily be quantified. It will typically be used to examine the complex nature of a particular phenomenon to describe and understand it from the participant's point of view. The researcher not only aims at establishing what happens, but also how it happens and why it happens the way it does (Henning *et al.*, 2010:95).

The qualitative research will consist of the information obtained from the literature study and the responses obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the directors of the Marketing and Communication Departments at the three campuses of North-West University.

1.7.1.1.1   Literature study

Numerous important concepts on marketing, relationship marketing, marketing communication, integrated marketing communication, marketing communication plan and strategy will be analysed and described in the literature study to contextualise the study further. The study firstly investigated the concept and more specifically the 7 Ps of marketing. Secondly, relationship marketing as a strategy for the recruitment of students was dealt with to lay the foundation for the study. Thirdly, marketing communication and the elements of the IMC mix was explained and lastly, the strategic implementation of the marketing communication plan as a recruitment tool and its role in relationship building was examined within the framework of this study.

A search was conducted on the following databases: *National Research Foundation* (NEXUS), *EbscoHost*, *Emerald Informa World* and *SAePublications* to ensure that no other comparable study had been done previously. This search has identified the following related studies: Branding the university: relational strategy of identity construction in a competitive field (Drori *et al.*, 2013); Key information sources influencing prospective students' university choice: A South African perspective (Lubbe & Petzer, 2013); Marketing the Institution to prospective students – A review of brand (reputation) management in Higher Education (Beneke, 2011); Student recruitment Marketing in South Africa – An exploratory study on the adoption of a relationship orientation (Beneke & Human, 2010); Information and source preferences of a student market in higher education (Bonnema & Van der Waldt, 2008); Defining the essence of a university: lessons from higher education branding (Waeraas & Solbakk, 2008); University and course choice: Implications for positioning, recruitment and marketing (Maringe, 2006); Universities in national innovation systems (Mowery & Sampat, 2005) and Higher education institution image: a correspondence analysis approach (Ivy, 2001).

Similarities may occur regarding the content of the literature in the above-mentioned studies, but the study is unique in its focus on North-West University's marketing communication strategy for prospective students – especially within the context of a multi-campus institution of higher education.

1.7.1.1.2   Semi-structured interviews

For successfully conducting the semi-structured interviews a certain relationship must exist between the researcher and the respondent as information is exchanged during the interview in a question-and-answer session. A structured list of questions based on the data obtained from the literature study was compiled which gave structure to the interview and assisted in posing relevant and important questions. The interview also left room for follow-up questions which could clarify certain facts that are not clear from the outset (Du Plooy, 2009:190). It is a more time-consuming process because the views and interpretations of each individual are taken into account. The attitudes and perceptions of the respondents regarding marketing and recruitment were determined by conducting individual semi-structured interviews.

The qualitative research approach is targeted at a small group of respondents and for this study it was resolved that a total of three interviews would be conducted – one at each campus of NWU. The interviewees will comprise the two directors of the Marketing and Communication Departments on the Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle campuses (henceforth referred to as Potch and Vaal Triangle campuses). Since the researcher was the director of the Marketing and Communication department at the Mafikeng campus during the time of the study, the interview was conducted with a marketer at the Mafikeng campus. For continuation and during the rest of the study, references to the directors of the three Marketing and Communication departments at the campuses of NWU will include and refer to the marketer at the Mafikeng campus and the two directors of the Marketing and Communication departments at the Potchefstroom campus and the Vaal Triangle campus.

Recruitment is thus purposive to secure participants with the necessary knowledge of and experience in this field. This should warrant data that is relevant, which will ensure that the objectives of the study will be reached.

The compilation of the directors at the Mafikeng, Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle campuses who were interviewed in the semi-structured interviews are illustrated in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Compilation of managers interviewed in the semi-structured interviews

North-West University Mafikeng campus	North-West University Potchefstroom campus	North-West University Vaal Triangle campus
Director: Marketing and Communication	Director: Marketing and Communication	Director: Marketing and Communication

1.7.1.1.3   Analysing the qualitative data

The data or information obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analysed by means of qualitative content analysis by coding the responses to evaluate the different approaches followed by the three directors of the Marketing and Communication departments for recruiting-strategy purposes.

An interview schedule (see Addendum 1) was compiled comprising the categories listed below and was used as a guideline to obtain the relevant information from the interviewees:

- Demographic information (Category 1)
- Relationship attributes of NWU as strategy for student recruitment (Category 2)
- Marketing Communication plan, mix and elements (Category 3)

Open-ended questions were compiled regarding marketing, relationship marketing, marketing communication and the marketing communication plan and were split up into the different categories in the interview schedule so as to obtain specific answers from the respondents. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and commenced with a friendly conversation during which the purpose and goals of the interview were explained and in particular, how the research could be of relevance in the future. Notes were taken during the interview and answers tape-recorded to ensure that all information was captured. The interviewee was informed that the interview and all answers will be kept confidential and that it would be done on all three campuses.

The interviewee was requested to consent to the interview being tape-recorded. All the interviews were transcribed by the researcher to ensure that all content would be analysed. The qualitative research approach will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.7.1.2   Quantitative research approach

Berger (2014) describes a quantitative questionnaire as the systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques. The objective of quantitative research is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories and/or hypotheses pertaining to phenomena. The process of measurement is central to quantitative research because it provides the fundamental connection between empirical observation and mathematical expression of quantitative relationships.

In the quantitative research approach the objective was to obtain or collect numerical data from students, to be analysed with statistical calculations of data to explain a certain occurrence or phenomenon (Muijs, 2011:40). Information from a relatively large population can be obtained within a brief period of time which will give structure to the study to make certain assumptions and draw comparisons.

In the case of this study, the quantitative approach was adopted: an electronic questionnaire was distributed to prospective first-year students of the three campuses to determine their perceptions of the marketing communication plan of NWU. The data obtained were used to compile a profile of each campus on the students' initial perceptions of the marketing communication plan during the recruitment process. It must be noted that a comparison between the campuses cannot be drawn as the target audiences or stakeholders of the three campuses differ largely. The aim was to establish the perceptions of prospective students of the marketing communication plan at the three campuses of NWU. The quantitative research approach will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.8   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE STUDY

The study was approved by the Research Ethics Regulatory Committee of North-West University. Details of participants in the qualitative interviews were kept confidential and permission was obtained for using

the contact details of prospective students for the distribution of the electronic questionnaire to their email addresses through the Promotion of Personal Information Act (POPI Act, 2002). The electronic questionnaire was completed voluntarily and anonymously by the participants to ensure confidentiality. The researcher at all times strove to maintain his research integrity and objectivity by not being selective in reporting and analysing the data.

1.9 CHAPTER LAYOUT

Chapter one provided an introduction to the higher education landscape in South Africa to the extent that universities today are competing for prospective students. The context of NWU was also discussed which served as background information to the contextualisation and problem statement of the study.

Chapter two addressed the first research question by providing a literature overview of marketing, relationship marketing, marketing communication and the marketing communication plan in the context of Higher Education.

In **Chapter three** the research methods utilized were illustrated by discussing the qualitative research design and the semi-structure interview schedule. Next a discussion followed explaining the quantitative research design and the electronic questionnaire applied in the research.

In **Chapter four** the results of the findings of the semi-structured interviews conducted with the directors at the three campuses of NWU on their use of the marketing communication plan in student recruitment were discussed in detail which answered the second research question.

The third research question was addressed in **Chapter five** to describe the results of the electronic questionnaire distributed to prospective students with a view to determine their perception of the marketing communication plan of NWU.

In **Chapter six** a conclusion was drawn regarding the relations that exist between the literature and the results of the study. The aim of this chapter was to answer the general research questions stated in Chapter one which was: What should the marketing communication plan, with the aim of recruiting prospective students, at NWU entail.

CHAPTER 2

MARKETING AND MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided an overview of the Higher Education landscape and the challenges NWU faces in the competitive environment of twenty five other South African universities. Apart from its core business, which is teaching, learning and research, the recruitment of quality students and reaching the institution's enrolment targets are of the utmost importance.

Given the current focus on the study of NWU's marketing communication plan, the basic features and principals of marketing, relationship marketing, marketing communication and the marketing communication plan will be explored to gain an understanding of student recruitment at NWU. The strategy of NWU is to build a personal relationship with prospective students from an early stage in their high school career so that when it comes to choosing a university, they will eventually choose to register at NWU. The study aims to illustrate the marketing communication plan to be utilized in the framework of the strategy of relationship building.

This process will address the study's first specific research question:

What does marketing communication with the aim of recruiting prospective students entail, according to marketing literature?

The concepts *marketing, relationship marketing, marketing communication and the marketing communication plan* with regard to student recruitment will be illustrated in accordance with literature. Each element of the marketing communication mix will also be discussed individually, focusing on the characteristics, shortcomings and benefits of each and on how each element can be used in a marketing communication plan to recruit students, such as running a social media campaign in the case of NWU.

The following section will deal with the nature of marketing in the context of higher education.

2.2   THE NATURE OF MARKETING

Marketing can be traced back to the Pre-Industrial Age when products were custom-made for each individual, were expensive on a per-unit basis and varied in quality. The Industrial Age was characterized by mass production, specialization and more uniform and less expensive products. No or very little consideration was given to individual needs and the focus was on selling manufactured products. This trend came to an end in the 1960s and 1970s, when stakeholders wanted to be listened to and their wants

and needs to be met. In the 21st century, marketers compete for the attention of stakeholders and help them to make informed decisions (Bennet, 2010:3).

For purposes of this analysis it is essential to look at what marketing in the higher education context entails.

2.2.1   Marketing in the higher education context

The earliest marketing concepts prior to the twentieth century focused on the distribution and exchange of commodities and manufactured products and it was from this early manufacturing-based view of economics that marketing emerged. The concept *marketing* was seen to be obtaining something by offering something in return which means that some form of exchange had to take place (Kotler, 1972:46).

During the seventies the view of marketing changed to the creation and offering of value to clients to achieve a desired response. Later on marketing was described as both a set of activities performed by organisations (micro-marketing) and a social process (macro-marketing) (Kotler 1972:46; McCarthy & Perreault, 1990:8). The more modern understanding of marketing can be defined as managing profitable stakeholder relations which aims at creating value for stakeholders and capturing value in return.

The concept *marketing* is described in different words by various authors. Cant (2010:14) defines marketing as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organisational goals. He also refers to marketing as anticipating and satisfying stakeholder needs through a mutually beneficial exchange process by outperforming competitors through efficient managerial processes. Kerin *et al.* (2013:5) state that marketing serves both the stakeholder and the organisation and attempts to establish what their needs and wants are and to satisfy them. To achieve this, some form of exchange must take place, which is the trade of items of value between the organisation and its stakeholders so that both will be better off after the trade. Kurtz (2014:5) explains that the essence of doing business in any society is the production and marketing of goods and services. Lamb *et al. (*2015:5) indicate that marketing has two facets:

- it is a philosophy, an attitude, a perspective and a management orientation that stresses stakeholders' satisfaction; and
- it is a set of activities used to implement this philosophy.

The American Marketing Association (AMA), which represents marketing professionals, incorporates both perspectives: marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for the customers, clients, partners and society at large (AMA, 2013). This definition focuses on anticipating and satisfying stakeholders' needs by

addressing mutually beneficial exchange processes. It must be done profitably and more effectively than competitors by means of efficient managerial processes.

In putting it in a more simplistic way and for purposes of this study, marketing can thus be described as: *the management of products and services on the one hand, and on the other hand, the management of relations and satisfying stakeholder needs that will be beneficial to both parties (*Armstrong & Kotler, 2013:32; Kerin *et al., 2013:5;* Lamb *et al.*, 2015:5*).*

From the definitions cited above and viewpoints of different authors, marketing in the university context can thus be described as a process consisting of a variety of activities such as:

- understanding the university's mission and realising that mission through marketing;
- setting marketing objectives;
- collecting, analysing and interpreting information concerning the university's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats;
- developing a marketing strategy to satisfy the target market, namely prospective students, positioning of the university in terms of other universities through developing appropriate marketing activities, which is the marketing mix;
- implementing the university's marketing strategy;
- designing marketing performance measures; and
- evaluating marketing efforts and making changes.

Marketing therefore has to provide real benefits in delivering services, goods and ideas to the stakeholder, which must be to the benefit of the organisation, its stakeholders and society. It is not only the organisation that benefits, but also the stakeholders, employees, suppliers and society at large. The central marketing offer of product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence and processes when dealing with services, must be combined in a consistent and effective marketing programme for a specific market. Satisfying stakeholder needs is key to the survival of any institution in the long term; therefore stakeholder satisfaction can be described as the primary goal of marketing (Bearden *et al.*, 2007:13; Egan, 2011:29; Kerin *et al.*, 2013:5; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:5).

Lamb *et al.* (2015:28) stress the importance of understanding the concept *marketing strategy* and draw a distinction between a marketing strategy, a marketing plan and a marketing programme. Firstly, a marketing strategy is formulated to pursue a marketing opportunity and will consist of an objective, a description of the target market, the competitive advantage of the service or brand of the university, how the university will position itself and how the marketing mix elements – the 7 Ps – will be combined to achieve the objectives of the marketing strategy. Secondly, a marketing plan consists of a marketing strategy, but has the added dimensions of assigning resources and responsibility of implementation, the

control measures that will be followed and a time frame. This marketing plan is a written document. Thirdly, a marketing programme is a combination of several marketing plans.

The next section describes one of the modern marketing developments known as relationship marketing and will focus on how it relates to a recruitment marketing communication strategy to satisfy stakeholder needs. Building long-term, lasting relationships should form part of North-West University's recruitment strategy. By creating a relationship with learners from an early age will result in them applying and eventually registering at the university. To this end, the broader underpinnings of relationship marketing will be used as an introduction to illustrate the use of marketing communication to build and maintain long-term relationships in such a strategy.

2.2.2 Relationship marketing

Relationship marketing is a natural development from marketing with the intention to build and maintain long-term stakeholder relationships between an institution and its stakeholders through highly effective marketing techniques, especially when it comes to recruiting students (Cant, 2010:11; Cosic & Djuric, 2010:53; Khan, 2014b:109).

The traditional focus of marketing was on the single, isolated exchange between buyer and seller which has dominated marketing literature, research and practice. However, later on from the fields of service marketing and industrial marketing, the concept *relationship marketing* emerged (Boshoff, 2014:344; Cosic & Djuric, 2010; Grönroos, 2008:325; Sweidan *et al.,* 2012). The focus now is on services and standards of quality and on satisfying existing stakeholders that will spread the word about the quality of the service or product, resulting in the increase of trust, and on the particular institution's attitude of caring for its existing stakeholders just as much as for their new ones (Berndt &Tait, 2012:6; Cosic & Djuric, 2010:54; Sweidan *et al.*, 2012).

Relationships are part of human nature, are timeless and independent of culture, and present in every type and size of an organization. Relationship marketing comprises a relationship, networks and interaction, and relationships between multi-parties form networks, and interaction is the result when different networks enter into contract with one another (Gummesson, 2008:6; Sweidan *et al.* 2012).

The focus of a university's recruitment strategy needs to be centred on attracting and retaining prospective students which will be to the advantage of all those involved and will allow the co-creation of value. In retaining students the turnover level will be maintained and enrolment figures will increase as students will become less sensitive to fees and be willing to accept fee payments in exchange for reduced risk.

The prospective student is at the heart of the value chain, and an institution's creative use of recruitment practices and procedures will ultimately add value. It is thus necessary to understand their needs and what it is that will satisfy them. For instance, for one particular group of prospective students, value can

be quality of programmes, low cost and accessibility, and for others, cost will not necessarily play a huge role, but rather the benefits associated with a particular brand (Fill, 2009:198; Han, 2014:122; Lubbe & Petzer, 2013:921; Wiese *et al.*, 2009:41).

The way in which marketers communicate with their stakeholders is key to building and retaining long-term relationships. They have various resources of communication and communication options available to support their brands. For example: TV, print, and interactive advertising; trade and consumer promotions; arts, sports, and sponsorships, to mention but a few. The challenge for marketers is to identify and understand what the different marketing communication options offer and how they should apply and combine it to foster long-term relationships with its stakeholders. If stakeholders, in this instance prospective students, are responsive to engaging in a relationship with the university, it will result in gaining their support for the university and its activities and ultimately registering quality students (Berndt & Tait, 2012:xii; Khan, 2014b:123).

In the context of NWU with its three campuses, the application of a relationship approach forms a crucial part of its recruitment strategy. Building a relationship with learners at an early age, since grade 10 in their high school career, will warrant a sense of belonging and influence their final decision.

In building and maintaining long-term relationships with stakeholders some form of communication should take place to influence stakeholders' behaviour and to inform and remind them of the market offering, and in the process persuade them in the direction of applying for study at the specific university.

Marketing is an organisational function and typically a set of processes to create, communicate and provide value to its stakeholders and to manage relationships that will benefit the institution and its stakeholders. The value provided is the benefit received by the stakeholder when making a purchase or when making use of a service. Through marketing, these benefits the product or service promises to deliver are communicated as the value proposition to the stakeholder. In order to realize this objective means the adoption and implementation of effective managerial tasks, activities and decision-making processes. To this end, this section will deal with those aspects institutions can implement to realize the marketing function's objective and thus also fulfil the objective of the institution.

2.2.3   Analysing the external environment

In the competitive environment we are functioning today, institutions must constantly be on the lookout for new opportunities to achieve their objectives. The overall goals of the institution, in the context of NWU for example, is to be an internationally recognised university in Africa, distinguished for engaged scholarship, social responsiveness and an ethic of care. This goal must be supported by the functional objectives of the marketing department, financial department, maintenance department etc. The marketing department will refine the marketing objectives – for instance, to be internationally recognised in Africa, NWU should recruit well-rounded students and set objectives for each of the 7 Ps of marketing

as previously discussed. The opportunities for and threats to the realization of these objectives are found in the institution's external environment and need to be managed. This process of continually collecting and evaluating environmental data and information is known as environmental scanning (Kerin *et al.*, 2013:64; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:35; NWU, 2017).

Unless the external environment is fully understood by the marketing manager, institutions will not be successful in identifying opportunities and effectively plan for the future. Environmental trends typically arise from macro-environmental factors that operate in the external environment, which affects the marketing activities of an institution. Some authors describe five factors and although there are some differences in the division of these factors it can be used as a basic guideline. For this purpose reference will be made to the following environmental factors: social, demographic, economic, technological, political and legal factors (Grewal & Levy, 2014:149; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:43). These environmental factors are subsequently discussed in more detail.

2.2.3.1   Social factors

The term *social factors* refers to the characteristics of the society, the people who live in that society and their culture. It includes attitudes, values and lifestyle and is one of the most difficult external variables to predict. The consequences thereof is that, in shaping marketing strategies, the marketer needs to consider and understand and adapt to the customs, characteristics and practices of the institution's target market (Grewal & Levy, 2014:149; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:49).

Social trends that cannot be ignored are that people of all ages today have a broader range of interest, they are more demanding, inquisitive and no longer willing to be satisfied with the second best. Material things are no longer important and a higher value is attached to non-material accomplishments (Lamb *et al.*, 2015:49). There is greater sensitivity towards the environment and the demand for higher productivity has increased the number of double-income households, adding increasingly more pressure on available time (Kerin *et al.*, 2013:66; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:49).

Lamb *et al.* (2015) also illustrate that it is important to understand the differences in age groups. Pre-teens for example have a higher discretionary income than many university students. Teenagers are more demanding and are willing to air their own opinion and thereby influence parents regarding what brand or product to buy. The generation Y is people born between 1977 and 1994, also referred to as the children of the baby boomers, the dot-com generation or millennials because they don't know a life without the internet or cell phones. Generation X refers to those born between 1965 and 1976 and speaks of those children who had to look out for themselves, come from dual-career households or separated parents. Then there is the baby boomers, born in the post-World War period between 1946 and 1964 and cherish convenience and the so-called grey market or the senior-citizens who show more loyalty to the brands they are used to. More unique to South-Africa is the "black diamonds" who are defined as the recently enfranchised black middle-class and comprises well-educated and wealthy individuals. At the

opposite end of the income spectrum to that of the Black Diamonds are the Survivors, people who live in households with an income of R5 000 or less per month (Grewal & Levy, 2014:152-155; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:50-54).

For universities it will thus be of great importance to identify and distinguish the preferences, attitudes and values of their stakeholders to construct appropriate marketing strategies. With the aim of recruiting prospective students it will be worthwhile to research and analyse the age groups of pre-teens and teenagers before implementing a recruitment campaign.

2.2.3.2   Demographic factors

Demographic factors refer to the observable aspects and characteristics of human populations and segments such as size, age, gender, ethnicity and location. Marketers use demographic factors to predict how stakeholders will respond to a specific marketing mix and look at variables such as the size and distribution of the population to identify opportunities and plan marketing strategies (Grewal & Levy, 2014:151; Solomon *et al.*, 2012:65).

As a means to segment the South African consumer market, the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) introduced a non-racial measurement called the Living Standard Measure (LSM). LSM distinguishes between people in terms of living standard regardless of ethnicity, income or education and not on the grounds of demographic differences. By quantifying ownership of certain durable goods, access to services etc. a combined measure of social class is provided. Thus the consumption behaviour of people is determined by their social class as measured by ownership of goods and consumption of services (SAARF, 2016).

2.2.3.3   Economic factors

The economic situation in a country affects the way consumers react to products and services, and marketers will regard favourable economic conditions as an opportunity to execute their marketing plans. Having a product that meets the needs of consumers may be of little value if they are unable to purchase it. Economic conditions are not always favourable and marketers need to take into account inflation and recession as well as the impact of interest rates. The most commonly used measure of economic health is the gross domestic product (GDP) and the gross national product (GNP) of a country (Kerin *et al.*, 2014:74; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:63; Solomon *et al.*, 2012:55).

Economic factors will undoubtedly have an impact on marketing efforts of a university if a country is undergoing a recession or is experiencing high inflation rates, as prospective students will not be able to register due to monetary difficulties.

2.2.3.4   Technological factors

For universities and particularly the marketing department it is essential to be up to date with the latest technology developments as it strongly affects marketing activities. Advances in technology have led to the decline in cost of especially information technology such as smart phones, iPads, tablets, websites and apps and as these become more affordable, stakeholders have easier access to these tools (Kerin *et al.*, 2014:77; Solomon *et al.*, 2013:61).

Hence the marketing department of a university continuously needs to scan and research the latest technology developments that are focused on the youth and find new and creative ways of utilizing these tools in their communication and recruitment efforts with prospective students (Koekemoer, 2014:289; Mulder & Niemann-Struweg, 2015:28). It is particularly imperative when it comes to the various social media networks the youth of today are exposed to, that a sound and efficient technological monitoring system be in place to evaluate preferences and needs of prospective students.

2.2.3.5   Political and Regulatory factors

Political and regulatory influences such as political parties, government organisations, legislation and law, need to be fully understood by universities. Universities must be mindful of legislation on fair competition, the Protection of Personal Information Act or PoPi Act and providing false or misleading information. A major consideration for marketers entering foreign markets is the attitude of the government in power towards recruitment activities in their country (Lamb *et al.*, 2015:65; Solomon *et al.*, 2013:64).

Particularly when it comes to using information of prospective students it is important for universities to adhere to appropriate legislation. When launching recruitment drives with the aim of recruiting foreign students, marketers should acquaint themselves with the political environment in that country.

Having discussed the external environment and the factors influencing marketing practices the decision-making process of stakeholders is next deliberated.

2.2.4   Stakeholder decision-making

The fact that more students now have access to universities has brought about changes in students' decision-making when choosing a university. Behind the visible act of making a choice lies an important decision-making process a prospective student undergoes in making a choice regarding which university or programme to apply for, which is called the student decision-making process. This process comprises five stages, which will be discussed in more detail. Since the focus of this study is on prospective-student recruitment, the stages will be discussed in the context of the university and adapted to refer to the student decision-making process.

Stage 1: Problem recognition

The first stage in the student decision-making process is problem recognition by which prospective students recognize that they have an unsatisfied need and would like to progress from their actual, needy state to a different desired state. Marketers cannot create needs, but can create student wants which is an unfulfilled need. Once a prospective student realizes that he would like to go to a university after passing his matric (need) he has to make a choice from the different universities in the country (want). The marketing department of the university needs to activate the student's decision process (wants) by informing him of the unique selling propositions of the university at an early stage in his school career (Kerin *et al.*, 2014:110; Solomon *et al.*, 2013:153).

Stage 2: Search for information

After recognising a need or want, prospective students will start searching for information concerning the various alternatives available to satisfy their wants. The length and intensity of the search is based on the degree of perceived risk associated with the service. Regardless of the search level, information search is found in two types, namely internal search for information and external search for information (Grewal & Levy, 2014:177; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:86).

In an internal search for information the prospective student will examine his or her own memory and knowledge of the university obtained through past experiences. For instance, while deciding on which university to attend, a prospective student may scan his memory for previous experiences with a specific university which might be an athletic event sponsored by that university (Grewal & Levy, 2012:177; Kerin *et al.*, 2014:110).

In an external search for information the prospective student seeks information beyond his personal knowledge base to help make the decision when past experience is insufficient. Distinction can be drawn among three types of information sources, namely non-marketing-controlled or personal resources and marketing-controlled or public sources and marketer-dominated sources. The term *personal resources* refers to family and friends or a marketer visiting a school. The term *public resources* includes rating reports of universities, or television programmes. Marketer-dominated sources are information obtained from advertising, university websites, new media such as blogs and exhibitions at events (Grewal & Levy, 2014:177; Kerin *et al.*, 2014:110; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:86).

Stage 3: Evaluation of alternatives

In the third stage, the prospective student has to sift through the choices available and evaluate the alternatives. Often the evaluation is based on a set of important attributes or evaluative criteria. Evaluative criteria consist of prominent or unique selling propositions a university portrays. For example,

a unique selling proposition of NWU may be that it is a relatively safe environment (Grewal & Levy, 2014:182; Solomon *et al.*, 2013:156).

Stage 4: Final choice

After evaluating all the alternatives, the prospective student is ready to make a final decision. Factors that now come into play are for example location and the environment where the university is located compared to other universities. For this purpose the internet is used to gather information, which adds a technological dimension to the prospective student's decision (Kerin *et al.*, 2014:112).

Stage 5: Post choice behaviour

After having made the final decision and eventually applying at his/her university of choice, prospective students compare it with their expectations which are either to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Satisfied students could spread positive word-of-mouth about their experience, which may lead to other students applying at that university (Grewal & Levy, 2014:187).

This section has dealt with the decision-making process of a prospective student. An understanding of the decision-making process of prospective students could assist the marketing department in defining its stakeholders and designing a marketing mix. Next the influence of competitors will be explored.

2.2.5   Analysing the competitive environment

The competitive environment in which universities presently operate, are populated by stakeholders who have their own diverse needs which continually change. These needs are: accessibility; family income; financial aid; parents' educational experience; and students' achievements, aspirations and expectations. However, knowing one's stakeholders' needs is not sufficient. Universities should also analyse who their competition in the market is and what their strong and weak points are.

Understanding competitors and their activities, especially with prospective-student recruitment, can provide universities with significant key information such as knowing their size, growth, image, objectives, strengths and weaknesses and current and past strategies (Lamb *et al.*, 2015:158).

2.2.6   Marketing research

Marketing research refers to the systematic and objective process of defining a marketing opportunity, and collecting and analysing marketing information in an attempt to enhance the managerial decision-making process. Hence, a marketing context it is important for the university to know and understand the needs and wants of their stakeholders. The availability of information provides the decision-makers with data on the effectiveness of the current marketing mix and leads to more accurate planning and better anticipation of stakeholder needs. For this purpose, the marketing department uses recognised scientific

methods to collect information to facilitate marketing management's decision-making (Kerin *et al.*, 2013:192; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:162; Rudansky-Kloppers & Strydom, 2015:279).

Marketing research has a descriptive role in that it includes collecting and presenting factual reports, for instance the historic application trend of prospective students at the university. It also has a diagnostic role whereby data and results are explained, for example the impact on applications in changing the logo of the university. Lastly, it also has a predictive role to play, for example: By increasing the advertising budget with X amount; will it lead to an increase in applications and overall registration at the university? (Lamb *et al.*, 2015:101; Solomon *et al.*, 2013:106.)

Rudansky-Kloppers and Strydom (2015:279) describe the marketing-research process in five steps.

Step 1: Defining the problem. By defining the problem, specific objectives can be set for the marketing research, for instance the applications to the university in the first three months have declined with 30% compared to the first three months of the previous year.

Step 2: Developing hypotheses. The possible causes and explanations for the problem need to be developed in the second step. In the example cited above, a decline in advertising due to a budget cut could have been the cause of the decline in applications or the establishment of a new university in another city with more relevant programmes.

Step 3: Collecting data. In this step the data needed must be determined, namely secondary data (data that already exist) and primary data (data that must be collected), and how it will be collected. Primary data are collected by means of observation, experimentation and surveys. Thereafter a sample has to be selected whereby the respondents who will be interviewed can be identified. To be able to obtain reliable results, fieldworkers who will conduct the interviews need to be trained.

Step 4: Processing, analysing and interpreting information. This deals with the conversion of raw data through statistical methods into findings that are used as a base for drawing conclusions and making recommendations. Once the data has been interpreted, the initial hypothesis must be proved or disapproved.

Step 5: Compiling a research report and making recommendations. Finally, a report on the research findings has to be written and presented to management in table-, figure- and/or graph format accompanied by a recommendation, for example to focus more on digital marketing which is cheaper or redesigning curricula for programmes.

Following the marketing research process and obtaining the relevant information regarding stakeholders' needs and wants, a process of segmentation, targeting and positioning needs to be implemented so as to satisfy their needs. This process will be illustrated in more detail in the subsequent section.

2.2.7 Market segmentation, target marketing and positioning

Market segmentation is the grouping of prospective students into categories reflecting their common characteristics and needs and which of them will respond similarly to a marketing action. The purpose of segmentation for a university is to identify prospective students with similar needs, interests and even behaviours and group them under a homogeneous category (Kerin *et al.*, 2013:222; Rudansky-Kloppers & Strydom, 2015:281; Solomon *et al.*, 2013:223).

In order to segment the market, marketers use different variables or criteria such as demographic, geographic, psychographic and behavioural. A further segmentation tool is the Living Standard Measure (LSM).

Demographic variables are used to divide the stakeholders into groups on the basis of age, gender, income, education, and ethnic background. Geographic variables divide stakeholders according to geographic location such as provinces, cities and towns. Rudansky-Kloppers and Strydom (2015:283) point out that while demographic and geographic segmentation are relatively simple to understand, they do not directly address the needs and wants of stakeholders to make a decision, as discussed in the section on stakeholder decision-making, paragraph 2.2.4. To be more specific in identifying stakeholders with the same interests, psychographic segmentation is used to assist in understanding the lifestyle, personality and social-class characteristics of stakeholders. Lastly, stakeholders are also grouped in terms of behavioural characteristics such as brand loyalty status, cost sensitivity and benefits expected (Lamb *et al.* 2015:208; Rudansky-Kloppers & Strydom, 2015:283; Solomon, 2013:225).

The LSMs were developed by the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) to provide detailed information about the population's media and product consumption patterns. This method of segmentation is based on 29 variables such as the possession of certain household durables, availability of water and electricity, media types used, and electronic appliances. LSMs do not refer to race, but reflects the reality of South Africa and are not an alternate label for income (SAARF, 2016).

Once the market has been divided into different segments, the marketing mix to be utilized must be designed and implemented for a specific target market which is called targeted marketing. At this stage the marketing department at the university has to choose one or more segments that they wish to serve, while taking into account the objectives and resources of the university (see Lamb *et al.* 2015:226; Rudansky-Kloppers & Strydom, 2015:284).

Once the target market has been decided on, positioning of the university needs to take place, which means developing a specific marketing mix to influence prospective students' overall perceptions of the university's brand and other unique selling propositions. In effect it means the position the brand and unique selling propositions occupies in the prospective student's mind and assumes that prospective

students will compare different universities with one another on the basis of important features (see Lamb *et al.*, 2015:227; Solomon *et al.*, 2013:238; Rudansky-Kloppers & Strydom, 2015:284).

This section dealt with the importance of the environmental scanning process in marketing. In the next section the application of the 7 Ps of the marketing mix, namely product, price, place, people, processes, physical evidence and promotion will be assessed to illustrate how an institution can create a relationship with stakeholders.

2.2.8   The 7 Ps model of marketing applied to Higher Education

The marketing offer of an organisation and thus also within the context of higher education includes several variables which combine to provide stakeholder satisfaction. These variables are popularly known as the marketing mix, as illustrated in Figure 2.1.
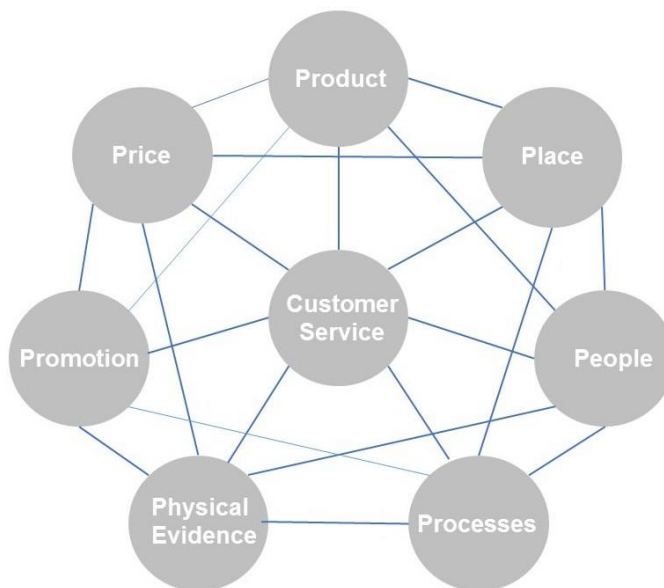
Figure 2.1: The 7 Ps model of the marketing mix

Source: Adapted from Egan (2011:29)

Figure 2.1 comprises (1) identification, selection and development of a *product*; (2) determination of *price*; (3) selection of a distribution channel to reach the stakeholder's *place*; (4) service orientated *personnel or people*; (5) professional measures and procedures which is *processes;* (6) provide a conducive environment that is *physical evidence*; and (7) development and implementation of a *promotional* strategy (Berndt &Tait, 2012:4; Egan, 2011:29; Khan, 2014a; Schofield *et al.* 2013).

The elements of the 7 Ps of marketing are subsequently deliberated upon in more detail to illustrate the connection of these elements with stakeholder satisfaction.

2.2.8.1   Product

Products are those tangible and intangible attributes that include packaging, colour, price, quality and brand. The marketer develops the product concept, researches the stakeholders and then develops the product that will produce the desired revenue (Berndt & Tait, 2012:10). Product can also be defined as: "something or anything that can be offered to the stakeholder for attention, acquisition or consumption and satisfies some want or need" (Khan, 2014a:97). In the context of the university, product will refer to quality of programmes, quality of teaching and learning and the brand of the university. The product communicates with stakeholders through its visibility, appearance and packaging and very importantly by virtue of its name called the brand name by which it can be identified. The brand name of a university is one of its key attributes and takes the form of a name, term, design, symbol or something unique that defines them from other universities and is usually protected by a registered trademark (Armstrong & Kotler, 2013:32; Khan, 2014a:98; Koekemoer, 20011:6). The pay-off line of NWU – *it all starts here* – and logo for instance, distinguishes it from other universities.

There are two standpoints to a product offering called product orientation and consumer orientation. With product orientation, the marketer develops a product with little or no customer input and only when deciding that it is ready for the market will they go out and look for potential buyers. The argument is that the stakeholder will not know what they want before they see it (Koekemoer, 2011:6).

The view of Belch and Belch (2012:60) supports the consumer orientation viewpoint when they state that a product as a marketing element comprises more than the mere physical object; it needs to include the overall needs, benefits and values it holds for the stakeholder. In the more desirable standpoint of consumer orientation, the marketer first considers what the chosen target market may need and will only then provide the product offering. In this case the stakeholders may be asked what they value in a certain product before it is actually developed (Koekemoer, 2011:6).

In the higher education context universities are applying both standpoints, namely product orientation and consumer orientation. With regard to product orientation, universities have to offer programmes to support the policy of the government in developing scarce skills with little or no input from prospective students. However, an element of consumer orientation is also present in student life and sport preferences.

2.2.8.2   Price

The term *price* in the university environment is seldom used. When referring to monetary exchange terms that are more often associated with it in a university context, is fees, tariffs, rates and expenditures on food, housing, books and travelling. However, the term *price* is commonly used in marketing to describe the amount of money a buyer exchanges for a service rendered. A price is set for a product or service and offers the price in the market and seeks to secure a fair return on the investment made by the business. Price is also considered the most important factor which determines stakeholder satisfaction

and fluctuates due to their different needs. Stakeholder perception on the price of services or products may differ among individuals (Berndt & Tait, 2012:12; Boshoff, 2014:154; Khan, 2014a:99).

The price will also give some indication of the quality of the product and service and the general viewpoint is that quality does not come cheap. However, products must be affordable and still maintain a certain degree of quality. If a product or service is overpriced it will be rejected altogether and the stakeholder will likely find a lower-priced service elsewhere (Boshoff, 2014:155; Koekemoer, 2011:8).

Price is the only variable in the marketing mix that must be set in relation to the other 7 Ps and is considered the most important element of the marketing mix as it is the only element that generates an income for the university as opposed to the other elements that are a cost to the university (Khan, 2014a:99; Muala & Qurneh, 2012).

2.2.8.3   Place or Distribution

Place or distribution is seen as the channel that takes the product from producer to stakeholder and can be described as the process implemented to ensure that the product is being made available to the target market in the right place, at the right time, quantities, condition and cost which is commonly referred to as the distribution channel (Berndt & Tait, 2012:13). Muala and Qurneh (2012) describe place as a set of interdependent organisations that caters to the process of making a product available to the stakeholder.

Koekemoer (2011:9) describes three types of distribution channels. Firstly, an intensive distribution channel where the product is commonly available to everyone who wants to buy it, such as petrol. Secondly, a selective distribution channel where the product is only available at selective outlets. The third channel is an exclusive distribution channel where the product offering is of such a nature that it is only available at very few selected outlets.

Place is also referred to as the ease of access to a specific location which potential stakeholders ascribe to a service (Khan, 2014a:102). In this regard, in the context of North-West University, the three campuses as delivery sites are fairly distributed in two provinces, located far from one another. The Mafikeng campus is situated in Mahikeng in the North West Province and mostly attracts or gives access to prospective students from the rural areas. The Potchefstroom campus is situated in Potchefstroom, which is close to the large centres such as Johannesburg and Pretoria and mostly attracts students from those areas, who wish to study in the country side. The Vaal Triangle campus is situated in Vanderbijlpark which is in the industrial hub of the country and mostly attracts students from there who wish to study close to home. NWU therefore provides access to a wide variety of prospective students due to its different locations.

2.2.8.4 People or Personnel

People or Personnel refer to the personal interaction and delivery of service between the stakeholder and the personnel of a university which has a strong influence on the stakeholder's perception of service quality. Service delivery is reliant on personnel, and stakeholders link the quality of service to the university, which is the key element in a stakeholder-centred institution such as a university. Stakeholder-orientation cannot be achieved if no cooperation and interaction from the personnel exists, since it influences stakeholder perceptions (Khan, 2014a:104).

Personnel or staff at the university must therefore focus on meeting the needs of prospective students and provide services, especially during the application process, in such a manner that prospective students perceive it as being the best service and will want to tell others about the services (Brent & Tait, 2012:69). It can thus be stated that the actions of all personnel influence the success and function of the university and with more communication, training, skills, learning and advice personnel will recognize the monetary value of each stakeholder. It is unfortunately true that negative experiences by stakeholders can often be attributed to undesirable personnel behaviour and attitudes (Boshoff, 2014:210; Khan, 2014a:104; Brent & Tait, 2012:69).

2.2.8.5 Process

Muala and Qurneh (2012) define process as the implementation of action and function that increases value for products with low cost and high advantage to stakeholders and is more important for services than products. The stakeholder's level of satisfaction with the service the university provides will depend on delivery time and the skill and quality of the service. Prospective students will evaluate the university on the manner in which it delivers its services, and the quality will, for example, be significantly influenced adversely if any delays in the process do not meet their expectations (Boshoff, 2014:182).

Effective management of university processes is thus important to ensure the availability and consistence of quality. The processes must be designed for the convenience of the prospective student and not for the convenience of the university and must be geared to meet the needs of the prospective student attitudes (Boshoff, 2014:182; Brent & Tait, 2012:69; Khan, 2014a:104).

2.2.8.6 Physical Evidence

Physical evidence or physical environment refers to the environment in which the service is delivered and in which the university and the prospective student interact. The importance of physical environment lies in the fact that the stakeholder normally judges the quality of the service provided and the environment in which the service is delivered through physical evidence which is called the "servicescape". For example, the atmosphere on campus, the type of services provided by administrative staff at the admissions office and during the application process, comfortable seating in lecture halls and physical layout of facilities, neatness of gardens and even the appearance of the lecturers can influence their perception of the quality

of the university and their level of satisfaction and experience (Boshoff, 2014:267; Khan, 2014a:105; Muala & Qurneh, 2012).

As service cannot be displayed; universities should create a suitable environment to catch the attention of prospective students who use tangible clues to assess the quality of the service provided. Physical evidence can therefore be seen as a form of communication because that which the prospective student sees, hears, feels or smells, when entering the university, "talks" to that student. Almost every element of the servicescape communicates with the prospective student (Boshoff, 2014:269; Khan, 2014a:105).

The question is, however, whether the prospective student will experience the intended message. Boshoff (2014) describes three types of evidence that will determine whether the intended message is communicated successfully. The first type of evidence is the physical environment itself such as the air quality, noise, cleanliness, architecture, texture and social factors. The second type of evidence is communication from the university to the prospective students. By advertising, writing to them and providing information on the university's website, universities are communicating with their stakeholders. A third type of evidence is fees as this will determine accessibility and what type of services can be expected.

2.2.8.7   Promotion

The seventh P (promotion) of the marketing mix is the collective activities, materials and media used to communicate with the target market and inform and remind them of the services offered at the university and the act of persuading them to finally register. It is a two-way process by which marketers listen to the needs of the market (prospective students) and communicate with them about the service offering. This market-initiated communication aspect of the marketing mix (7 Ps) is known as promotion or marketing communication and is a collective term used when referring to all the methods and techniques marketers employ to influence a specific target audience's attitudes and behaviour (du Plessis *et al.*, 2010:3; Koekemoer, 2011:10; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:381).

In order to inform, persuade or remind prospective students effectively and to contribute to the realisation of the university's marketing objectives, marketers rely on one or more of the elements of the marketing communication plan, namely advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing, sponsorships, public relations, digital media and alternative communication channels. Without effective communication prospective students will not know whether the university will provide in their needs and wants. Promotion (marketing communication) is thus a particularly important element of the marketing mix, and to communicate effectively the promotion mix elements (marketing communication mix elements) must be used synergistically – a strategy that is known as IMC (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2009:3; Koekemoer, 2014:4; Kurtz, 2014:7; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:381).

To this end of providing more detail and understanding, a comprehensive explanation of the role of marketing communication in the marketing mix as well as the IMC strategy will be discussed in a separate section (see paragraph 2.3).

When placing the 7 Ps of marketing in an educational context and specifically for NWU, it is essential for the programmes and services offered to add value to the needs and expectations of new stakeholders who in this case are prospective students. To attract prospective students the university should:

- identify stakeholder needs and accessibility in the market (*place*);
- determine which learning experiences the university can provide when enrolling prospective students for a programme (*product*);
- determine the economic factors including fees and bursaries (*price*);
- grow and establish a service orientated staff and student force who's interaction with prospective students will inform these stakeholders' views of the experience (*people)*;
- implement professional measures and procedures such as enrolment, applications and registrations (*processes)*;
- develop and provide a conducive environment such as buildings and equipment (*physical evidence);* and
- develop a marketing communication strategy including a strong brand to lure the prospect to come and study at the institution (*promotion*) (Berndt &Tait, 2012:4; Khan, 2014a; Kurtz, 2014:6; Schofield *et al.,* 2013).

For institutions such as NWU it is thus critically important to identify the needs in the market in terms of the relevance of the programme offerings and to be in line with the National Development Plan 2030 (Alexander, 2017; South Africa, 2017).

Having discussed marketing and relationship marketing, the following guiding argument can be stated (see paragraph 1.6.1):

Specific guiding argument 1

NWU should implement a relationship approach in their recruitment strategy by engaging and interacting with prospective students, and providing information via the marketing communication mix and elements.

The following section deals with marketing communication as part of the 7 Ps of the marketing mix. It will attempt to illustrate the use of the marketing communication plan as part of a recruitment strategy in building and maintaining long-term relationships.

2.3   MARKETING COMMUNICATION

Marketing communication can be regarded as a subset of marketing which, as described earlier, consists of the marketing mix or 7 Ps of marketing (product, price, place, process, people, physical environment and promotion). Marketing communication is the seventh P (promotion) of marketing. Promotion is the coordination of the marketing communication efforts to influence attitudes and behaviours (Solomon *et al.*, 2013:418).

The main purpose of marketing communication in a university context is to communicate with prospective students. It comprises the measures, techniques and methods by means of which information about programmes, services or brand of a university reaches its target audience.   These methods and techniques can take many forms such as television commercials, sophisticated magazine ads, web banner ads and even T-shirts (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2011:2; Koekemoer, 2014:2; Solomon *et al.*, 2013:418).

Communication objectives such as creating awareness of or interest in what a university offers, are not adequate and should in fact aim at establishing behavioural changes in prospective students' experiences of the university and at persuading them to take action (Koekemoer, 2014:1).   The implication for universities is that in order to be successful it has to communicate, and failing to do so will result in prospective students being unaware of their services and offerings and in them turning to the known brands, namely the competition (Solomon *et al.*, 2013:418).

The purpose of the marketing communication plan is to convince and inform prospective students of the value of the university, to remind them to apply, to persuade them to choose the university, and to build a relationship with these prospects. As a result, marketing communication should be an audience-centred activity with messages that focus on the needs and environment of prospective students through one-way, two-way, interactive and dialogic communication (Fill, 2009:16; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:381; Solomon *et al.*, 2013:418).

Solomon *et al.* (2013:423) take it one step further and argue that although promotion is one of the 7 Ps of marketing, actually everything an organisation says and does is a form of marketing communication and that all seven elements of the marketing mix is a form of communication. For instance, the tuition fees a university charges, the type and quality of the programmes it offers, the attitudes of staff and the physical environment all communicate something about a university.

This interrelatedness of the elements of the marketing mix has led to the process of IMC which will be analysed in the following sections to explain in what way it delivers a clear, consistent and compelling message concerning the institution and the programmes it delivers.

2.3.1 The evolution of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

In the last decade, the focus was mainly or primarily centred on mass marketing in the form of selling highly standardized products to masses of stakeholders and in the process, effective mass-media communication techniques were developed to support these strategies. The large companies invested millions of dollars in television, magazines, and other mass-media advertising and in doing so, reached millions of stakeholders via a single advertisement (Armstrong & Kotler, 2013:397).

In the sixties leading up to the seventies the different elements of the marketing communication mix were seen as separate functions of departments controlled by specialists in those specific areas. Each of these departments had its own objectives and it was not uncommon for different messages to be communicated to their stakeholders since no coordination took place. For example, an advertising company would design and manage the advertising campaign and the website and other technological activities would be managed by outside technological experts, which have all led to chaos as activities were uncoordinated and inconsistent. This approach also resulted in researchers studying the effectiveness of these different communication options or media types in isolation, failing to recognise the potential interactions and synergy that may exist between the various options that comprise a communication programme (Koekemoer, 2014:2).

Presently, however, this has all changed with the evolution of IMC. Numerous factors have led to the new approach of marketing communication such as the empowerment and changes in stakeholder behaviour, political and social changes, changes in marketing strategies and rapid digital technological developments. IMC can be seen as a logical and historical progression into a new age of marketing communication and is the natural evolution of traditional mass-media advertising, which has been refined to adapt to new technology. IMC no longer is a communication process only, but a process that associates with management and brands and manages marketing communication in a holistic manner to achieve strategic objectives (Armstrong & Kotler, 2015:398; Kitchen *et al.*, 2004; Madhavaram *et al.*, 2005; Schultz, 1999:337).

On the forefront of this are social networks such as Facebook and Twitter and products such as smart phones and tablets such as the Apple iPhone an iPad and Samsung's smartphone range. No longer can marketers dictate to their target audience (stakeholders). These stakeholders are informed and empowered to make their own decisions on what to read or to listen to and they make them heard. It especially is on Facebook and Twitter that stakeholders air their views and opinions on topics such as politics and social issues (Koekemoer, 2014:3).

Madhavaram *et al.* (2005) maintain that the evolution of IMC as a strategic tool assists organisations in being more effective in realizing their brand communication goals. As already stated, the rapid growth of new electronic media, numerous and diverse communication options, the span and reach of electronic communication and the rapidly changing advertising environment has led to the evolution of IMC

(Armstrong & Kotler, 2013:397; Madhavaram *et al.*, 2005). The emergence of IMC has been regarded as the most significant example of development in the marketing discipline and since the 1990s it has become one of the main topics of discussion in the field of marketing (Holm, 2006:23).

As was established in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.1, the changing environment in higher education over the past years forced the recruitment departments at universities to change their approach to promoting their services and offerings to prospective students who are now in a position to evaluate the offers being made and to make decisions independently. Prospective students are generally far more selective and the competition between universities makes it possible for them to be provided with precisely what they want and when they want it.

IMC takes place when all the departments of a university work together to serve the interest of prospective students and takes place at two levels. Firstly, all the marketing functions – sales, advertising, customer service, product management and market research – should work together and be coordinated from the viewpoint of the stakeholder. Secondly, it must be embraced by the other departments. For example, the maintenance manager at a university must know that if the campus is clean and well maintained, it might influence a prospective student's decision to register at the campus. The same can be said of the service the members of staff at the admissions office portray (Lamb *et al.*, 2015:382).

It is thus evident that the internal processes of the university are of the utmost importance, even more important than the external marketing processes. Able, professional and qualified employees should be hired, trained and motivated to serve stakeholders.

From the above it can also be stated that by adopting an IMC approach, NWU can carefully integrate and coordinate its many communication channels to deliver a clear, consistent and compelling message concerning the institution and the programmes it delivers.

At this stage it is important to illustrate how these processes are intertwined and linked to one another. Marketing consists of the 7 Ps (see paragraph 2.2.8). Promotion is the seventh P and the methods, channels or platforms the university uses to communicate with its stakeholders to build and establish relationships which is called marketing communication. The marketing communication mix is the combination of these elements which the management of the university believes will meet the needs of prospective students and realise the overall objectives of the university. Ideally, marketing communication using each marketing mix and the elements should be integrated.

The view of Koekemoer (2014) on the IMC mix and elements was applied as a dependable model in that it includes eight comprehensive elements. Generally most authors only mention five elements, namely advertising, direct marketing, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations (Boshoff, 2014:289; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:382). The elements identified by Koekemoer are as follows:

- advertising;

- personal selling;

- shopper marketing and sales promotion;

- direct response and database marketing;

- public relations and word-of-mouth;

- sponsorship and event marketing;

- digital media marketing; and

- alternative communication channels.

2.3.2 The Integrated Marketing Communication mix

Koekemoer (2011) points out that marketers should recognize that to be successful, IMC should start at the corporate level. This implies that the overall corporate strategy of the university guides its marketing strategy which includes the elements of the IMC plan. Each element of the promotional mix is viewed as an IMC tool that plays a distinctive role and is designed to do a specific job and these tools, as already mentioned, must be integrated in a way that produces the best possible synergy in the IMC programme. To be effective, the university must establish which elements of the marketing communication mix prospective students will relate to and will work best for its product offering (Koekemoer, 2014:11-12).

The IMC elements and how the 7 Ps of the marketing mix "communicate" to the target market of the organization are illustrated by Koekemoer (2011:7) in Figure 2.2. As this study deals with the 7 Ps of marketing, it was revised to provide a comprehensive picture.

To achieve their marketing objectives, the marketing department at the university must use these eight marketing communication elements as indicated in Figure 2.2 in their recruitment campaigns in a combined manner so as to package the message when communicating with prospective students. This combination of elements may differ and must be adjusted in accordance with the changing environment, perceptions of the students, economic factors and competitors' actions.

The integration of the marketing communication mix and elements implies that the message reaching the prospective student should be the same, regardless of whether it is from an advertisement, a marketer visiting a school, an article in a school newspaper or good news story in the newspaper (Lamb *et al.*, 2015:395).
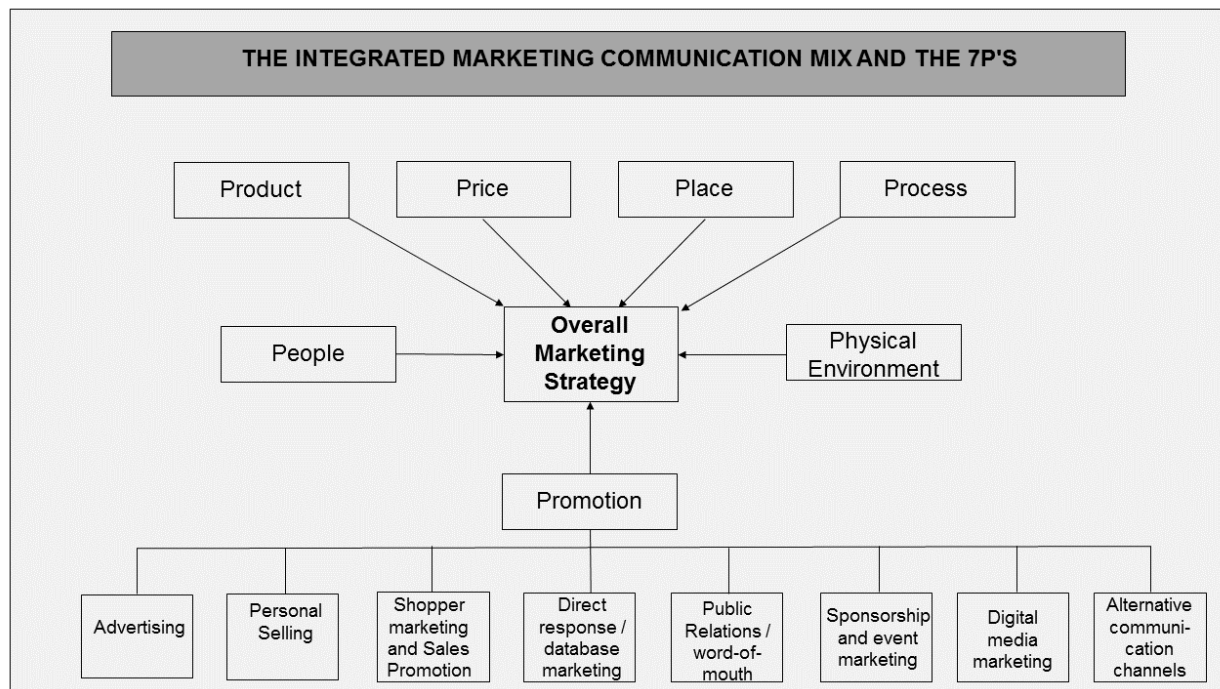
Figure 2.2: The integrated marketing communication mix and the 7 Ps of marketing

Source: Adapted from Koekemoer (2011:7)

2.3.2.1 Advertising

Advertising is one of the most visible tools used to communicate to the market and is described as a paid, controlled, non-personal form of mass communication to persuade through constant messages targeted at a specific audience to buy a product, service or even an idea (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2011:5; Fill & Jamieson, 2006; Koekemoer, 2014:5). Mass communication tools such as television, radio, outdoor signage, magazines, newspapers, cell phone text messages and the internet are used because of the ability thereof to reach a large audience (Buil *et al.*, 2013; Koekemoer, 2014:5; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:417).

Advertising also has the ability to increase brand awareness and is the most visible of the eight marketing disciplines. Stakeholders associate with a brand when they come in contact with it and advertising creates, modifies and reinforces this contact and association (Buil, *et al.*, 2013; Grewal & Levy 2014:576).

Researchers have also observed that the content of an advertising campaign has a direct influence on the level to which advertising impacts on brand equity. A campaign that is creative, innovative and original is much more likely to capture the attention of the stakeholder, which in turn will lead to a favourable brand association. The messages need to be informative, persuasive and must remind the stakeholder of the brand, its features, advantages and benefits (Buil *et al.*, 2013; Koekemoer, 2014:5; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:417).

From the above it can be concluded that the frequency of exposure and the inherent quality of the message advertising wants to convey are two of the most critical ingredients that determine the success of an advertising campaign.

It is, however, difficult to measure the success of advertising to persuade the stakeholder to act in a particular manner as the stakeholders may not believe the messages delivered through advertising as easily as the messages received from other marketing communication elements. Nevertheless, advertising has the advantage of being flexible as it can be used at a global, national and local level or for a specific group with specific interests or demographics (Fill, 2006:21; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:450).

Koekemoer (2014:5) agrees with this statement and points out that the role or task of advertising changes during the course of the life cycle of the product. In the introduction phase of the life cycle advertising makes people aware of the product and creates a primary demand for it. When the product moves into the growth phase of the life cycle, the emphasis shifts to persuading them to buy the product (Fill & Jamieson, 2006; Kerin *et al.*, 2013:459).

According to the Director of the Marketing and Communication department at the Mafikeng campus of NWU (Mr Landsberg, 29 September 2016) advertising is focused mainly on local radio stations and newspapers to advertise events such as inaugural and public lectures, on making announcements such as closing dates, publicising research entities and profiling researchers and experts in their field of study. Full-fledged and strategic advertising campaigns are not conducted due to budgetary constraints and the expensive nature of advertising.

Advertising campaigns, according to the Director at the Potchefstroom campus (Mr Cloete, 2 September 2016) of NWU, are strategic and include national and local newspapers and radio stations. Several campaigns were launched over the past years targeting both Afrikaans and English audiences. Outdoor advertising such as billboards are also utilized at strategic places around the country.

It is stated by the Director at the Vaal Triangle campus of NWU (Mr Makgowe, 19 August) that advertising to communicate to stakeholders is used in the same way as is done at the Mafikeng campus; focusing more on announcements and events targeting local radio stations and newspapers.

Advertising as part of the IMC mix is utilized by NWU to create awareness and persuade stakeholders by communicating certain messages, announcements and events through printed media, radio and bill boards although not at the same intensity at the different campuses. Due to the expensive nature of advertising it is not a popular marketing tool. The marketing and recruitment department should therefore plan one or two targeted advertising campaigns for the year and include it in the budgetary process.

2.3.2.2 Personal selling

The oral, person-to-person presentation of a product, service or idea to one or more target audience in the hope that a transaction will take place is described as personal selling. It involves interpersonal face-to-face communication between two parties, namely the marketer at the university and the prospective student (the seller and the buyer respectively) which is to the benefit of both parties (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2011:148; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:440). Because of its flexible nature, it is the ideal method for establishing and nurturing strong relationships for the purpose of recruitment as its activities are part of different stages in the decision-making process, and messages can be adapted immediately to fit the situation (Belch & Belch, 2012; Fill, 2009:655; Fill & Jamieson, 2006; Koekemoer, 2014:5).

Personal selling, as part of the IMC mix of the university, does not function in isolation, but is influenced by the university's strategy and resources, the characteristics of the prospective student and the competitiveness of other universities. Of all the elements in the marketing communication mix, it is the most central and present in almost all situations and seen as the most beneficial marketing tool. When starting with a recruitment campaign, universities start off by utilizing personal selling as each prospective student can be approached in a unique manner. The emotional connection and sense of satisfaction gained may result in the prospective student overlooking certain shortcomings of the university such as the unavailability of certain programmes (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2011:5; Koekemoer, 2014:5).

Personal selling or personal contact as an element of the IMC mix is one of the main recruitment activities utilized at the Mafikeng campus, Potchefstroom campus and the Vaal Triangle campus of North-West University. Appointments are arranged at identified schools, which enable the marketers to speak face to face to a group of learners or on an individual basis. The same principal applies to campus tours by individuals or groups, and to open days. Other events where personal contact is utilized are career exhibitions where the campuses attend on invitation to address groups of learners from different schools.

It thus seems that personal selling as a marketing communication element is very effective and is used extensively by the Marketing and Recruitment department and they should continue to do so.

2.3.2.3 Shopper marketing and sales promotion

In theory, sales promotion is referred to as marketing activities that provide extra value to the sale force, distributors, or consumer and can stimulate sales (Fill & Jamieson, 2006; Grewal & Levy, 2014:596; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:451). It refers to those methods that cannot be classified as personal selling, advertising or publicity, but which complement these procedures as it assists in transmitting the message. In a university context, it consists of personal and impersonal short-term efforts to motivate prospective students to make a decision. It can include communication activities that provide extra value or incentives to encourage interest in the university (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2011:6; Fill, 2009:538-539; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:451).

Koekemoer (2014:6) divides sales promotion, as an element in the marketing communication mix, into shopper marketing and sales promotion. He proclaims that shopper marketing is designed to influence the behaviour of the audience which can be seen as brand marketing in the university environment. It is aimed at discovering stakeholders' insights, physical environment and managerial processes. Sales promotion on the other hand, in professional marketing terms, means activities that offer incentives such as hand-outs during open days or campus tours to encourage a desired response from the prospective student. In a university context, sales promotion is directed at the internal members of the university, the members at the admissions office and the prospective students (Koekemoer, 2014:6).

Shopper marketing and sales promotion as elements of IMC in the recruitment strategy at the Mafikeng, Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle campuses of NWU include promotional items and hand-outs such as branded pens, rubber arm bands, bookmarks with contact details, fridge magnets, merchandise etc. These items are handed out during school visits, university open days and campus tours. The Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle campuses also present promotion days in the form of an open day once a year, mini-open days directed at specific faculties and conducted campus tours with specific groups.

2.3.2.4   Direct response and database marketing

This element of the marketing communication mix is also termed by some authors as direct marketing and described as the process of communicating directly with your target audience via telephone, email, electronic means or a personal visit (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2011:7; Fill, 2009:22; Thomas, 2012:25). The most popular methods used are direct mail, telemarketing, direct response, broadcast advertising, on-line computer shopping services, infomercials and shopping networks.

Companies have also bought into modern-day technology and started to utilize direct marketing in conjunction with social networking to build their brand and to reach new target markets that were previously unreachable, which is an on-going process and not a once-off sales mechanism (Rizzo, 2011:32; Thomas, 2012:25).

Direct marketing can also be seen as targeting individuals with personalised messages and building a relationship with them based on how they respond to these messages. In a university context, this element attempts to build a one-on-one relationship with prospective students by communicating with them on a direct and personal basis. It thus is about the management of their behaviour and to create a personal dialogue which often includes a 'call-to-action' element to encourage them to react to the message. As it is about building relationships, it seeks to create a sense of trust and commitment between the university and the prospective student by sustaining personal and honest dialogue (Fill, 2009:23; Rizzo, 2011:32; Thomas, 2012:25).

Koekemoer (2014:6) stresses the importance of direct marketing being interactive and measurable and refers to this element as direct response and database marketing. He describes it as being interactive

as the marketer and prospective student engage in two-way communication by using one or more advertising mediums to stimulate a measurable response from the target audience. This makes direct marketing different from other general marketing methods such as mass advertising, which sends messages to a large number of targets.

If direct marketing is on-going through a series of transactions it should lead to the development of a long-term, one-on-one relationship. The main criticism regarding this element is that it uses unwanted direct mail also known as junk mail (Koekemoer, 2014:282).

Direct response and database marketing as an element of the IMC mix is one of the main recruitment activities utilised by NWU and especially at the Potchefstroom campus. Marketers compile a database of prospective students by means of school visits, career exhibitions and campus tours. The contact information of learners such as name and surname, telephone number and email address as well as the school and study choice are collected by requesting the prospect to complete a brief information card. The captured data of applicants are also obtained from the admissions department. All this information is then captured on a spread-sheet for personal follow-ups and information-sharing through telephone by calling individuals, sending an sms on birthdays, and well-wishes for the approaching examinations, emails and direct mail. Although not utilized to the full extent at the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses it is present in recruitment activities.

2.3.2.5   Public relations and Word-of-Mouth communication

The Public Relations Institute of South Africa (PRISA) describes public relations or PR as 'the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organization and its internal and external stakeholders'. A university's publicity campaigns is the most visible result of PR activities and by establishing good relationships with the different media channels they advertise and announce company news to the mass audience which is mostly positive and in a controlled manner. The aim is to influence prospective students in a non-personal manner by making the actual newsworthiness of the university's offerings known through the media and by doing so, leveraging free coverage on the organization and its product (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2011:6; Koekemoer, 2014:7; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:433; Robinson, 2006:247).

Public relations activities are occasionally associated with free publicity as organizations receive positive publicity in printed media or on television – it does not pay for it directly for the exposure. However, although there is no charge for the media space or time, cost is always incurred with the production of the material. As an example, company X may decide to sponsor a building on the Mafikeng campus. After completion a positive good-news article is published in all the main media channels. Company X received free publicity, indirectly costs were incurred with the erection of the building (Koekemoer, 2014:7; Lamb *et al.*, 2015:433).

Public relations is also strongly linked to the development and communication of corporate and competitive strategies in that it provides a form of media presence for a university which allows it to be properly identified, positioned and understood by all of its stakeholders. Fill (2009:565) makes an important observation by pointing out that public relations should be used by management to understand issues from a stakeholder perspective. By appreciating the views of others, good relationships and dialogue are developed and used by management to shape attitudes and opinions of stakeholders. By taking the interests of its stakeholders into consideration and developing goodwill and understanding will lead to the development of long-term relationships of all parties.

Koekemoer (2014) placed public relations in a marketing context by describing the relationship between public relations and marketing. Both deal with organizational relationships and employ similar processes, techniques and strategies. Public relations, on the one hand, manage and maintain harmony with social groups on which the organization depends to achieve its goals. Marketing, on the other hand, attracts and satisfy stakeholders on a sustained basis in order to achieve the organizations economic goals. Every organization needs a public relations and a marketing function, which are equally essential for the organisation to survive and succeed. The activities of public relations fulfil the marketing objectives (Grewal & Levy, 2014:594; Koekemoer, 2014:328).

Word-of-Mouth (WOM) is described as interpersonal, face-to-face communication and comes from friends, relatives, newspaper reviews or colleagues or through digital means regarding products, brands or services and is a non-paid form of communication. The information received from these sources forms an impression in the stakeholder's mind that will ultimately lead to some form of expectation. The communication can be positive or negative and it is difficult for an organisation to control this type of communication as it is spontaneous, unbiased and trustworthy. The organisation has to deliver constant high-quality service to ensure that Word-of-Mouth communication concerning it is positive (Koekemoer, 2014:7; Machado & Diggines, 2012:145).

Strategies that can be implemented to trigger Word-of-Mouth about a particular service are the use of prominent figures or organisations as references for a service or the use of testimonials of satisfied customers. However, according to Boshoff (2014), customer satisfaction is a prerequisite for the effective use of Word-of-Mouth as a promotional tool to stimulate and encourage positive Word-of-Mouth. The principal is that the customer with a strong view about the service (either positive or negative) is more likely to talk about the service than those who hold a neutral position about it. A customer who is extremely dissatisfied with a service is more likely to discuss his or her experience than the customer who is extremely satisfied (Boshoff, 2014:297).

With all the communication channels available, a situation of information overload is created which leads to stakeholder fatigue, leading to stakeholders relying increasingly more on Word-of-Mouth references than on having to sift through vast amounts of information (Bughin *et al.*, 2010:2). To this end, with the

proliferation of digital communication, Word-of-Mouth communication is not restricted to actual speaking, but can be one-on-one communication online, which is referred to as Word-of-Mouse communication of which Facebook, Twitter and other networks are important examples (Koekemoer, 2014:369).

Public Relations and Word-of-Mouth as an element of the IMC mix is one of the key recruitment activities utilized by NWU and the Marketing and Communication departments of the Mafikeng, Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle campuses. The main activities include sound *media relations* (press kits, media functions, media releases on good-news stories), *lobbying* (presentations and talks by members of the Executive management at dinners with school principals and officials of the department of Higher Education and Training and talks during prize-giving events, and sharing of experiences by a former learner who previously attended the school), *publicity* (publications such as brochures and research reports, annual reports) and *corporate communication* (promotional videos, internal and external messages).

2.3.2.6   Sponsorship and event marketing

An organisation generally uses sponsorships as a marketing communication element to sponsor individuals, organisations, sports and arts and culture by providing financial or other support in return for naming rights or the right to display its brand name or logo linked to the sponsored activity. This enables the university to present its brand in a favourable environment and holds the potential of benefitting from an already favourable attitude towards the sponsored activity (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2011:7; Percy, 2008:139).

Several authors such as Lamb *et al.* (2015:434), Grewal and Levy (2014:595) and Fill (2006:22) do not consider sponsorship a separate element of the marketing communication mix, but include it as part of public relations as a form of publicity to disseminate the message through a third party. The endorsement offered by a third party can be very influential as it reinforces brand identification with a stronger impact on the target audience. It is, however, an expensive form of marketing, since often large amounts of money are spent without the sponsor receiving much benefit.

As part of the IMC plan it is, however, an element in its own right, but cannot be isolated as it extends the impact of the other elements of the marketing communication mix, for instance, advertising, shopper marketing, public relations, direct response and personal selling. The other elements are required for leverage of the sponsorship programme, for example a sponsor might be involved in an on-site promotion activity or use advertising to actively promote their engagement as an event partner. This is especially true in an environment such as higher education, where the audience is more open and receptive to relevant messages. These supplemental actions have shown to have an effect on stakeholder awareness and attitude towards the sponsor (Koekemoer, 2014:373).

Event marketing is closely linked to sponsorships but differs from it in this respect that with event marketing a university only supports a specific event, rather than creating an on-going relationship. It is

more a once-off sponsorship and the marketing of the institution at a sport, cultural, charity or other event is mostly utilized to increase brand awareness and enhance image and reputation (Percy, 2008:139).

Sponsorship and event marketing as elements of the IMC are utilized by three campuses of North-West University, but not to the same degree. Sponsorship and event marketing at the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses were limited to once-off sponsoring of sport events and components at golf days. Some school newspapers were also sponsored with the right of advertising the campuses on the front page, which can also be seen as a form of sponsorship. This can be attributed to a limited budget in this regard.

The Potchefstroom campus has a strong focus on sponsoring sports events at schools such as athletics and rugby and also other events and activities such as prize-giving events, and floating trophies to top performers.

2.3.2.7   Digital media marketing

Electronic marketing or digital media has stepped to the forefront in the past ten years and has become a very prominent component in the marketing mix, especially with the younger generation that grew up with this technology and are connected wherever they are. It can be described as any promotional message that is sent via a medium that uses digital technology. Seeing that prospective students fall within this group, digital media such as the internet, emails, blogging, podcasting, the Twitters- and Facebook communication can no longer be ignored by the university in its marketing campaigns (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2011; Fill, 2009:xxv; Koekemoer, 2014:8).

Digital media marketing also includes mobile or m-marketing. Apart from sending a sms to a stakeholder it is not really fully utilized in recruitment campaigns and is a medium that can be explored. Social media may fall in this category, but will be discussed as a separate topic in paragraphs to follow. Mobile marketing refers to mobile communication channels whereby the brand can be extended onto a mobile device to create communication and entertainment between a brand and the audience. It enables the distribution of interactive and personalized information at the most appropriate time and place and in the right context. Unlike any other existing media, mobile marketing provides an unprecedented opportunity for establishing a direct link with the stakeholder. It is more personal and communication messages are more direct, targeted and interactive and assist brands with more precise segmentation and direct interactive contact (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2011:372; Varnali *et al.*, 2011:4).

Social media represents a unique blending of technology and social interaction to create personal value for the user. In the context of the university, social media can be referred to as student-generated media and the challenge for the marketing department is to convert passive "receivers" of the message to active "evangelists" who will spread favourable messages regarding the university. Social media provides a platform for online conversation where students submit comments, photos and videos accompanied by

feedback. Conversations are typically about a subject of mutual interest that is built on personal thoughts and experiences. There are more than 400 social media sites available and the Marketing and Recruitment department should establish which sites are the most popular to be used in their recruitment campaigns. When referring to a single social media site such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube it is called social media network (Kerin *et al.*, 2014:493)

Digital media marketing is one of the main IMC elements utilized by the Mafikeng, Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle campuses of NWU for recruiting students. Each campus has well-established Facebook pages, Twitter and Instagram accounts and YouTube channels. Each of these social media networks has its own unique style and goal in reaching students. The university also has a well-established website on which all information concerning programmes, applications, and study information is available to prospective students. A virtual tour of each campus also provides a visual experience on what campuses look like and what can be expected.

2.3.2.8   Alternative communication channels

Marketers need to develop alternative communication channels to get past the mass media web. These forms of communication channels are often unexpected and unconventional and thrive on engagement and visual impact, for example augmented reality, guerrilla-marketing, sensory branding, product placement, non-linear advertising and video networks The approach is disruptive and often consists of user-generated content and personal experience where stakeholders utilise their networks with other stakeholders to lead introduce brand awareness. It is also used to create a buzz and then it uses technology to drive the message home by means of word-of-mouth communication. Typically it involves the use of initiatives such as special events or product launches to be enjoyed and shared by stakeholders and the media. By using alternative communication channels marketers attempt to make each encounter with a stakeholder a unique, unplanned personal exchange of information, instead of a planned marketing communication attempt (Du Plooy, 2009:44; Koekemoer, 2014:8).

Alternative communication channels utilized at the Mafikeng campus, the Potchefstroom campus and the Vaal Triangle campus have as an element of the IMC by NWU campus tours, invitations to graduation ceremonies and special events to individual learners, groups and schools. Current students are also utilized as brand ambassadors who assist with campus tours and open days and who share their experiences with learners.

Having discussed the IMC mix elements, the following guiding argument can be stated (see paragraph 1.6.2):

Specific guiding argument 2

The recruitment strategy of NWU ought to consist of the following IMC mix and elements: advertising, personal selling, shopper marketing and sales promotion, direct response and database marketing, public relations and word-of-mouth, sponsorship and event marketing, digital media marketing and alternative communication channels.

In the previous section marketing communication was discussed which dealt with the evolution of IMC and the IMC mix and elements (see paragraphs 2.3 and 2.3.2). The following section will be a broad layout of the planning process of marketing communication.

2.4 PLANNING PROCESS OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION

In the previous section the elements of IMC were discussed and flowing from that is the marketing communication planning process. This is the final section of the literature study which will aim at focussing on the specific considerations in planning and strategizing marketing initiatives when using the marketing communication mix.

It is important to understand the marketing communication planning process as this will provide the logical sequence of steps in developing such a plan. Du Plessis *et al.* (2011:22) point out that the marketing communication plan identifies the main communication issues, it informs all the interest groups that form part of the communication process, it integrates all the marketing communication efforts, top management is informed about the money that will be spent and it compares actual results with the plan and measure deviations. It is also important to note that the marketing communication campaign comprises a particular combination of marketing communication elements designed to achieve a particular objective which is directed at a particular target market. The marketing communication objectives result from the marketing strategies. The objectives of the marketing communication elements, namely advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity, public relations, sponsorships, direct marketing and digital communication are derived from the marketing communication objectives (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2011:30).

Given the unique demographic compilation of the three campuses of NWU, the planning of marketing communication of each campus will differ from that of the next, and in setting communication objectives, the distinctive role that each IMC tool plays should be thoroughly considered. It cannot be assumed that the marketing communication planning process for identifying, selecting and recruiting high-quality students on one campus will be the same on all the campuses.

It is also imperative to draw a distinction between communication objectives on the one hand and marketing objectives on the other as the one leads to the other. Communication objectives aim at creating increased awareness, changing perceptions, building brand image, repositioning the brand and getting

stakeholders to talk about the brand. To reach the marketing objectives, all the communication objectives first need to be met (Koekemoer, 2014:86-87).

The manner in which the IMC tools are used will differ from campaign to campaign and will be used in various combinations and at varying levels of intensity. Each tool has its own features, benefits, strengths and weaknesses which will determine the choice and mix of the tools to be used in the campaign. For a successful campaign the various tools need to be integrated and fit for purpose. Some tools will be perfect for a specific task and will generate dividends in a short stretch of time. In planning a campaign, the right IMC tools should be taken into account to complement one another (Koekemoer, 2014:96; Du Plessis *et al.,* 2011: 30; Fill, 2009:26).

Fill (2009:26) identified four main criteria which determine the selection and strategic use of the IMC mix:

- Control: Relatively high message control can be obtained with advertising and sales promotion starting from designing it to ending it with the actual transmission. Partial control, however, is obtained over concluding feedback associated with the original message.
- Financial resources: This refers to the financial ability of an organization. By paying a third party to communicate a message on its behalf will result in the loss of control to a certain extent. Control is lost as the message can change with the way in which it is interpreted by the third party.
- Credibility: PR is viewed as highly credible as the messages from public relations are perceived to be unbiased and honest. Advertising, sales promotion and personal selling may be seen as not credible enough.
- Size and geographic dispersion: To reach national and international stakeholders, mass communication such as advertising and sales promotion needs to be utilized. For close contact, personal selling and persuasion tactics will be more effective.

Koekemoer (2014:96) takes a broader view and refers to twelve factors that will influence the marketing communication planning process which will be described in more detail.

Size of budget. The size of the budget will determine how many IMC tools will be used. The smaller the budget, the more cost effective the tactics will have to be.

Purpose of the campaign. Different tools will be used for different purposes. Do you want to create awareness, or generate higher sales, within a brief period of time?

Speed. Some IMC tools are more suitable for building the brand equity over time such as PR, sponsorship or advertising. To generate fast sale, direct marketing and sales promotion will be used.

Loyal versus swing users. For loyal users only a reminder will be needed whilst swing users will need some persuasion to switch brands or remain loyal.

Type of target market. The type of target market will determine the IMC tool that will be used. To reach the mass public, advertising will be used and for a smaller target market, direct marketing will be useful.

Target market's media usage. The tactics for reaching young, tech-savvy stakeholders will be more focused on using mobile media than trying to reach them through the print media. Some stakeholders will be relatively easy to reach, but others not. Factors to take into account are exposure, attention span and motivation value of the media tools to be used.

Type of brand. High involvement brands such as tablets, where think and feel is significant, will need different tactics than low involvement brands such as convenience goods such as bread where repetitive buying behaviour is pertinent. For high involvement brands, personal selling is important, while advertising will be more appropriate for creating high awareness for repetitive buying behaviours.

Price elasticity. Some products are more affected by price rises or declines than others', which is referred to as price elasticity. Sales promotions, in-store sales, special events and special-offer websites will be appropriate for short-term special offers. PR will be more suitable for building reputation over time, especially where price elasticity is not involved.

Relationship building. IMC tools to be used are one-on-one through personal selling, direct response marketing at events and sales promotions. To build relationships via reputation building, PR, sponsorships and advertising will reach a wide variety of stakeholders.

New technology. The creation of new technology has led to new media or digital media. Most, if not all, advertising campaigns are linked to digital media. For example, TV is linked to YouTube for demonstrations, radio with Twitter for news and outdoor, print and brand experience with the web.

To be different. In today's world it is all about outsmarting your competitor; to be first and noticed first and different, disruptive thinking is necessary. Campaigns will have to focus on word-of-mouse, rumours, ambient media, guerrilla tactics and wow point-of-sales.

Creating a buzz. By creating a buzz it is expected that the stakeholder will talk favourably about a particular brand. This can be achieved by viral marketing through social media, one-on-one communication and guerrilla marketing.

Kim and Hyun (2011:423-424) place stronger emphasis on brand equity which deals with brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty and market performance as elements to be considered in implementing the marketing communication mix. Brand equity is achieved by the direct and indirect effects of the marketing communication mix on the stakeholders, which is prompted by the corporate image of an organization.

Echoing Koekemoer (2014:96), Kim and Hyun (2011:423) also refer to product complexity and product involvement and how these differences influence the choice of the marketing communication tools. For example, advertising will be more suitable in promoting products with a low level of complexity such as general consumables where brand awareness is the main objective. For a stronger brand image and high purchase conviction, personal selling will yield more dividends.

In developing plans for marketing communication, NWU has to study the various marketing communication elements and consider their strengths and weaknesses when compiling a marketing communication plan for a specific target market. The elements of the marketing communication plan must be integrated in such a manner that it achieves NWU's objective which in this case is prospective-student recruitment.

The steps or phases in the planning process of the marketing communication campaign are now discussed in more detail. Several models have been proposed by various authors such as Koekemoer (2015:82-96), McCant and Van Heerden (2010:365-367) and Fill (2009:293-314), but for purposes of this study Du Plessis *et al.'s* (2011:23-31) model will be considered as it is a combination of all the models proposed by the authors mentioned above.

Figure 2.3 gives a revised illustration of the integration of the Marketing Communication elements in the Marketing Communication planning process.
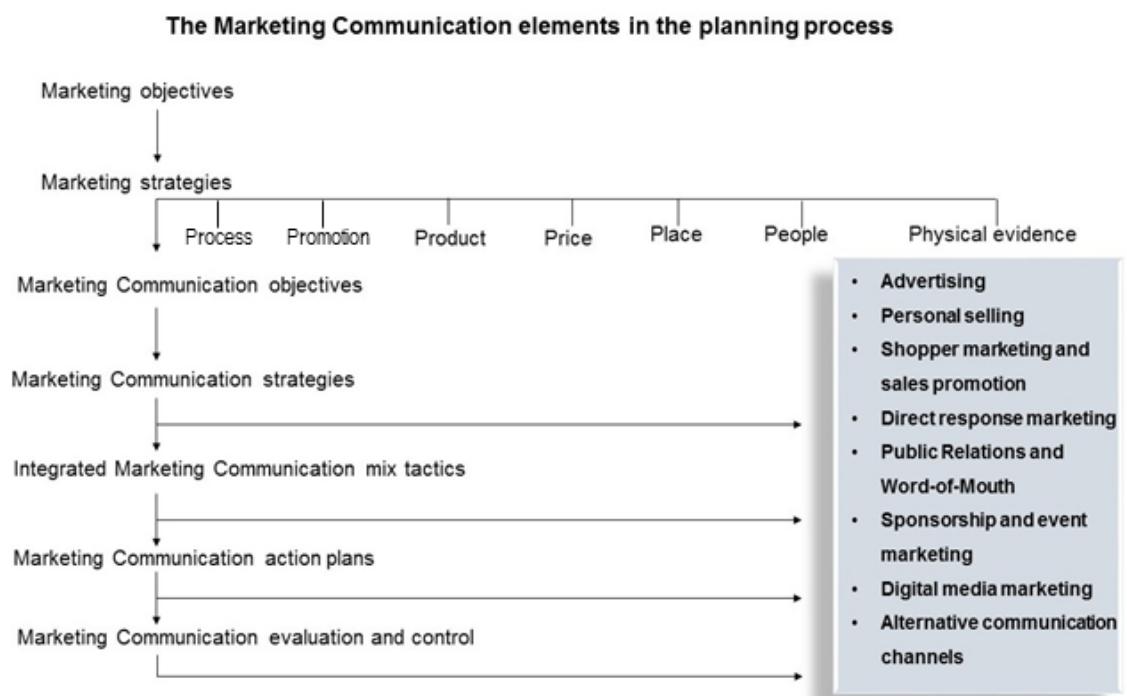
Figure 2.3: The Marketing Communication elements in the planning process

Source: Adapted from Du Plessis *et al.* (2011:26).

The planning of the marketing communication process is described in nine phases by Du Plessis *et al.* (2011:23) as follows:

Phase 1:   Analyse the situation. A situation analysis of the status quo in the market must be done by a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), which includes the external and internal environment.

Phase 2:   Select appropriate opportunities. The appropriate opportunities identified in phase 1 must be selected.

Phase 3:   Identify the target market. The target market should be described based on the identified opportunity.

Phase 4:   Develop the marketing communication objectives. The marketing communication objectives are formulated based on the marketing strategies. The objectives of the marketing communication plan are to inform, to persuade and to remind the stakeholders. Sub-objectives are to create awareness, create understanding, change perceptions and reward positive behaviour. The marketing communication strategy must take into account the decision-making process followed by stakeholders

Phase 5:   Determine the preliminary budget. Expenditure should lead to the accomplishment of the stated objectives.

Phase 6:   Develop strategies for the marketing communication mix elements and adapt the budget. All marketing communication elements should be investigated to produce an IMC campaign.   Such a campaign comprises a particular combination of marketing communication elements aimed at achieving certain objectives directed at towards a particular target market. Each element plays a unique role in achieving the marketing communication objectives.

Phase 7:   Develop an action plan for each strategy – the operational plan with the activities, responsibilities and time frames.

Phase 8:   Measure the marketing communication effectiveness. Ascertain whether the marketing communication programme has achieved its objectives.

Phase 9:   Obtain continual feedback on the effectiveness of the marketing communication plan. Share information to ensure that the right decisions are made.

On the basis of the nine phases as described by Du Plessis *et al.* (2011:23), the marketing communication planning process will now be illustrated further by applying it to prospective-student recruitment as a hypothetic example.

By compiling a SWOT analysis (Phase 1) of NWU the appropriate opportunities can be selected and categorized (Phase 2). As an example it is suggested that the main opportunities for NWU is their rating as the sixth-best university in the country, it is the second largest university of 26 universities in the country and it has 15 faculties to choose from. The target market (Phase 3) is prospective students, which is one of the main stakeholders of the university. According to the strategic plan of NWU, the vision is to become a pre-eminent university in Africa, driven by the pursuit of knowledge. The strategic plan of NWU forms part of the marketing objectives from which the marketing communication objectives are formulated (Phase 4) and aimed at prospective-student recruitment, which is the target market.

The objectives of the marketing communication plan are to inform prospective students and to remind them of the opportunities and programmes at NWU and to persuade them to choose NWU. Sub-objectives may be to create awareness of NWU, create an understanding of NWU, namely the different programmes that are offered by the 8 faculties, change perceptions concerning NWU, namely that it is seen as the Potchefstroom campus only, and to reward positive behaviour by offering applicants with outstanding results, a bursary if they chose NWU.

The compilation of a preliminary budget (Phase 5) comprises: defining communication objectives, determining the strategies and tasks to achieve these objectives, and estimating the cost related to the performance of these strategies.

To achieve the marketing communication objectives to recruit quality students for NWU, plans must be developed for the marketing communication elements (Phase 6) and combined in a marketing communication campaign. Such plans and as a much generalized illustration can include the following:

- An advertising campaign on targeted local radio stations, in identified local newspapers and in school newspapers.
- Personal selling by calling individual visits to schools to conduct one-on-one interviews with learners or in a group or by attending career exhibitions.
- Shopper marketing and sales promotion by giving hand-outs at schools or by offering bursaries to the two best performers in identified schools.
- Direct response and database marketing by communicating to learners through emails informing them about the programmes offered at NWU.
- Public relations and word-of-mouth by publicizing events, research and good news about NWU as widely as possible.
- Sponsorship and event marketing by sponsoring or offering some form of support to school events such as prize-giving events, athletic events and rugby or soccer derbies.
- Digital media marketing by using the different social media platforms to engage with prospective students, for example sending an sms to each learner on their birthdays or wishing them well with the approaching examinations, providing information on Facebook and Twitter or compiling video clips for YouTube.

- Alternative communication channels by creating a buzz on social media about a new invention by the engineering faculty.

A detailed action plan with activities, responsibilities and time frames will be developed for each marketing communication campaign (Phase 7), which is referred to as the operational or implementation plan. Each campaign needs to be measured (Phase 8) for its effectiveness in relation to the marketing communication objectives. An overall indication may be the number of prospective students that eventually register at NWU. Information regarding the marketing communication effectiveness needs to be shared (Phase 9) with management and especially the campus Marketing and Student Recruitment director with a view to take corrective measures at each campus.

Having discussed the planning process of marketing communication the following specific guiding argument can be specified (see paragraph 1.6.3).

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Specific guiding argument 3

For NWU to have a competitive advantage, its marketing communication strategy should consist of the following factors: a marketing communication plan, identifying main stakeholders, engage and build relationships with stakeholders, evaluating and taking corrective measures.

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2.5   CONCLUSION

In this chapter of the study the aim was to answer the first research question: "What does marketing communication with the aim of recruiting prospective students entail according to marketing literature?" The chapter provided a literature overview on marketing, relationship marketing and marketing communication as well as on the mix and elements of IMC and how it is utilized by NWU for recruiting students. The chapter indicated that marketing is not only about the management of products and services, but also the management of stakeholder relationships, which benefits both parties.

The marketing mix, and especially the 7 Ps of marketing, was an indisputable model in academic research and taken for granted as the "marketing truth". The main focus was on how to use the marketing tools instead of emphasizing the meaning and consequences of the marketing concept and nature of market relationship.

Relationships are regarded as fundamental assets of an organisation and determine the future of an organisation and predict whether new value will continue to be created and shared with a variety of stakeholders.

Literature also indicated that for any business, company or institution to be successful it has to communicate with its market. The absence of communication will result in the market being unaware of

the services and products offered by the organization, causing them to turn them to the known brands or businesses. Hence the role of marketing communication for NWU in the competition for prospective students is to let its brand stand out to engage stakeholders and to differentiate, reinforce, inform and persuade them to think, feel and act in a particular manner. NWU has to convince and inform its stakeholders that it offers better value than its competitors.

The rapid growth of new electronic media and other technological developments has led to the advancement of a new age of marketing communication known as an integrated marketing communication. This approach is no longer a communication process only, but a process that associates with management and brands and involves managing marketing communication in a holistic manner to achieve strategic objectives.

The Marketing and Recruitment department also has to make use of eight marketing communication elements, which is a collective term for all the planned messages used for communicating. Each medium enhances the contributions of all the other media and is driven by the potential existence of synergy, meaning that the added value of one medium, as a result of the presence of another, will bring about a combined effect of the media used that will be stronger than their individual effects.

It is also necessary for NWU to focus on a strategic and specific approach to marketing challenges. The implementation of a consistent, integrated, timely and highly targeted marketing communication plan will lead to a competitive advantage and an increase in prospective students for North-West University. Such a plan must, however, be aligned with NWU's overarching corporate strategy.

Chapter 3 will give an overview of the research design and methodology followed by discussing the qualitative research design and the semi-structure interview schedule as well as the quantitative research design and the electronic questionnaire applied in the research.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODS

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to outline the research design and methodology followed in this study which should result in answering the specific research questions as stated in Chapter 1, paragraphs 1.4.2 and 1.4.3.

A mixed method research approach was adopted. Firstly, a qualitative research approach was followed for the semi-structured interviews and secondly, a quantitative research approach was applied for the electronic questionnaires. The planning and sampling methods and the sample frame and size will be outlined in this chapter as well as the qualitative analysis of information and the processing of the quantitative data. Components such as validity, reliability and ethics and its contribution to the study will also be explained herein.

3.2   THE MIXED METHOD RESEARCH APPROACH

Creswell (2009:4) describes the mixed-method research approach as an inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms which involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches and the mixing of both approaches in a study. It is thus more than simply collecting and analysing both kinds of data as it also involves the use of both approaches in harmony to strengthen the overall outcome of the study.

The mixed-method research developed from the realistic worldview that it is not committed to any one system of philosophy, which allows researchers different assumptions, the use of multiple methods and diverse forms of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009:10). Creswell (2009:206-207) furthermore states that the nature of mixed-method design to be used is determined by four aspects, namely timing, weighting, mixing and theorising. Theorising states the theoretical viewpoints as discussed in Chapter 2 that guides the design and provides the context for the research. The other aspects, timing, weighting and mixing, and how it relates to the study will be discussed in more detail as described by Creswell.

Timing – Timing refers to how data are collected. It can be in phases, which is sequential or concurrent, which is simultaneously. In this study data was collected in phases (sequentially). During the first phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the directors on the respective campuses to establish which marketing communication plan they applied for the recruitment of students. The second phase entailed the distribution of electronic questionnaires to prospective first-year students at the three campuses of NWU to determine their perceptions of the marketing communication plan of NWU.

Weighting – The priority given in a study to either quantitative or qualitative research is referred to as weighting. The primary orientation for this study was quantitative data collection as it is important to gain the opinions of first-year students – how the marketing communication plan is seen from outside the University. The qualitative data obtained from the interviews with directors provided an inside view on the current marketing communication plan.

Mixing – Mixing refers to the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and the electronic questionnaires being integrated. In this study the data obtained from the interviews with the Marketing and Communication directors were integrated with the data obtained from the electronic questionnaires by identifying similar concepts and measuring the same constructs (see Table 4). The integration was done during the final interpretation of the entire analysis.

3.2.1 Qualitative approach

Qualitative research is interpretative and aims at providing a high degree of understanding. One of the main characteristics of the qualitative research approach is that it is used to determine the perceptions of participants of certain aspects to obtain a holistic view (Berger, 2014:13). It is based on words, perceptions and feelings and can appear as experiments, interviews, focus groups or questionnaires with open-ended questions. The main instrument in qualitative research is the researcher who closely engages with the respondents being studied, and who has the knowledge, understanding and expertise to interpret the data (Monette *et al.*, 2005:428).

Leedy and Ormond (2010:95) describe qualitative research as a concept that combines a wide variety of non-numerical data collection and analysis techniques and involves looking at characteristics or qualities that cannot easily be quantified. It will typically be used to examine the complex nature of a particular phenomenon to describe and understand it from the participant's point of view. The researcher not only wishes to establish what happens, but also how it happens and why it happens the way it does (Henning *et al.*, 2010:95). The research is also conducted in the participant's natural environment – in this case the offices of each of the directors – to provide their own information and experiences from the positions they hold.

The qualitative research approach is targeted at a small group of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme or situation. It is a more time-consuming process because the views and interpretations of each individual are taken into account (Boyce & Neale, 2006:3). This implies that the information obtained from the three directors of the Marketing and Communication departments at the three campuses can be used to establish their approach to prospective-student recruitment.

3.2.2 Quantitative approach

In the quantitative approach the objective is to obtain or collect numerical data of social phenomena via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques to explain a certain occurrence (Berger, 2004; Muijs, 2011:9). Data collected from prospective first-year students can be described and the level of occurrences can be measured on the basis of numbers and calculations. The information can be obtained within a brief period of time, which will give structure to the study to make certain assumptions and draw comparisons regarding variables such as students' lifestyles, attitudes and preferences which will give an indication of their perceptions of the marketing communication plan of NWU (Creswell, 2009:4).

Using an electronic questionnaire ensures that answers are standardised. The information gathered during this study was processed by the Statistical Consultation Services of North-West University's Potchefstroom campus. The compilation of the sample size will be assessed under point 3.4 Planning and Sampling.

In the case of this study, the quantitative approach was adopted to distribute a questionnaire to all prospective first-year students of the three campuses to determine their perceptions of the marketing communication plan. The data obtained were used to compile a profile of each campus on the students' initial perceptions of the marketing communication plan during the recruitment process. With the quantitative approach the research question on how prospective students perceive the marketing communication plan of each campus before having obtained knowledge of the Institution was answered.

The discussion above gave an overview of the approach to this study. It was indicated that a mixed-method approach was followed consisting of a qualitative approach and a quantitative approach. The following section summarises the research design and how the qualitative and quantitative approaches are combined in the research.

3.3 OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN

In this section the qualitative and quantitative research approaches were summarized in table format in the interest of clarification. The research design for the semi-structured interviews consists of the following concepts: relationship marketing, marketing communication mix and elements and marketing communication plan. The Research design for the electronic questionnaires consists of the concepts of: relationship marketing and marketing communication mix and elements. The general guiding and specific guiding arguments should provide outcomes for the specific research questions respectively (see Chapter 1, paragraphs 1.4 and 1.6) and were discussed in depth in the literature overview in Chapter 2.

Table 3.1 demonstrates how the research design was compiled and gives a comprehensive overview on how the research will be carried out

Table 3.1: Research design for the semi-structured interviews and the electronic questionnaire

Specific Research Question 1.4.2	Guiding argument	Specific Guiding argument	Concepts	Constructs measured	Semi-structured interviews
Which marketing communication plan is applied by the respective directors for recruiting students?	1.6.1 Relationships are regarded as fundamental assets of an institution's recruitment strategy and are rooted in building stakeholder loyalty and lasting engagements with learners. The implementation of a relationship marketing approach of engaging and interacting with prospective students should form a connection with NWU's target market for mutual long-term benefits. The marketing mix is instrumental in utilizing relationship marketing as a strategy for student recruitment	NWU should implement a relationship approach in their recruitment strategy by engaging and interacting with prospective students, and providing information via the marketing communication mix and elements.	Relationship marketing	Engagement and interaction	2(b), 2(c), 2(d), 2(e)
				Availability of information	3(j), 3(l), 3(n), 3(o), 3(p), 3(q)
	1.6.2 The marketing communication mix and elements can be divided into eight disciplines directed at stakeholders to influence their attitudes and behaviour, namely, advertising, personal selling, shopper marketing and sales promotion, direct response and database marketing, public relations and word-of-mouth, sponsorship and event marketing, digital media marketing and alternative communication channels. Each of these elements play a unique role and must be synchronised and coordinated to achieve the marketing communication objectives of the organisation	The recruitment strategy of NWU ought to consist of the following IMC elements: advertising, personal selling, shopper marketing and sales promotion, direct response and database marketing, public relations and word-of-mouth, sponsorship and event marketing, digital media marketing and alternative communication channels.	IMC mix and elements	Advertising	3(o)
				Personal selling,	3(n)
				Shopper marketing and sales promotion	3(m)
				Direct response and database marketing,	3(l)
				Public relations and word-of-mouth,	3(p)
				Sponsorship and event marketing	3(k),
				Digital media marketing	3(j)
				Alternative communication channels	3(q)

				Marketing communication plan	2(d), 2(e), 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(i)
	1.6.3 The implementation of a consistent, integrated, timely and highly targeted marketing communication plan should lead to a competitive advantage for NWU and an increase of prospective students.	For NWU to have a competitive advantage, its marketing communication strategy should consist of the following factors: a marketing communication plan, identifying main stakeholders, engage and build relationships with stakeholders, evaluating and taking corrective measures.	Marketing Communication plan	Main stakeholders	2(a)
				Engage and build relationships with stakeholders	2(b), 2(c)
				Evaluation and corrective measures	3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h)
Specific Research Question 1.4.3	**Guiding argument**	**Specific Guiding argument**	**Concepts**	**Constructs measured**	**Electronic Questionnaire**
What are prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication plan applied by the three campuses of North-West University?	1.6.1 Relationships are regarded as fundamental assets of an institution's recruitment strategy and are rooted in building stakeholder loyalty and lasting engagements with learners. The implementation of a relationship marketing approach of engaging and interacting with prospective students should form a connection with NWU's target market for mutual long-term benefits. The marketing mix is instrumental in utilizing relationship marketing as a strategy for student recruitment	NWU should implement a relationship approach in their recruitment strategy by engaging with prospective students, interacting and providing information through the marketing communication mix and elements.	Relationship Marketing	Engagement and interaction	B(2), B(4), B(5), B(6),
				Availability of information	B(1), B(3),
	1.6.2 The marketing communication mix and elements can be divided into eight disciplines directed at targeted stakeholders to influence their attitudes and behaviour, namely, advertising, personal selling, shopper marketing and sales promotion, direct response and database marketing, public relations and word-of-mouth, sponsorship and event marketing, digital media marketing and alternative communication channels. Each of	The recruitment strategy of NWU ought to comprise the following IMC elements: advertising, personal selling, shopper marketing and sales promotion, direct response and database marketing, public relations and word-of-mouth, sponsorship and event marketing, digital	IMC mix and elements	Advertising	C(1), C(2)
				Personal selling	C(3),
				Shopper marketing and sales promotion	C(3)
				Direct response and database marketing	C(4),

	these elements play a unique role and must be synchronised and coordinated to achieve the marketing communication objectives of the organisation	media marketing and alternative communication channels.		Public relations and word-of-mouth	B(7), C(5)
				Sponsorship and event marketing	C(5)
				Digital media marketing	C(6), C(7), C(8)
				Alternative communication channels	C(3)

3.4 RESEARCH METHODS

The research design outlines how data are to be collected from different sources using methods and describing techniques for analysing the data collected. The reasons chosen for a particular data collection and analysis method are determined by the nature of the research outcomes. There are three research methods as indicated by Tustin *et al.* (2005).

- Exploratory research describes research conducted for a problem of which the exact nature has not been clearly defined. Exploratory research is regarded as initial or introductory research that assists in determining the best research design, data collection method and selection of subjects, and in drawing definitive conclusions only with extreme caution (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:32). Through exploration the researcher can develop a vague concept of clearer, established priorities, which will improve the final research design.

- Descriptive research refers to the type of research question, design, and data analysis that will be applied to a given topic and includes the 'who, why, what, when and how" associated with the product or target market. The objective of descriptive research is to describe patterns and trends in social phenomena such as the market potential for a product or the demographics and attitudes of consumers who buy the product. Descriptions can also take the form of verbal narratives and descriptions derived from interviews, essays and novels (Bless *et al.*, 2013:57).

- Causal research determines which variable might be causing certain behaviour, i.e. whether a relation exists between two variables. In order to determine causality, it is important to keep the variable that is assumed to cause the change in the other variable(s) constant and then measure the changes in another variable(s). Strydom (2011:82) states that causal research is done to determine cause-and-effect relations. Where descriptive research reveals a possible relation between certain variables, causal research confirms that this relation exists, or concludes that there is no causal relation.

The research methods most suitable for the study chosen, is a descriptive research design that involves a qualitative analysis with semi-structured interviews with the directors at the three campuses of NWU and a quantitative survey with an electronic questionnaire distributed to prospective students at the three campuses to describe trends and patterns and identify the characteristics of the population to be studied (see paragraphs 3.4.1 and 3.4.2).

The research instruments used are subsequently discussed and explained in more detail.

3.4.1 The qualitative research methods

A distinction can be drawn between three different formats of interviews; structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

With *structured interviews*, a series of pre-determined questions are drawn up that are answered in the corresponding order. Data analysis tends to be straight forward as researchers can compare and contrast different answers given to the same questions. The use of *unstructured interviews* is the least reliable form of interviews and is conducted in an informal manner and is associated with a high level of bias. The *semi-structured* interview consists of components of both structured and unstructured interviews. The interviewer prepares a set of the same questions for the interviewees and additional questions may be posed during interviews to expand on and clarify a certain issue (Boyce & Neale, 2006:3).

To determine the attitudes and perceptions of the respondents regarding marketing and recruitment, this study focussed on individual semi-structured interviews with the directors and heads of the Marketing and Communication departments of NWU as it allows the interviewer to interact with each individual respondent. Individual semi-structured interviews are characterised by substantial freedom on the part of the interviewer.

For the semi-structured interviews a certain relationship must exist between the researcher and the respondent, as information will be exchanged during the interview in a question-and-answer session. A structured list of open-ended questions based on the knowledge obtained from the theories explained in the second chapter were compiled, which would give structure to the interview and assist in posing questions that are relevant and important.

The interview would also leave some room for follow-up questions which could clarify certain facts that were not clear from the onset (Du Plooy, 2009:190). Naude (2001:104) and Babbie (2010:291-292) emphasise that the interview in qualitative research should not be seen to simply be a list of questions to be asked, but must be viewed as a guided conversation or conversation with a purpose by means of which the interviewer establishes the general agenda for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent.

In this study, semi-structured interviewing was chosen as the research method since the emphasis of the study is on indicating the different marketing communication practices at the three campuses of NWU and on determining how the three directors understand the role of the IMC tools. Semi-structured interviews would ensure that:

- general background information on the three campuses would be obtained;
- the marketing communication model used on each campus would be identified; and
- information would be gathered pertaining to the marketing communication strategy applied for recruiting students.

3.4.1.1   Semi-structured interview

For this study, a total of three interviews were conducted. The interviewees comprised the two directors of the Marketing and Communication Departments at the Vaal Triangle and the Potchefstroom campuses. On the Mafikeng campus, the interview was conducted with one of the recruitment officers. Recruitment is thus purposive to secure participants with the necessary knowledge of and experience in the specific field.

3.4.1.2   Sampling

The interview schedule focused on the two directors at the Vaal Triangle and Potchefstroom campuses and the Recruitment Officer at the Mafikeng campus to obtain information related to their perspectives of the Marketing Communication plan they follow for recruiting students. The interviews were conducted during August and September 2016 to ensure that information is still relevant to the study.

The interview schedule consists of the following categories:

- Demographic information (category 1)
- Relationship attributes of NWU as strategy for student recruitment(category 2)
- Marketing Communication plan, mix and elements (category 3)

Table 3.2: An illustration of where and with whom the semi-structured interviews were conducted on the three campuses of NWU

North-West University Mafikeng campus	North-West University Potchefstroom campus	North-West University Vaal Triangle campus
Director: Marketing and Communication	Director: Marketing and Communication	Director: Marketing and Communication

The data or information obtained from the interviews were analysed by means of qualitative content analysis to compare the perceptions of the recruitment personnel of the three Marketing and Communication Departments of NWU regarding the recruitment of students at their campuses.

3.4.1.3   The interview schedule

An important aspect that needs to be borne in mind is that before the empirical questions can be determined, the theoretical background to the study has to be stated to ensure that accurate information is obtained. The theoretical information compiled in Chapter two was used to develop the interview schedule.

Open-ended questions were compiled regarding marketing, relationship marketing, marketing communication and the planning process of marketing communication which were divided into different categories in the interview schedule so as to obtain specific answers from the respondents. The questions are all-inclusive to ensure that all information concerning the specific concept was obtained. For purposes of this study an interview schedule was compiled to be used as guideline to obtain the relevant information from the interviewees (see Addendum 1).

The relevance of the questions in the semi-structured interviews was tested with some of the marketers at the campuses during informal discussions concerning the recruitment strategy at each campus.

3.4.1.4 The interview process

The interview was conducted face-to-face and was introduced with a friendly conversation during which the purpose and goals of the interview were explained and in particular how the research can be of relevance in the future. Notes were taken during the interview and answers were tape-recorded to ensure that all information was captured. The interviewee was informed that the interview and all answers would be kept confidential and that it would be done on all three campuses. The interviewee was also requested to give consent for the interview to be tape-recorded. All the interviews were transcribed by the researcher to ensure that all content would be analysed as described in Chapter 4. Addendum 1 provides an overview of the interview schedule of the semi-structured interviews indicating the questions that would measure the different concepts and constructs.

The next section will deal with the quantitative research methods and the implementation thereof to establish prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication strategy applied by the three campuses of North-West University.

3.4.2 The quantitative research methods

The quantitative approach was followed to distribute a questionnaire to all prospective first-year students of the three campuses to determine their perceptions of the marketing communication plan of North-West University.

3.4.2.1 Questionnaire: Characteristics and application in the study

A questionnaire is the most common instrument used to collect primary data, and careful consideration must be given to the type of questions, format, wording and sequence. The nature of questions should be relevant and easily understood, and leading questions should be avoided, by using simple, clear and direct instructions and wording (Strydom, 2011:88-89). Babbie (2010:254) describes a questionnaire as a document that contains questions and statements so as to obtain information relevant to a study. In this study an electronic questionnaire was compiled with a view to obtain relevant information from

prospective students for the study. By providing various options at each question, standardized answers were obtained. An electronic questionnaire is a relatively inexpensive method of distributing the questionnaire and was also completed anonymously.

3.4.2.2   Sampling

Two factors are important in the sampling decision, which is the population and sample. The population refers to the group in totality that could be asked and the researcher has to decide whether to include the entire population or only a selected group of the population to participate in the research (the task of sampling). The sample is the subset of the whole population, which is actually investigated that will give a generalised view of the entire population (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:33; Daymon & Holloway, 2011:222; Tustin *et al.*, 2005:337).

For purposes of this study the convenience non-probability sampling method was applied as the participants were randomly selected due to their convenient accessibility and availability – also because the group of prospective students identified is a naturally formed group. It is a statistical method of drawing representative data where participants are chosen by the researcher due to their availability (Cant & Van Heerden, 2013:144).

3.4.2.3   The sample frame and size for the study

The sample frame is the basis on which respondents are selected: people, telephone numbers, or addresses are sampled from a frame. Sampling frames must be up to date, complete, affordable and easy to use, in the sense that they can be manipulated and transferred into other media. They should be easily exported into software such as spread-sheets or word processing programmes (Bradley, 2010:154-155). The sampling frame used in this study was the prospective students who had applied at the three campuses of the NWU by the end of 2015. These prospects were provisionally accepted to register as first-year students at the NWU pending the outcome of their grade 12 results. Neuman (2012:163) states that the sample size is affected by what one wants to know, the purpose of an inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources. This includes the quality of data, the scope of the study, the nature of the topic, the amount of useful information obtained and the study design used, also all affect how much data is needed.

The sample size decided on in this study and for purposes of factor analysis was 400 prospective first-year students. To ensure that the number of responses would be reached, 12 000 questionnaires were distributed to prospective students who had applied and were provisionally accepted to study at NWU in 2016. Seeing that an availability sample was used and not a random sample, power calculations are not necessary.

3.4.2.4   Format of the questionnaire in the study

The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Table 3.3 gives an indication of the format of the electronic questionnaire.

Table 3.3: Format of electronic questionnaire

	Focus area	Options
Section A	Demographic information	Mark with an X
Section B	Relationship attributes	Likert scale
Section C	Marketing communication mix and elements	Likert scale

Section A comprised demographic information in which the respondent had to indicate his/her choice with an X. In section B the Likert scale was used to determine the extent of relationship communication and engagement NWU has with prospective students. The questions in section C also were in the Likert scale format to determine the marketing communication plan.

Traditionally, the Likert scale is based on two extremes and divided into five or seven categories, which are: completely disagree, disagree, agree, fully agree, and *don't know.* The disadvantage of this approach is that it can possibly lead the respondents to follow a certain response pattern, especially with the inclusion of *don't know*. In this study only four categories were used, namely completely disagree, disagree, agree and fully agree to ensure that the respondent definitely answered the question.

The Quantitative electronic questionnaire is set out in Addendum 2.

3.5   DATA COLLECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

The data collection process is referred to as fieldwork and can be classified according to the way in which it was collected or in terms of its intrinsic properties. When researchers collect their own data for purposes of a particular study, it is called primary data. Data collection done in this manner complements the aims of research, since the data gathering is directed at answering the specific questions raised by the researcher (Bless *et al.*, 2013:184).

Secondary data is information that already exists within an organisation and is a cheaper and faster way of collecting data. In contrast, primary data is specifically gathered to solve a particular problem that has been identified within the organisation (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:31). Strydom (2011:82) remarks that primary data does not yet exist; it has to be generated through original research. Primary data collection is relatively expensive and slow. However, primary data is usually more relevant to the research objectives than secondary data.

The suitability of secondary data for a particular research problem may not be very good, since the purpose of its collection might have been slightly different from that of the new research. The data might have been based on different operational definitions and little may be known about other possible biases in the data collection, such as sampling bias. When research is based on the analysis of secondary data, great care must be taken in the interpretation thereof (Bless *et al.*, 2013:184).

In this study, primary data were collected by distributing an electronic questionnaire since the data gathering is directed at answering the specific research question raised by the researcher which complements the aims of the research, namely: *What are prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication plan applied by the three campuses of North-West University?*

The questionnaire was administered via Survey Monkey, which is an online survey development cloud-based service by means of which a link is created to the questionnaire which can be distributed electronically. A database was obtained from the Student Administrative System (VSS) of 12 000 prospective first-year students who had applied and were provisionally accepted at NWU. As the questionnaire was placed online, all prospects could access it electronically. They had an equal opportunity or probability of completing the survey, and the researcher relied solely on the prospects' initiative and cooperation to complete the questionnaire and submit their responses. They were made aware of the questionnaire via email and SMS. The questionnaire was sent out on 8 December 2015 and the closing date for submission was 30 January 2016. The researcher retrieved 3 203 completed questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 76%.

A formal pilot study to test the feasibility and relevance of questions with the group was not conducted as similar questionnaires were utilised in previous surveys with first years on specific campuses.

3.5.1 Sample realisation

Table 3.4 summarises the responses received from the electronic questionnaire. The electronic questionnaire was distributed to 12 000 prospective students of the three campuses of NWU – 6 000 to those of the Potchefstroom campus, 4 000 of those of the Mafikeng campus and 2 000 of those of the Vaal Triangle campus. The questionnaire was completed by 3 203 participants whilst the target population was 400. This implies that a much larger amount of questionnaires were obtained adding to the richness of the quantitative results of the study.

Table 3.4: Summary of responses obtained from the electronic questionnaire

	NWU	Potchefstroom campus	Mafikeng campus	Vaal Triangle campus
Students targeted	12000	6000	4000	2000
Sample needed	400	200	100	100
Number of questionnaires completed and received	3203	1730	995	478
% of responses received	**76%**	**81%**	**74%**	**73%**

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The information obtained from the semi-structured interviews was analysed by applying qualitative content analysis by means of coding which is a term used to refer to the method of constant comparison analysis. Coding can be described as the process of scrutinizing the data for themes, ideas and categories and then marking similar passages of text with a code label so that it can easily be retrieved for further comparison.

In this study, different colours were used to identify certain categories which enabled the researcher to break down and understand the text. The research questions in the interview schedule were used as a guide for conducting the analysis, and each category was broken down into sub-categories. After having coded the transcribed text obtained from the three interviews, the sub-categories were compared according to the colour codes assigned to the different categories and subcategories. This process known as *constant comparison* ensured that the coding was consistent. The process of coding was conducted on an MS Excel spread-sheet on which the different categories and sub-categories were indexed.

The data obtained from the electronic questionnaire were analysed using Statistical (StatSoft Inc., 2013) and SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2013) statistical computer programmes. The Statistical Consultation Services at North-West University's Potchefstroom campus rendered assistance during the process of analysing the data.

The statistics used for the objectives of this study are discussed in the next section and include: frequency tables, factor analysis according to the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criteria, *t*-tests, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Cronbach (1951) alpha-coefficient.

3.6.1 Frequency tables

A frequency analysis summarises data and depicts the number of times a data value occurs and an effective method for analysing huge numbers of data for ease of interpretation and for presenting the data (Argyrous, 2011:80). Only frequencies should be employed in the case of categorical variables, such as

describing the demographics of a sample and should involve counting the number of responses for every value of a variable. In addition, frequency analysis is also used to provide more clarity to a research study report by employing statistical tables, graphs and pictures.

A frequency analysis was done for each question in the study and the number of participants (N) that had answered the question was indicated as it differs from question to question. This information was also broken down in accordance with the opinions of the participants on the statements, which were *strongly disagree, disagree, agree and fully agree*. To provide an accurate interpretation of the data of prospective students' perceptions of the recruitment marketing communication strategy applied by the three campuses of North-West University, the option of *I don't know* was not included.

The response percentages of the participants on each question were also provided as it provides for more accurate information and ease of interpretation. Statistical tables and bar charts were used to report on the frequency distribution

3.6.2 Factor analysis

Factor analysis "is a statistical method used to describe variability among observed, correlated variables in terms of a potentially lower number of unobserved variables called factors" (Yong & Pearce, 2013:80). Factor analysis searches for such joint variations in response to unobserved latent variables and allows for an examination of which variables are related, and which not, and factor analysis uncovers which variables relate to which factor. As such, factor analysis is valuable for evaluating correlations between variables and scrutinises the entire set of interdependent relations among variables.

It is also important to have a large enough sample size; the larger the sample size, the better, and a five to one ratio is suggested as a rule of thumb which involves five observations for every item to be factor analysed. Barlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy may be employed to evaluate the factorability of data. When KMO calculates a value higher than 0.6 and the Barlett's test of sphericity is significant, it then typically indicates sample adequacy

Two general factor analyses are identified, namely common factor analysis and principal components factor analysis. In common factor analysis, the factors are estimated based only on the common variance. In principal components analysis, the number of variables is reduced in order to determine the minimum number of factors that will account for maximum variance in the data (Malhotra, 2007:643). When using principal components analysis, all communalities are initially assumed to be 1.0. The total variance of the variables may therefore be considered by the factors or components, which denotes a no error variance. It is also important for researchers to decide on the optimal number of factors that may be extracted to effectively illustrate the interrelatedness of the variable sets.

Following factor extraction, difficulty may be experienced in interpreting and naming the factors based on their factor loadings. In eliminating this obstacle, Field (2013:678-680) suggests factor rotation. Two key categories of rotation methods are identified, namely orthogonal and oblique rotation. With orthogonal rotation the variables are being kept independent. Oblique rotation indicates the relatedness and interdependence of the variables (Field, 2013:680).

In this study the factor loadings of the different constructs were calculated and can vary from -1.0 to 1.0. Only the factors with the highest loading were analysed. The higher the value the more information a specific factor explained regarding the separate questions in the questionnaire. This is applicable to all the factor analyses used in the study. Principal Component Analysis was done with Oblimin Axis Rotation to extract the factors. The questions regarding Marketing Communication are divided into nine factors - predominantly English media, recruitment activities, predominantly Afrikaans media, sponsored school events and none sponsored school events, irregularly utilized electronic platforms, established electronic platforms, unsought sources of information and desired sources of information – which could be withdrawn according to the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criteria. Kaiser-Meyer Axis Oblimin rotation method was used. The factor analysis of Section B (Relationship Communication / engagement) and Section C (Marketing Communication information / mix elements of marketing communication) were employed separately.

Factor analysis was used in this study to investigate variable relationships for concepts that are not easily measured directly by collapsing a large number of variables into a few interpretable underlying factors. In particular, factor analysis was used to explore the data obtained from the electronic questionnaire for patterns and to reduce the number of elements studied to a more manageable number and to observe how they are interlinked.

3.6.3   T-test

A *t*-test statistical significance indicates whether or not the difference between two groups' averages most likely reflects a "real" difference in the population from which the groups were sampled. It is also described by Malhotra (2010:504) as a statistical analysis technique used for testing differences between means of the population being studied.

Three main types of *t*-tests are identified, namely the one-sample *t*-test, the two-independent-sample *t*-test and the paired samples *t*-test. In this study the paired samples *t*-test was used to compare two groups or values which are somehow related to each other as the respondents completed both sections dealing with relationship communication and marketing communication. Malhotra (2010:531) describes it as a statistical analysis technique used for testing differences between mean scores for more than two independent samples.

3.6.4   Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

ANOVA typically uses two important values, namely the F-value, which is the test statistic, and the p-value to identify whether significant differences exist. A p-value smaller than 0.05 is a substantial indication that the results are statistically significant and that the sample was large enough and that adequate data were retrieved.

Whereas a *t*-test allows researchers to test the difference in the means of two samples, it is necessary to test for the difference in means of several different groups occasionally. This necessitates the use of an *analysis* of *variance (ANOVA).* ANOVA is an extended version of the *t*-test. Its advantage is that it can be used to simultaneously investigate several independent variables, also named factors. ANOVA breaks down the total variability in a set of data into its different sources. It basically explains the sources of variance in a set of scores on one or more independent variables.

Statistical significance tests such as *t*-tests and ANOVA's are used to indicate that the results are significant. Statistical significance is represented by the p-value. A small p-value (p.05), medium p-value (p0.01) and a large p-value (p4.001) are considered sufficient evidence that the result is statistically significant (Cohen, 1988).

Statistical significance testing is only appropriate for probability samples (usually assumed to be random) from a population and is not relevant when dealing with complete populations or availability samples. To determine the significance between the means of two or more populations (non-probability samples, as in this study) an effect size can be used. With a view to distinguish the significance thereof from the statistical significance, the effect size significance will be called the practical significance (d-value) (Steyn, 2000:l).

Cohen (1988) gave some guidelines as an aid for the interpretation of practical significance:

d=0.2   (small effect, which means that if this occurs in new research, the experiment or survey ought to be replicated to determine whether there is an effect or whether the result is practically non-significant)

d=0.5   (medium effect, which is detectable and might point towards practical significance. A better planned experiment might result in more significant results)

d≥0.8   (large effect; the results are practically significant and therefore of practical significance).

In cases where statistically significant results were obtained, d-values were calculated.
Table 3.5 summarises the practical significance of the effect sizes in a *t*-test.

The effect sizes for *t*-tests and ANOVA are calculated by means of the statistical computer software programme, Statistica version 7.1.

Table 3.5: Summary of the practical significance of the effect sizes in a *t*-test

Effect sizes	Interpretation
d = 0.2	Small effect
d = 0.5	Medium effect
d = 0.8	Large effect

In the case of a contingency table the effect size is indicated by the w-value, which is given by the phi (f) coefficient. The effect size is a measure of the practical significance of the relationship and is independent of sample size.

In this case the effect size is given by $w=\sqrt{\frac{X^2}{n}}$, where X^2 is the usual Chi-square statistic for the contingency table and *n* is the sample size (see Steyn, 2000). In the special case of a 2×2 table, the effect size (w) is given by the phi (ϕ) coefficient. Note that the effect size is again independent of sample size. Cohen (1988) gives the following guidelines for the interpretation thereof in the current case:

w=0.1 (small effect)
w=0.3 (medium effect)
w=0.5 (large effect)
A relation with ≥0.5 $A = \pi r^2$ is considered practically significant (Ellis & Steyn, 2003:53).

3.6.5   Validity of the study

Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration (Babbie & Mouton, 2009:122). There are four means by which to establish the validity of a study, namely: criterion-related validity, construct validity, content validity and timeframe of data-collection (Babbie & Mouton, 2009:122-124; David & Sutton, 2011:268; Du Plooy, 2009:90).

3.6.5.1   Criterion-related validity

Criterion-related validity, also known as predictive validity, is based on external criterion and describes the extent to which a specific aspect can be predicted. The validity of this study is determined in accordance with the interrelatedness of the approaches of the directors of the Marketing and

Communication departments to the recruitment strategy and the prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication strategy applied by the three campuses of North-West University.

3.6.5.2   Construct validity

Construct validity is based on the logical relations among variables (Babbie & Mouton, 2009:124). For purposes of this study, factor analysis was used to indicate the interrelatedness of the different variables.

3.6.5.3   Content validity

Content validity refers to how much a measure covers the range of the meanings included within a concept. In essence, content validity determines whether a study contains the relevant aspects of the topic. This study is valid with regard to the content as the different components of marketing, namely relationship marketing and marketing communication were illustrated by the report on the literature review as indicated in Chapter 2. The relevant aspects regarding the recruitment marketing communication strategy of NWU were discussed using different constructs to establish the perceptions of prospective students.

3.6.5.4   Face validity

Face validity is the extent to which a test is subjectively viewed as a measure to measure what it purports to measure. As the perceptions of prospective students of the marketing communication strategy of NWU are measured, it can be viewed as having a strong face validity and a valid means of measuring prospective students' perceptions of NWU.

3.6.5.5   Timeframe validity

The timeframe in which data were collected refers to the validity of the study with regard to the elapsed time when the research was conducted and the outcomes and possibilities for further studies (David & Stutton, 2011:268). The data for this study are valid as it was gathered during December 2015 and January 2016.

3.6.5.6   Internal and external validity

It is also important to distinguish between internal validity and external validity. Internal validity deals with the extent to which a study can account for all other factors on which data may or may not have been collected that may affect the outcome of the research question to be answered (David & Stutton, 2011:269).

External validity refers to the extent to which findings can be generalised to larger populations and applied to different settings. It is determined by the representativeness and size of the sample from which the findings are derived (David & Stutton, 2011:269).

For this study the results are internally valid as different research methods were used to measure the different concepts.

3.6.6 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient

The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was used to determine the internal validity of the study and to compile associations between the different variables to establish to what extent the items can be grouped. The Cronbach Alpha uses the principal that a large number of constructs needs to be investigated to indicate the validity of the constructs.

According to Urdan (2010:178), the Cronbach Alpha varies between 0 and 1.0 where 0 is low and 1.0 is high. This implies that the data of the factors with a Cronbach Alpha of .700 and above are reliable and acceptable.

3.6.7 Reliability of the study

The reliability of a study is a matter of whether a particular technique, if applied repeatedly to the same object, will produce the same result each time. The key is the stability and consistency of results if the study should be repeated (Babbie & Mouton, 2009:124-125). Curtis and Curtis (2011:13) explain that reliability measures the extent to which the analysis of data yields reliable results that can be repeated or reproduced at different times or by different researchers.

David and Stutton (2011:268) also state that reliability can also be determined through correlations. In the quantitative questionnaires correlations were done through Spearman order correlations of the quantitative data to indicate the connections between the different factors. In this study the Correlation Coefficient was used as an indication of the relationship between the variables, which makes it possible to establish how the value of one variable relates to the value of another. Correlations specifies the interrelatedness of the different factors where .01 indicates a small correlation, .3 a medium correlation and .5 a high correlation.

3.7 ETHICS OF THE STUDY

Research ethics relates to the questions concerning how the research was formulated and clarified, and whether the research topic, design of the research and gaining of access, data collection, processes and storing of the data, data analyses and the write-up of the research findings were dealt with in a moral and responsible manner.

The following ethical issues were considered during the study:

The study was approved by the Research Ethics Regulatory Committee of North-West University.

- Participants in the qualitative interviews were contacted via email to arrange an appointment to be interviewed. They were thoroughly briefed in advance on the nature and duration of the interview.
- The names of the participants in the qualitative interview were kept confidential and only the researcher and the supervisor had access to the transcribed interviews.
- Permission was obtained to use the contact details of prospective students for distributing the electronic questionnaire to their email addresses in adherence to the Promotion of Personal Information Act (POPI Act 2 of 2000).
- The electronic questionnaire was completed anonymously to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. The purpose of the research and the rights of the participants were outlined and also that participation was voluntary.
- The researcher maintained his research integrity by not being selective in what to report and by not being objective when conducting the data analysis in the interpretation thereof.

3.8   CONCLUSION

The mixed-method research approach to the study as well as the relevant research methods utilised, were discussed in this chapter. The qualitative and quantitative research approaches, the benefits and limitations thereof as well as the reasons for using it in this study, were outlined. A detail description was also provided of the qualitative semi-structured interviews and the quantitative electronic questionnaires utilized in the research. How it is applicable to the study was also explained and clarified, and the reliability and validity of the study were deliberated upon.

The captured data were analysed by the Statistical Consultation Services on the Potchefstroom campus using the IBM SPSS system. The statistical methods applied to the empirical data sets included frequencies, factor analyses, reliability and validity analysis, Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient as well as on two independent-samples *t*-test and one-way ANOVA.

In Chapter 4, the research findings emanating from the qualitative research results of the responses are presented and analysed.

CHAPTER 4

THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION PLAN APPLIED BY NWU

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, the empirical research methods of the study were deliberated upon. In this chapter the recruitment strategy of NWU will be analysed according to the marketing communication plan applied by the directors of the three Marketing and Communication departments of NWU to prospective-student recruitment.

The main purpose of this chapter is to answer the following specific research question (see paragraph 1.4) and to answer it by discussing the results of the semi-structured interviews:

> *Which marketing communication plan is applied by the respective directors for recruiting students?* (see paragraph 1.4.2.)

The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section dealt with the concept *relationship marketing* and the constructs that were measured are engagement and interaction and the availability of information. The second section dealt with the concept *integrated marketing communication*. The constructs measured are the eight elements of the IMC mix which are advertising, personal selling, shopper marketing and sales promotion, direct response marketing, public relations and Word-of-Mouth, sponsorship and events marketing, digital media marketing and alternative communication channels. The third section dealt with the concept *marketing communication plan* and the constructs measured are targeted marketing communication plan, identifying main stakeholders, engaging with stakeholders and evaluation and measuring success and taking corrective measures (see paragraph 3.3, Table 3.1). Each of these constructs were supplemented with the information obtained from the semi-structured interviews to point out what the approach to prospective- student recruitment is, as followed by the directors of the three Marketing and Communication departments at North-West University.

In the next section the second research question (paragraph 1.4.2) was answered by means of an analysis of the demographic information of the directors of the three Marketing and Communication departments followed by their approach to prospective-student recruitment. The demographic information provided data regarding the three directors, which was necessary to determine whether they would be a representative sample for the research.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE DIRECTORS OF THE THREE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENTS

As indicated in paragraph 3.4.2, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two directors and a marketer of the marketing and communication departments at the three campuses of NWU. Figure 4.1 provides a summary of the demographic information obtained from the semi-structured interviews.
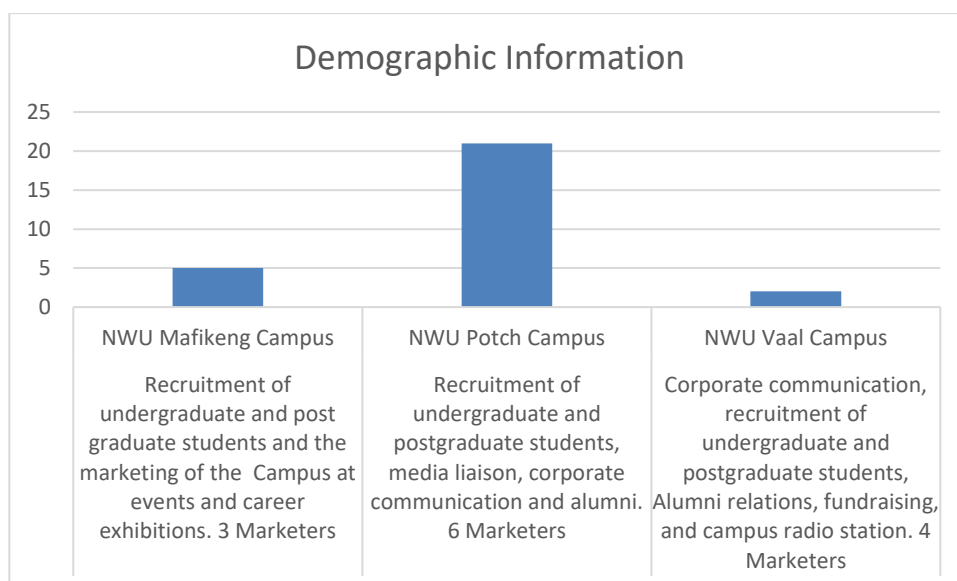
Figure 4.1: Demographic information on respective directors at the three campuses of NWU

At the Mafikeng campus of NWU the marketer interviewed has five years' experience and is mainly responsible for recruiting undergraduate and postgraduate students and for marketing the Mafikeng campus at events and career exhibitions. The marketing team at the Mafikeng campus consists of 3 persons.

The Director at the Potchefstroom campus of NWU has 21 years' experience and is responsible for recruiting undergraduate and postgraduate students, media liaison, corporate communication and alumni. A team of 6 persons is responsible for specifically prospective-student recruitment.

The Director at NWU Vaal Triangle campus has been in his current post for three years and two months and is responsible for internal and external communication, recruitment of undergraduate and postgraduate students, Alumni relations, fundraising, and campus radio station. Four persons take responsibility for prospective-student recruitment.

From the above it is clear that a well-established recruitment office exists at the Marketing and Recruitment departments at the three campuses of NWU. The Director at the Potchefstroom campus

has vast experience (21 years) with regard to recruitment practices, which is much lesser at the other two campuses.

4.3 THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION PLAN OF NWU WHEN RECRUITING PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS: RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

As mentioned in paragraph 2.2.3, relationship marketing is a natural development from marketing with the intention to build and maintain long-term relationships with prospective students, which should be to the advantage of both parties.

This section aims at indicating NWU's approach to prospective-student recruitment with regard to the concept *relationship marketing* and was analysed in accordance with the constructs *engagement and interaction and availability of information*.

4.3.1   Engagement and interaction

Paragraph 2.3.2 outlines the marketing communication mix and elements used to reach marketing objectives. The marketing communication elements are utilized to engage and interact with prospective students. Each element or tool is integrated and plays a unique and distinctive role and is designed to fulfil a specific task during the engagement process. The elements are used to package the message that needs to be conveyed and to achieve the communication objectives, which are to build and maintain long-term relationships by engaging and interacting with prospective students.

The results obtained from the semi-structured interviews showed that engagement and interaction were key to building relationships at the three campuses which indicated that engagement and interaction took place through visits to schools or during career exhibitions, open days and campus tours. Learners were assisted with career guidance and subject choices as early as in grade 9 and were exposed to NWU from an early stage. The campuses also undertook an annual open day during April and May where prospective first years and their parents visited the campuses during which they were given information on the different programmes and had a first-hand experience of the campus.

All three directors from campuses also pointed out that engagement and interaction took place by prospective students being sent selected messages such as birthday wishes or best wishes for the approaching examinations. Marketers also made follow-ups via personal phone calls to give the prospective student that essential personal attention. The results also showed that especially Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as social media networks were of the main channels to engage and interact with prospective students from an early age. These networks were monitored on a daily basis to establish what their needs were and to answer inquiries. Other forms of engagement and interaction were by providing financial and other support at prize-giving events and different sporting events.

At the Mafikeng campus, relationships were also established with: officials at the department of Higher Education and Training, especially with regard to recruitment at rural areas; school principals; and Life Orientation teachers. An annual Winter School was also presented for grade 12 learners, which exposed learners to the campus. Another project mentioned is the Ikateleng project, which was also presented on the campus where learners from grades 10 to 12 attend extra classes on Saturdays.

The Potchefstroom campus strongly focused on campus tours, promotional days and open days in building relationships and engaging with students and made use of brand ambassadors where current students and academics were to speak to learners visiting the campus. Engagement and interaction also took place during parent meetings at selected schools to inform learners and parents about subject choices and application procedures.

The Vaal Triangle campus indicated that the marketers shared their cell numbers with learners to assist with enquiries and also had a generic email address to assist with inquiries from learners.

The findings regarding engagement and interaction clearly indicated that some form of engagement and interaction does take place at all three campuses of NWU and that the directors see the value thereof in their respective recruitment campaigns. This is coherent with literature which indicates that to build a relationship with prospective students, engagement and interaction should take place (see Chapter 2, paragraph 2.2.2).

4.3.2 Availability of information

The directors at the three campuses also indicated that all study and application information and information concerning the campuses was published on NWU website, which was one of the main sources of information. All the programmes and different schools in the faculties had a landing page and this information was updated by dedicated publishers in the faculties. Each campus also had a virtual tour on the website to showcase facilities and the environment. Added to this, campus newsrooms were also on the website in which articles and good-news stories were published on a daily basis. Newsworthy articles were also published in local and national newspapers. This information was also provided on the social media networks with links to the university's website.

Information was also provided by means of a first-year prospectus which is a catalogue of all the different programmes, programme codes, admission requirements and admission point scores (APS). These prospectuses were provided to schools and at career exhibitions and were also available on the website. Further to this, most of the faculties also had their own brochures and leaflets.

On special occasions, personal visits by the marketers of the three campuses were also conducted; occasionally even after hours in the comfort of the prospective student's own home. During these visits

learners and parents were assisted in completing the application form and were given feedback on progress to provide a feeling of special attention and sense of care.

Other information sessions, especially at the Potchefstroom campus, were held during parent meetings at selected schools to inform learners and parents about subject choices and application procedures.

It can thus be concluded that, as gathered from the Directors at all three campuses of NWU, there is a certain level of engagement and interaction with prospective students and that information concerning the university is provided on electronic platforms, social media networks, during personal visits and via a first-year prospectus and faculty brochures. This does not mean, however, although it is being confirmed by literature, that prospective students have the same experience with regard to engagement and interaction and availability of information.

In the following section the marketing communication mix elements of the approach of the directors at the three campuses of NWU will be assessed.

4.4 THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION PLAN OF NWU WHEN RECRUITING PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS: MARKETING COMMUNIATION MIX AND ELEMENTS

As mentioned in paragraph 2.3.2, IMC should commence at the corporate level, and the corporate strategy guides the institution's marketing strategy, which includes the elements of the IMC plan.

This section aims at indicating NWU's approach to the recruitment of students with regard to the marketing communication mix elements.

4.4.1   Application of the marketing communication mix

The marketing communication mix was discussed in detail in paragraph 2.3.2 and consisted of the following IMC (IMC) elements:

- advertising;
- personal selling;
- shopper marketing and sales promotion;
- direct response and database marketing;
- public relations and word-of-mouth;
- sponsorship and event marketing;
- digital media marketing; and
- alternative communication channels.

As a means to illustrate to what extent the directors had knowledge of and were applying the IMC elements, a one-point score was allocated to the responses where the elements were mentioned, starting

from the element with the highest response (digital media marketing) to the element with the lowest response (alternative communication channels). The findings indicated that the directors had sound knowledge of the different IMC mix elements.

4.4.1.1   Digital media marketing

The strongest focus was centred on *digital media marketing* (13 points). This can be attributed to the fact that the campuses and Institutional office had dedicated Facebook pages for the 2017 first-year intake, Twitter and Instagram accounts and a YouTube channel that was applied in recruitment campaigns. Electronic and digital platforms were also extended to social media such as links to electronic newsletters and blog posts that were posted on Facebook and Twitter. NWU's website was also comprehensively used and contains all application information and information on faculties, academic programmes, contact information, residences, alternative accommodation, student life and sport. A virtual tour of the three campuses offered a life view on what the environment looks like at the respective campuses. Individual campus newsrooms also provided daily updates on good-news stories, events and other campus activities. It also indicated that the marketing and communication departments at the three campuses of NWU were in line with the current marketing trends in the world (see paragraph 2.3.2.7).

Figures 4.2 to 4.7 provide examples of different digital media platforms at NWU.

Figure 4.2: Facebook page for the 2017 first-year intake

Figure 4.2 provides an example of a Facebook page that was created for prospective first-years on the Mafikeng campus. The Facebook page is being used for campaigns to engage and interact with learners to create a relationship.

Figure 4.3: Twitter account of NWU

Figure 4.3 depicts an example of a Twitter account of the Potchefstroom campus. Twitter was being used to tweet short messages about relevant news and events. For this purpose different #tags were being created for conversations such as #MyNWU or #NWUOpenday.

Figure 4.4: YouTube account of NWU

In Figure 4.4 an example of a YouTube account is shown. Each campus had a YouTube account which was used to upload short videos of events and/or messages from the Vice-Chancellor or campus Rectors.
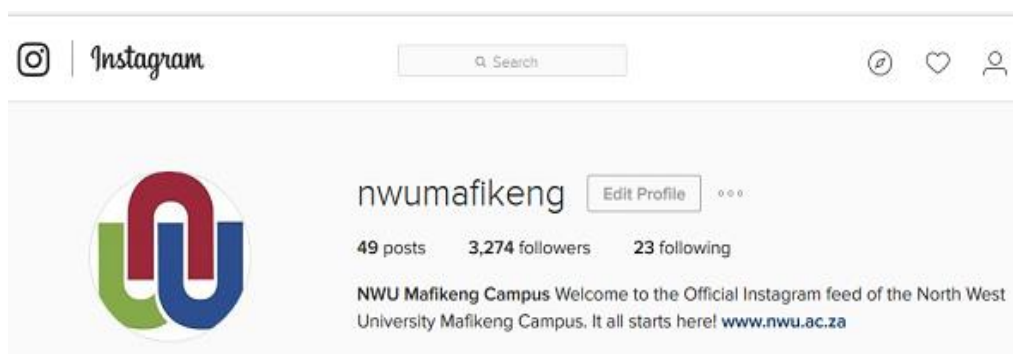
Figure 4.5: Instagram account of NWU

Figure 4.5 illustrates what an Instagram account looks like. Instagram was used especially to upload and post photos of events and student life for purposes of engagement and interaction.

Figure 4.6: Virtual tour on NWU website

In Figure 4.6 an example of a virtual tour of what it looked like on each campus is given. The virtual tour showed to the user physical footage of buildings such as the libraries and what it looked like in a classroom and tells a story of what to expect when one arrives at the campus.

Figure 4.7: Website of NWU

Figure 4.7 gives an example of North-West University's website and provides all information about programmes and courses, admission requirements, how to apply online, bursaries and loans and news and events on the different campuses.

4.4.1.2   Personal selling

The second-most used tool at the campuses was *personal selling* (9 points). This comprised all oral, person-to-person contact to one or more targeted audiences (see paragraph 2.3.2.2). School visits, individual visits, career exhibitions, campus tours, open days and promotional days are activities that were utilized to engage and build relationships with learners.

4.4.1.3   Direct response and database marketing

Direct response and database marketing (6 points) was also widely used by the marketers at the campuses and is described as the process of communicating directly with your target audience by means of telephone, mail, email or other electronic means such as electronic newsletters (see paragraph 2.3.2.4). The activities undertaken by personal selling made available a platform for obtaining information from prospective students which was captured on computer to, at a later stage, communicate and do follow-ups via telephone, sms, and email.

4.4.1.4   Public relations and Word-of-Mouth communication

Public relations and Word-of-Mouth communication (6 points) is described as the management through communication of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organization and its internal and external stakeholders (see paragraph 2.3.2.5). All three campuses mentioned that public relations played a role in their marketing campaigns. This included events with school principals and life orientation teachers, current students, lecturers and Campus Rectors spoken to groups and press releases about NWU events and good-news stories in local and national media and selected magazines. Press releases and good news stories were also published on web-based newsrooms, the Mail and Guardian itweb, NWU newsroom and Universities South Africa Daily Higher Education News. It was also pointed out that word-of-mouth, which means the sharing of experiences by current students with family and friends, was also a main marketing source.

4.4.1.5   Advertising

Advertising (5 points) is one of the most visible tools used to communicate to the market and is described as a paid, non-personal form of mass communication to persuade through constant messages (see paragraph 2.3.2.1). Advertising was commonly used by all the campuses, especially in selected newspapers, strategically placed billboards, radio stations, and school magazines and newsletters. It was specifically mentioned that advertising had become a very expensive marketing tool and that the

focus turned to Facebook advertising which was less expensive. Figures 4.8 to 4.10 provide examples of advertisements used by NWU.

Figure 4.8: An advertisement of a postgraduate open day presented by NWU

Figure 4.8 gives an illustration of an advertisement about a postgraduate open day at NWU. It was especially used for mass communication to inform and persuade the target audience about NWU and events on campuses.
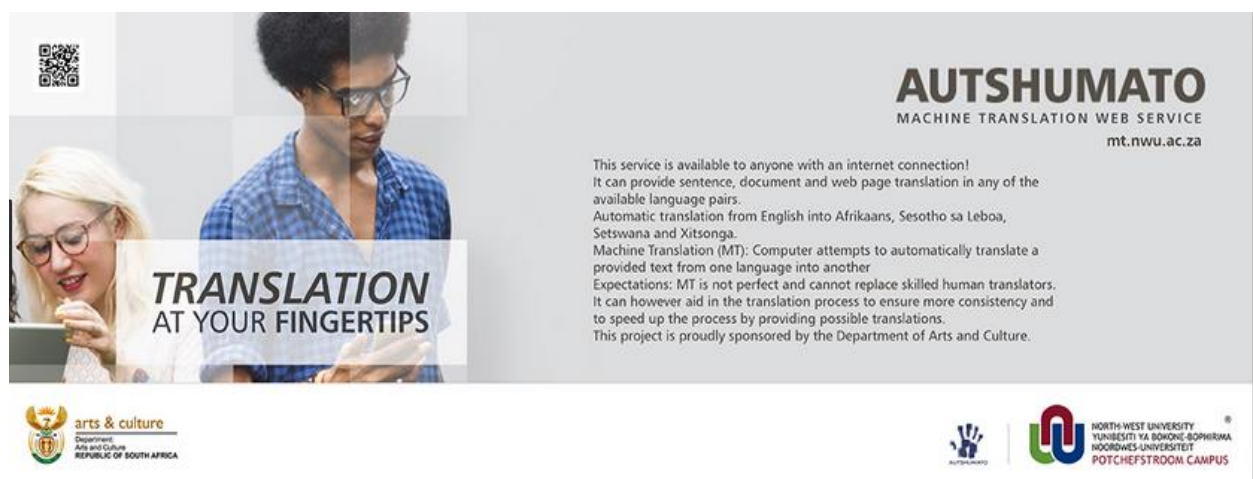
Figure 4.9: An advertisement of translation services at the Potchefstroom campus

In Figure 4.9 an example is given of an advertisement of the translation services provided by the Potchefstroom campus of NWU. It also had a QR code in the top left corner to direct interested readers to the website.

Figure 4.10: Bill board advertising by NWU

Figure 4.10 provides an example of bill board advertising used by NWU. The bill board was erected at a strategic location next to the N1 before the Colonnade off-ramp in Pretoria to attract the most attention.

4.4.1.6 Sponsorships and events marketing

Sponsorships and events marketing (4 points) is the sponsoring of individuals, organizations or teams by providing financial or other support in return for naming rights or the right to display its brand name or logo linked to the sponsored activity (see paragraph 2.3.2.6). The campuses of NWU mentioned that they did make use of sponsorships and events marketing as a marketing tool in that they sponsor sports events such as athletics, rugby and golf days as well as prize-giving events, floating trophies and academic and cultural events. It was, however, also mentioned that it is an expensive marketing tool.

4.4.1.7 Shopper marketing and sales promotion

Shopper marketing and sales promotion (3 points) is referred to in paragraph 2.3.2.3 as methods that cannot be classified as personal selling, advertising or publicity, but which complement these procedures as it helps to transmit the message. In this regard the campuses had various promotional items such as T-shirts, caps, different kinds of stationary, bags, note pads and files, to mention but a few. These promotional items were handed out during school visits, career exhibitions, conferences and all other events where the campuses are involved.

4.4.1.8   Alternative communication channels

Alternative communication channels (2 points) as an IMC tool is described in paragraph 2.3.2.8 as unexpected, unplanned and unconventional, and that it thrives on engagement and visual impact. The virtual tour on NWU website and invitations to graduation ceremonies and other special events were mentioned as an alternative communication channel.

Figure 4.11 summarises the extent to which the IMC elements are applied by NWU.

The semi-structured interviews with the directors of the Marketing and Communication Departments at the three campuses clearly revealed that the most popular element utilised by the Marketing and Communication departments was digital media marketing with specific reference to social media. This was followed by personal selling, direct response and database marketing as well as public relations and word-of-mouth as elements of the marketing communication mix.

	Advertising	Personal selling	Shopper marketing and sales promotion	Direct response and database marketing	PR and WOM	Sponsorships and events marketing	Digital media marketing	Alternative Communication channels
■ Series1	5	9	3	6	6	4	13	2
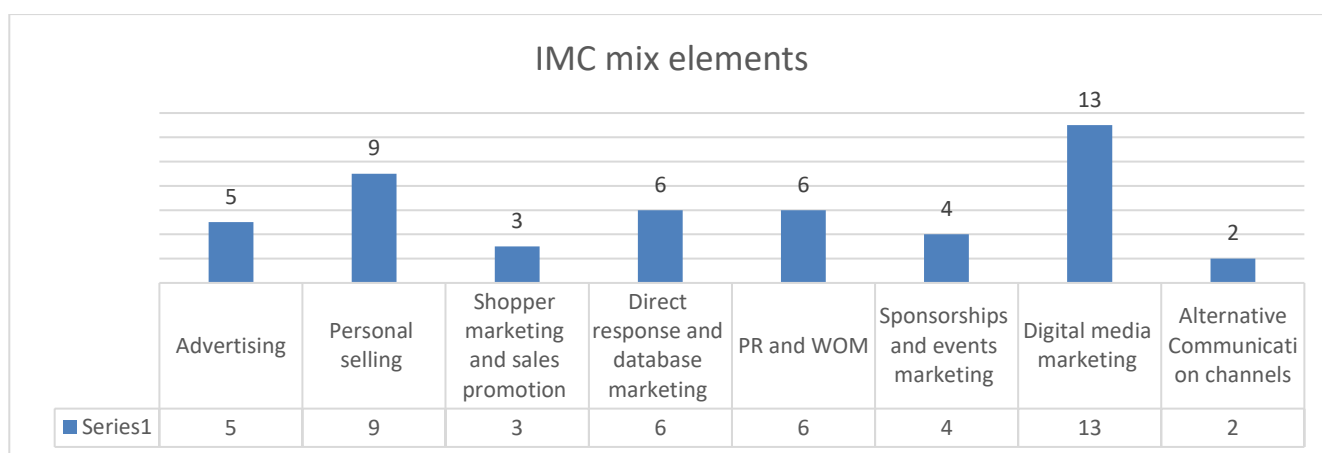
Figure 4.11: Application of the IMC mix elements at NWU

The next section describes the marketing communication plan in the approach of the directors of the three marketing and communication departments of NWU to prospective-student recruitment.

4.5 THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION PLAN OF NWU WHEN RECRUITING PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS: MARKETING COMMUNICATION PLAN

Paragraph 2.4 points out that the marketing communication campaign comprises a particular combination of marketing communication elements designed to achieve a particular objective which is directed at a particular target market. The marketing communication objectives result from the marketing strategies. The objectives of the marketing communication elements, namely advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity, public relations, sponsorships, direct marketing and digital communication are derived from the marketing communication objectives.

As already stated in Chapter 1, due to the unique demographic compilation of the three campuses of NWU, the planning of marketing communication on each campus will differ from that of the rest with regard to setting communication objectives and the distinctive role each IMC tool plays, which should be carefully selected. It cannot be assumed that the marketing communication planning process for identifying, selecting and recruiting high-quality students on one campus will be the same for all campuses.

In this section the marketing communication planning process followed by the directors at the three campuses of NWU regarding the recruitment of students were deliberated upon.

4.5.1   Marketing communication plan

As specified in paragraph 2.4, the elements of the marketing communication mix must be integrated in such a manner that it achieves NWU's objectives which in this case is prospective-student recruitment.

All three campuses of NWU indicated that they had a marketing communication plan for recruiting students, which mainly consists of activities such as school visits, career exhibitions, campus tours, social media, events and open days. The IMC elements that were pertinent in these activities were direct response and database marketing, personal selling, digital media marketing and sponsorships and events marketing. The integration of these elements provided marketers with the full picture and allowed for less staff specializing in more than one field.

The recruitment campaign started as early as January with school visits to selected schools that were identified through research. In this regard the top 800 schools in the country had been identified with the top learners in the different subjects as good students should also ensure a good throughput rate. The focus was mostly on grade 12 learners until the closing date for applications on 30 September from where the emphasis was shifted to grade 11 learners.

It was indicated by the director at the Mafikeng campus that diversifying was part of the campus plan; therefore specific focus was centred on the recruitment of minority groups which in the case of the Mafikeng campus was the recruitment of white, Indian and coloured students. Rural development also formed part of the campus plan. As such, learners attending disadvantaged and rural schools were also recruited.

The director at the Potchefstroom campus particularly mentioned that activities were informed by research on what influenced learners' decisions and also by monitoring activities to establish what worked and what not.

The director at the Vaal Triangle campus stated that they identified the best communication platforms such as social media and advertising in targeted newspapers.

4.5.2 Main stakeholders

The main stakeholders in the recruitment campaign identified by all three campuses were grade 9 to grade 12 learners. For grade 9 the focus was more on career guidance and subject choices. More direct marketing was done among grade 10, 11 and 12 learners.

Other stakeholders mentioned were parents, school principals, current students, staff members as well as media. With regard to current students, the director at the Potchefstroom campus elucidated that a portfolio for student recruitment existed on the house committees and campus Student Representative Council (CSRC). They acted as brand ambassadors and there was a structure in place to communicate with them to assist with campus tours and other events.

4.5.3 Engage and build relationships with stakeholders

As mentioned in paragraph 2.3.2, each element of the marketing communication mix is viewed as an IMC tool that plays a unique and distinctive role and is designed to do a specific job. These tools are integrated in a way that produces the best possible synergy in the IMC programme. The elements are used to package the message that needs to be conveyed and to achieve the communication objectives, which are to build and maintain long-term relationships and to engage with stakeholders.

The results obtained showed that the marketing communication mix played a unique role at the campuses of NWU in building and maintaining relationships as well as engaging with stakeholders and in marketing NWU. Personal selling as an IMC element was used when schools were visited or during career exhibitions, open days and campus tours. Learners as early as in grade 9 were assisted with career guidance and subject choices and were being exposed to NWU from an early stage. The campuses also undertook an annual open day during April and May where prospective first years and their parents visited the campuses where they were given information on the different programmes and had first-hand experience of the campus.

A database of learners who had already applied to NWU were obtained from the admissions office which were used for direct response and database marketing where selected messages such as best wishes for the examinations were sent via sms and email. During school visits and career exhibitions learners that showed interest in studying at NWU were also encouraged to complete a card which captured information such as contact details, school, degree choice and subject and APS score. This information was then captured on computer to make follow-ups.

Digital media was used to launch specific social media campaigns, especially on dedicated first-year Facebook pages. Each campus also had its own Twitter and Instagram account and a YouTube channel. The Facebook pages and Twitter accounts were especially used to engage with learners and were

monitored on a continuous basis to establish what their needs were and to answer inquiries. All study and application information and information about the campuses were being published on NWU website. Each campus also had a virtual tour on the website to showcase facilities and the environment. Added to this, campus newsrooms were also on the website where articles and good-news stories were published on a daily basis. Newsworthy articles were also being published in local and national newspapers.

Sponsorships and events marketing were also used to engage and build relationships with learners. This was being done by sponsoring prize-giving events, school sports events and golf days.

At the Mafikeng campus relationships were also established with officials at the department of Higher Education and Training especially with recruitment at rural areas with school principals and Life Orientation teachers. An annual Winter School was also presented for grade 12 learners, which exposed learners to the campus. Another project mentioned is the Ikateleng project that was also presented on the campus during which learners from grades 10 to 12 attend extra classes on Saturdays.

The Potchefstroom campus strongly focused on campus tours, promotional days and open days in building relationships and engaging with students and made use of brand ambassadors where current students and academics were used to speak to learners visiting the campus.

The Vaal Triangle campus indicated that the marketers shared their cell numbers with learners to assist with enquiries and also had a generic email address to assist with inquiries from learners.

4.5.4   Evaluation and corrective measures

For any campaign to be successful the activities implemented should be evaluated and measured to determine the effectiveness thereof (see paragraph 2.4). The three directors at the campuses pointed out that one of the main aspects used for measuring the success of their recruitment strategy was that NWU was one of the few universities which, for the past four years, had reached their enrolment target as set by the department of Higher Education and Training. As a means to evaluate the success of the different elements a survey was also conducted at the beginning of the year with all registered first-year students.

The directors at the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses also mentioned that they work hand in hand with the admissions office to monitor the number of applications in specific programmes.

The director at Potchefstroom campus stated that they conduct research and compile messages accordingly which were tested with focus groups. After registration it was tested with all first-years by means of a survey. A detailed feedback discussion session with the marketers was also held on a monthly basis to evaluate success.

After measuring and evaluating success, corrective measures should be put in place. All three campus directors mentioned that the academic systems do not support the recruitment campaigns such as the electronic application system and the placing of students. Other aspects that posed a challenge for the recruitment of students was funding for needy students.

The director at the Mafikeng campus specifically pointed out that the location of the campus, being predominantly in a rural area, made it difficult to attract and retain students at the campus. There were only three marketers who had to travel long distances to attend career exhibitions and visit schools.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter answered the following research question (see paragraph 1.4.2) by discussing the results obtained from the semi-structured interviews with the directors of the three Marketing and Recruitment departments of NWU namely:

> *Which marketing communication plan is applied by the respective directors for recruiting students?*

The results of the qualitative semi-structured interviews with the three directors were deliberated upon in accordance with the concepts of Relationship Marketing, IMC mix and the Marketing Communication planning process as referred to in paragraph 3.3 and Table 3.1.

The results obtained from the semi-structured interviews indicate that **engagement and interaction** took place by schools being visited, career exhibitions and open days being attended, learners' attendance of campus tours, direct messages and digital media marketing and was key to **building relationships** with prospective students at the three campuses.

It was also indicated that application information and information about the campuses were being published on NWU website which was one of the main **sources of information**. Information was also provided by means of first-year prospectus, personal visits, parent meetings and electronic platforms.

It came out clearly that the most popular element the Marketing and Communication departments utilised was **digital media marketing** with specific reference to social media. Each campus administered not only a campus Facebook page, but also a dedicated first-year Facebook page. Although not as popular, a Twitter and Instagram account and YouTube channel were also present and actively used. NWU website had a dedicated page on which all relevant information was being populated and regularly updated. It can thus be stated that directors of the Marketing and Recruitment departments at the three campuses of NWU had adapted to the rapid digital technological developments of the past 10 years.

Personal selling, direct response and database marketing as well as **public relations and word-of-mouth** as elements of the IMC process were also used at length as the directors of the Marketing and

Recruitment departments at the three campuses at NWU placed a high priority on these elements. Face-to-face, direct contact and Word-of-Mouth communication was thus still highly effective by means of which to engage and build relationships with learners.

The three campuses were also in agreement that **advertising, sponsorships and events marketing** as well as **shopper marketing and sales promotion** were also present and used in their respective marketing campaigns. Although mentioned by all three directors of the Marketing and Recruitment departments it did not come out strongly at the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campus. This could be attributed to the fact that these elements had greater budgetary implications than the other elements.

Alternative communication channels as an element of the IMC process was not used widely and it appeared that the directors at the Marketing and Communication departments may not have a clear understanding of what was meant by alternative communication channels as the answers provided described the elements already mentioned.

A **targeted marketing communication plan** was applied in the respective recruitment campaigns and there was a clear course of action that was applicable to the uniqueness of each campus. The directors at the Marketing and Communication departments were fully aware of and clear on who their **main stakeholders** were. They are also in agreement that by applying the IMC elements in their different campaigns they were able to **engage and build and maintain long-term relationships** with their different stakeholders. The activities in the different recruitment campaigns were regularly **evaluated** and the outcomes were **monitored** and **measured** upon which **corrective measures** were taken.

A close and good working relationship also existed between the directors at the Marketing and Communication departments as well as the marketers at the three campuses. Information about schools, learners and best practices was widely shared and support was provided when needed. As the Marketing and Communication department at the Potchefstroom campus had a strong research component, information on new trends and activities were also shared with the other campuses.

It was evident that the three directors of the Marketing and Communication departments at the three campuses of NWU were aware of the marketing communication mix and elements and that it was functional and present in their recruitment campaigns in some form. The intensity of each element applied may differ from campus to campus, but each campus specified that they had knowledge of the different elements and could explain how it was being applied in their respective recruitment campaigns.

This implies that the marketing communication plan applied by the directors at the three campuses of NWU regarding the recruitment of students is in line with the current marketing trends in the world. Factors such as empowerment of stakeholders and changes in their behaviour, political and social changes, changes in marketing strategies and rapid digital technological developments were taken into

account and formed part of the marketing communication plan of the directors at the three campuses of NWU.

It can thus be stated that the marketing communication plan utilized by the respective directors at the three campuses of NWU to recruit students consists of **building sound relationships** with prospective students by **engaging and interacting** with them at an early stage in the school career. This was being accomplished by making use of the marketing communication mix in an integrated manner to address the needs and wants of prospective students.

In the next chapter prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication strategy applied by the three campuses of NWU will be discussed according to the information obtained through a quantitative questionnaire.

CHAPTER 5
PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE NWU MARKETING COMMUNICATION PLAN

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the marketing communication plan followed by the directors of the three Marketing and Communication departments of NWU for recruiting prospective students was discussed. This current chapter deals with prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication plan applied by the three campuses of NWU. As indicated in paragraph 3.5.1, Table 3.4, the sample size that was needed was 400 respondents. Questionnaires distributed totalled 12 000 of which 3 203 completed responses were obtained which gives a completion rate of 76% which makes this research statistically unique. The high response rate will be utilized to enlighten the following specific research question (see paragraph 1.4.3) and to answer it by discussing the results of the electronic questionnaire:

> *What are prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication plan applied by the three campuses of North-West University?*

The research question was answered by discussing the demographic information of prospective students. The demographic information provided data regarding prospective students, which was necessary to determine whether they would be a representative sample for the research. Thereafter the chapter was divided into two sections. The first section referred to the concept *relationship marketing* and the constructs that were measured, namely engagement and interaction and availability of information. The second section dealt with the concept *marketing communication mix and elements* and the constructs that were measured, namely advertising, personal selling, shopper marketing and sales promotion, direct response and database marketing, public relations and Word-of-Mouth, sponsorships and event marketing, digital media marketing and alternative communication channels (see paragraph 3.3 and Table 3.1).

Each of these constructs will be supplemented with the information obtained from the electronic questionnaire to point out what prospective students' perceptions were of the marketing communication plan applied by the three campuses of NWU. The primary focus of the study was on the marketing communication plan and prospective students' perceptions thereof and not on the marketing communication strategy. Since the opinions of the directors at the three campuses regarding the relationship between the NWU and prospective students were asked in the semi-structured interviews, some aspects of relationships were also tested with prospective students in the electronic questionnaire.

The survey attempted to assist in identifying reference points for monitoring the effectiveness of the University's marketing communication plan in prospective-student recruitment. The data obtained was used to compile a profile of the students' initial perceptions of the marketing communication plan during the recruitment process. It must be noted that a comparison was not drawn between the campuses as the target audiences or stakeholders of the three campuses differ largely. The survey attempted to answer the question as to how prospective students perceived the marketing communication plan of NWU before enrolling at the Institution. The aim of the analysis was to understand the various constituting elements of data through inspecting the interrelatedness of concepts, constructs or variables. The analyses were done to investigate whether any patterns or trends could be traced in the data that could be identified or isolated. The researcher could also gather a clearer picture of the prospective students' perceptions.

5.2 PRESENTATION OF STATISTICS

Frequency tables were used to give a summary of the number of participants (N) that had answered the questions, and were also stated as a percentage. Reference was also made to the average and standard deviation of each question. The average is the sum of all the values divided by the number of participants to indicate the answers of the participants according to the scale. (1 – completely disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – agree and 4 - fully agree). An option of "don't know" was not provided, so as to ensure more accurate provision of data. The standard deviation is also related to the average. In the event that the standard deviation is large, the average is spread. The opposite is also applicable. When the standard deviation is small, the average is condensed more (David & Sutton, 2011:482).

5.2.1   Demographic information

In this section the demographic information of the participants was described.

Table 5.1, page 94, portrays the respondents' demographic information with regard to their gender, language and age by specifying the frequency and percentage (%) thereof.

The Table, indicates that the majority (more than half of the participants) that had completed the questionnaire were female (n=1617, 56.5%), which is the case on all three campuses (Potchefstroom n=928, 55.8%; Vaal Triangle n=244, 59.7%; Mafikeng n=445, 53.9%).

Afrikaans is the home language of the majority of the participants (n=1279, 31.9%). However, the dominant home language at the campuses differ. The dominant language at Potchefstroom is Afrikaans (n=1182, 72.8%), South Sesotho at Vaal Triangle (n=114, 26.6%) and Setswana at Mafikeng (n=446, 58.4%). This is in accordance with the languages spoken in the different regions.

More than three quarters of the participants fall within the age group of 17 to 20 years (n=2504, 83%) which is also reflected by the campuses (Potchefstroom n=1 548, 93.2%; Vaal Triangle n=334, 80.5%; Mafikeng n=622, 75.1%).

Table 5.1: Demographic information with regard to gender, language and age

What is your gender?								
N=2907	Vaal Triangle		Potchefstroom		Mafikeng		NWU	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Male	170	40.3	742	44.2	378	46.1	1290	43.5
Female	244	59.7	928	55.8	445	53.9	1617	56.5
Total	414	100	1670	100.0	823	100.0	2907	100
What is your home language?								
N=2840	Vaal Triangle		Potchefstroom		Mafikeng		NWU	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
English	31	7.8	176	10.7	43	5.0	250	8.5
Northern Sesotho	28	7	34	1.9	64	8.3	126	5.7
Southern Sesotho	114	26.6	41	2.4	43	5.1	198	11.9
Xitsonga	11	2.9	16	0.9	31	3.5	58	2.4
Setswana	25	5.7	103	6.2	446	58.4	574	23.4
isiZulu	78	18.8	41	2.2	64	7.8	183	9.6
isiXhosa	37	9.1	30	1.7	31	4.0	98	4.9
Venda	4	1	18	1	26	3.1	44	1.7
Afrikaans	82	20.9	1182	72.8	15	1.9	1279	31.9
Total	410	100	1646	100	784	100	2840	100
What is your age?								
N=2917	Vaal Triangle		Potchefstroom		Mafikeng		NWU	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
17 - 20	334	80.5	1548	93.2	622	75.1	2504	83
21 - 25	58	13.3	78	4.6	164	20.3	300	12.7
26 - 30	13	3.1	11	0.7	21	2.2	45	2
30 and above	14	3.1	30	1.5	24	2.4	68	2.3
Total	419	100	1667	100	831	100.0	2917	100

Table 5.2 depicts the respondents' demographic information with regard to their country and province of residence.

The Table shows that the majority of the prospective students resides in South Africa (n=2853, 97.7%) and 3.3% (n=53) at the Potchefstroom campus and 0.4% (n=3) at the Mafikeng campus is observed for Namibia whereas participants from the other neighbouring countries each form less than 1%. The majority of prospective students comes from the Gauteng Province (n=975, 40.7%). This is, however,

only the case at the Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle campuses (Potchefstroom n=531, 32.6%; Vaal Triangle n=294, 70.5%; Mafikeng 18.6%). More than half of the students at the Mafikeng campus (n=463, 55.4%) comes from the North West Province (Potchefstroom n=397, 24.4%; Vaal Triangle n=17, 3.8%).

Table 5.2: Place of residence

In which country do you live?								
N=2940	**Vaal Triangle**		**Potchefstroom**		**Mafikeng**		**NWU**	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
South Africa	418	98.7	1615	96.2	820	98.2	2853	97.7
Swaziland	1	0	2	0.1	3	0.3	6	0.1
Botswana	1	0.3	1	0	6	0.7	8	0.3
Lesotho	0	0	2	0.1	0	0	2	0.1
Namibia	0	0	53	3.3	3	0.4	56	1.2
Zimbabwe	3	0.8	4	0.2	6	0.5	13	0.5
Other	1	0.3	1	0.1	0	0	2	0.1
Total	424	100	1678	100	838	100	2940	100
In which province do you live?								
N= 2876	**Vaal Triangle**		**Potchefstroom**		**Mafikeng**		**NWU**	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Northern Cape	1	0.3	101	6.3	37	4.8	138	3.8
Eastern Cape	1	0.3	30	1.9	7	.7	38	0.9
Western Cape	0	0	100	6.3	1	0.1	101	2.2
Free State	60	14.1	152	9.5	19	2.4	231	8.6
KwaZulu-Natal	16	4.1	69	4.3	14	1.6	99	3.4
Gauteng	294	70.5	531	32.6	150	18.6	975	40.7
Mpumalanga	16	3.3	117	7.1	74	8.6	207	6.3
North West	17	3.8	397	24.4	463	55.4	877	27.8
Limpopo	16	3.6	125	7.6	68	7.8	209	6.3
Total	421	100	1622	100	833	100.0	2876	100

In Table 5.3 the reasons why the respondents' chose to study at NWU are described by specifying the frequency and percentage (%) thereof.

The Table shows that the main reasons for prospective students to choose to study at NWU is the quality of its programmes (n=873, 28%) and it being a safe university (n=770, 22.4%). The quality of its

programmes is also reflected by the Mafikeng campus (n=227, 26.9%) as being their main reason for choosing the Mafikeng campus, and it being a safe university (n=160, 19%) as their second choice. The Potchefstroom campus indicated that they choose NWU because it is a safe university (n=542, 32.3%) and the quality of programmes as their second choice (n=535, 31.9%). The respondents at the Vaal Triangle campus stated that it is because the campus is close-by and they can study from home (n=142, 33.6%) and they indicated the quality of programmes (n=111, 26.2%) as their second choice.

Table 5.3: Reasons why prospective students chose to study at NWU

Why did you choose to study at NWU?								
	Vaal Triangle		Potchefstroom		Mafikeng		NWU	
N=2946	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
A family member studied here	32	7.6	388	23.1	63	7.5	483	12.7
It was the last resort	8	1.9	51	3.0	21	2.5	80	2.4
It is a safe university	68	19.1	542	32.3	160	19.0	770	22.4
It is affordable	40	9.5	191	11.4	142	16.8	373	12.5
It is close by and I can study from home	142	33.6	147	8.8	89	10.5	378	17.6
It has a stable environment	92	21.7	482	28.7	138	16.4	712	22.3
It is the only university that offers my programme of choice	32	7.6	173	10.3	82	9.7	287	9.2
Quality of programmes	111	26.2	535	31.9	227	26.9	873	28.3
Quality of facilities	72	17.0	461	27.5	121	14.3	654	19.6
Multi-lingual policy of NWU	14	3.3	68	4.1	27	3.2	109	3.5
The diversity of NWU	61	14.4	242	14.4	122	14.5	486	14.4
Student life	31	7.3	488	29.1	53	6.3	572	14.2
Sport	23	5.4	242	14.4	35	4.1	331	7.9
Cultural activities	4	0.9	120	7.1	22	2.6	146	3.5
Total	423	100	1679	100	844	100	2946	100

In Table 5.4 the month in which the respondents finally decided to study at NWU is illustrated. Table 5.4 indicates that the majority of respondents only finally decided to study at NWU in January 2015 (n=693, 22.2%), followed by those participants who finally decided to study at NWU in January 2016 and in June 2015 comprising 14% (n=371) and 10.7% (n=290) respectively. Other months (in the period January 2015 to January 2016) in which the participants finally decided to study at NWU each form less than 10%

with the lowest percentage of participants having finally decided to study at the campus in December 2015 (n=31, 0.8%). Interesting to note is that at the Mafikeng campus the results reflected the opposite, with the majority of respondents only finally deciding to study at NWU in January 2016 (n=189, 23%) followed by January 2015 (n=163, 18.9%). This may be ascribed to the fact that learners are only provisionally accepted pending the outcome of their grade 12 results, which are only announced during the first week of January. The securing of funds may be another contributing factor that influences the decision of prospective students at the Mafikeng campus to come to study, as late as in January 2016.

Table 5.4: Summary of the month in which prospective students decided to study at NWU

N=2962	Choose the month in which you finally decided to study at NWU							
	Vaal Triangle		Potchefstroom		Mafikeng		NWU	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
January 2015	93	21.6	437	26.2	163	18.9	693	22.2
February 2015	28	6.5	104	6.2	45	5.2	177	6.0
March 2015	40	9.3	186	11.1	56	6.5	282	90
April 2015	32	7.4	116	6.9	44	5.1	268	6.4
May 2015	33	7.7	145	8.7	45	5.2	223	7.2
June 2015	54	12.6	140	8.4	96	11.1	290	10.7
July 2015	23	5.3	111	6.6	50	5.8	184	6.0
August 2015	34	7.9	100	6.0	63	7.3	197	7.0
September 2015	29	6.7	103	6.2	63	7.3	195	6.7
October 2015	9	2.1	54	3.2	15	1.7	78	2.3
November 2015	3	0.7	34	2.0	12	1.4	49	1.3
December 2015	1	0.2	19	1.1	11	1.3	31	0.8
January 2016	51	11.9	122	7.3	198	23.0	371	14.0
Total	430	100	1 671	100	861	100	2 962	100

Table 5.5 shows the results on the question: Have any of your family members studied at NWU?

In the table it is indicated that only 29.9% (n=1033) of the participants have some family members who had studied at NWU. More than half of the respondents (n=1949, 70.1%) at all three campuses together indicate that no family member had previously studied at NWU.

Table 5.5 : Results on family members who had studied at NWU

Have any of your family members studied at NWU?								
N=3389	**Vaal Triangle**		**Potchefstroom**		**Mafikeng**		**NWU**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	101	23	737	44	195	22	1 033	29.9
No	330	77	943	56	676	78	2 356	70.1
Total	431	100	1 680	100	871	100	3 389	100

Table 5.6 shows the different resources by which studies are being financed.

Table 5.6: Sources by which studies are financed

How are your studies financed?								
N=2981	**Vaal Triangle**		**Potch**		**Mafikeng**		**NWU**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Bursary from an employer	9	2.1	52	3.1	27	3.1	88	2.7
Merit bursary	17	3.9	52	3.1	35	4.0	104	3.6
Bank loan	14	3.2	192	11.4	17	2.0	223	5.5
University loan	6	1.4	11	0.7	17	2.0	34	1.3
Parents	119	27.5	901	53.5	241	27.9	1 267	36.6
NSFAS	116	26.9	124	7.4	226	26.1	466	20.1
Self-paying	28	6.5	100	5.9	37	4.3	165	5.5
Uncertain	123	28.5	252	15.0	265	30.6	640	24.7
Total	432	100	1 684	100	865	100	2 981	100

Table 5.6 shows that the majority of the participants at NWU either have their studies financed by their parents (n=1267, 36.6%) or are uncertain about how their studies would be financed (n=640, 24.7%). More than a quarter of the participants at the Mafikeng campus (n=226, 26.1%) and Vaal Triangle campus (n=116, 26.9%) have their studies financed by NSFAS. Other forms of finance each form less than 8% of all the given financing methods.

In Figure 5.1 a breakdown of access to internet and visits to the NWU website is given. It shows that approximately 72.9% (n=2295) of the participants who had access to internet at their schools had visited

NWU's webpage (n=2765, 88.8%). More or less 27.1% (n=713) did not have access to internet, and 11.2% (n=280) did not visit NWU webpage.
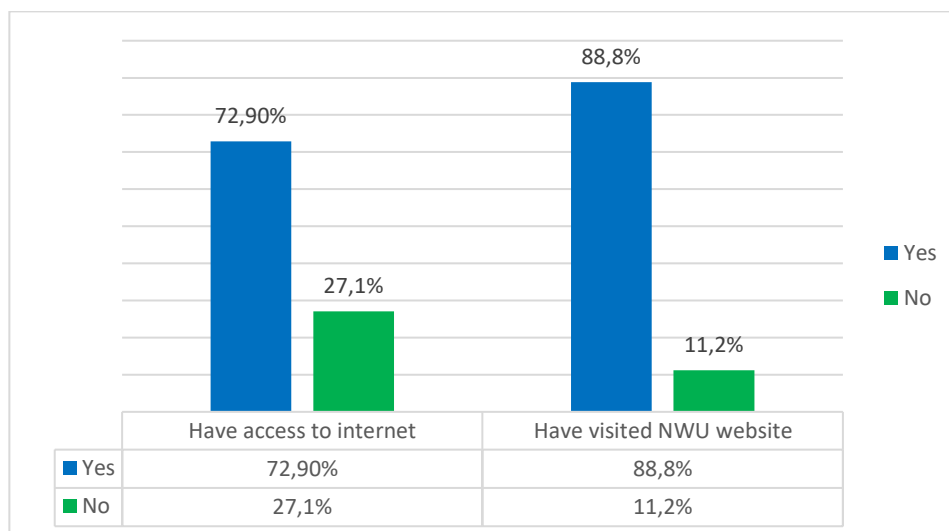
Figure 5.1: Access to internet and visits to the NWU

In table 5.7 the different channels through which the participants learned about NWU are illustrated such as advertising, promotions, personal contact, physical environment, direct responses, Word-of-Mouth, sponsored events and digital media.

Table 5.7: Channels through which participants learned about NWU

How did you learn about NWU?								
N=3040	Vaal Triangle		Potchefstroom		Mafikeng		NWU	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Advertising	63	14.1	368	21.9	94	10.3	525	15.4
Promotions	18	4.0	139	8.3	34	3.7	191	5.3
Personal contact (school visits. Career Exhibition)	187	41.7	872	51.9	345	37.9	1591	43.8
Physical Environment (Campus tours)	52	11.6	367	21.8	95	10.4	514	14.6

	n	%	n	%	n	%	353	9.7
Direct responses (email. sms)	29	6.5	257	15.3	67	7.4	353	9.7
Word-of-mouth (Friends. family)	196	43.8	978	58.2	316	34.7	1490	45.5
Sponsored events	11	2.5	101	6.0	26	2.9	138	3.8
Digital Media (Website. social media	99	22.1	483	28.7	217	23.8	799	24.8
Total	448	100	1 681	100	911	100	3040	100

Table 5.7 reports that, the majority of the participants (n=1490, 45.5%) either learnt about NWU through Word-of-Mouth (friends and family) or personal contact sessions (school visits, career exhibitions) (n=1591, 43.8%). The third largest percentage of participants (n=799, 24.8%) agreed that they had learnt about NWU through digital media marketing (website, social media) followed by advertising and physical environment (campus tours) each comprising 15.4% (n=525) and 14.6% (n=514) of the total participants respectively. Approximately 9.7% (n=353) of the participants learnt about NWU through direct responses (email, sms).   With regard to promotions and sponsored events relatively small percentages of participants indicated that they had learnt about NWU by these means, comprising 5.3% (n=191) and 3.8% (n=138) respectively.

Table 5.8: Summary of items that are applicable to students' households

Select the items that are applicable to your situation								
	Vaal Triangle		Potchefstroom		Mafikeng		NWU	
N=3076	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
VCR	37	8.1	454	26.9	48	5.2	539	13.4
3 or more cell phones	271	59.0	1 397	82.9	491	52.7	2 159	64.8
DVD Player	239	52.1	1 315	78.0	369	39.6	1 923	56.5
Computer in the home	198	43.1	1 321	78.4	287	30.8	1 806	50.7
Access to the internet	202	44.0	1 285	76.2	329	35.3	1 816	51.8
TV set	306	66.7	1 477	87.6	511	54.9	2 294	69.7
Less than 2 radio sets	128	27.9	548	32.5	129	20.6	805	27.0
M-Net/DStv subscription	188	41.0	1 205	71.5	308	33.1	1 704	48.5
Motor vehicle	182	39.7	1 336	79.2	226	24.3	1 744	47.7

Refrigerator	293	63.8	1 487	88.2	483	51.9	2 263	67.9
Washing Machine	226	49.2	1 415	83.9	339	36.4	1 980	56.5
Dishwasher	76	16.6	911	54.0	65	7.0	1 052	25.8
Total	459	100	1 686	100	931	100	3 076	100

Table 5.8 presents a summary of the items applicable to the students' situations, indicating that more than half of the respondents have at least three cell phones in the household (n=2 159, 61.36%), a DVD player (n=1 923, 56.5%), a TV set (n=2 294, 69.7%), a refrigerator (n=2 263, 67.9%), a washing machine (n=1 980, 56.5%), a computer (n=1 806, 50.7%), and access to internet (n=1 816, 51.8%). More than 40% of the participants have M-Net/DStv subscription (n=1 704, 48.5%) and/or a motor vehicle in the household (n=1 744, 47.7%). Less than 30% have a dishwasher (n=1 052, 25.8%) and a little less than 15% have a VCR (n=539, 13.4%) in their households.

The discussion gives a breakdown of the demographic information of the participants at the three campuses, but also holistically for NWU. This information is important for illustrating the variances at the campuses and interpreting correlations between factors to establish the perceptions of prospective students of the marketing communication plan. It can thus be said that the Marketing and Recruitment department should focus their recruitment campaigns on learners between the ages of 17 – 25 years, concentrating on English, Afrikaans Setswana and Sesotho speaking learners in Gauteng, North West and Free State as the majority of learners came from these provinces. Campaigns should be dedicated to digital media marketing as most learners have access to internet and cell phones. The marketing communication plan should also concentrate on personal contact, Word-of-Mouth and advertising as it was indicated that those were the elements learners were the most exposed to.

The next section deals with factor analyses and the different factors that were withdrawn according to the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criteria.

5.3 FACTOR ANALYSIS

As stated in paragraph 3.6.2, factor analysis is used to evaluate correlations between variables, and scrutinises the entire set of interdependent relations among variables. Factor analysis represents a broad category of approaches aimed at conceptualizing groups or clusters of variables in order to determine which variables belong to which group. The factor loadings of the different constructs were calculated and can vary from -1.0 to 1.0. Only the factors with the highest loading are analysed. The higher the value, the more information a specific factor explains regarding the separate questions in the questionnaire. This is applicable to all the factor analyses throughout this chapter. Principal Component Analyses was done with Oblimim Rotation to extract the factors. The questions regarding marketing

communication are divided into the following factors which could be withdrawn according to the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criteria (Yong & Pearce, 2013:80) (See chapter 3 paragraph 3.6.2).

5.3.1 Factors identified

Table 5.9 gives an indication of how the questions with regard to advertising are grouped together. Three factors were extracted explaining 62.98% of the total variance. The factors were labelled *predominantly English media, recruitment activities* and *predominantly Afrikaans media.* The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is 0.959 which indicates that enough data is available to indicate the factors.

Table 5.9: Factors identified as *predominantly English media, recruitment activities* and *predominantly Afrikaans media.*

Pattern Matrix[a]			
	Component		
	Predominantly English media	Recruitment Activities	Predominantly Afrikaans media
Sowetan			
Citizen	0.886		
City Press	0.882		
Motsweding	0.876		
Daily Sun	0.866		
New Age	0.834		
Sunday Times	0.811		
Star	0.807		
Mail & Guardian	0.796		
SA FM	0.745		-0.258
Radio 2000	0.686		-0.311
Ikateleng Project	0.657	0.285	0.283
North West FM	0.546		
5 FM	0.898		-0.417
Winter School	0.518	0.451	
Open Day on campus		0.811	
campus Tour		0.804	
Career Exhibition		0.761	
Session with marketer at school		0.725	
Websites		0.435	
Bill Boards		0.363	-0.301
School Newspapers		0.349	-0.300
Rapport			-0.851
Beeld			-0.805
RSG			-0.739

Jacaranda	0.265		-0.634
OFM			-0.581
Highveld Stereo	0.377		-0.545
Magazines	0.301		-0.407
National Newspapers	0.260	0.253	-0.404
Television	0.292		-0.359
Local Newspapers	0.272	0.290	-0.345
Radio	0.313	0.302	-0.316

The first factor was identified as predominantly English media as all the radio stations and newspapers in that group are focusing on people who use English as their first or second language. The second factor was termed recruitment activities as all the actions indicate activities that are typically undertaken by the recruitment department. The third factor, predominantly Afrikaans media, indicates radio stations and newspapers that are focusing on people with Afrikaans as their first or second language.

Component Correlation Matrix			
Component	1	2	3
1	1.000	0.326	-0.500
2	0.326	1.000	-0.367
3	-0.500	-0.367	1.000

The above correlation matrix indicates that a medium correlation exists between these factors, which vary between 0.33 and 0.5.

Table 5.10 gives an indication of how the questions with regard to sponsorship of events are grouped together. Two factors were extracted explaining 82.4% of the total variance and categorized as *sponsored school events and none-sponsored school events*. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is 0.895 which indicates that enough data is available to indicate the factors.

Table 5.10: Factors identified as *sponsored school events and none-sponsored school events*

Pattern Matrix		
	Component	
	Sponsored school events	None sponsored school events
Tennis	0.919	
Hockey	0.907	
Athletics	0.903	
Rugby	0.897	
Soccer	0.862	
Prize-giving events	0.840	
No events sponsored		0.991

The factors identified are the events that are typically being sponsored by NWU. The one group indicted that they are aware that events are sponsored as opposed to the other group that indicated that no events are sponsored.

Component Correlation Matrix		
Component	1	2
1	1 000	-0.007
2	-0.007	1 000

The above correlation matrix indicates that a medium correlation exists between these factors, which varies between 0.007 and 1.0

Table 5.11 indicates how the questions with regard to electronic platforms are grouped together. Two factors were extracted explaining 75.9% of the total variance, namely *irregularly utilized electronic platforms and established electronic platforms*. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is 0.889, which indicates that enough data is available to indicate the factors.

Table 5.11: Factors identified as *irregularly utilized electronic platforms and established electronic platforms*

Pattern Matrix[a]		
	Component	
	Irregularly utilized electronic platforms	Established Electronic platforms
Pinterest	0.976	
Podcasts	0.966	
Blogs	0.852	
Instagram	0.796	
Twitter	0.766	
YouTube	0.665	0.250
Website		0.910
Facebook		0.787

The factors were identified according to how they are utilized with a view to obtain information on NWU. The university website and Facebook page is a huge source of information and well-established.

Component Correlation Matrix		
Component	1	2
1	1.000	0.433
2	0.433	1.000

The correlation matrix above indicates that a medium correlation exists between these factors, which varies between 0.4 and 1.0

Table 5.12 explains how the questions with regard to the provision of information are grouped together. Two factors were extracted explaining 62.98% of the total variance and labelled *unsought sources of information* and *desired sources of information*. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is 0.853, which indicates that enough data is available to indicate the factors.

The two factors explain the preferred mediums by means of which prospective students would like to receive information about NWU. The pattern matrix indicates that they would like to be informed about NWU through the university website, Facebook page and through personal visits by a marketer.

Table 5.12: Factors identified as unsought sources of information and desired sources of information

Pattern Matrix		
	Component	
	Unsought sources of information	**Desired Sources of information**
University Pinterest account	0.931	
University Twitter account	0.913	
University YouTube account	0.824	
Advertorials in newspapers	0.708	
University Website		0.951
University Facebook page		0.704
Personal visits	0,299	0.446

Component Correlation Matrix		
Component	1	2
1	1.000	0.445
2	0.445	1.000

The above correlation matrix indicates that a medium correlation exists between these factors, which vary between 0.4 and 1.0.

5.4 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

In the following section the perceptions of prospective students of the marketing communication plan of NWU is discussed with reference to the concept *relationship marketing* and the constructs *engagement and interaction,* and *availability of information*.

Each of these constructs will be supplemented with the information obtained from the electronic questionnaire to point out what prospective students' perceptions were of the marketing communication

plan applied by the three campuses of NWU. The primary focus of the study was on the marketing communication plan and prospective students' perceptions thereof and not on the marketing communication strategy. As the opinions of the directors at the three campuses regarding the relationship between the NWU and prospective students were asked in the semi-structured interviews, some aspects of relationships were also tested with prospective students in the electronic questionnaire.

5.4.1 Engagement and interaction

In this section, information was illustrated regarding the engagement and interaction of the marketers of NWU with prospective students since it was specified by the directors at the three campuses of NWU in the semi-structured interviews.

The results from question B2 *"I am very sure NWU fully understands my needs as a student with regard to acquiring tertiary education"* (see Figure 5.2) illustrate that the majority of respondents either agree (53.7%) or fully agree (42.8%) with the statement. This indicates that prospective students trust NWU to enable them to attain a quality degree. NWU could thus use this information as a unique selling proposition for recruiting prospective students.
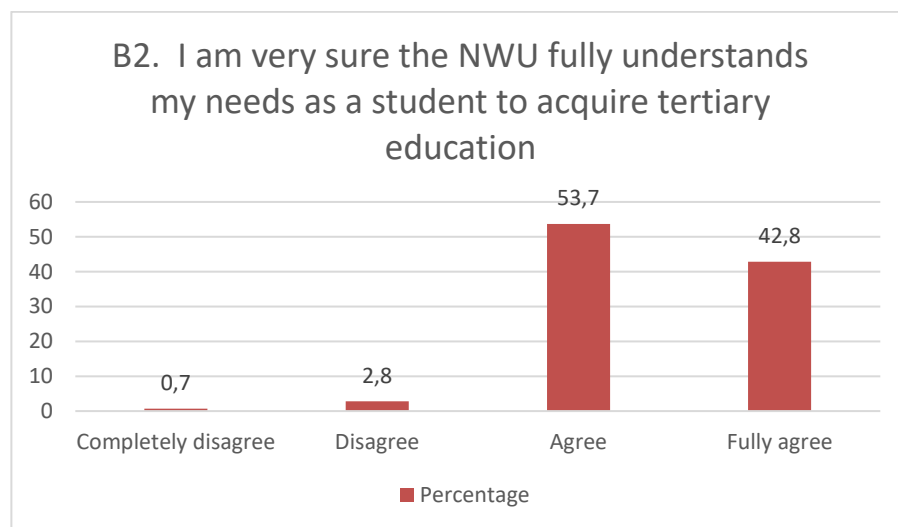
Figure 5.2: Engagement and interaction

In Figure 5.3 prospective students' views on their choice of institution are presented. The figure gives an account of item B4: *"I am very sure that choosing NWU was the right choice for me to attain a quality degree"*. It reports that participants fully agree (65.5%) and agree (33.1%) with the remark and are convinced that they had made the right choice. This information is valuable in that it can also be used as a unique selling proposition during the recruitment campaign.

B4. I am very sure that in choosing the NWU was the right choice to obtain a quality degree
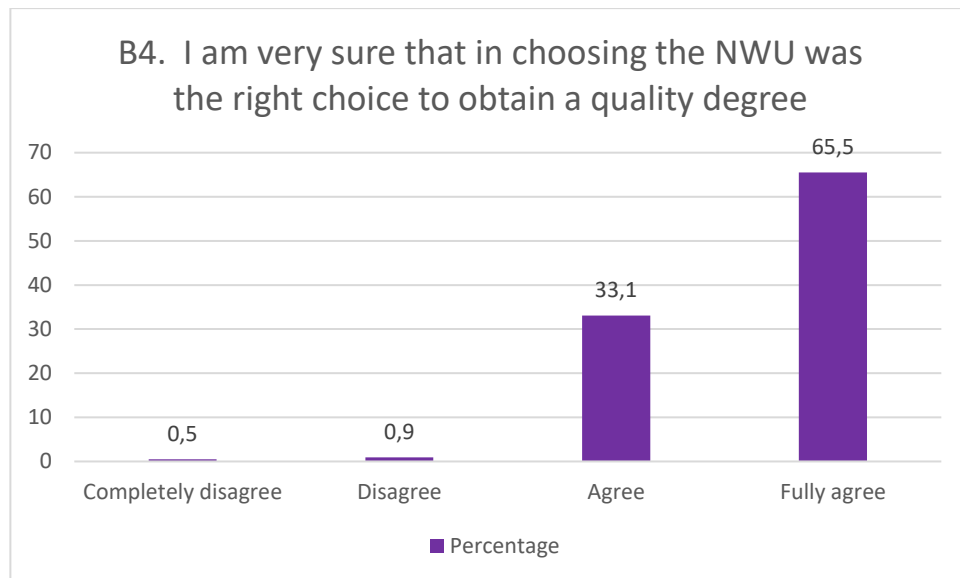
Figure 5.3: Engagement and interaction

Figure 5.4 deals with NWU as being a professional institution.

B5. I am very certain the NWU is a very professional institution
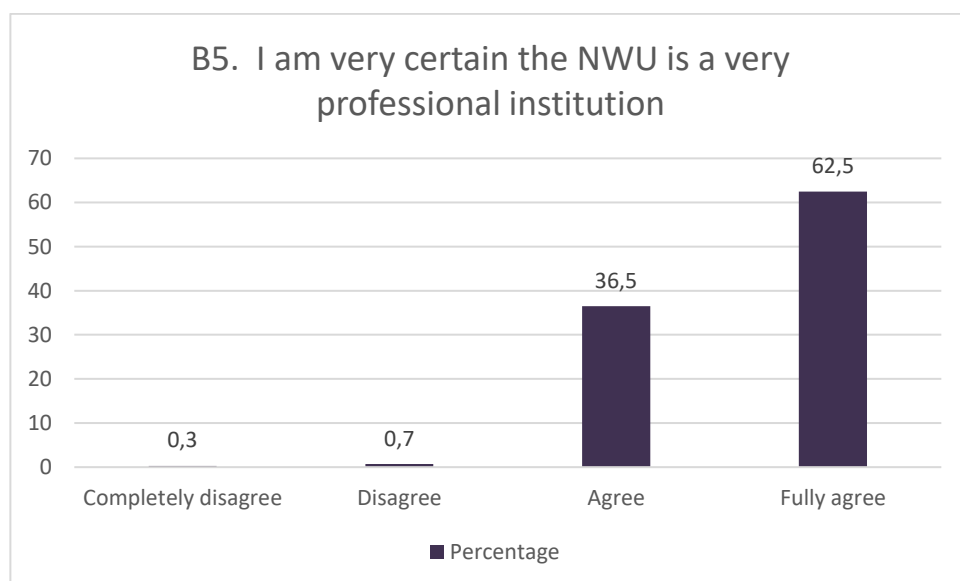
Figure 5.4: Engagement and interaction

Figure 5.4 illustrates the results to item B5 *"I am very certain NWU is a very professional institution".* Here the respondents fully agree (62.5%) and agree (36.6%) that NWU is very professional as an institution of higher learning and could be part of the message in the marketing communication plan.

Figure 5.5 makes mention of service delivery at NWU.
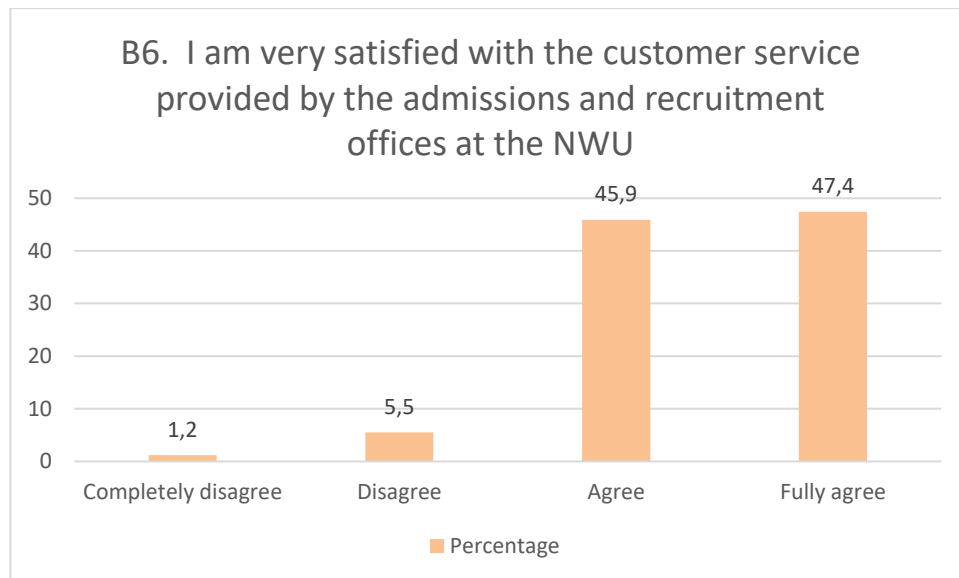
Figure 5.5: Engagement and interaction

The answers to item B6: *"I am very satisfied with the customer service provided by the admissions and recruitment offices at NWU"* demonstrate that participants fully agree (47.4%) and agree (45.9%) with the services provided by the admissions and recruitment offices at NWU. Although students agree that NWU's customer service is good, improvements can be made with online application systems as indicated by the directors at the campuses.

5.4.2 Availability of information

In this section information regarding the availability of information to prospective students will be explained.

The results from item B1 (Figure 5.6) "*I am very satisfied with the amount of information generally available on NWU when choosing my institution of study*" revealed that the majority of respondents (55.2%) agree and fully agree (39.9%) that NWU provides adequate information to prospective students for them to make informed decisions. In Table 5.12 the NWU website, Facebook pages and personal visits were identified as desired sources of information and should be included when compiling the marketing communication plan.

The outcome of item B3 "I am very certain that NWU's brand is well-known in the country" reveals that prospective students fully agree (56.9%) and agree (38.3%) that the brand of NWU is recognized in South Africa which illustrates that NWU's brand is well-established.   Prospective students thus at some stage in their high school career had a positive experience with NWU about its programmes, services, environment and student life.
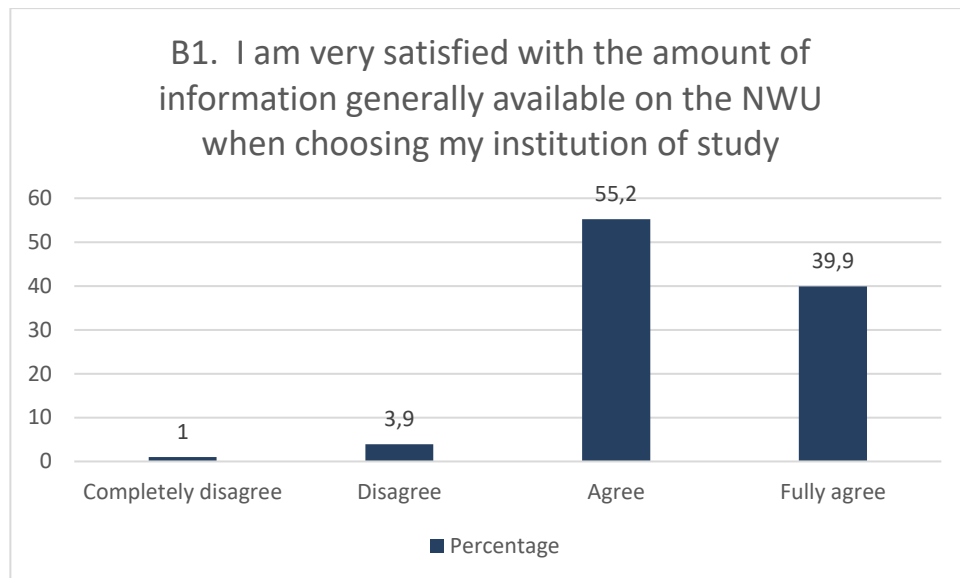
Figure 5.6: Availability of information
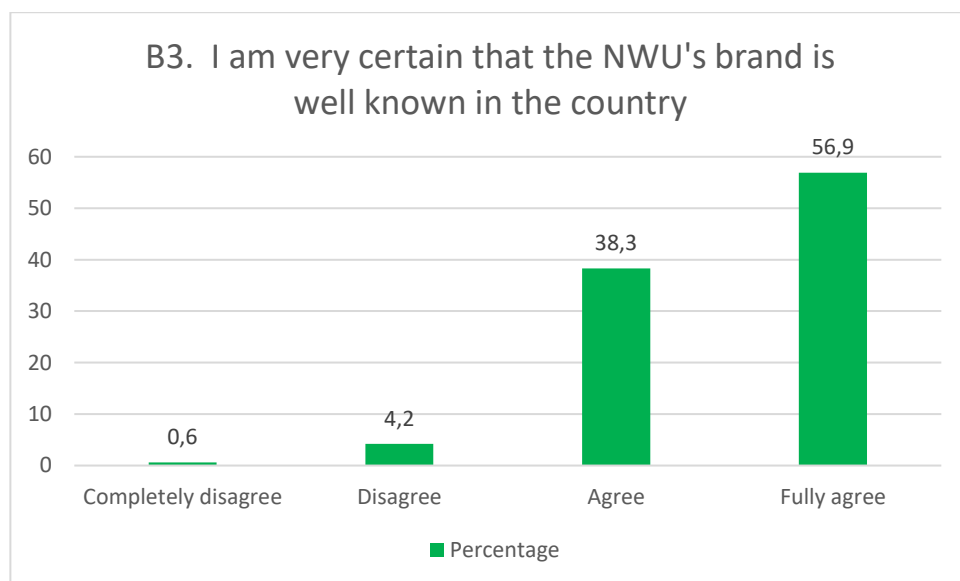
Figure 5.7: Availability of information

5.5 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION MIX

In the following section the perceptions of prospective students of the marketing communication plan of NWU will be discussed with reference to the concept *marketing communication mix and elements* and the constructs *advertising, personal selling, shopper marketing and sales promotion, direct response and database marketing, public relations and word-of-mouth, sponsorship and event marketing, digital media marketing and alternative communication channels.*

Each of these constructs will be supplemented with the information obtained from the quantitative questionnaire to point out what prospective students' perceptions are of the marketing communication plan applied by the three campuses of NWU.

5.5.1 Advertising

Figure 5.8 describes how respondents experience advertising campaigns undertaken by NWU. The figure shows that generally, the majority of respondents are in agreement ("fully agree" or "agree") that they were much exposed to advertising campaigns in websites and radio. On the other hand, the majority of the participants are in disagreement ("completely disagree" or disagree") that they were much exposed to advertising campaigns in the following media: national newspapers, local newspapers, school newspapers, magazines, television and billboards. Advertising campaigns as part of the marketing communication plan and because it is expensive, should thus focus more on radio and the NWU website which could also be described as including all digital media and direct-and database marketing.
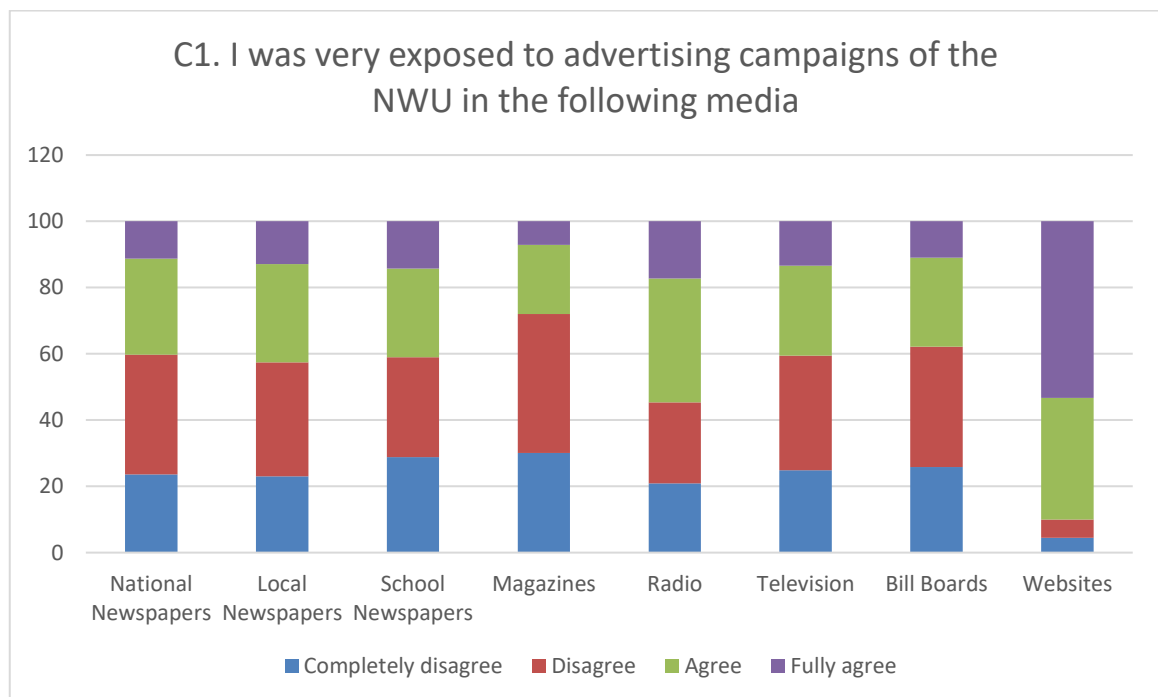
Figure 5.8: Respondents' experiences of advertising campaigns undertaken by NWU

5.5.2 Personal selling

Figure 5.9 deals with the amount of personal contact students had experienced from marketers. The figure shows that generally, the majority of respondents are in agreement (agree or fully agree) that they were much exposed to personal interaction by NWU marketers at career exhibitions, sessions with marketers at school, open day on campus and campus tours. In addition, it is shown that generally, the majority of respondents are in disagreement (disagree or completely disagree) that they were much exposed to personal interaction by NWU marketers at all other given events. Events at which the

participants were least exposed to personal interaction with NWU marketers are the Ikateleng project and Winter schools. This can be attributed to the fact that these events are presented exclusively on the Mafikeng campus of NWU.
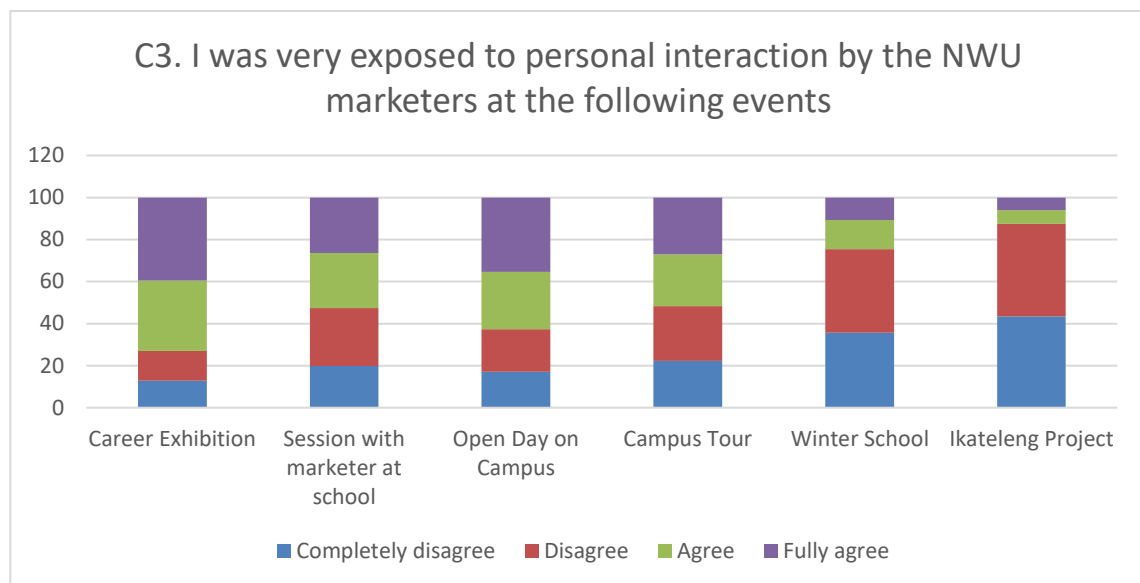
Figure 5.9: Personal interaction by NWU marketers

5.5.3   Shopper marketing and sales promotion

Sales promotion and shopper marketing was illustrated in Table 5.9. A total of 5.3% of respondents indicated that they had learned about NWU through sales promotions. This information illustrates that the Marketing and Recruitment departments should explore the practise of shopper marketing and sales promotion and especially the use of promotional events in their marketing communication plan. It is also a possibility that respondents did not understand what is meant by shopper marketing and sales promotion.

5.5.4   Direct response and database marketing

Figure 5.10 explains direct contact and database marketing It is obvious from Figure 5.10 that generally, all participants are in agreement (agree or completely agree) that they are very satisfied with the direct response they had received through the given channels that are used by NWU. More participants agreed or fully agreed with the use of emails and sms as direct response and database marketing than with personal contact by marketers and personal phone calls. Direct response and database marketing is very much integrated with digital media marketing. With the evolution of new technology and especially with the fast development of smartphones and tablets which is predominantly used by respondents to access platforms such as the website, Facebook, email and sms. These elements should be one of the main focus areas of the marketing communication plan.
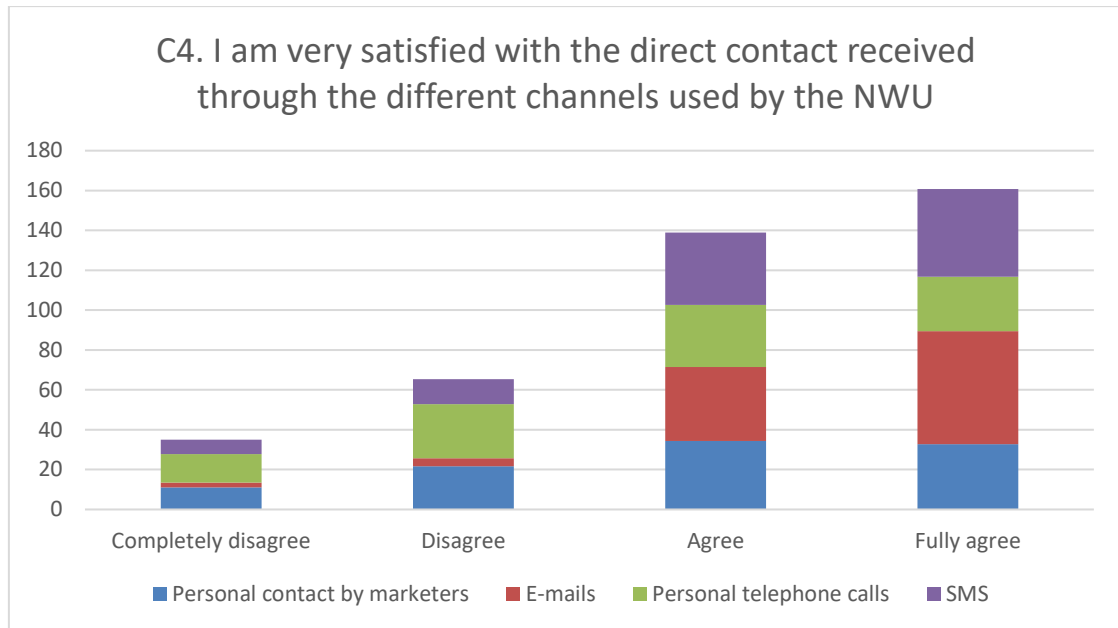
Figure 5.10: Direct response and database marketing

5.5.5 Public relations and word-of-mouth communication

Figure 5.11 speaks of public relations and word-of-mouth communication.

In Figure 5.11 nearly half of the respondents (45.5%) indicated that they had learned about NWU through word-of-mouth. According to Figure 15 respondents fully agree (62.5%) and agree (36%) to item B7 *"I will certainly recommend NWU as a tertiary institution to a friend or family member"* which points to a sense of loyalty and trustworthiness towards NWU.
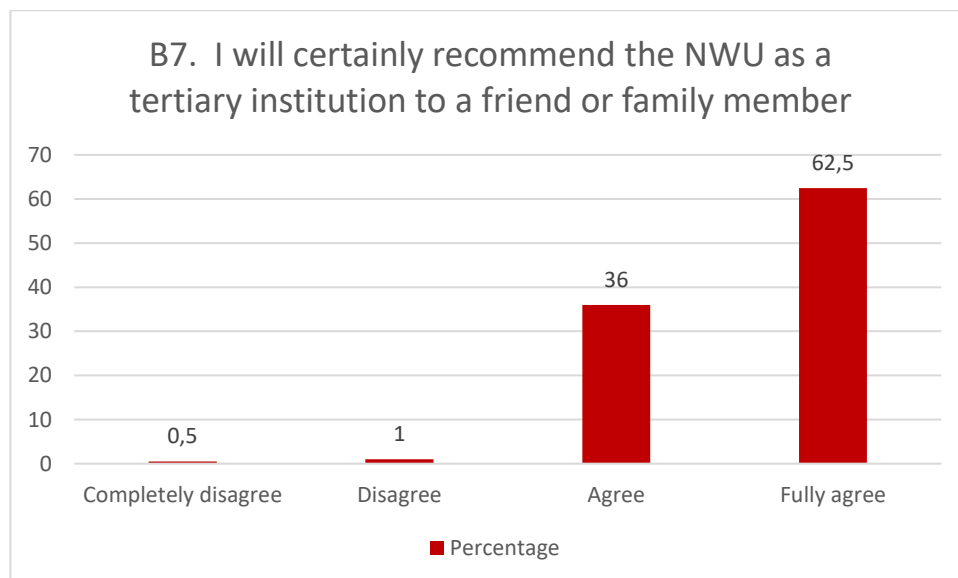
Figure 5.11: Public relations and Word-of-Mouth

5.5.6 Sponsorships and events marketing

In Figure 5.12 sponsorships and events marketing are illustrated. Figure 5.12 reveals that generally, more than half of the participants are in agreement (agree or fully agree) that they are very aware that NWU sponsored the following school events: athletics, rugby, soccer, hockey and tennis. More than 60% of the participants are in disagreement (disagree or completely disagree) that NWU has not sponsored any event in their schools. Sponsorship and events marketing is, however, expensive as indicated by the directors at the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses and mostly utilized by the Potchefstroom campus.

C5. I am very aware that the NWU sponsored the following school events

	Athletics	Rugby	Soccer	Hockey	Tennis	Price givings	No event sponsored
■ Fully agree	30,46	28,97	27,54	21,8	17,52	18,32	14,98
■ Agree	36,53	35,53	35,29	32,59	33,63	31,73	20,15
■ Disagree	19,92	22,23	22,38	30,09	32,76	32,75	33,23
■ Completely disagree	13,09	13,27	14,79	15,52	16,09	17,2	31,64
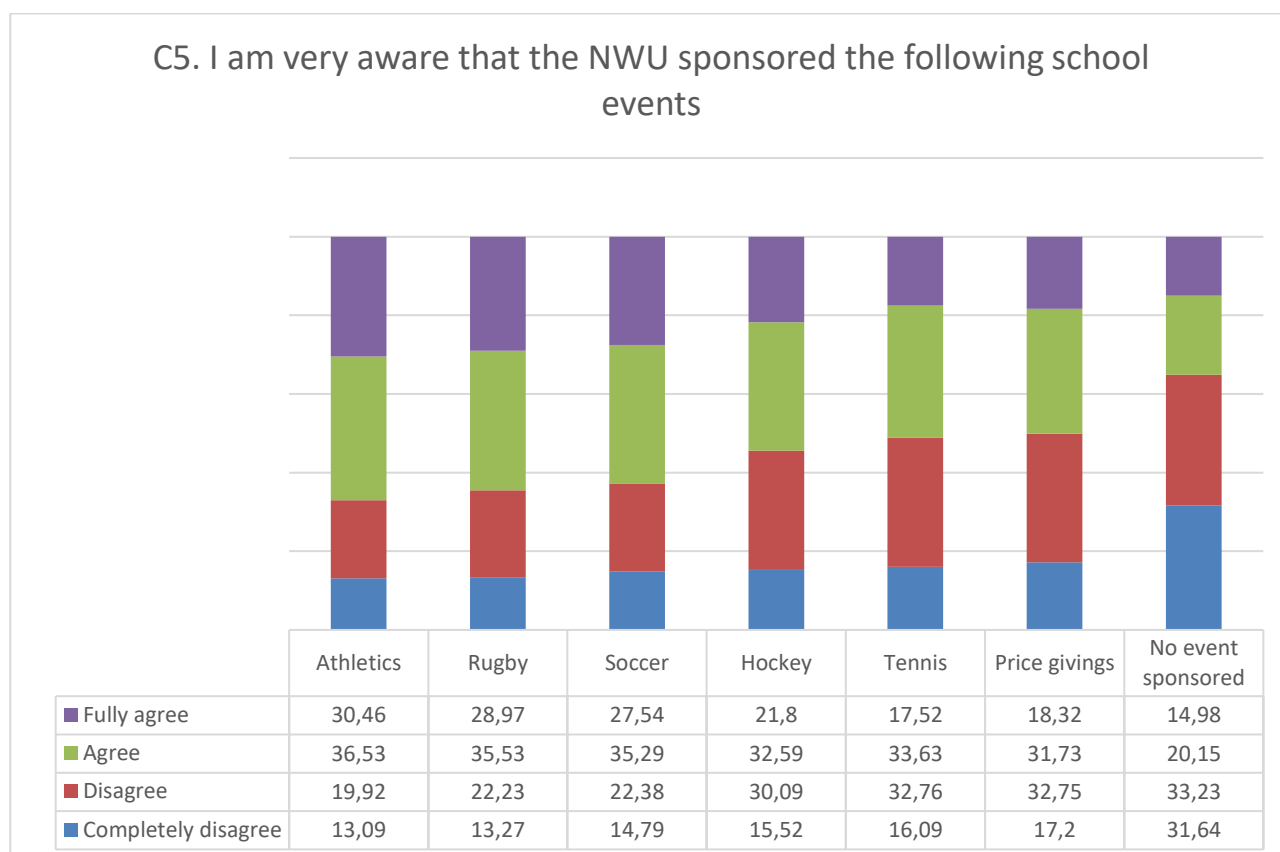
Figure 5.12: Sponsorship and events marketing

5.5.7 Digital media marketing

Digital media marketing will be illustrated according to the participants' responses about information available on NWU's website (Figure 5.13), electronic platforms utilized by NWU (Figure 5.14) and the various categories of information they would like to be exposed too (Figure 5.15).

Figure 5.13 on page 115 deals with information available on NWU's website. The figure displays that generally, the majority of the respondents (more than75%) are in agreement (agree or fully agree) that they are very satisfied with the following information available on NWU's website: Study information; Information on programmes; Information on residences; Information on bursaries and loans; Information on cultural activities;

Information on sport activities; Information on student life; General campus information and the Virtual Tour. Figure 5.13 also indicates that the participants are mostly very satisfied with the information on NWU's website about the Study information (94.98%), Information on programmes (93.76%) and General campus information (91.25%).

Figure 5.14 (page 116) shows that generally, almost all the participants are in agreement (agree or fully agree) that they are very satisfied with the information available on NWU's website and NWU's Facebook page. In addition, slightly more than half of the participants are in agreement (agree or fully agree) that they are very satisfied with the information available through Twitter and YouTube. Participants that are in agreement (agree or fully agree) and those in disagreement (disagree or completely disagree) are almost equally divided into half, relative to the information available on Blogs used by NWU. The majority of participants are in disagreement (disagree or completely disagree) that they are very satisfied with the use of Podcasts, Instagram and Pinterest by NWU.

In Figure 5.15 the various categories of information prospective students would like to be exposed to, are illustrated (See page 116).

Figure 5.15 reveals that generally, almost all participants are in agreement (agree or fully agree) that they would like to be exposed to information about NWU on fields of study, application information; minimum requirements; fees payable; bursaries and loans; residences and student life.

As indicated in paragraph 5.6.4, direct response and database marketing is very much integrated with digital media marketing and is seen as the modern trend in marketing communication. When utilized optimally and effectively it could be a powerful tool in the marketing communication plan.

C6. I am very satisfied with the information available on the NWU's website

	Study information	Information on programmes	Information on residences	Information on bursaries and loans	Information on cultural activities	Information on sport activities	Information on student life	General campus information	Virtual Tour
■ Fully agree	51,68	49,72	41,91	40,09	32,15	36,04	38,64	43,46	36,26
■ Agree	43,3	44,04	42,57	43,29	47,29	45,72	46,33	47,79	43,65
■ Disagree	3,56	5,22	12,15	13,62	17,11	14,78	12	7,08	15,55
■ Completely disagree	1,46	1,02	3,37	3	3,45	3,46	3,03	1,67	4,54

Figure 5.13: Information on NWU website as part of digital media marketing

Figure 5.14 illustrates the electronic platforms utilized by NWU

C7. I am very satisfied with the information available on the following electronic platforms utilized by the NWU

	Website	Facebook	Twitter	Podcasts	Pinterest	Instagram	Youtube	Blogs
Fully agree	56,87	49,98	22,23	14,98	13,94	22,39	28	19,76
Agree	38,29	38,13	36,3	27,63	26,98	27,93	31,83	29,29
Disagree	3,36	8,73	31,54	44,03	45,4	38,08	30,87	39,43
Completely disagree	1,48	3,16	9,93	13,36	13,68	11,6	9,3	11,52
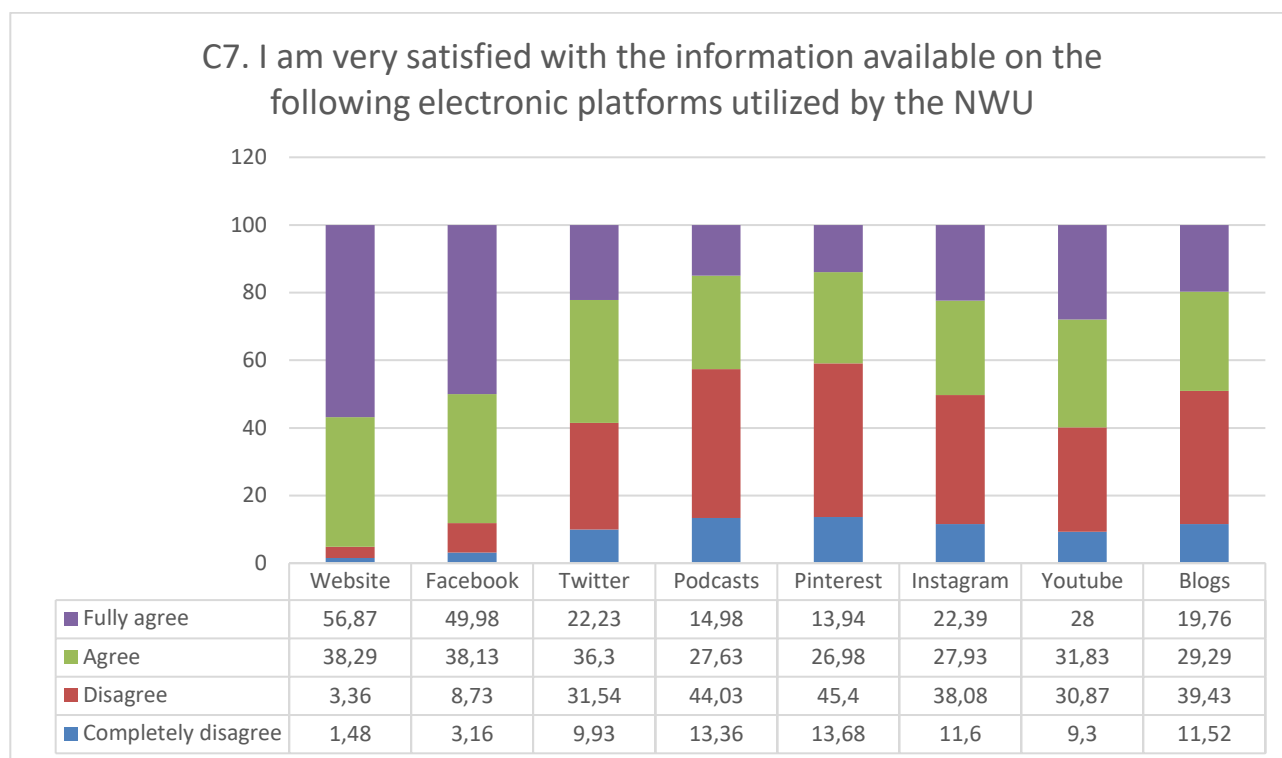
Figure 5.14: Electronic platforms as part of digital media marketing

C8. I would like te be exposed to information about the NWU on the following matters

	Fields of study	Application information	Minimum requirements	Fees payable	Bursaries and loans	Residences	Student life
Fully agree	58,86	58,4	58,17	63,59	64,41	60,61	58,72
Agree	37,04	35,97	35,06	32,87	31,43	31,76	36,18
Disagree	2,57	3,62	4,57	2,27	2,38	4,64	3,38
Completely disagree	1,53	2,01	2,2	1,27	1,78	2,99	1,72
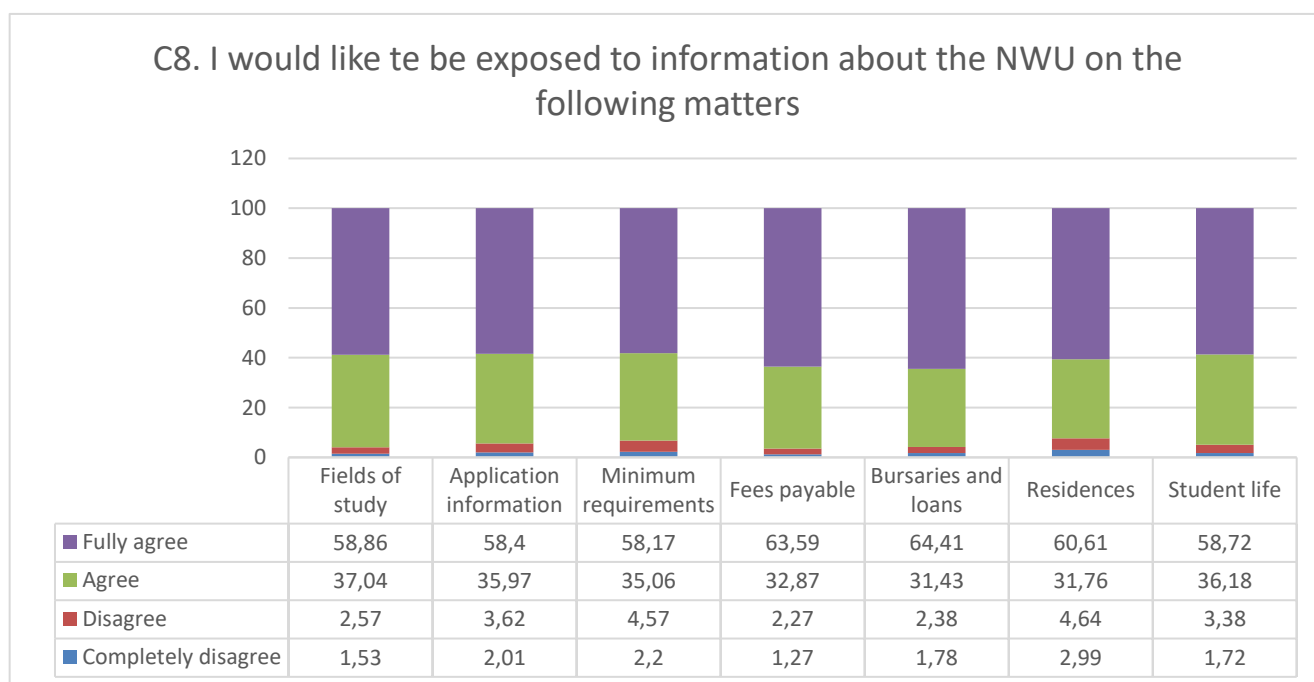
Figure 5.15: Categories of information as part of digital media marketing

5.5.8 Alternative communication channels

This element of the marketing mix was not contained within in the questionnaire as the activities are covered by the other elements of the IMC mix.

The above section dealt with the respondents' perceptions of the marketing communication mix. In general the majority of respondents are in agreement that NWU utilises the marketing communication mix and elements in their recruitment campaigns.

The next section deals with the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and focus on the reliability of the factors dealing with advertising, sponsorships and events marketing, digital media marketing and sources of information.

5.6 CRONBACH'S ALPHA COEFFICIENT

Reliability is defined as the similarity of results provided by independent, but not comparable measures of the same construct (Urdan, 2010:178). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the factors for advertising, sponsorships and events marketing, digital media marketing and sources of information (see Chapter 3, paragraph 3.6.6).

Table 5.13: Results of reliability analysis

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Means	Standard deviation
Factor 1: Predominantly English media	0.964	2.34	1.01
Factor 2: Recruitment activities	0.80	3.00	0.77
Factor 3: Predominantly Afrikaans media	0.921	2.52	0.87
Factor 4: Sponsored school events	0.944	2.89	0.92
Factor 5: None-sponsored school events	0.895	2.19	1.01
Factor 6: Irregularly utilized electronic platforms	0.928	2.79	0.84
Factor 7: Established electronic platforms	0.620	3.45	0.61
Factor 8: Unsought sources of information	0.715	2.92	0.89
Factor 9: Desired sources of information	0.879	3.49	0.58

Table 5.13 indicates that the Cronbach's Alpha values of the factors are as follows: Predominantly English media – 0.964, recruitment activities – 0.80, predominantly Afrikaans media – 0.921, sponsored events – 0.944, none-sponsored events – 0.895, irregularly utilized electronic platforms - 0.928, established electronic platforms – 0.620, unsought sources of information – 0.715 and desired sources of information – 0.879. This implies that the data are reliable as all the levels of reliability are acceptable.

In the following section prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication strategy applied by the three campuses of NWU will be discussed in accordance with the concept *relationship marketing*.

5.7 CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE FACTORS

The Correlation Coefficient gives an indication of the relation among the variables, which enables the researcher to establish how the value of one variable relates to the value of another. *Correlations* specifies the relationship among the different factors where 0.01 indicates a small correlation, 0.3 a medium correlation and 0.5 a high correlation. The following correlations were extracted which are subsequently discussed in more detail (David & Stutton, 2011:268. (See Chapter 3 paragraph 367).

From Table 5.14 (page 119) it is clear that a small to medium correlation exists between the factors that influence the choice of NWU and how they have learned about NWU, as none of the correlations is higher than 0.352. This implies that there is a link between learning about NWU and its student life. When prospective students learn about NWU they get to know the student life which could result in them choosing NWU. With regard to the unique selling propositions, a medium to high correlation exists between factors that influence their choice of NWU with student life (0.562), quality of facilities (0.556), quality of programmes (0.546), stable environment (0.545), and safety (0.572) reflecting a high correlation. This implies a direct link between unique selling propositions and students' choice of university. If the respondents had a family member who had also studied at NWU they would most likely have a positive perception of learning about NWU and its unique selling propositions.

Table 5.15, page 120, gives an indication of the correlation between relationship marketing and each of the marketing communication elements respectively

The table shows that generally, a low to high correlation (0.480) exists between relationship marketing and the various marketing communication elements. This implies that a link exists between building a relationship with prospective students and using the various marketing communication elements that cannot be ignored. If marketing communication is executed effectively it will result in sound relationships with stakeholders.

The correlation metrics implies that NWU's website and Facebook as electronic platforms are the established sources of information and also the most desired sources of information for prospective students. As the preferred sources of information, these platforms thus need to be utilized for the dissemination of information to build relationships with prospective students.

Table 5.14 presents details of the correlation between how prospective students learned about NWU and their choice of NWU, as well as the correlation between unique selling propositions of NWU and their choice of NWU.

Table 5.14: Correlation between learning about NWU and choice, and unique selling propositions and choice

		A family member also studied there	It is a safe University	It is affordable	It is close by and I can study from home	It is the only university that offers my programme of choice	Quality of Programmes	Quality of facilities	Multi linguicism policy of the University	The diversity of the University	Student life	Sport	Cultural activities
F14_Learning about the NWU	Correlation Coefficient	.202**	.286**	.140**	.069**	.051**	.241**	.277**	.122**	.179**	.352**	.206**	.226**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,004	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203
F7 Unique selling propositions	Correlation Coefficient	.349**	.572**	.112**	-.164**	-.100**	.546**	.556**	.165**	.117**	.562**	.402**	.343**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203

Table 5.15: Correlation between relationship marketing and the various marketing communication elements respectively

		Q16 Amount of information available	Q17 The NWU understands my needs	Q18 The NWU's brand is well known	Q19 The NWU was the right choice	Q21 The NWU is a professional institution	Q22 Satisfactory service by staff	Q23 Will recommend the NWU
F32Unsought sources of information	Correlation Coefficient	.153*'	.153*'	.136*'	.107*'	.164*'	.114*'	.155*'
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	1339	1334	1335	1335	1333	1336	1340
F32Desired sources of information	Correlation Coefficient	.314*'	.303*'	.241*'	.277*'	.305*'	.262*'	.300*'
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	2175	2171	2171	2169	2168	2176	2183
F31Exposure to information	Correlation Coefficient	.279*'	.259*'	.202*'	.247*'	.278*'	.239*'	.270*'
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	2145	2140	2141	2138	2138	2149	2153
F30Irregular electronic platforms	Correlation Coefficient	.304*'	.268*'	.261*'	.238*'	.263*'	.266*'	.254*'
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	1386	1385	1386	1383	1383	1386	1391
F30Established electronic platforms	Correlation Coefficient	.405*'	.371*'	.293*'	.370*'	.356*'	.349*'	.373*'
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	2181	2176	2176	2174	2171	2181	2187
F29Satisfied with information on website	Correlation Coefficient	.480*'	.417*'	.284*'	.351*'	.339*'	.381*'	.374*'
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	2208	2203	2206	2203	2201	2208	2217
F28Sponsored school events	Correlation Coefficient	.246*'	.221*'	.235*'	.237*'	.212*'	.208*'	.191*'
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	1761	1758	1762	1758	1757	1761	1767
F28None sponsored school events	Correlation Coefficient	,025	,011	,005	-,019	,002	,043	-,003
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,385	,705	,875	,515	,949	,144	,930
	N	1181	1177	1178	1177	1173	1180	1182

F27Direct contact to students	Correlation Coefficient	.341*`	.329*`	.236*`	.285*`	.306*`	.350*`	.324*`
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	2226	2221	2220	2220	2215	2227	2232
F24_26Radio_Print_media	Correlation Coefficient	.148*`	.113*`	.128*`	.131*`	.106*`	.059*	.112*`
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,016	,000
	N	1644	1642	1644	1645	1637	1646	1650
F24_26Recruitment_Activities	Correlation Coefficient	.291*`	.260*`	.261*`	.269*`	.262*`	.247*`	.274*`
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	2253	2248	2247	2245	2243	2253	2258
F24_26Afrikaans_Media	Correlation Coefficient	.200*`	.158*`	.207*`	.147*`	.158*`	.158*`	.167*`
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	1965	1964	1960	1956	1954	1965	1966
F16_23 Building relationships	Correlation Coefficient	.696*`	.701*`	.616*`	.703*`	.692*`	.677*`	.747*`
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
	N	2819	2814	2811	2808	2821	2824	2841
F14_Learning about the NWU	Correlation Coefficient	.072*`	.063*`	.101*`	.068*`	,036	.078*`	.078*`
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,001	,000	,000	,059	,000	,000
	N	2819	2814	2811	2808	2821	2824	2841
F7 Unique selling propositions	Correlation Coefficient	.118*`	.095*`	.097*`	.148*`	.100*`	.110*`	.137*`
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	2819	2814	2811	2808	2821	2824	2841

The section about correlations shows that if the respondent had a family member who had also studied at NWU they are likely to have a positive perception of studying at NWU and its unique selling propositions. Marketing Communication must be executed effectively in the interest of building sound relationships with stakeholders.

In the following section a *t-test* will be used to compare the means of two samples.

5.8 *T*-TEST

The following section summarises the influence the different elements of the demographic information has on the factors. The *t*-test determines the statistical and practical significance of factors, and effect sizes were used to determine the relevance. In cases where the P-value is smaller than 0.05 it indicates a statistically significant difference, but not necessarily that the demographic information has an influence on the factor. The effect sizes give an indication of the practical significance of the factors (Malhotra, 2010:531) (See Chapter 3, paragraph 3.6.3).

Table 5.16 summarises the practical significance of the effect sizes in a *t*-test.

Table 5.16: Practical significance of the effect sizes in a *t*-test

Effect sizes	Interpretation
d = 0.2	Small effect
d = 0.5	Medium effect
d = 0.8	Large effect

The effect size indicates the practical significance of the relationship between two variables. In instances where the effect sizes are larger than or equal to 0.5, it indicates that the relationship between the variables is practically significant.

It must be emphasised that all the effect sizes on the *t*-tests dealing with gender and family members that studied at NWU, are less than 0.01, which indicates that it is not statistically or practically significant.

In the following tables the *t*-tests on the factors that have a p-value smaller than 0.05 will be discussed, which indicates that the factors are statistically significant. The factors with effect sizes larger than 0.3, were identified to indicate that the factors are practically relevant.

Table 5.17: *t*-test on the choice of NWU website on the different factors

Q13 Have you ever visited the NWU website		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value	Effect size
Q16 Amount of information available	Yes	2504	3.36	0.601	<0.001	0.35
	No	234	3.15	0.570		
F30Irregularly utilized electronic platform (Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest)	Yes	1292	2.8226	0.83855	<0.001	0.47
	No	99	2.4323	0.77687		
F30Established electronic platforms (website, Facebook)	Yes	2013	3.747	0.59912	<0.001	0.40
	No	173	3.1879	0.71384		
F29Satisfied with type of information on website	Yes	2039	3.3292	0.59710	<0.001	0.37
	No	179	3.0854	0.66578		
F14 Learning about the NWU	Yes	2765	1.8177	1.36024	<0.001	0.45

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Effect size
	No	280	1.2071	0.68780		
F7 Unique selling propositions	Yes	2765	0.1920	0.20944	<0.001	0.39
	No	280	0.1094	0.14523		

The table shows that the data have a medium effect. Students who answered *yes* to the *amount of information on the website* (m=3.36, SD=0.601) scored a higher average than those who answered *no*. Those who answered *yes*, that Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest are *irregularly utilized electronic platforms* (m=2.822, SD=0.838) also scored a higher average than those who answered *no* as well as those who answered *yes* that NWU website and Facebook are the more *established electronic platforms* (m=3.18, SD=0.713). Students who answered *yes*, that they are indeed *satisfied with the type of information on the website* (m=3.32, SD=0.597) also scored a higher average than those who answered *no*. This is also the case with the question concerning whether they had *learned about NWU* (m=1.817, SD=0.687) and had experienced NWU through its *unique selling propositions* (m=.192, SD=0.209). This implies that generally, more students are positive about NWU website and Facebook pages in the interest of learning about NWU and gaining information on application procedures and available programmes.

Table 5.18 provides a *t*-test of the influence of advertising on the factors. The table indicates that more students answered *yes* to learning about NWU (m=3.382, SD=1.860) and also to the unique selling proposition (m=.192, SD=0.209). This shows that those who answered *yes* scored a higher average than those who answered *no*. The factor concerning *learning about NWU* has a large effect which implies that students take note of NWU through reading advertisements. The factor *unique selling propositions,* has a medium effect, which indicates that students project a more positive attitude towards NWU when exposed to advertisements.

Table 5.18: *t*-test of the influence of advertising on the factors

Advertising		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Effect size
F14_ Learning about the NWU	Yes	525	3.3829	1.86062	<0.001	1.09
	No	2678	1.3585	0.89365		
F7_Unique selling propositions	Yes	525	0.2698	0.25519	<0.001	0.44
	No	2678	0.1576	0.18740		

Table 5.19 provides a *t*-test of the influence of promotions on the factors. The table indicates that more students answered yes to learning about NWU through promotions (m=4.02, SD=2.178) and also to unique selling propositions (m=0.284, SD=0.281). This shows that those who answered *yes* scored a higher average than those who answered *no*. The factor *learning about NWU* has a large effect and students are learning about NWU through promotions. The factor *unique selling propositions,* has a medium effect, which indicates that students demonstrate a positive attitude towards NWU when exposed to promotions.

Table 5.19: *t*-test of the influence of promotions on the factors

Promotions		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Effect size
F14_Learning about the NWU	Yes	191	4.0209	2.17874	<0.001	1.14
	No	3012	1.5425	1.11533		
F7_Unique selling propositions	Yes	191	0.2847	0.28131	<0.001	0.41
	No	3012	0.1691	0.19646		

Table 5.20 provides a *t*-test of the influence of personal contact on the factors. The table indicates that the factor *learning about NWU* has a large effect and that more students answered *yes* to learning about NWU through personal contact during school visits and career exhibitions (m=1.19, SD=0.799). This shows that those who answered *yes* scored a higher average than those who answered *no.*

 Table 5.20: *t*-test of the influence of personal contact on the factors

Personal Contact (School visits, Career Exhibitions)		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Effect size
F14_ Learning about the NWU	Yes	1404	2.3255	1,60057	<0.001	0.71
	No	1799	1.1946	0.79902		

Table 5.21 provides a *t*-test of the influence of physical environment on the factors. The table indicates that more students answered *yes* to the factor *learning about NWU* by visiting NWU (m=3.167, SD=1.915) which has a large effect, indicating that those who answered *yes* scored a higher average than those who answered *no.* The implication is that students are learning about NWU by visiting NWU and experiencing the physical environment. More students also answered *yes* to *unique selling propositions* (m=0.278, SD=0.260) which has a medium effect and implies that physical environment is a unique selling proposition.

Table 5.21: *t*-test of the influence of physical environment on the factors

Physical Environment (Campus Tours)		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Effect size
F14_ Learning about the NWU	Yes	514	3.1673	1.91517	<0.001	0.92
	No	2689	1.4080	0.97083		
*F7_ Unique selling propositions	Yes	514	0.2785	0.26017	<0.001	0.47
	No	2689	0.1564	0.18551		

Table 5.22 provides a *t*-test of the influence of direct responses on the factors. The table displays that more students answered *yes* to *unique selling proposition* (m=0.290, SD=0.262), which has a medium to large effect with the implication that those who answered *yes* scored a higher average than those who answered *no.* This indicates that direct responses through email and sms stand out for students.

Table 5.22: *t*-test of the influence of direct responses on the factors

Direct responses (e-mails, sms)		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Effect size
F7_Unique selling propositions	Yes	353	0.2900	0.26237	<0.001	0.49
	No	2850	0.1619	0.19130		

Table 5.23 provides a *t*-test of the influence of word-of-mouth on the factors. The table indicates that the factor *learning about NWU* has a large effect and that more students answered *yes* and learn about NWU through Word-of-Mouth (m=2.31, SD=1.57). More students also answered yes to *unique selling propositions* (m=0.241, SD=0.235), which has a large effect and implies that Word-of-Mouth is a unique selling proposition.

Table 5.23: *t*-test of the influence of Word-of-Mouth on the factors

Word-of-Mouth (Friends and Family)		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Effect size
F14_ Learning about the NWU	Yes	1490	2.3174	1.57653	<0.001	0.74
	No	1713	1.1448	0.74652		
F7_ Unique selling propositions	Yes	1490	0.2419	0.23352	<0.001	0.53
	No	1713	0.1187	0.15356		

Table 5.24 provides a *t*-test of the influence of sponsored events on the factors. It shows that more students answered *yes* to all the factors. This shows that those who answered *yes* scored a higher average than those who answered *no*. The factor *learning about NWU* has a large effect on sponsorships of events and students do experience NWU through the sponsoring of events. All the other factors (established electronic platforms, sponsored, none-sponsored, recruitment activities, unique selling propositions) have a medium effect, which implies that they demonstrate positive attitudes towards sponsorships of events.

Table 5.24: *t*-test of the influence of sponsored events on the factors

Sponsored events		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Effect size
F30 Established electronic platforms	Yes	83	3.1305	0.74082	<0.001	0.43
	No	1319	2.7728	0.84015		
F28 Sponsored	Yes	98	3.3104	0.78692	<0.001	0.48
	No	1697	2.8729	0.92085		
F28 None-Sponsored	Yes	52	1.7692	1.05933	<0.001	0.42
	No	1147	2.2127	1.05854		
F24_26Recruitment_Activities	Yes	113	3.2747	0.57408	<0.001	0.36
	No	2189	2.9910	0.78052		

F14_Learning about the NWU	Yes	138	3.7971	2.37431	<0.001	0.93
	No	3065	1.5954	1.18992		
F7_Unique selling propositions	Yes	138	0.2763	0.26697	<0.001	0.39
	No	3065	0.1715	0.19990		

Table 5.25 provides a *t*-test of the influence of digital media marketing on the factors. The table indicates that more students answered *yes* to the factor *learning about NWU* (m=2.749, SD=1.812) which has a large effect and that students learn about NWU through digital media marketing. This implies that electronic platforms such as the website and social media are significant elements and should be a main focus area in the marketing communication plan (see paragraphs 5.6.4 and 5.6.7).

Table 5.25: *t*-test of the influence of digital media marketing on the factors

Digital media marketing (Website, Social Media)		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Effect size
F14_ Learning about the NWU	Yes	799	2.7497	1.81263	<0.001	0.78
	No	2404	1.3382	0.89713		

The section reporting on the *t*-test showed that students generally are more positive about the NWU website, that they feel more positive towards NWU when they are exposed to advertisements, promotion, personal contact, physical environment, direct responses through email and sms, Word-of-Mouth, sponsored events and electronic platforms which is also significant for the marketing communication plan.

The following section demonstrates the *analysis of variance* or ANOVA to compare the means of more than two samples

5.9 ANOVA

Anova is meant to test whether a statistical difference exists in the population means of more than two groups. ANOVA breaks down the total variability in a set of data into its different sources. It basically explains the sources of variance in a set of scores on one or more independent variables (Cohen, 1988) (See Chapter 3 paragraph3.4).

Practical significance is represented by a d-value. Table 5.26 summarises the practical significance of the effect sizes in a contingency table. Statistical significance is represented by the **p-value.**

Table 5.26: Summary of the practical significance of the effect sizes

Effect sizes	Interpretation
d = 0.2	Small effect
d = 0.5	Medium effect
d = 0.8	Large effect

5.9.1   Comparison of factors with campus

Table 5.27: Comparison by campus

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Effect sizes	
						Potch with	Vaal Triangle with
F24 Predominantly English Media	Potch	872	2.0736	0.94667	<0.001		
	Vaal Triangle	249	2.3715	1.00844		0.30	
	Mafikeng	564	2.7506	0.99530		0.68	0.38
	Total	1685	2.3442	1.01872			
F14_Marketing Communication elements	Potch	1730	2.0607	1.52303			
	Vaal Triangle	478	1.3703	0.95984	<0.001	0.45	
	Mafikeng	995	1.2000	0.88311		0.57	0.18
	Total	3203	1.6903	1.34015			
F7_ Unique selling propositions	Potch	1730	0.2354	0.22871			
	Vaal Triangle	478	0.1132	0.14823	<0.001	0.53	
	Mafikeng	995	0.1029	0.13977		0.58	0.07
	Total	3203	0.1760	0.20430			

Table 5.27 illustrates that there are significant differences exist regarding language spoken at the three campuses and the factors. It emerged that the respondents from the Mafikeng campus (m=2.75, SD=0.995) value *English media* higher than do the other two campuses. The same applies when comparing the Vaal Triangle campus and the Potchefstroom campus. More respondents on the Vaal Triangle campus (m=2.37, SD=1.00) value English media higher than do those on the Potchefstroom campus (m=2.07, SD=0.946, d=<0.001). This implies a stronger focus on the English media when launching campaigns at the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses.

With regard to marketing communication elements, the Potchefstroom campus (m=2.06, SD=1.523, d=<0.001) rates the use of the element as a source of information higher than do those on the other two campuses. The Vaal Triangle campus (m=1.37, SD=.959, d=<0.001) also rates it higher than is the case with the Mafikeng campus (m=1.2, SD=.883, d=<0.001). This indicates that the marketing communication elements should be utilized more during campaigns on the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses.

The Potchefstroom campus (m=0.235, SD=0.228, d=<0.001) also values unique selling propositions higher that do the other two campuses. The Vaal Triangle campus (m=0.113, SD=0.148, d=<0.001) rates it also higher than is the case with the Mafikeng campus (m=0.102, SD=0.139, d=<0.001). This implies that a higher focus on unique selling propositions could be implemented on the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses.

5.9.2 Comparison of factors with home language

In this section the effect of the respondents' home language on their views regarding irregularly utilized electronic platform (Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest), established electronic platforms (website, Facebook), sponsored school events, recruitment activities, building relationships, marketing communication elements and unique selling propositions, was analysed. The following table illustrates the comparison by home language:

Table 5.28: Comparison factors by home language

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Effect size	
						1 with	10 with
F30 Irregularly utilized electronic platform (Twitter. YouTube. Pinterest)	English	115	2.6696	0.86066			0.31
	Northern Sotho	56	2.6768	0.82943		0.01	0.32
	Southern Sotho	75	2.4178	0.83325		0.29	0.63
	Tsonga	25	2.4900	0.82709		0.21	0.54
	Ndebele	11	2.8030	0.58603		0.16	0.17
	Setswana	234	2.6567	0.84250		0.01	0.34
	isiZulu	70	2.6048	0.85464		0.08	0.39
	isiXhosa	40	2.7017	0.76531		0.04	0.29
	Venda	13	2.8744	0.82587		0.24	0.08
	Afrikaans	724	2.9401	0.81165		0.31	
	Total	1363	2.7948	0.83731			
F30 Established electronic platforms (website. Facebook)	English	177	3.3870	0.61117			0.20
	Northern Sotho	88	3.3466	0.55376		0.07	0.29
	Southern Sotho	139	3.4532	0.69390		0.10	0.08
	Tsonga	42	3.1548	0.88681		0.26	0.40
	Ndebele	17	3.4706	0.51450		0.14	0.07
	Setswana	398	3.4146	0.68281		0.04	0.14
	isiZulu	115	3.3739	0.72802		0.02	0.18
	isiXhosa	71	3.4366	0.61487		0.08	0.12
	Venda	23	3.3696	0.71059		0.02	0.20
	Afrikaans	1027	3.5083	0.54270		0.20	
	Total	2097	3.4511	0.61422			
F28 Sponsored School events	English	143	2.6958	0.97911			0.17
	Northern Sotho	78	2.9047	0.91768		0.21	0.04
	Southern Sotho	114	2.9165	0.88551		0.23	0.05
	Tsonga	34	3.1892	0.72380		0.50	0.34
	Ndebele	16	2.7917	0.62805		0.10	0.08
	Setswana	326	3.0075	0.87904		0.32	0.15
	isiZulu	97	2.8210	0.95686		0.13	0.05
	isiXhosa	62	2.9435	0.82368		0.25	0.08
	Venda	18	3.3056	0.77807		0.62	0.47
	Afrikaans	811	2.8661	0.94407		0.17	

	Total	1699	2.8947	0.92179			
F24 Predominantly English media	English	142	2.3786	0.98442			0.42
	Northern Sotho	82	2.4728	0.98476		0.10	0.51
	Southern Sotho	118	2.5269	1.02574		0.14	0.55
	Tsonga	33	2.6322	0.90329		0.26	0.71
	Ndebele	15	2.7076	0.67429		0.33	0.79
	Setswana	377	2.6426	1.00345		0.26	0.67
	Isi Zulu	105	2.3105	1.00764		0.07	0.34
	isiXhosa	63	2.5749	0.98249		0.20	0.62
	Venda	20	2.8500	0.90990		0.48	0.95
	Afrikaans	623	1.9675	0.93309		0.42	
	Total	1578	2.3130	1.01081			
F25 Recruitment Activities	English	186	2.8662	0.76395			0.31
	Northern Sotho	96	2.7153	0.84798		0.18	0.46
	Southern Sotho	139	2.9715	0.83108		0.13	0.16
	Tsonga	40	2.9539	0.74177		0.11	0.20
	Ndebele	17	2.8782	0.73607		0.02	0.31
	Setswana	404	2.9132	0.88110		0.05	0.22
	isiZulu	123	2.7702	0.93604		0.10	0.36
	isiXhosa	74	2.9593	0.80192		0.12	0.18
	Venda	26	3.1172	0.82720		0.30	0.02
	Afrikaans	1062	3.1035	0.66650		0.31	
	Total	2167	2.9938	0.77165			
F16_23 Building relationships	English	231	3.3939	0.41400			0.45
	Northern Sotho	116	3.3973	0.39678		0.01	0.46
	Southern Sotho	178	3.5115	0.41850		0.28	0.16
	Tsonga	52	3.4825	0.33816		0.21	0.26
	Ndebele	21	3.4660	0.31047		0.17	0.31
	Setswana	515	3.4661	0.40795		0.17	0.28
	isiZulu	161	3.4758	0.44880		0.18	0.23
	isiXhosa	91	3.4715	0.38245		0.19	0.28
	Venda	37	3.3673	0.62229		0.04	0.34
	Afrikaans	1204	3.5783	0.36421		0.45	
	Total	2606	3.5113	0.39822			
F14_Marketing Communication elements	English	250	1.7360	1.14873			0.35
	Northern Sotho	126	1.3333	0.80994		0.35	0.60
	Southern Sotho	198	1.4242	0.83199		0.27	0.54
	Tsonga	58	1.3103	0.86261		0.37	0.61
	Ndebele	26	1.4615	0.94787		0.24	0.52
	Setswana	574	1.3449	0.91878		0.34	0.59
	isiZulu	183	1.1967	0.64159		0.47	0.69
	isiXhosa	98	1.3673	0.94583		0.32	0.58
	Venda	48	1.1875	0.67339		0.48	0.69
	Afrikaans	1279	2.2979	1.60582		0.35	
	Total	2840	1.8025	1.35158			

F7_Unique selling propositions	English	250	0.2150	0.21987			0.15
	Northern Sotho	126	0.1389	0.15829		0.35	0.48
	Southern Sotho	198	0.1307	0.15594		0.38	0.51
	Tsonga	58	0.1422	0.18651		0.33	0.46
	Ndebele	26	0.1827	0.20685		0.15	0.29
	Setswana	574	0.1257	0.16137		0.41	0.53
	isiZulu	183	0.1318	0.13600		0.38	0.51
	isiXhosa	98	0.1301	0.13894		0.39	0.51
	Venda	48	0.1302	0.10619		0.39	0.51
	Afrikaans	1279	0.2508	0.23477		0.15	
	Total	2840	0.1923	0.20873			

Table 5.28 above reflects the differences among home language and some of the factors. It emerged that Southern Sotho- (m=2.41, SD=0.833) and Xitsonga- (m=2.49, SD=0.827) speaking respondents value *irregularly utilized electronic platforms* less than do the other language-speaking groups. Xitsonga-speaking respondents also value *established electronic platforms* less (m=3.15, SD=0.886), but regarding *sponsored school events* they value higher than do English-speaking respondents (m=3.18, SD=0.723). Venda- (m=3.30, SD=0.778) speaking respondents, however, value *sponsored school events* higher than do all the other groups. This implies that Xitsonga- and Northern Sotho-speaking students are not strongly attracted to electronic platforms, but would approve of sponsored school events.

All the groups highly value *predominantly English media* except for isiZulu- (m=2.31, SD=1.00) and Afrikaans- (m=1.96, SD=0.933) speaking respondents. The Afrikaans group also predominantly values English media less than do English-speaking respondents, compared to the Venda group (m=2.85, SD=0.909) that values the factor higher than do English-speaking respondents. It can thus be said that except in the case of the Afrikaans group, the English media are preferred.

All the groups regard *recruitment activities* important except for the Northern Sotho- (m=2.71, SD=0.847) and isiZulu- (m=2.77, SD=0.936) speaking respondents who consider it less important. The same can be said of *building relationships* where the English- (m=3.39, SD=0.414) and Northern Sotho- (m=3.39, SD=0.396) speaking respondents consider it less important than do the other groups. Afrikaans- (m=3.57, SD=0.364) speaking respondents consider it more important than does the English-speaking group. The assumption can thus be made that recruitment activities such as school visits, campus tours and social media are important for building relationships with prospective students – especially with the Afrikaans-speaking learners.

The *marketing communication elements* as a factor are highly valued by all the groups with English- (m=1.73, SD=1.148) and Afrikaans- (m=2.29, SD=1.605) speaking respondents who value it highest. The Afrikaans group also value it higher than do the English-speaking respondents. The same pattern applies to the factor of *unique selling propositions* which is valued highly by all the groups, with English- (m=0.215,

SD=0.218) and Afrikaans- (m=0.250, SD=0.234) speaking respondents valuing it highest. The Afrikaans group also value it higher than does the English group. This implies that the marketing communication elements such as advertising, personal selling, digital media and public relations, to name but a few, will be successful mediums for communicating the unique selling propositions to prospective students – especially to the Afrikaans audience.

5.9.3   Comparison of factors with province of residence

Table 5.29 reports significant differences among province of residence and the different factors. It emerged that the respondents of the Eastern Cape (m=2.33, SD=0.805) value *unsought sources of information* such as Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest less important than do the other provinces. The Eastern Cape (m=3.28, SD=0.595) also values *desired sources of information* such as the website and Facebook pages of the university to be less important than do the other provinces. It also indicates that the Eastern Cape (m=3.37, SG=0.444) was less *exposed to information* than is the case with the other provinces. Thus it can be concluded that the Eastern Cape generally does not value electronic media platforms as sources of information as high as the case is with other provinces, which explains why they were also less exposed to information than were the other provinces.

With regard to the *irregularly utilized electronic platforms*, the Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and the North West province valued it lower than did the other provinces with North West (m=2.74, SD=0.837) valuing it lowest of all. This implies that Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest as electronic platforms are not the preferred mediums, compared to the value attached to it by the Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Free State and KZN provinces.

The Eastern Cape again, indicated that they do not value *sponsored school events* (m=2.39, SD=0.992) and *non-sponsored school events* (m=1.80, SD=0.980) as high as did the other provinces, which can indicate that they were less exposed to these type of activities.

The section on *direct contact with students* is valued lower by Gauteng (m=3.17, SD=0.606) and Limpopo (m=3.14, SD=0.809) than by the other provinces, which can be interpreted as them having been less exposed to direct contact such as school visits and personal visits by a marketer than was the case with the other provinces.

The North West province (m=2.53, SD=1.029) and Northern Cape (m=2.54, SD=1.047) attached a higher value to *predominantly English media* than did the other provinces, illustrating that the English media are more preferred.

Table 5.29: Comparison by province of residence

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-Value	Effect sizes							
						1 with	2 with	3 with	4 with	5 with	6 with	7 with	8 with
F32 Unsought sources of information (Twitter. YouTube. Pinterest)	Northern Cape	50	3.0633	0.78292									
	Eastern Cape	15	2.3333	0.80549		0.91							
	Western Cape	52	3.0304	0.78591		0.04	0.87						
	Free State	109	2.9159	0.90441		0.16	0.64	0.13					
	KZN	37	2.8919	0.81977		0.21	0.68	0.17	0.03				
	Gauteng	470	2.9096	0.92787		0.17	0.62	0.13	0.01	0.02			
	Mpumalanga	86	2.8517	0.96036		0.22	0.54	0.19	0.07	0.04	0.06		
	North West	393	2.9722	0.83915		0.11	0.76	0.07	0.06	0.10	0.07	0.13	
	Limpopo	91	2.8782	0.98572		0.19	0.55	0.15	0.04	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.10
	Total	1303	2.9266	0.89258									
F32 Desired sources of information (Website. Facebook)	Northern Cape	96	3.5590	0.55461									
	Eastern Cape	33	3.2828	0.59583		0.46							
	Western Cape	81	3.4588	0.56121		0.18	0.30						
	Free State	175	3.5095	0.53538		0.09	0.38	0.09					
	KZN	63	3.5529	0.57721		0.01	0.45	0.16	0.08				
	Gauteng	725	3.4940	0.58083		0.11	0.35	0.06	0.03	0.10			
	Mpumalanga	143	3.5210	0.57049		0.07	0.40	0.11	0.02	0.06	0.05		
	North West	637	3.4898	0.59216		0.12	0.35	0.05	0.03	0.11	0.01	0.05	
	Limpopo	140	3.4512	0.64208		0.17	0.26	0.01	0.09	0.16	0.07	0.11	0.06
	Total	2093	3.4931	0.58245									
F31 Exposure to information	Northern Cape	96	3.5686	0.52910									
	Eastern Cape	30	3.3798	0.44454		0.36							
	Western Cape	82	3.4733	0.59404		0.16	0.16						
	Free State	177	3.5743	0.50871		0.01	0.38	0.17					

	Region	N	Mean	Std Dev									
	KZN	62	3.6031	0.59544		0.06	0.38	0.22	0.05				
	Gauteng	717	3.5330	0.56389		0.06	0.27	0.10	0.07	0.12			
	Mpumalanga	139	3.5761	0.55413		0.01	0.35	0.17	0.00	0.05	0.08		
	North West	630	3.5160	0.58636		0.09	0.23	0.07	0.10	0.15	0.03	0.10	
	Limpopo	139	3.4773	0.60627		0.15	0.16	0.01	0.16	0.21	0.09	0.16	0.06
	Total	2072	3.5297	0.56780									
F30 Irregularly utilized electronic platforms (Twitter. YouTube. Pinterest)	Northern Cape	56	2.8958	0.87880									
	Eastern Cape	21	2.8730	0.71861		0.03							
	Western Cape	56	3.0988	0.67710		0.23	0.31						
	Free State	117	2.8464	0.87984		0.06	0.03	0.29					
	KZN	41	2.8740	0.78243		0.02	0.00	0.29	0.03				
	Gauteng	496	2.7706	0.83489		0.14	0.12	0.39	0.09	0.12			
	Mpumalanga	87	2.7557	0.90350		0.16	0.13	0.38	0.10	0.13	0.02		
	North West	393	2.7456	0.83719		0.17	0.15	0.42	0.11	0.15	0.03	0.01	
	Limpopo	91	2.7941	0.87850		0.12	0.09	0.35	0.06	0.09	0.03	0.04	0.06
	Total	1358	2.7939	0.84091									
F28 Sponsored school events	Northern Cape	80	2.9979	0.88251									
	Eastern Cape	28	2.3988	0.99209		0.60							
	Western Cape	58	2.7448	0.94464		0.27	0.35						
	Free State	144	2.8803	0.97322		0.12	0.49	0.14					
	KZN	53	2.7648	1.06816		0.22	0.34	0.02	0.11				
	Gauteng	589	2.8276	0.94535		0.18	0.43	0.09	0.05	0.06			
	Mpumalanga	120	2.9317	0.91198		0.07	0.54	0.20	0.05	0.16	0.11		
	North West	527	3.0159	0.83460		0.02	0.62	0.29	0.14	0.24	0.20	0.09	
	Limpopo	116	3.0032	0.89745		0.01	0.61	0.27	0.13	0.22	0.19	0.08	0.01
	Total	1715	2.9053	0.91624									
F28 None-Sponsored school events	Northern Cape	44	2.3864	1.08297									
	Eastern Cape	21	1.8095	0.98077		0.53							
	Western Cape	47	2.4043	1.15457		0.02	0.52						

	Region	N	Mean	Std									
	Free State	98	2.2551	1.11514		0.12	0.40	0.13					
	KZ-N	39	2.2308	1.06281		0.14	0.40	0.15	0.02				
	Gauteng	416	2.2043	1.04551		0.17	0.38	0.17	0.05	0.02			
	Mpumalanga	73	2.3425	1.12075		0.04	0.48	0.05	0.08	0.10	0.12		
	North West	331	2.1148	1.05549		0.25	0.29	0.25	0.13	0.11	0.08	0.20	
	Limpopo	74	2.1081	1.04117		0.26	0.29	0.26	0.13	0.12	0.09	0.21	0.01
	Total	1143	2.1942	1.06566									
F27 Direct contact to students	Northern Cape	99	3.4116	0.69035									
	Eastern Cape	32	3.0339	0.75694		0.50							
	Western Cape	88	3.3532	0.54404		0.08	0.42						
	Free State	187	3.2946	0.61900		0.17	0.34	0.09					
	KZN	64	3.4036	0.60662		0.01	0.49	0.08	0.18				
	Gauteng	740	3.1711	0.71204		0.34	0.18	0.26	0.17	0.33			
	Mpumalanga	150	3.2644	0.68499		0.21	0.30	0.13	0.04	0.20	0.13		
	North West	648	3.2220	0.68906		0.27	0.25	0.19	0.11	0.26	0.07	0.06	
	Limpopo	146	3.1450	0.80925		0.33	0.14	0.26	0.18	0.32	0.03	0.15	0.10
	Total	2154	3.2252	0.69627									
F24_26 Predominantly English media	Northern Cape	63	2.5491	1.04744									
	Eastern Cape	25	2.0605	1.00659		0.47							
	Western Cape	54	2.0340	0.89848		0.49	0.03						
	Free State	121	2.2202	1.07105		0.31	0.15	0.17					
	KZN	46	2.1884	0.90769		0.34	0.13	0.17	0.03				
	Gauteng	534	2.2093	0.96838		0.32	0.15	0.18	0.01	0.02			
	Mpumalanga	108	2.2589	1.00103		0.28	0.20	0.22	0.04	0.07	0.05		
	North West	535	2.5378	1.02943		0.01	0.46	0.49	0.30	0.34	0.32	0.27	
	Limpopo	114	2.3281	0.99019		0.21	0.27	0.30	0.10	0.14	0.12	0.07	0.20
	Total	1600	2.3363	1.01178									
	Northern Cape	100	3.1588	0.71055									
	Eastern Cape	34	2.7417	0.86580		0.48							

		N	Mean	Std Dev									
F25 Recruitment Activities	Western Cape	88	2.9541	0.72694		0.28	0.25						
	Free State	185	3.1164	0.73231		0.06	0.43	0.22					
	KZ-N	64	2.8039	0.79582		0.45	0.07	0.19	0.39				
	Gauteng	749	2.9497	0.78453		0.27	0.24	0.01	0.21	0.18			
	Mpumalanga	153	2.9784	0.79450		0.23	0.27	0.03	0.17	0.22	0.04		
	North West	657	3.0491	0.76995		0.14	0.36	0.12	0.09	0.31	0.13	0.09	
	Limpopo	150	2.9247	0.78597		0.30	0.21	0.04	0.24	0.15	0.03	0.07	0.16
	Total	2180	2.9963	0.77562									
F26 Predominantly Afrikaans Media	Northern Cape	84	2.7087	0.85088									
	Eastern Cape	30	2.1788	0.81567		0.62							
	Western Cape	80	2.4356	0.74683		0.32	0.31						
	Free State	161	2.5792	0.92304		0.14	0.43	0.16					
	KZ-N	54	2.2354	0.84245		0.56	0.07	0.24	0.37				
	Gauteng	665	2.4797	0.85941		0.27	0.35	0.05	0.11	0.28			
	Mpumalanga	133	2.5367	0.85628		0.20	0.42	0.12	0.05	0.35	0.07		
	North West	577	2.6029	0.85220		0.12	0.50	0.20	0.03	0.43	0.14	0.08	
	Limpopo	123	2.4751	0.88097		0.27	0.34	0.04	0.11	0.27	0.01	0.07	0.15
	Total	1907	2.5257	0.86158									
F14_Marketing communication elements	Northern Cape	139	1.5827	1.08280									
	Eastern Cape	38	1.8684	1.29805		0.22							
	Western Cape	101	2.2772	1.34995		0.51	0.30						
	Free State	231	2.0260	1.58230		0.28	0.10	0.16					
	KZ-N	99	1.7475	1.26445		0.13	0.09	0.39	0.18				
	Gauteng	975	1.7938	1.30611		0.16	0.06	0.36	0.15	0.04			
	Mpumalanga	207	1.7101	1.25142		0.10	0.12	0.42	0.20	0.03	0.06		
	North West	877	1.7184	1.39938		0.10	0.11	0.40	0.19	0.02	0.05	0.01	
	Limpopo	209	1.6364	1.18963		0.05	0.18	0.47	0.25	0.09	0.12	0.06	0.06
	Total	2876	1.7782	1.34313									
	Northern Cape	139	0.1745	0.18097									

	Eastern Cape	38	0.2467	0.20853		0.35							
	Western Cape	101	0.2450	0.21500		0.33	0.01						
	Free State	231	0.2002	0.21546		0.12	0.22	0.21					
F7_Unique selling propositions	KZ-N	99	0.2210	0.23202		0.20	0.11	0.10	0.09				
	Gauteng	975	0.1924	0.20533		0.09	0.26	0.24	0.04	0.12			
	Mpumalanga	207	0.2349	0.23173		0.26	0.05	0.04	0.15	0.06	0.18		
	North West	877	0.1622	0.19653		0.06	0.41	0.39	0.18	0.25	0.15	0.31	
	Limpopo	209	0.1890	0.19844		0.07	0.28	0.26	0.05	0.14	0.02	0.20	0.14
	Total	2876	0.1893	0.20645									

The table also illustrated that the Eastern Cape (m=2.74, SG=0.865) considered recruitment activities to be less important than did the other provinces. This again can be interpreted as that they were less exposed to these activities than was the case with the other provinces.

The Northern Cape (m=2.70, SD=0.850) demonstrate a more positive attitude towards *predominantly Afrikaans media* than is found among the other provinces. This can be expected, since Afrikaans is the home language of most of the communities in that region.

With regard to Marketing Communication elements, the Western Cape (m=2.27, SD=1.349) value it highest. It can thus be assumed that they have experienced the marketing communication elements more often, compared to the other provinces.

The Eastern Cape (m=0.246, SD=0.208) also scored highest with regard to the unique selling proposition compared to the scores of the other provinces. This implies that they are more aware of what NWU offers than is the case with the awareness of the other provinces.

5.9.4 Comparison of factors with financial aid

Table 5.30 reflects significant differences among financial aid and several factors. It appears that those students studying with a university loan (m=3.60) value the fact that NWU *understands their needs* higher than do those who study with a bursary from an employer. Individuals whose studies are financed by their parents (m=3.39) are self-paying (m=3.37) or who are uncertain (m=3.30), are less positive that NWU understands their needs than do those who study with a university loan. This implies that students who study with a university loan feel that NWU understands their needs.

It also appears that those students whose studies are paid by their parents (m=3.61), are self-paying (m=3.61) or are uncertain (m=3.60), felt less positive that *NWU was the right choice,* than can be said of those students who study with a university loan m=3.80). This shows that individuals who study with a university loan feel that they have made the right choice.

Students who are uncertain (m=3.29) about how their studies will be financed, are less optimistic about the *services provided by the admissions and recruitment offices* than are those who study with a university loan (m=3.53). The implication is that those who study with a university loan are satisfied with the services provided by the admission and recruitment offices. This can also be said of students who are uncertain (m=3.56) about how their studies will be financed, since they are less likely to *recommend NWU* to family or friends than is the case with those who study with a university loan (m=3.77).

With regard to *unsought sources of information*, the table indicates that students who study with a university loan (m=3.18) are more convinced that Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest are not popular sources of information than are those who study with a merit bursary (m=2.78). Respondents who study with a

merit bursary (m=2.78) or with a bank loan (m=2.80) are less convinced that Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest are popular sources of information than are those who study with a university loan, which is also the case with respondents whose studies are being paid by their parents (m=2.86). Individuals who study with an NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme) loan (m=3.16) are more convinced that Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest are not *popular sources of information* than are those who study with a merit bursary (m=2.78) or with a bank loan (m=2.80), or those whose parents are paying for their studies (m=2.86). Self-paying (m=2.77) students are also less convinced that Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest are popular sources of information than are those who study with a university loan or an NSFAS loan.

It is also apparent that NWU website and Facebook pages as *desired sources of information* are valued higher by students who study with a university loan (M=3.68) than those who study with a bursary from an employer (m=3.42) value it. Self-paying students (m=3.41) and those whose studies are financed by parents (m=3.45) place a lesser value on the website and Facebook pages than do those with a university loan.

It is again evident that students who study with a university loan (m=2.98) do not *utilize Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest on a regular basis* as opposed to those students who study with a bursary from an employer (m=2.57) and who are uncertain about finances (m=2.59). Individuals with a university loan (m=3.63) experience NWU website and Facebook pages as *established electronic platforms,* whereas those who study with a bursary from an employer (M=3.35) or with a merit bursary (m=3.44) do not experience it likewise.

Students who study with a university loan (m=3.32) are also more aware of *sponsored school events* than are those who study with a bursary from an employer (m=2.75) or with a merit bursary (m=2.88). Individuals whose studies are financed by their parents (m=2.78) are less aware of sponsored school events than is the case with those studying with a university loan, which is also the case with self-paying students (m=2.92) and those who are uncertain (m=2.89). Respondents who are studying with an NSFAS loan are more aware of sponsored school events than are those whose parents are paying for their studies.

Table 5.30: Comparison by financial aid

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-Value	1 with	2 with	3 with	4 with	5 with	6 with	7 with
Q17 NWU understand my needs	Bursary from employer	75	3.37	0.514								
	Merit bursary	95	3.47	0.650		0.15						
	Bank loan	201	3.42	0.570		0.09	0.08					
	University loan	30	3.60	0.498		0.44	0.19	0.31				
	Parents	1167	3.39	0.550		0.03	0.13	0.06	0.39			
	NSFAS	408	3.45	0.568		0.14	0.03	0.05	0.26	0.12		
	Self-paying	142	3.37	0.614		0.00	0.15	0.08	0.37	0.02	0.13	
	Uncertain	575	3.30	0.634		0.12	0.27	0.20	0.47	0.14	0.24	0.12
	Total	2693	3.39	0.581								
Q19 The NWU was the right choice	Bursary from employer	74	3.66	0.476								
	Merit bursary	94	3.70	0.583		0.07						
	Bank loan	204	3.67	0.501		0.02	0.05					
	University loan	30	3.80	0.407		0.29	0.17	0.26				
	Parents	1164	3.61	0.536		0.09	0.16	0.11	0.35			
	NSFAS	407	3.73	0.451		0.14	0.04	0.11	0.16	0.22		
	Self-paying	140	3.61	0.531		0.09	0.15	0.11	0.35	0.00	0.21	
	Uncertain	571	3.60	0.552		0.12	0.18	0.14	0.37	0.03	0.24	0.03
	Total	2684	3.64	0.525								
Q22 Services provided by the admissions and recruitment office	Bursary from employer	76	3.43	0.639								
	Merit bursary	95	3.41	0.707		0.03						
	Bank loan	203	3.46	0.623		0.04	0.07					
	University loan	30	3.53	0.681		0.15	0.17	0.11				
	Parents	1167	3.42	0.608		0.02	0.02	0.06	0.16			
	NSFAS	407	3.42	0.672		0.02	0.01	0.06	0.17	0.00		

		N	Mean	SD		c1	c2	c3	c4	c5	c6	c7
	Self-paying	141	3.44	0.637		0.01	0.04	0.03	0.14	0.03	0.03	
	Uncertain	575	3.29	0.697		0.20	0.17	0.24	0.35	0.19	0.18	0.21
	Total	2694	3.40	0.647								
Q23 Recommending the NWU	Bursary from employer	76	3.63	0.512								
	Merit bursary	96	3.63	0.603		0.01						
	Bank loan	203	3.59	0.568		0.07	0.06					
	University loan	30	3.77	0.430		0.26	0.24	0.31				
	Parents	1169	3.61	0.524		0.03	0.02	0.04	0.29			
	NSFAS	412	3.65	0.517		0.04	0.04	0.10	0.22	0.07		
	Self-paying	140	3.64	0.498		0.01	0.02	0.08	0.26	0.04	0.03	
	Uncertain	579	3.56	0.540		0.13	0.11	0.05	0.38	0.10	0.17	0.14
	Total	2705	3.61	0.531								
F32 Unsought sources of information (Twitter. YouTube. Pinterest)	Bursary from employer	39	3.0897	0.84970								
	Merit bursary	46	2.7899	0.81190		0.35						
	Bank loan	102	2.8064	0.95030		0.30	0.02					
	University loan	16	**3.1875**	0.85391		0.11	0.47	0.40				
	Parents	623	2.8604	0.88270		0.26	0.08	0.06	0.37			
	NSFAS	189	3.1658	0.80469		0.09	0.46	0.38	0.03	0.35		
	Self-paying	71	2.7782	0.97243		0.32	0.01	0.03	0.42	0.08	0.40	
	Uncertain	245	2.9384	0.92675		0.16	0.16	0.14	0.27	0.08	0.25	0.16
	Total	1331	2.9178	0.89312								
F32 Desired sources of information (Website. Facebook)	Bursary from employer	58	3.4253	0.67189								
	Merit bursary	78	3.5128	0.55229		0.13						
	Bank loan	172	3.5068	0.52127		0.12	0.01					
	University loan	24	3.6806	0.51527		0.38	0.30	0.33				
	Parents	988	3.4553	0.57530		0.04	0.10	0.09	0.39			
	NSFAS	307	3.5679	0.57246		0.21	0.10	0.11	0.20	0.20		
	Self-paying	114	3.4167	0.64502		0.01	0.15	0.14	0.41	0.06	0.23	
	Uncertain	414	3.5282	0.59841		0.15	0.03	0.04	0.25	0.12	0.07	0.17

Category	Source	N	Mean	SD							
	Total	2155	3.4912	0.58180							
F30 Irregularly utilized electronic platforms (Twitter. YouTube. Pinterest)	Bursary from employer	34	2.5735	0.97803							
	Merit bursary	53	2.7805	0.76938	0.21						
	Bank loan	109	2.8312	0.84691	0.26	0.06					
	University loan	15	2.9867	0.90780	0.42	0.23	0.17				
	Parents	681	2.8465	0.82407	0.28	0.08	0.02	0.15			
	NSFAS	171	2.8676	0.80549	0.30	0.11	0.04	0.13	0.03		
	Self-paying	76	2.7627	0.83949	0.19	0.02	0.08	0.25	0.10	0.12	
	Uncertain	250	2.5951	0.86382	0.02	0.21	0.27	0.43	0.29	0.32	0.19
	Total	1389	2.7904	0.83907							
F30 Established electronic platforms (Website. Facebook)	Bursary from employer	62	3.3548	0.69770							
	Merit bursary	81	3.4444	0.53033	0.13						
	Bank loan	169	3.5059	0.53727	0.22	0.11					
	University loan	23	3.6304	0.50492	0.40	0.35	0.23				
	Parents	998	3.4699	0.58748	0.16	0.04	0.06	0.27			
	NSFAS	305	3.4820	0.61143	0.18	0.06	0.04	0.24	0.02		
	Self-paying	111	3.3739	0.66902	0.03	0.11	0.20	0.38	0.14	0.16	
	Uncertain	415	3.3855	0.67890	0.04	0.09	0.18	0.36	0.12	0.14	0.02
	Total	2164	3.4508	0.61157							
F28 Sponsored School events	Bursary from employer	50	2.7500	1.12851							
	Merit bursary	64	2.8846	0.86857	0.12						
	Bank loan	136	3.0147	0.90460	0.23	0.14					
	University loan	21	3.3254	1.06911	0.51	0.41	0.29				
	Parents	798	2.7840	0.94509	0.03	0.11	0.24	0.51			
	NSFAS	273	3.1283	0.75345	0.34	0.28	0.13	0.18	0.36		
	Self-paying	93	2.9233	0.91811	0.15	0.04	0.10	0.38	0.15	0.22	
	Uncertain	316	2.8958	0.91902	0.13	0.01	0.13	0.40	0.12	0.25	0.03
	Total	1751	2.8924	0.92112							
	Bursary from employer	46	2.4761	1.06210							

Factor	Funding source	N	Mean	Std. Dev							
F24 Predominantly English media	Merit bursary	66	2.4481	0.98462	0.03						
	Bank loan	110	2.0970	0.98649	0.36	0.36					
	University loan	22	2.6394	1.07273	0.15	0.18	0.51				
	Parents	698	2.1518	0.98578	0.31	0.30	0.06	0.45			
	NSFAS	273	**2.7483**	0.98445	0.26	0.30	0.66	0.10	0.61		
	Self-paying	88	2.2727	0.98169	0.19	0.18	0.18	0.34	0.12	0.48	
	Uncertain	331	2.3622	1.00540	0.11	0.09	0.26	0.26	0.21	0.38	0.09
	Total	1634	2.3246	1.01515							
F14_Marketing Communication elements	Bursary from employer	88	1.7273	1.44419							
	Merit bursary	104	1.9135	1.64353	0.11						
	Bank loan	223	**2.2108**	1.61510	0.30	0.18					
	University loan	34	1.3529	0.88360	0.26	0.34	0.53				
	Parents	1261	1.9278	1.40194	0.14	0.01	0.18	0.41			
	NSFAS	466	1.3369	0.84511	0.27	0.35	0.54	0.02	0.42		
	Self-paying	165	1.8788	1.36948	0.10	0.02	0.21	0.38	0.03	0.40	
	Uncertain	640	1.6031	1.19152	0.09	0.19	0.38	0.21	0.23	0.22	0.20
	Total	2981	1.7712	1.33084							
F7_Unique selling propositions	Bursary from employer	88	.1776	0.21834							
	Merit bursary	104	.1839	0.19780	0.03						
	Bank loan	223	**.2517**	0.23684	0.31	0.29					
	University loan	34	.1434	0.18498	0.16	0.20	0.46				
	Parents	1261	.2195	0.22089	0.19	0.16	0.14	0.34			
	NSFAS	466	.1280	0.15169	0.23	0.28	0.52	0.08	0.41		
	Self-paying	165	.1864	0.20917	0.04	0.01	0.28	0.21	0.15	0.28	
	Uncertain	640	.1455	0.17964	0.15	0.19	0.45	0.01	0.33	0.10	0.20
	Total	2981	.1865	0.20628							

It also emerged that respondents studying with an NSFAS loan (m=2.74) are much more prone to using the *English media* than are those who study with a bank loan (m=2.09) and whose parents finance their studies (m=2.15). Respondents who are self-paying (m=2.27) and uncertain (m=2.36, are less prone to using the English media than are those who study with an NSFAS loan. Respondents who study with a bank loan (m=2.09) are also less prone to using the English media than are those who study with a bursary from an employer (m=2.47) or with a merit bursary (m=2.44).

The table also indicates that respondents who study with an NSFAS loan (m=1.33) are less aware of the *marketing communication elements* than are those who study with a merit bursary or a bank loan (m=2.21) or whose parents (m=1.92) finance their studies. Those individuals studying with a university loan (m=1.35) are also less aware of marketing communication elements than are those studying with a bank loan (m=2.21). Respondents whose parents (m=1.92) pay for their studies and those who are self-paying (m=1.87) are more aware of the marketing communication elements than are those who study with a university loan (m=1.35).

Finally, it can also be stated that those respondents who study with a university loan (m=0.184) or an NSFAS loan (m=0.128) and who are uncertain (m=.145) are less aware of the *unique selling propositions* than are those who study with a bank loan (m=0.251). The respondents who are studying with an NSFAS loan are less aware of the unique selling propositions than are those whose parents are financing their studies.

The **ANOVA** can thus be summarized as follows: it illustrated that, compared to campuses, there are significant differences among language spoken at the three campuses and the factors. The Mafikeng campus values English higher than do the Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle campuses. The Vaal Triangle campus also values English higher than is the case with the Potchefstroom campus. This implies a stronger focus on the English media when launching campaigns at the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses. The Potchefstroom campus also rates marketing communication elements as a source of information higher than is the case with the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses, indicating that the marketing communication elements should be utilized more often during campaigns on the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses. The Potchefstroom campus also values unique selling propositions higher that do the other two campuses, which implies that a stronger focus on unique selling propositions could be implemented on the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses which should form part of the marketing communication plan.

With regard to the comparison with home language, it also emerged that Xitsonga- and Northern Sotho-speaking respondents are not strongly attracted to electronic platforms, but would approve of sponsored school events. Except for the Afrikaans group, the English media are preferred. Recruitment activities such as school visits, campus tours and social media are important for building relationships with

prospective students – especially with the Afrikaans-speaking learners. The marketing communication elements such as advertising, personal selling, digital media and public relations, to name but a few, will be successful mediums to communicate the unique selling propositions to prospective students – especially to the Afrikaans audience.

When comparing the province of residence it showed that the respondents of the Eastern Cape do not value electronic media platforms as sources of information as highly as do those from other provinces, which explains why they were also less exposed to information than the participants from other provinces. It can also be attributed to the fact that the Eastern Cape province is more rural and remote, 3G connection and Wi-Fi is not readily available or network connection is poor. Recruitment activities in the marketing communication plan should therefore focus more on personal visits and career exhibitions in this province. As the number of students from the Eastern Cape are less than 1% it is an area that could be explored more by the Marketing and Recruitment department.

Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and the North West provinces are less interested in Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest as electronic platforms, as opposed to the Northern Cape, Western Cape, Free State and KZ-N that indicated that they have a stronger interest in the mentioned electronic platforms. Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest as social networks for marketing communication purposes could thus be utilised more in the last-mentioned provinces.

The Eastern Cape was also less exposed to sponsored school events and the Gauteng and Limpopo provinces are less exposed to direct contact such as school visits and personal visits by a marketer than were the other provinces. This can be attributed to the fact that these provinces with the exception of Gauteng are far from one of the NWU's campuses and that recruitment activities are more focused on career exhibitions in these areas.

English media are also preferred more by the North West and Northern Cape province. This can be contributed to the fact that especially on the Mafikeng campus, 58.4% of respondents indicated that Setswana is their home language and that English as language of communication other than Setswana are their first choice. Advertising campaigns in these provinces should therefore be more focused on the English media.

With regard to Marketing Communication elements, the Western Cape has experienced the marketing communication elements more than was the case with the other provinces. This is significant for the Marketing and Recruitment department in that it shows that the Western Cape is more receptive for recruitment activities based on the marketing communication elements. The Eastern Cape values the unique selling proposition of NWU more than it is valued by other provinces, which implies that they are more aware of what NWU offers.

Comparisons with regard to financial aid also showed significant differences. Respondents who study with a university loan feel that NWU understands their needs, that they have made the right choice in choosing NWU, that they are satisfied with the services provided by the admission and recruitment offices, that they will recommend NWU to family and friends, and that they are more aware of sponsored school events. It can also be stated that Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest are not popular sources of information. An assumption can thus be made that students studying with a university loan are more loyal to the university and that more such loans if possible should be made available.

Self-paying students and those whose studies are financed by parents place a lesser value on the website and Facebook pages as sources of information than do those with a university loan. As these students' financial obligations are more or less secured, it can contribute to the fact that they do not need to explore the website for information regarding bursaries and loans.

Students studying through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) are much more prone to using the *English media* than are those who study with a bank loan, whose parents finance their studies or are self-paying students. NSFAS students are also less aware of marketing communication elements than those who study with a merit bursary or with a bank loan. As specified earlier, it can be said that these students are mostly Setswana-speaking and that English as language of communication other than Setswana are their first choice.

Respondents whose parents pay for their studies and those who are self-paying are more aware of the marketing communication elements than are those who study with a university loan, which again can be attributed to the fact that their financial obligations are more or less secured.

Those respondents who study with a university loan, an NSFAS loan and who are uncertain are less aware of the *unique selling propositions* than those who study with a bank loan. The respondents who are studying with an NSFAS loan are less aware of the unique selling propositions than those whose parents are financing their studies. This gives an indication that for those respondents it is not important and that the only thing that matters is to secure a loan that will enable them to register.

5.10   CROSS-TABULATIONS BETWEEN VARIABLES

Where frequency tables are used to describe a single categorical variable, cross-tabulation (crosstabs), also known as a contingency table, is used to describe the relation between two categorical variables. Crosstabs depicts the number of times each of the possible category combinations occurs in the sample data. Cramer's V was used to measure the strength of the association between one nominal variable with another nominal variable, giving a value between 0 and +1. Statistical significance is represented by the **p-value.** Table 5.31 provides an interpretation of the practical significance of the effect sizes in a cross-tabulation table.

Table 5.31: Practical significance of the effect sizes in a cross-tabulation table

Effect sizes	Interpretation
p = 0.1	Small effect
p = 0.3	Medium effect
p = 0.5	Large effect

5.10.1 Association of campus with family member who had studied at NWU

Table 5.32: Association of campus with family member who had studied at NWU

Crosstab			A family member also studied there		
			0	1	Total
Campus	Potch	Count	1342	388	1730
		% within campus	77.6%	22.4%	100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	446	32	478
		% within campus	93.3%	6.7%	100.0%
	Mafikeng	Count	932	63	995
		% within campus	93.7%	6.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	2720	483	3203
		% within campus	84.9%	15.1%	100.0%
		Value	Chi-square test		
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.223	p-value		
	Cramer's V	0.223	0.000		
N of Valid Cases		3 203			

Table 5.32 above shows the influence a family member who had studied at NWU has on choosing a university to attend in relation to the three campuses. The Potchefstroom campus has a stronger association (22.4%) with family members who had studied at the campus than is the case with the Mafikeng (6.3%) and Vaal Triangle (6.7%) campuses. This implies that their choice of university is being influenced more by a family member who had also previously studied there than is the case with the two other campuses.

5.10.2 Association by distance from NWU

Table 5.33: Association by distance from NWU

			It is close-by and I can study from home		Total
			0	**5**	**Total**
Campus	Potch	Count	1583	147	1730
		% within campus	91.5%	8.5%	100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	336	142	478
		% within campus	70.3%	29.7%	100.0%
	Mafikeng	Count	906	89	995
		% within campus	91.1%	8.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	2825	378	3203
		% within campus	88.2%	11.8%	100.0%

It is close-by and I can study from home		Value	Approximate Significance		
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.233	0.000		
	Cramer's V	0.233	0.000		
N of Valid Cases		3 203			

From table 5.33 above it emerges that the Vaal Triangle campus (29.7%) has a higher association with the distance the campus is situated from place of residence than is the case with the Mafikeng campus (8.9%) and with the Potchefstroom campus (8.5%).   It can thus be said that at the Mafikeng and Potchefstroom campuses students do not regard distance as a major concern in choosing a university than is the case with the Vaal Triangle campus.

5.10.3 Association with student life

Table 5.34: Association with student life

			Student life		Total
			0	**12**	**Total**
Campus	Potch	Count	1242	488	1730
		% within campus	71.8%	28.2%	100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	447	31	478
		% within campus	93.5%	6.5%	100.0%
	Mafikeng	Count	942	53	995
		% within campus	94.7%	5.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	2631	572	3203
		% within campus	82.1%	17.9%	100.0%
		Value	Approximate Significance		

Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.293	0.000		
	Cramer's V	0.293	0.000		
N of Valid Cases		3 203			

Association with student life is very high on the Potchefstroom campus (28.2%), as indicated in Table 5.34 above, compared to that of the Mafikeng campus (5.3%) and of Vaal Triangle campus (6.5%). It can thus be assumed that student life plays a much stronger role when it comes to choosing a university for students that wish to study at the Potchefstroom campus than it does for those who choose the Mafikeng campus or the Vaal Triangle campus.

5.10.4 Association with Word-of-Mouth communication (friends and family)

Table 5.35: Association with Word-of-Mouth communication

			Word-of-Mouth (Friends and Family)		
			0	**6**	**Total**
Campus	Potch	Count	752	978	1730
		% within campus	43.5%	56.5%	100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	282	196	478
		% within campus	59.0%	41.0%	100.0%
	Mafikeng	Count	679	316	995
		% within campus	68.2%	31.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	1713	1490	3203
		% within campus	53.5%	46.5%	100.0%
		Value	Approximate Significance		
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.225	0.000		
	Cramer's V	0.225	0.000		
N of Valid Cases		3 203			

The choice of a university as indicated in the above table is also highly influenced by Word-of-Mouth, especially on the Potchefstroom campus (56.5%) where more than half of the respondents indicated that their choice was influenced by Word-of-Mount from friends and family. Word-of-Mouth also plays a role at the Mafikeng campus (31.8%) and the Vaal Triangle campus (41%), although not as strongly as at the Potchefstroom campus which scored a high association.

5.10.5 Association with the Living Standard Measure (LSM)

The Living Standard Measure (LSM) is a segmentation tool that is used in South Africa to group people according to their living standards (see Chapter 2, paragraph 2.2.7). Table 5.36 provides an overview of the LSMs that have an association with the three campuses. The following LSM’s were extracted:

- VCR in the home
- 3 or more cell phones in the household
- DVD player in the household

- Computer in the home
- Access to the internet
- M-Net / DStv subscription
- Motor vehicle in the household
- Refrigerator in the household
- Washing machine in the household
- Dishwasher in the household

Table 5.36: LSM associated with the three campuses

			VCR		
			0	**1**	**Total**
Campus	Potch	Count	1276	454	1730
		% within campus	73.8%	26.2%	100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	441	37	478
		% within campus	92.3%	7.7%	100.0%
	Mafikeng	Count	947	48	995
		% within campus	95.2%	4.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	2664	539	3203
		% within campus	83.2%	16.8%	100.0%
Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Approximate Significance		
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.274	0.000		
	Cramer's V	0.274	0.000		
N of Valid Cases		3203			

			3 or more cell phones in household		
			0	**2**	**Total**
Campus	Potch	Count	333	1397	1730
		% within campus	19.2%	80.8%	100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	207	271	478
		% within campus	43.3%	56.7%	100.0%
	Mafikeng	Count	504	491	995
		% within campus	50.7%	49.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	1044	2159	3203
		% within campus	32.6%	67.4%	100.0%
Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Approximate Significance		
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.313	0.000		
	Cramer's V	0.313	0.000		
N of Valid Cases		3 203			

			DVD player		
			0	**3**	**Total**
Campus	Potch	Count	415	1315	1730

		% within campus	24.0%	76.0%	100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	239	239	478
		% within campus	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	Mafikeng	Count	626	369	995
		% within campus	62.9%	37.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	1280	1923	3203
		% within campus	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.363	0.000
	Cramer's V	0.363	0.000
N of Valid Cases		3 203	

			Computer in home		
			0	4	Total
Campus	Potch	Count	409	1321	1730
		% within campus	23.6%	76.4%	100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	280	198	478
		% within campus	58.6%	41.4%	100.0%
	Mafikeng	Count	708	287	995
		% within campus	71.2%	28.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	1397	1806	3203
		% within campus	43.6%	56.4%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.444	0.000
	Cramer's V	0.444	0.000
N of Valid Cases		3203	

			Access to the internet		
			0	5	Total
Campus	Potch	Count	445	1285	1730
		% within campus	25.7%	74.3%	100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	276	202	478
		% within campus	57.7%	42.3%	100.0%
	Mafikeng	Count	666	329	995
		% within campus	66.9%	33.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	1387	1816	3203
		% within campus	43.3%	56.7%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.389	0.000
	Cramer's V	0.389	0.000
N of Valid Cases		3 203	

			M-Net/DStv subscription		
			0	8	Total
campus	Potch	Count	525	1205	1730
		% within campus	30.3%	69.7%	100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	290	188	478
		% within campus	60.7%	39.3%	100.0%

					Total
	Mafikeng	Count	687	308	995
		% within campus	69.0%	31.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	1502	1701	3203
		% within campus	46.9%	53.1%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance		
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.363	0.000		
	Cramer's V	0.363	0.000		
N of Valid Cases		3 203			

			Motor vehicle in household		
			0	**9**	**Total**
Campus	Potch	Count	394	1336	1730
		% within campus	22.8%	77.2%	100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	296	182	478
		% within campus	61.9%	38.1%	100.0%
	Mafikeng	Count	769	226	995
		% within campus	77.3%	22.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	1459	1744	3203
		% within campus	45.6%	54.4%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance		
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.505	0.000		
	Cramer's V	0.505	0.000		
N of Valid Cases		3 203			

			Refrigerator		
			0	**10**	**Total**
Campus	Potch	Count	243	1487	1730
		% within campus	14.0%	86.0%	100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	185	293	478
		% within campus	38.7%	61.3%	100.0%
	Mafikeng	Count	512	483	995
		% within campus	51.5%	48.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	940	2263	3203
		% within campus	29.3%	70.7%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance		
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.375	0.000		
	Cramer's V	0.375	0.000		
N of Valid Cases		3 203			

			Washing Machine		
			0	**11**	**Total**
Campus	Potch	Count	315	1415	1730
		% within campus	18.2%	81.8%	100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	252	226	478
		% within campus	52.7%	47.3%	100.0%
	Mafikeng	Count	656	339	995
		% within campus	65.9%	34.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	1223	1980	3203
		% within campus	38.2%	61.8%	100.0%

			Value	Approximate Significance		
		Symmetric Measures				
Nominal by Nominal	Phi		0.454	0.000		
	Cramer's V		0.454	0.000		
N of Valid Cases			3 203			
			Dishwasher			Total
			0	12		
Campus	Potch	Count	819	911		1730
		% within campus	47.3%	52.7%		100.0%
	Vaal Triangle	Count	402	76		478
		% within campus	84.1%	15.9%		100.0%
	Mafikeng	Count	930	65		995
		% within campus	93.5%	6.5%		100.0%
Total		Count	2151	1052		3203
		% within campus	67.2%	32.8%		100.0%
		Symmetric Measures				
			Value	Approximate Significance		
Nominal by Nominal	Phi		0.462	0.000		
	Cramer's V		0.462	0.000		
N of Valid Cases			3 203			

Table 5.36 shows that the items identified in the Living Standards Measure have a stronger association or relate stronger to the Potchefstroom campus than with the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses. This implies that the students who choose to study at the Potchefstroom campus have access to more household items than those who choose to study at the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses.

The section covering **cross-tabulations** showed that the Potchefstroom campus has a stronger association with family members who had studied at than campus than is the case with the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses. This implies that their choice of university is influenced by a family member who had previously studied there, which contrasts with the situation at the two other campuses in this respect. It should thus be worthwhile for the Marketing and Recruitment department to have a strong link and connection with the Alumni of the university to market NWU by means of Word-of-Mouth.

For the Vaal Triangle campus, distance from residence ranks higher regarding priority than for the other two campuses. Student life plays a stronger role when it comes to choosing a university for students that wish to study at the Potchefstroom campus than it does for students wishing to study at the Mafikeng campus as well as for those wishing to study at the Vaal Triangle campus. This could be contributed to the fact that student life on the other two campuses is not as extensive as on the Potchefstroom campus. The choice of a university is also highly influenced by Word-of-Mouth from friends and family, especially on the Potchefstroom campus. Word-of-Mouth also plays a role at the Mafikeng campus and the Vaal Triangle campus, but to a lesser degree.

With regard to the Living Standards Measure, it was indicated that the LSM has a stronger association with or is stronger related to the Potchefstroom campus than it has with the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses. This implies that the students who choose to study at the Potchefstroom campus are from a higher level of income and therefore have access to more household items than those students who choose to study at the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses.

5.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter prospective students' perceptions were discussed regarding the marketing communication strategy applied by the three campuses of North-West University. The aim was to answer the third research question: *What are prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication plan applied by the three campuses of North-West University?* by analysing the results of the electronic questionnaire.

Firstly, the research question was answered by discussing the demographic information of prospective students followed by the factor analysis. Nine factors were identified namely predominantly English media, recruitment activities, predominantly Afrikaans media, sponsored school events, none-sponsored school events, irregularly utilized electronic platforms, established electronic platforms, unsought sources of information and desired sources of information. Thereafter the concepts of relationship marketing and the concepts of the marketing communication mix elements (paragraph 3.3, Table 3.1) were discussed. Each of these concepts were supplemented with the information obtained from the quantitative questionnaire to point out what prospective students' perceptions are of the marketing communication strategy applied by the three campuses of NWU.

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was also used to determine the reliability of the factors for advertising, sponsorships and events marketing, digital media marketing and sources of information which indicated that the data are reliable as all the levels of reliability are acceptable. Correlations were also drawn between how prospective students learned about NWU and their choice of NWU, the unique selling propositions of NWU and their choice of NWU as well as relationship marketing and the marketing communication elements.

A *t*-test was also conducted to determine the statistical and practical significance of factors by using effect sizes to determine the relevance. A t-test was conducted on the factors dealing with the choice of NWU website on the different factors, the influences of advertising, promotions, personal contact, physical environment, direct responses Word-of-Mouth, sponsored events and digital media marketing on the factors.

An ANOVA test was also used to explain the sources of variance in a set of scores on one or more independent variables. Comparisons were drawn between the factors and campuses, home language, province of residence and financial aid.

Cross-tabulation was also used to describe the relation between two categorical variables to depict the number of times each of the possible category combinations occurs in the sample data. Associations were made of campus and family member who studied at NWU, distance from NWU, student life, Word-of-Mouth communication and Living Standard Measure.

Generally the statistics showed that students agree that NWU does engage and interact with them and that information regarding NWU is made available by means of the different marketing communication elements. Students also agree that NWU understands their needs and that they have made the right choice. They also agree that NWU is a professional institution and that the admissions and recruitment offices perform well. The statistics furthermore reveal that NWU also provides a large amount of information to prospective students and that the NWU brand also is well known. The main reasons for prospective student to choose to study at NWU are the quality of programmes it offers and it being a safe university. It also seemed that students finally decide during January of the previous year to study at NWU. Most of the students' studies are financed by their parents or they are uncertain about how they will pay for their studies.

Overall prospective students do have access to the internet and visit the NWU website to obtain information about the university and they have learned about the university through Word-of-Mouth and personal contact sessions with one of the marketers.

A general feeling also exists that they took note of advertisements in media, especially on radio and the university website. They also agreed that they have experienced personal interaction with a marketer be it at school, career exhibition or other events of the university. They also indicated that they prefer to receive information through sms and emails. It also seems that prospective students are mostly positive about NWU and that they would recommend NWU to friends and family members. They are also aware that NWU sponsors events and functions. The majority of prospective students also indicated that digital media marketing is the preferred medium for accessing information or receiving information on NWU and for engaging with the university.

The results obtained from the electronic questionnaire as discussed in this chapter clearly illustrated prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication plan applied by the three campuses of NWU (see third research question, paragraph 1.4.3). This results will now be made applicable in the next chapter to answer the general research question and to provide guidelines regarding what the marketing communication plan for prospective-student recruitment at the NWU should entail? The

chapter will also include the conclusion to the study, limitations thereof and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 6

ASSESSING THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR STUDENT RECRUITMENT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter one introduced this study by referring to the problem statement and specific research questions to be answered in the study. Chapter two presented the literature that served as a basis to the study along with a discussion of marketing, relationship marketing, marketing communication and the planning process of marketing communication. Thereafter a breakdown of the research approach and research methods used in the study were provided in Chapter three as well as the manner in which the semi-structured interviews and electronic questionnaires were applied to conduct the research. In Chapter four the results obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the directors at the three campuses of NWU were discussed and in Chapter five the data obtained from the electronic questionnaire completed by the prospective students were analysed.

The purpose of this chapter is to propose guidelines that could be implemented for student recruitment at the NWU which will answer the stated general research question:

What should the marketing communication plan for prospective-student recruitment at NWU entail?

This will be done by answering each of the following specific research questions:

(1) What does marketing communication with the aim of recruiting prospective students entail according to marketing literature?
(2) Which marketing communication plan is applied by the respective directors for recruiting students?
(3) What are prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication plan applied by the three campuses of North-West University?

The conclusions drawn from the literature study, semi-structured interviews and the electronic questionnaires will firstly be discussed, where after certain guidelines will be proposed and limitations illustrated.

6.2 CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY

6.2.1 Conclusion to Research Question 1

The first research question was answered, namely: *What does marketing communication with the aim of recruiting prospective students entail according to marketing literature?* It was done in accordance with a literature study conducted in Chapter two by providing an overview on marketing, relationship marketing, marketing communication and the marketing communication plan.

Since **marketing** is not only about the management of products and services, but also the management of stakeholder relationships which are to the benefit of both parties, Chapter two pointed out that the central marketing offer of product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence and processes when dealing with services need to be combined into a consistent and effective marketing programme for a specific target market in the recruitment campaigns for prospective students (see paragraph 2.2.1). With the increase in competition, informed stakeholders, increased segmentation of target markets, new technology and the unreliability of traditional marketing the NWU needs to focus their recruitment activities on building long-term relationships with prospective students. This will warrant a sense of belonging and influence prospective student's final decision.

As an organisational function, marketing can be viewed as a set of processes to create, communicate and provide value to its stakeholders and to manage relationships that could be to the benefit of both NWU and prospective students. The value provided by NWU is the benefit received by the student when he or she makes their choice to register. These benefits are communicated as the unique selling proposition and should be part of the marketing communication plan. In order to realize this objective effective managerial tasks, activities and decision-making processes need to be adopted and implemented (see paragraph 2.2.3).

The aspects the Marketing and Student Recruitment department of the NWU can implement to reach the marketing function's objective; thus also to reach the objective of NWU, include an analysis of the external environment to establish what opportunities and threats exist which must be fully understood by the Marketing and Recruitment department for effective planning to take place (see paragraph 2.2.3). It is also important to take into consideration the different stages in the student's decision-making process (see paragraph 2.2.4) and to know who NWU's competition (see paragraph 2.2.5) in the market is. Defining the marketing opportunities and collecting and analysing marketing information to enhance the managerial decision-making process will provide data regarding the effectiveness of the marketing mix to enhance planning and anticipate stakeholders' needs (see paragraph 2.2.6).

Through segmenting the market NWU should be able to identify prospective students who have similar needs and interests and demonstrate similar behaviours. The marketing mix to be utilized should then

be designed for a specific target market to influence prospective students' perceptions of the brand and other unique selling propositions, a process which is called positioning (see paragraph 2.2.7).

Relationship marketing is a natural progression from marketing and one of the modern marketing developments which is aimed at engaging and building long-term stakeholder relationships by applying effective marketing techniques. Various factors such as increasing competition, informed stakeholders, increased segmentation of target markets which includes the socio-economic status of individuals or groups (the so called Living Standard Measure), new technology and the unreliability of traditional marketing have contributed to the development and growth of relationship marketing (see paragraph 2.2.2).

The role of **marketing communication** is to engage stakeholders and to differentiate, reinforce, inform or persuade to think, feel or act in a particular manner. Hence it is the means by which NWU presents its programmes, services, values and ideas to prospective students with the aim of stimulating dialogue to establish lasting relationships.

Prospective students are more informed and empowered to make their own decisions on what to read or listen to and make them heard, especially with social media where they air their views of and opinions regarding topics such as politics and social issues (see paragraph 2.3.1). The marketing communication plan should thus consist of several elements for reaching the target market, and the combination of these elements is called the marketing communication mix which was discussed in detail in paragraph 2.3.2.

The **marketing communication plan** must identify the main communication issues, it should inform all the interest groups that form part of the communication process, it has to integrate all the marketing communication efforts, a budget must be drawn up and should compare actual results with the plan and measure deviations (see paragraph 2.4).

The marketing communication objectives result from the marketing strategies, and the objectives of the IMC elements should derive from the marketing communication objectives. The assumption could thus made that the marketing strategy is operationalized by the marketing communication plan of NWU. As student recruitment implies relationships the strategy of NWU is to build long-term relationships with prospective students through a well-developed marketing communication plan.

It can thus be stated that according to literature, the way in which NWU communicates with prospective students is key to building and retaining these relationships and the Marketing and Student Recruitment department should identify and understand what the different marketing communication options offer and how it could be applied and combined in the marketing communication plan to foster long-term relationships. In building a relationship with learners at an early age – since grade 9 in their high school career – will warrant a sense of belonging and influence their final decision (see paragraph 2.2.2). By

implementing a marketing communication plan NWU can carefully integrate and coordinate its many communication channels to deliver a clear, consistent and compelling message about NWU and the programmes it delivers.

6.2.2 Conclusion to Research Question 2

The second specific research question: *Which marketing communication plan is applied by the respective directors for recruiting students?* is answered by discussing the responses received from the semi-structured interviews.

The results of the semi-structured interviews were discussed in Chapter 4 (see paragraph 4.2 and 4.3). The concepts are based on relationship marketing, the elements of an IMC process and the marketing communication plan which should be followed in prospective-student recruitment. When mention is made in this section to the directors at the three campuses of NWU, it was still when the three campus model was in existence and before the new unitary structure took effect.

6.2.2.1 Building relationship through engagement and interaction

At all three campuses of NWU **engagement and interaction** takes place by paying school visits or during career exhibitions, open days and campus tours (see paragraph 2.3.2 and 4.1.1). Learners are exposed to NWU from an early age, as early as grade 9, when they are assisted with career guidance and subject choices. Engagement and interaction also takes place at all three campuses through direct and database marketing (sms, emails and phone calls). Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as social media networks are the main channels to engage and interact with prospective students. Other forms of engagement and interaction are by providing financial and other support at prize-giving events and different sporting events.

At the Mafikeng campus relationships are established with officials at the department of Higher Education and Training, especially with recruitment at rural areas, school principals and Life Orientation teachers. An annual Winter School is presented for grade 12 learners, which exposes learners to the campus. Another project that is mentioned is the Ikateleng project that is presented on the campus where learners from grades 10 to 12 attend extra classes on Saturdays. It also seems that the Mafikeng campus focus more on career exhibitions than on individual school visits as a form of engagement and interaction.

The Potchefstroom campus strongly focuses on campus tours, promotional days and open days with a view to build relationships and to engage with students and make use of brand ambassadors for which current students and academics are used to speak to learners visiting the campus. Engagement and interaction also takes place during parent meetings at selected schools to inform learners and parents about subject choices and application procedures.

The Vaal Triangle campus indicated that the marketers share their cell numbers with learners during school visits and other contact sessions to assist with enquiries. There is also a generic email address to assist with inquiries from learners.

It can thus be stated that at Mafikeng campus, Potchefstroom campus and Vaal Triangle campus of NWU engagement and interaction with prospective students takes place and that relationships are established through engagement and interaction with prospective students. However, although present, it seems that it does not take place at the same intensity or level at the three campuses and that there are different approaches and focus areas towards engagement and interaction.

6.2.2.2 Building relationships through the availability of information

In order to build relationships with prospective students i**nformation is made available** through the NWU website (admission requirements, application procedures, different programmes, virtual tour of each campus, and online newsrooms). Newsworthy articles are also published in local and national newspapers and posted on social media. Information is also provided by means of a first-year prospectus and faculty brochures and leaflets. On special occasions, the marketers of the three campuses also occasionally pay visits after hours to render assistance and give feedback on application procedures. Other information sessions especially at the Potchefstroom campus, take place during parent meetings at selected schools to inform learners and parents about subject choices and application procedures.

It can thus be indicated that at Mafikeng campus, Potchefstroom campus and the Vaal Triangle campus of NWU relationships are being established by providing information to prospective students. However, although information is made available especially on digital platforms it may pose a problem to those prospective students who are residing in far of and rural places where network connection is poor or non-existent. These learners may also not have the financial means to buy data to access the website and other social networks.

6.2.2.3 Building relationship through the marketing communication elements

Advertising is frequently used by all the campuses, especially in selected newspapers, strategically place billboards, radio stations and school magazines and newsletters. However, advertising has become a very expensive marketing tool for building relationships especially in printed media and on television; thus the focus is now turning to Facebook advertising which is less expensive (see paragraphs 2.3.2.1 and 4.3.1.5). The Marketing and Recruitment department should therefore concentrate more on social networks for advertising purposes which would be more personal and reach a much bigger and targeted audience. However, radio advertisements could also be considered as it was indicated by prospective students as a preferred medium.

Personal selling or personal contact is rated by the directors as the second most used tool of the IMC mix elements. School visits, individual visits, career exhibitions, campus tours and open days all are activities utilized by all three campuses as a means to build relationships with prospective students (see paragraphs 2.3.2.2 and 4.3.1.2). It is personal, face to face and immediate and is highly regarded by the directors at the three campuses and should thus be part of a marketing communication plan.

Shopper marketing and sales promotions is seen as brand marketing in the university environment and used to influence the behaviour of stakeholders to complement the other elements in the marketing communication mix such as personal selling, advertising and publicity and support in transmitting the message (see paragraphs 2.3.2.3 and 4.3.1.7). Brand marketing includes promotional items and hand-outs such as branded pens, rubber arm bands, bookmarks with contact details, fridge magnets, merchandise etc. These items are handed out during school visits, university open days and campus tours.

The three campus directors indicated that shopper marketing and sales promotion, although part of the recruitment campaign, is not used extensively, which can be interpreted as it has financial implications.

Direct response and database marketing is the process of communicating directly with one's target audience by means of telephone, sms, email or other electronic means such as electronic newsletters (see paragraphs 2.3.2.4 and 4.4.1.3) and is highly rated by the three campus directors as a marketing communication tool. They could also explain how the activities undertaken by personal selling and digital media marketing make a platform available to obtain information from prospective students to compile a database to communicate and do follow-ups through telephone, SMS, and email.

However, it seems that a database and data-driven focus is not well researched by the Marketing and Recruitment department as there is much more than just sms and email. It is suggested that the use of artificial intelligence to curate and create marketing contend and personalize messages to build relationships with prospective students, should be part of the marketing communication plan. By having a clear picture of who the target audience is and why they want to study at NWU, will give an idea of what content is going to reach them most effectively, which issues they care about, which headlines they'll most likely click on and which topics will keep them engaged with NWU's brand and offerings. This can only be accomplished by putting out quality, data-driven content on a regular basis through a well-thought-out marketing communication plan.

Database and data-driving marketing are closely intertwined with digital media marketing for targeted communication and such an approach will hugely benefit NWU's marketing communication plan.

As described in paragraphs 2.3.2.5 and 4.4.1.4, **public relations and Word-of-Mouth** aims at changing perceptions and relationships through communication. It was stated by the three campus directors that

it is used regularly and remains one of the most effective marketing communication tools and that it complements the other marketing communication tools such as advertising, direct marketing, and digital media marketing.

It can thus be stated that by reading about, listening to and observing NWU on different platforms, prospective students and other stakeholders will share the experiences with family, friends and the community at large. A negative experience could, however, result in the opposite end result.

As discussed in paragraphs 2.3.2.6 and 4.4.1.6 **sponsorships and events marketing** is the provision of financial or other support to individuals, organisations, teams or events in return for naming or display rights. The campuses indicated that although they do make use of sponsorships and events marketing, it is not on a broad scale as it is an expensive marketing activity.

It can thus be stated that sponsorship and events marketing as an element of the IMC mix is dependent on the amount of money available in the budget.

Paragraphs 2.3.2.7 and 4.4.1.1 give a comprehensive summary of the different **digital media marketing** channels the three campus directors have implemented in their recruitment campaigns. Digital media marketing as an IMC element is regarded by the directors at the three campuses as the most important of the IMC elements. All three campuses have produced well-administered social media platforms such as Facebook pages, Twitter and Instagram accounts and a YouTube channel. NWU website is also synchronized with these platforms with campus virtual tours and electronic newsrooms.

It can, therefore, be stated that the marketing and communication departments at the three campuses of NWU are in line with the current marketing trends in the world and that digital media should be incorporated in the marketing communication plan.

Alternative communication channels as an IMC element is described in paragraphs 2.3.3.8 and 4.4.1.8 as unexpected, unplanned and unconventional and thrives on engagement and visual impact. The results from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews indicate that the three directors of the marketing and communication departments at the campuses do not make use of alternative communication channels seeing that it was least mentioned by them.

6.2.2.4 Building relationship through a marketing communication plan

In order to reach NWU's objectives which mainly are to provide high-quality teaching and learning, research and innovation, community engagement and clearly differentiating student value proposition, the elements of the IMC mix should be integrated into the **marketing communication plan** when recruiting students (see paragraphs 2.4 and 4.5.1). All three campuses stated that they make use of various elements of the IMC mix in the recruitment campaigns of prospective students with digital media

marketing, personal selling, direct response and database marketing, and public relations and Word-of-Mouth communication as the most important elements in these campaigns.

However, as mentioned in paragraph 4.5.1, the three campuses do differ in their focus on their recruitment campaigns. Mafikeng campus indicated that their focus is on recruitment at disadvantaged and rural schools and also on minority groups (white, Indian and coloured students). Although the enrolment targets were mostly reached each year at the Mafikeng Campus, the specific targets for the recruitment of minority groups could not be reached and a different approach should be identified in their recruitment campaigns.

The Potchefstroom campus' recruitment activities are informed by research and monitoring of activities. This seems to be effective as the Potchefstroom campus also reached their enrolment targets frequently.

The Vaal Triangle campus indicated that they identify the best communication platforms such as advertising, public relations exercises and events and functions and the marketing communication elements in their recruitment campaigns. Although they also mostly reach their enrolment targets it is not necessarily executed in the most effective ways.

It is thus evident that the directors at the three campuses of NWU, before the unitary structure was implemented, do have a targeted marketing communication plan for prospective-student recruitment.

The main stakeholders in the recruitment campaign identified by all three campuses are grade 9 to grade 12 learners as well as parents, school principals, current students, staff members and the media (see paragraph 4.5.2). It was only mentioned by the Potchefstroom campus that a portfolio for student recruitment exists on the House committees and campus Student Representative Council (CSRC) who act as brand ambassadors.

The Mafikeng and the Vaal Triangle campuses would vastly benefit from the approach followed by the Potchefstroom campus by introducing a portfolio for student recruitment on the campus Student Representative Council (CSRC) and if possible, extending it to the House committees. They could act as brand ambassadors and render assistance during campus tours, promotional days and other events.

Leading from the section above it can be stated that the directors of the marketing and communication departments at the three campuses of NWU know who their main stakeholders are and that regular engagement and interaction takes place. The approach of the Potchefstroom campus by using brand ambassadors could be explored by the other two campuses.

As described in paragraphs 2.2.2 and 4.5.3, the marketing communication elements package the message that needs to be conveyed to engage and build and maintain long-term relationships with stakeholders.

The findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews clearly illustrated that the IMC elements are part of the marketing communication plan at the campuses to engage and build and maintain long-term relationships with its stakeholders (see paragraph 4.5.3).

To be effective, marketing communication plans should be regularly evaluated to measure its success and effectiveness where after corrective measures should be implemented. As indicated in paragraph 4.5.4, all three campuses illustrated that by reaching their enrolment targets they can determine that their marketing communication efforts are successful. Surveys are also conducted at the three campuses with first years during the registration period to establish needs and trends. The results are used to adapt and make alterations in the recruitment plans. It was mentioned by the directors of the marketing and communication departments at the three campuses that academic systems do not support recruitment campaigns and that funding and the programme offerings are some aspects that need to be addressed. In this regard, regular meetings and discussions are held with the admissions and bursaries office and other role players.

From the above paragraph it can be stated that the directors of the Marketing and Communication departments at the three campuses of NWU were evaluating and measuring the success of their campaigns by constantly observing the status of applications in comparison to the enrolment targets. Surveys were also utilized to evaluate and meetings and discussions were held with relevant role-players to implement corrective measures.

In summary of the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews it can be concluded that the three directors of the marketing and communication departments, before the implementation of the new NWU structure, did follow a strategy of building a relationship with prospective students and that they have a sound knowledge of the application of the various IMC elements in a marketing communication plan. Although the intensity of each element applied may differ from campus to campus, each campus specified that it follows a focused approach in building relationships with prospective students. They have knowledge of the different elements and could explain how it is being applied in their respective recruitment campaigns.

In the following section the perceptions of prospective students of the marketing communication plan at the three campuses of NWU will be discussed.

6.2.3 Conclusion to Research Question 3

The third research question: *What are prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication plan applied by the three campuses of North-West University?* is answered by means of a discussion on the information obtained from the electronic questionnaire.

The majority of prospective students agreed that NWU understands their need for attaining a quality degree, that they had made the right choice so that they could get a quality degree, that NWU is very professional as an institution of higher learning and that the services provided by the admissions and recruitment offices are excellent (see paragraph 5.5.1).

This implies that for NWU to understand the needs of prospective students as well as for these students to feel that they have made the right choice and that they see NWU as a professional institution, some form of engagement and interaction with NWU should take place.

Prospective students were also in agreement that NWU provides adequate information to enable them to make informed decisions and that the brand of NWU is recognized in South Africa, which illustrates that NWU's brand is marketed and is well established (see paragraph 5.5.2).

It can thus be stated that NWU does indeed engage and interact with prospective students and that adequate information is made available to prospective students to make an informed decision.

The majority of prospective students also indicated that they were exposed to **advertising** campaigns on the internet and radio, but not in national, local or school newspapers or in magazines, television or billboards (see paragraph 5.1).

From the above, it can be concluded that advertising is only effective on radio and the internet but not through other mediums such as print media, television and billboards. This fact should be taken in consideration when compiling a marketing communication plan for NWU.

Contrary to traditional advertising, prospective students were much exposed to **personal interaction** by one of the marketers of NWU either at a career exhibition, one on one sessions with marketers at school, an open day on campus or a campus tour (see paragraph 5.5.2).

This clearly shows that learners were exposed to or have met with a marketer at some stage during their high school career and that personal contact was indeed made.

Few of the prospective students learned about NWU through **promotions** (see paragraph 5.5.3). This can be attributed to the fact that promotion, being one of the IMC mix elements shares the platform with other elements such as advertising and public relations and event sponsorships and events marketing.

Prospective students are also satisfied with the **direct responses and database marketing** they had received through personal phone calls, emails and SMS (see paragraphs 4.8.1.4 and 5.6.4)

This is a clear indication that direct contact and database marketing are utilized in marketing communication plans for student recruitment and that email and SMS as a communication medium are

the preferred method. It should be, however, taken into consideration that most of the students access the information through cell phone and that having sufficient data or access to a Wi-Fi connection could pose a challenge.

Public relations and Word-of-Mouth communication complement most, if not all the other elements, in the IMC mix. All activities are presented in conjunction with a public relations exercise with the aim to create a conversation about the brand. Word-of-Mouth is the main channel through which prospective students have learned about NWU. In paragraph 5.5.5 prospective students' indications that they would recommend NWU to friends and family were reported on; thus indicating that they talk about NWU.

Prospective students are also aware that NWU **sponsors school events** such as sport and prize-giving events (see paragraph 5.5.6).

Sponsorships and events marketing is thus also an element prospective students are exposed to during their school career.

As indicated in paragraph 5.5.7, **digital media marketing** was discussed according to the prospective students' responses to information available on the NWU website electronic platforms utilized by NWU and the various categories of information they would like to be exposed to.

The responses clearly showed that prospective students use the NWU website as a source of information as well as social media platforms – especially Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Almost all prospective students want to be informed about fields of study, application information; minimum requirements; fees payable; bursaries and loans; residences and student life.

As the information available address their needs, it is thus clear that they are indeed informed about the NWU. It can therefore be said that the information currently shared through digital media and especially social networks and the NWU's website is effective and applicable for prospective students and should be included in any marketing communication plan.

Alternative communication channels as an element of the IMC mix also complements the other elements and is used in a more indirect level such as a competition on the digital media marketing platform.

From the factor analysis extracted from the responses from the electronic questionnaire (see paragraph 5.4), it can be concluded that recruitment activities should take into account factors such as English media, recruitment activities, Afrikaans media, sponsored school events, electronic platforms and sources of information.

As the English media is valued higher by the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses than by the Potchefstroom campus, media campaigns should focus on English media for these campuses. Marketing communication elements as a source of information are valued higher by the Potchefstroom campus and should be utilized more by the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses. Unique selling propositions are also valued higher by the Potchefstroom campus, which should be focused more on during recruitment campaigns at the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses (see paragraph 5.10.1).

Xitsonga-speaking students approve more of sponsored events and are not highly attracted to electronic platforms. Students and especially Afrikaans-speaking students see recruitment activities such as school visits, campus tours and social media to be important for building relationships. The marketing communication elements such as advertising, personal selling, digital media and public relations, to name but a few, will be successful mediums to communicate the unique selling propositions to prospective students, especially to the Afrikaans audience (see paragraph 5.10.2).

The Eastern Cape compared to other provinces does not use electronic media platforms much; thus receives less information concerning NWU and is less exposed to recruitment activities than are other provinces. The Eastern Cape also values the unique selling propositions of NWU more than do the other provinces.

Students who study with a university loan feel that NWU understands their needs, they have acted correctly by choosing NWU, they are satisfied with the services provided by the admission and recruitment offices, will recommend NWU to family and friends and are more aware of sponsored school events. Self-paying students and those whose studies are financed by parents attach a lesser value to the website and Facebook pages as sources of information than do those with a university loan. NSFAS students are also less aware of marketing communication elements than are those who study with a merit bursary or with a bank loan. Students whose parents pay for their studies and those who are self-paying are more aware of the marketing communication elements than are those who study with a university loan. Those students who study with a university loan, NSFAS loan and who are uncertain are less aware of the *unique selling propositions* than are those who study with a bank loan. The students who are studying with an NSFAS loan are less aware of the unique selling propositions than are those whose parents are financing their studies.

The choice of university at the Potchefstroom campus is influenced more strongly by a family member who previously studied there than is the case with the other two campuses. For the Vaal Triangle campus, the distance between campus and residence is more important than to the other two campuses. Student life as a reason for choosing a university is more important at the Potchefstroom campus than on the Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle campuses. The choice of a university is also highly influenced by Word-of-Mouth communication from friends and family, especially on the Potchefstroom campus.

Students who choose to study at the Potchefstroom campus have access to more household items than those who choose to study at the Mafikeng or Vaal Triangle campuses.

In summary of the findings obtained from the electronic questionnaire, it can be concluded that at the three campuses differences are observed in prospective students' perceptions of the marketing communication plan followed by NWU. Although they are positive towards the marketing communication plan, the experiences at the three campuses differ, especially with regard to the different marketing communication elements, media, language spoken, province of residence, paying for studies, family members who have studied there and standard of living.

In the above section, a conclusion to each research question was presented. In the section that follows, the marketing communication plan for student recruitment at NWU will be assessed and suggestions will be made pertaining to guidelines for a marketing communication plan.

6.3 ASSESSING THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR STUDENT RECRUITMENT AT THE NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY

The Higher Education landscape of South Africa which saw the mergers of 21 universities into 14 universities in 2004, as well as the decrease in state funding and higher enrolment targets set by the Department of Higher Education and Training has resulted in universities competing strongly for quality students in the recruitment pool. NWU also formed part of the merger process which brought about a multi-campus university. However, NWU has embarked on a new strategy for 2015 to 2025 which has led to a restructuring process that was implemented on 1 July 2017. A new strategy statement was developed which is *to transform and position NWU as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence, with a commitment to social justice*. A new vision or dream was also formulated, namely: *to be an internationally recognised university in Africa, distinguished for engaged scholarship, social responsiveness and an ethic of care* (NWU, 2015).

The new structure resulted in one university with eight faculties and three sites of delivery, Mahikeng, Potchefstroom and Vanderbijlpark. This has led to one *Marketing and Student Recruitment department* for NWU with offices at all the three delivery sites to assist NWU in realising its dream as stated above. The manager responsible for undergraduate student recruitment is situated in Potchefstroom and coordinates all recruitment activities to ensure that recruitment is no longer campus-driven, but aimed at prospective-student recruitment for NWU which implies one marketing strategy.

Marketing communication is the high-level plan that provides the roadmap for reaching the marketing objectives of the newly established Marketing and Recruitment department of NWU which is to recruit high-quality students for NWU and to ensure that the enrolment targets set by the Department of Higher Education and Training are met. In reaching these marketing objectives, NWU will uphold its dream of

becoming an internationally recognised university in Africa, distinguished for engaged scholarship, social responsiveness and an ethic of care. The above context of circumstances has prompted the question: What should the Marketing Communication plan for student recruitment at NWU entail?

Having collected and analysed the results from the semi-structured interviews and electronic questionnaire it can generally be stated that the marketing strategy of NWU is to build new and maintain current relationships with prospective students by utilizing the IMC mix and elements in a marketing communication plan. Based on the research conducted it seems that this strategy is effective although applied in different intensities at the three campuses. The responses from prospective students also revealed that the approach is still relevant and should form part of the marketing communication plan of the newly established Marketing and Student Recruitment department for NWU. Figure 6.1 describes the different stages to be followed for the implementation of the marketing strategy for NWU.
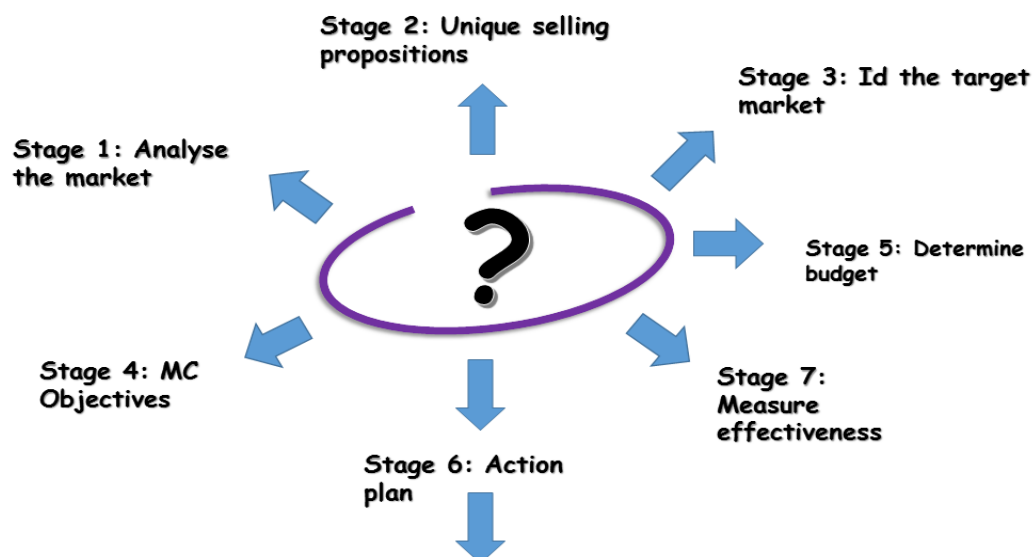
Figure 6.1: Different stages in the marketing strategy for NWU

For a marketing strategy to be successful it should include certain stages or a combination of stages. To do proper planning, a detailed *analysis of the market* should first be completed which will determine the *unique selling propositions*, the market segment that should be targeted and what the *marketing communication objectives* should be. It will also determine the *preliminary budget* and what the *marketing communication plan* should consist of when implementing the strategy. The *effectiveness* of the strategy should also be *measured* to be able to implement corrective actions.

The following guidelines for implementing a marketing strategy for prospective-student recruitment is thus proposed for NWU:

The guidelines are compiled in stages and illustrated in table format to provide a clear picture to the reader. The marketing communication plan, stage 6, will be discussed as a separate point to do justice to the plan.

Table 6.1: Guidelines for implementing a marketing strategy for student recruitment at NWU

Stages in the marketing strategy

Stage 1: Analyse the market
The results obtained from the research indicated the following: ***Home language***: English=8.5%, Afrikaans=31.9%, Setswana=23.4% and Sesotho=17%. ***Student profile i.t.o. race***: African/Black=33%, Indian/Asian=1%, Coloured=4%, White=59%. ***Age***: 17-25 years=96%. ***Province of residence***: Gauteng=41% and North West=28%. ***Final decision to study***: January=34%. ***Access to internet***: 72%. ***Access to cell phones***: 65%. ***Marketing Communication elements***: Word-of-Mouth, Personal contact, Digital media and Advertising. ***NWU brand perception***: Quality programmes=28%, stable environment=22%, quality facilities, diverse university=14%, student life=14%. ***Students' perceptions***: NWU understands my needs=93%, I made the right choice=98%, NWU is a professional institution=99%, Quality of service=93%, Availability of information=95%, NWU brand is well-known=95%. ***Main fields of study***: Business/Commerce=29%, Humanities/ Arts/Education=23%, Healthcare/Health Sciences=16%, Natural Sciences=11%, Engineering/Technology=11%, Law=10%. ***Influencers***: Parents=32%, Students of the universities=29%, Friends=21%, University rankings=21%, Tuition fees=19%. ***Competition***: University of Stellenbosch=18%, University of Pretoria=18%, University of Cape Town=14%, University of Johannesburg=10%, University of Witwatersrand=8%
Stage 2: Select unique selling propositions
The unique selling propositions were identified as follows: • NWU is a safe university • NWU has a stable environment • NWU has quality programmes • NWU has quality facilities • NWU is diverse • NWU has a unique student life

Stage 3: Identify the target market
The following learners should be targeted: • Black, Indian, Coloured and White students with an ethnic background of Afrikaans, English, Setswana and Sesotho between the ages of 17 and 25 years. • Students who reside in Gauteng and the North West Province. • Hard-working learners in grade 12 with a pass rate of 65% and higher with Mathematics and Physical Science as subjects. Grade 9 to grade 11 learners who have to make subject choices and choose a university. • Learners who are familiar with the NWU brand, who will be self-paying or will be studying with a loan and who expect to get a job after obtaining their degree at NWU.
Stage 4: Develop the marketing communication objectives
• To inform prospective students about and remind them of the opportunities and programmes at NWU. • To persuade them to choose NWU. • To build relationships and engage and interact with prospective students. • To raise awareness about and change perceptions of and attitudes towards NWU.
Stage 5: Determine the preliminary budget
It is proposed that an objective-and-plan approach should be followed to establish the budget. The objective is to reach the enrolment target for NWU. The marketing communication activities that need be implemented that stood out from the responses obtained from the questionnaire is advertising, personal contact, Word-of-Mouth and digital media. From here the budget must be determined to add up the cost of the marketing communication activities.
Stage 6: Develop an action plan for Marketing Communication
Goal: To recruit high-quality students to position NWU as an internationally recognised university in Africa, distinguished for engaged scholarship, social responsiveness and an ethic of care. See paragraph 6.3.
Stage 7: Measure effectiveness
The number of successful applications received in each faculty will indicate which programmes need to be marketed more aggressively, the number of students that register at NWU will determine whether the enrolment target is reached.

6.3.1   Marketing communication plan

The information provided in Table 6.1 informs the marketing strategy, and stage 6, the action plan for implementing the strategy will next be discussed in detail as this was the focus of the study namely to illustrate what the marketing communication plan for prospective-student recruitment at the NWU should entail.

The overall goal the Marketing and Student Recruitment department aims at achieving is: *To recruit high-quality students according to the enrolment plan of the department of Higher Education and Training and*

to position NWU as an internationally recognised university in Africa, distinguished for engaged scholarship, social responsiveness and an ethic of care (NWU, 2015)

6.3.2 Objectives for reaching the marketing communication goal

Several objectives were identified that will enable the Marketing and Student Recruitment department to reach the above-stated goal. The objectives are discussed in Table 6.2 and will be deliberated with the marketing communication elements that will be utilized in reaching these objectives and the timeframe within which it should be implemented.

Table 6.2: Objectives for reaching the marketing communication goals

Objective	Activity	Timeframe
To raise awareness of NWU	Launching an *advertising* campaign on selected radio station in North West, Gauteng and Free State about the unique selling proposition of NWU – this will typically include Highveld Stereo, 702, Jakaranda FM, OFM and RSG, to mention but a few.	December to January.
To recruit quality-students	*Personal contact* during school visits at selected schools focusing on grade 12 learners with an average of 65% and higher with Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Accounting as main subjects.	February to July
To persuade learners and parents to change their minds and attitudes and in so doing, decide to study at NWU	*Word-of-Mouth* in promoting NWU by conducting an open day at all three delivery sites of NWU	Continuous
	Word-of-Mouth in promoting NWU by conducting campus tours at all three delivery sites with individuals and their parents as well as small groups.	
	Promote NWU by attending selected career exhibitions.	
To remind learners about NWU	*Sponsoring events* and other school activities of selected schools such as athletic meetings, rugby and soccer days or tournaments, netball and hockey, and also prize-giving events and farewell functions.	February to July
	Database marketing through email, sms and whatsapp groups to successful applicants.	August to December.

To build a relationship with learners by interacting and engaging with them	*Digital media* campaigns on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram about unique selling propositions.	Continuous
	Personal contact by providing career guidance and assisting with subject choices with grade 9 to grade 11 learners.	August to November
To provide information and content about NWU and its programmes	*Digital media* by updating NWU's website with information about applications, bursaries and loans, programme offerings, news and research.	Continuous
	Public relations by producing a prospectus on the programme offerings as well as brochures and pamphlets on flagship programmes.	September to December
	Public relations by writing press releases about research outputs and good news-stories about NWU.	Continuous
To develop a database and data-driven artificial intelligence computerised system	*Database and data-driven* marketing using artificial intelligence to curate and create marketing content and personalize messages to connect with and understand the target audience.	January to December

6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Any study has inherent and specific limitations, and for this study the following limitations are identified: The focus of the study was on marketing communication and specifically on IMC and the application thereof in the marketing communication plan. The study is limited in the sense that the more modern view of integrated communication is excluded. IMC was traditionally the preferred model while integrated communication is seen as the evolution of the concept *integrated marketing communication*. As the focus of this study was primarily on the marketing communication plan further research could by conducted on building relationships with stakeholders, which is the overall marketing strategy of NWU.

The respondent in the semi-structured interview for the Mafikeng campus who is the marketer at the campus, did not have the desired level of theoretical knowledge to answer the questions posed to him, and some questions needed a level of clarification for him to answer them effectively.

The study showed that new technological innovations and advances in the field of digital media marketing such as website and social media together with the use of direct contact and database marketing is a critical component in any marketing communication strategy. The research showed that it is used by NWU to a certain extent. However, it needs to be explored in much more detail and as such provides an

opportunity for further research, especially in the field of artificial intelligence and the use of chatbots to help build an emotional bond with prospective students.

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ADDENDUM 1

Interview schedule for semi-structured interviews

1. Demographic Information
(a) Could you tell me how long you are in your current post?
(b) Can you describe your key performance areas?
(c) Could you tell me more about the different functions, responsibilities and activities of the Marketing Communication's department at your campus?
(d) How big is the team responsible for marketing communication and what are their responsibilities?

2. Relationship Attributes of NWU as strategy for student recruitment
(a) Describe who your main stakeholders are, what are their needs and what will satisfy them?
(b) How does the department engage with its stakeholders? Which channels do you use?
(c) How does the department build and maintain long-term relationships with its stakeholders?
(d) How does the department attract and maintain its stakeholders?
(e) Describe the marketing communication tools you are using to build a relationship with your stakeholders early in their school careers.

3. Marketing Communication, plan, mix and elements
(a) How do you manage the marketing communication plan generally? What guidelines or principals do you follow?
(b) How will you describe the advantages of following an integrated marketing communication approach in a marketing campaign?
(c) Can you explain how you manage the integration of the elements as a whole?
(d) How do you evaluate or measure the success of your marketing communication plan?
(e) If you think the current marketing communication plan is successful, can you explain why you think so?
(f) Can you describe how successful the current marketing communication plans are?
(g) What are the things you would organize differently in the next marketing communication plan?
(h) For the future, in terms of the three campuses, how would you describe the challenges facing the Mafikeng campus / Potch campus / Vaal Triangle campus?

(i)   Can you briefly describe any other aspect about the marketing communication plan that was not addressed in the interview?

(j)   (j)How would you define digital media and explain how you utilize it for student recruitment?

(k)   To what extent does the department make use of sponsorships and event marketing and how will you define it?

(l)   How will you describe direct response and database marketing and to what extent do you use it at your campus?

(m) How will you define promotion as a marketing communication tool and to what extent does the department utilize incentives in its marketing efforts?

(n)   Please describe personal selling or face-to-face communication and how do you use it in your recruitment strategy?

(o)   Please define advertising and what do you see as the role of advertising in a marketing communication plan?

(p)   How will you describe Public Relations and Word-of-Mouth and how is it implemented into your marketing communication plan?

(q)   What are the other alternative communication channels the department is using in its marketing communication efforts?

ADDENDUM 2

Electronic questionnaire

Section A: Demographic information					
(1) Indicate your campus of study	Mafikeng		Potch		Vaal Triangle	
(2) What is your gender?	Male		Female		
(3) What is your home language?					
		English			
		Northern Sotho			
		Southern Sotho			
		Xitsonga			
		Ndebele			
		Setswana			
		isiZulu			
		isiXhosa			
		Venda			
		Afrikaans			
		Other (Please specify)			
(4) What is your age					
		17 - 20			
		21 - 25			
		26 - 30			
		30 and above			
(5) In which country do you live?					
		South Africa			
		Swaziland			
		Botswana			

		Lesotho	
		Namibia	
		Zimbabwe	
		Other (Please specify)	
(6) In which Province do you live?			
		Northern Cape	
		Eastern Cape	
		Western Cape	
		Free State	
		KwaZulu-Natal	
		Gauteng	
		Mpumalanga	
		North West	
		Limpopo	
		Other (Please specify)	
(7) Why did you choose to study at NWU? Select the answers that best reflect your opinion.			
	A family member also studied there		
	It was the last resort		
	It is a safe University		
	It is affordable		
	It is close by and I can study from home		
	It has a stable environment		
	Quality of programmes		
	Quality of facilities		
	Multi Linguicism policy of the University		
	The diversity of the University		
	Student life		

	Sport	
	Cultural activities	

(8) Choose the month in which you finally decided to study at NWU. (Mark only one)

	January 2015	
	February 2015	
	March 2015	
	April 2015	
	May 2015	
	June 2015	
	July 2015	
	August 2015	
	September 2015	
	October 2015	
	November 2015	
	December 2015	
	January 2016	

(9) Have any of your family members studied at NWU?	Yes		No	

(10) If your answer is "Yes" in question 9; indicate the applicable members and at which campus.

	Mafikeng campus	Potch campus	Vaal Triangle campus
Grandfather			
Father			
Brother			
Uncle			
Nephew			
Grandmother			
Mother			
Sister			

Aunt			
Niece			

(11)	**How are your studies financed? Choose the most applicable option**		
		Bursary from an employer	
		Merit bursary	
		Bank loan	
		University loan	
		Parents	
		NSFAS	
		Self-paying	
		Uncertain	

(12)	**Did you have access to the internet while you were at school?**	Yes		No	
(13)	**Have you ever visited NWU's webpage?**	Yes		No	

(14)	**Out of the following resources; how did you learn about NWU? Check all resources that apply**	
	Advertising	
	Personal selling (School Visits)	
	Shopper marketing and sales promotion	
	Direct responses (email, sms)	
	Word-of-mouth (Friends and family)	
	Sponsored events	
	Digital Marketing (Website, Social Media)	
	Alternative communication channels (Please specify)	

(15)	**In your household, out of the following, select the items that are applicable to your situation. Check all that apply**	
	VCR	
	3 or more cell phones in household	
	DVD player	

	Computer in home	
	Access to the internet	
	TV set	
	Less than 2 radio sets in household	
	M-Net / DStv subscription	
	Motor vehicle in household	
	Refrigerator	
	Washing machine	
	Dishwasher	

Section B: Relationship Attributes

This section comprises statements whereby you fully agree, agree, disagree and completely disagree. Indicate your answer with an X in the space provided.

(1) I am very satisfied with the amount of information generally available on the NWU when choosing my institution of study

Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree

(2) I am very sure the NWU fully understands my needs as a student to acquire tertiary education

Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree

(3) I am very certain that the NWU's brand is well known in the country

Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree

(4) I am very sure that in choosing the NWU was the right choice to obtain a quality degree

Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree

(5) I am very certain the NWU is a very professional institution

Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree

(6) I am very satisfied with the customer service provided by the admissions and recruitment offices at the NWU

Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree

(7) I will certainly recommend the NWU as a tertiary institution to a friend or family member

Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree

Section C: Marketing Communication mix and elements

This section comprises statements whereby you fully agree, agree, disagree and completely disagree. Indicate your answer with an X in the space provided.

(1) I was very exposed to advertising campaigns of the NWU in the following media:

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree
National Newspapers				
Local Newspapers				
School Newspapers				
Magazines				
Radio				
Television				
Bill Boards				
Websites				

(2) I was very exposed to advertising campaigns of the NWU in the following media channels:

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree
Sunday Times				
City Press				
New Age				
Daily Sun				
Citizen				
Star				
Mail & Guardian				
Sowetan				
Beeld				

Rapport				
Motsweding				
Highveld Stereo				
5 FM				
SA FM				
Jacaranda				
Radio 2000				
North West FM				
RSG				
OFM				

(3) I was very exposed to personal interaction by the NWU marketers at the following events:				
	Completely disagree	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Fully agree**
Career Exhibition				
Session with marketer at school				
Open Day on Campus				
Campus Tour				
Winter School				
Ikateleng Project				

(4) I am very satisfied with the direct contact received through the different channels used by NWU:

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree
Personal contact by Marketers				
E-mails				
Personal telephone calls				
SMS				

(5) I am very aware that the NWU sponsored the following school events:

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree
Athletics				
Rugby				
Soccer				
Hockey				
Tennis				
Prize-giving events				
No event sponsored				

(6) I am very satisfied with the information available on the NWU's website:

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree
Study information				
Information on programmes				
Information on residences				

Information on bursaries and loans				
Information on cultural activities				
Information on sport activities				
Information on student life				
General campus information				
Virtual Tour				

(7) I am very satisfied with the information available on the following electronic platforms utilized by the NWU:

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree
Website				
Facebook				
Twitter				
Podcasts				
Pinterest				
YouTube				
Blogs				

(8) I would like to be exposed to information about the NWU on the following matters:

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree
Fields of study				
Application information				

Minimum requirements				
Fees payable				
Bursaries and loans				
Residences				
Student life				
(9) I would like to receive information about the NWU through the following mediums:				
	Completely disagree	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Fully agree**
University Website				
University Facebook page				
University Twitter account				
University YouTube account				
University Pinterest account				
Advertorials in newspapers				
Personal visits				