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Department: Information and Corporate Management

**Promotional Strategies on the Recruitment of Rural
Learners from the Zululand District into Higher
Education Institutions.**

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Promotional Strategies on the Recruitment of Rural learners from the Zululand District into Higher Education Institutions.

by

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management**

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15 August 2023

DECLARATION

I, Buyisile H. Makhuba, do hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my investigation and research and that this work has not been submitted in part or full for any degree or any other degree to any other university.

Signature of student

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DEDICATION

To my family, you are the reason for all that I do, and all that I do is for you. Thank you for making everything worthwhile.

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- I thank God for making all my endeavours possible and for instilling in me the courage, strength, persistence and perseverance to pursue my studies.
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ABSTRACT

Addressing the need for improved strategies in the recruitment of rural learners by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), this study focuses on the Zululand District. The purpose of this research is to enhance HEIs promotional strategies, reduce the number of walk-in learners, and bolster rural learner enrolment.

The methodology involves an analysis of learner preferences and an effectiveness assessment of various promotional strategies used in rural recruitment. It includes investigating challenges that rural learners face in accessing information about higher education and assessing the collaboration between schools and universities in recruiting first-year learners from rural areas.

Key findings revealed significant gaps in the current promotional strategies and highlighted the important factors influencing rural learners' choice of HEIs. Furthermore, the research found that improved engagement between schools and universities significantly impacts the effectiveness of recruitment efforts.

The study recommends a refinement of promotional strategies to meet the specific needs of rural learners, the introduction of accessible platforms for rural learners to acquire higher education information, and an enhancement of collaborative efforts between schools and universities in the Zululand District

Keywords: rural learners, Basic education, matric learners, HEI, HEI recruitment.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

HEI – Higher Education Institutions

KZN – KwaZulu-Natal

DOE- Department of Education

IREC- Institutional Research Ethics
Committee

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE STUDY

Globally, including in the United States of America, less than one in five rural residents aged 25 years and above have a university degree. The key challenge has often been the underlying culture and socioeconomic status of those from rural areas (Marcus and Krupnick 2017: 1). It has not been possible to obtain exact figures of the percentage of learners from rural backgrounds in South African universities. According to Czerniewicz and Brown (2014: 11), lack of figures in the South African context makes it difficult to collect data based on rural students' recruitment. These learners are often included either in the general category of 'disadvantaged students' or assumed to be in the group of learners who are on financial aid. For those who opt for university education, a considerable number of them belong to the first generation in their family to pursue higher education. Consequently, high school students from rural areas often face a lack of peer groups or reference points to consult when considering university alternatives. Additionally, rural schools frequently lack counseling services that can offer advice, support, and facilitate connections (Marcus and Krupnick 2017: 2). There is an assumption that rural learners frequently have difficulty choosing appropriate careers. This could be due to multiple reasons including lack of information, peer pressure, incorrect advice from friends, parents, teachers, lack of adequate professional guidance, career counselling, and the prestige attached to certain jobs (Dlamini 2017: 65).

This study was motivated by observing long queues of walk-in learners, indicating that learners did not apply ahead of time to study at higher education institutions (HEIs). Often this results in learners selecting the wrong career due to lack of proper career guidance and an increased dropout rate. Al-Fattal (2010: 31) asserts that in regard to students' needs, intentions, and desires to enroll at a particular HEI, marketers try to determine what the students' needs are and find a way to relay to the learners that these needs can be met. The author argues that a significant proportion of higher

education institutions (HEIs) inaccurately anticipate students' needs and devise programs that fail to address their actual requirements. For an organization to create an effective program that caters to student needs, it must first comprehend what potential students expect from the HEI, which can only be achieved by establishing communication channels with them (Al-Fattal 2010: 34). To succeed in recruiting students at the tertiary level, recruitment agents need to identify and interpret the factors that influence student choices, and then develop recruitment initiatives and other promotional tools to increase the number of students selecting their HEI as their preferred institution (Agrey and Lampadan 2014: 392).

This study explored how HEIs promote student recruitment processes in rural schools. In this exploration, different promotional strategies and processes are illuminated for the purpose of improving recruitment in rural communities. The findings provide relevant and appropriate information to enable potential rural learners to make informed decisions and preparation for their intended studies at urban campuses of higher education. The methodology used in this study was both quantitative and qualitative; a survey design was used to collect data from grade 12 learners and interviews were conducted with staff members.

The research design of this study was a multimethod approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative cross-sectional designs. The research paradigm underpinning the quantitative research was positivism, with the core belief that knowledge can be obtained objectively through scientific methods. Data collection for the quantitative research was executed using a carefully designed questionnaire, covering demographics, preferred promotional tactics, effectiveness of higher education institutions' (HEIs) promotional techniques, and decision-making processes. The data was subsequently analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 26.0, with descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns, relationships, and differences.

The qualitative research approach aligned with the constructivist paradigm, recognizing that human knowledge is formed through personal experiences and interactions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to grasp the participants'

truths and realities regarding HEIs' recruitment strategies. These interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Tesch's eight-step thematic analysis method, identifying recurrent patterns and themes. Key themes centered around the learner recruitment process, learner profiles, university preparedness, career choices, learner performance, and graduate attributes.

Sampling played a significant role in the data collection process, selecting a group that accurately represented the characteristics of the larger population. Pretesting of the questionnaire was conducted at Sibanisakhe High School to gauge its effectiveness and make necessary adjustments, ensuring the accuracy of the study. Ethical principles were maintained throughout, with informed consent forms signed by all participants. Lastly, an interview schedule, composed of demographic information and open-ended questions, guided the qualitative data collection. This comprehensive approach enabled a thorough exploration of the research question, providing valuable insights into HEIs' recruitment strategies.

The study's goal was to help HEIs identify the most effective strategies for attracting the desired number of students from rural schools and lowering the number of walk-ins from these locations. This will enable HEIs to enhance their promotional efforts by honing them and expanding the student pool from whom they can recruit. This study analysed students' preferences and levels of effectiveness of promotional strategies. It also examined the factors that students considered most important in influencing their decision to study at an HEI. The data collection instrument was a questionnaire. The target population was 186 learners from five different high schools in KwaZulu-Natal, Zululand District, in Mahlabathini. The sample of this population was 154 students. The questionnaire was distributed to 154 learners, and all were completed and returned. The responses to the questionnaires were analysed using the data analysis package SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Recommendations to HEIs to improve the recruitment of Rural learners were to communicate the most influential factors, namely: employment opportunities, the

learning environment, qualifications offered, facilities and services of the HEI, and reputation of the HEI. The target market should be potential students between the ages of 18 and 23 years that extend to Zululand District and beyond with multilingual types of advertising, interactive marketing and direct marketing. This would have a positive influence on students' decisions to study at a particular HEI.

1.2 Research setting

Brink, van der Walt and van Rensburg (2012: 59) define research setting as a specific place or physical location as well as conditions where the data will be collected by the researcher. This study was set in the Zululand District, in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa. Zululand is one of the 11 district municipalities of KZN province. The majority of its 803 575 people are black isiZulu speakers. It is part of a larger historical area and covers an area of 14 799 km². This district has 80 schools in all suburbs and townships. The study was conducted in four high schools in Mahlabathini Zululand District. The Zululand District Municipality is situated in the northeastern part of KZN.

It is the largest district in the KZN district, which makes up 16% of its geographical area (Figure 3.1).



Figure 1.2: Map showing location of Ulundi known as Mahlabathini
Source: Municipalities of South Africa (2018).

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The challenges faced by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in recruiting rural learners are multifold, compounded by increased competition among institutions and rural learners' limited access to accurate information for informed decision-making. With HEIs' financial stability hinging on their ability to recruit a certain number of learners each year (Marshall, Smart & Alston, 2009: 37), the effectiveness of their recruitment strategies for rural schools comes into question.

Key to these strategies is the accurate and attractive portrayal of course offerings, as learners consider course information as a critical factor in choosing an HEI (Marshall, Smart & Alston, 2009: 37). One pertinent recent example is the University of Limpopo in South Africa, known for its concerted efforts to engage rural students. Their strategic recruitment campaign, which included comprehensive course information, resulted in an increase in rural student enrollment (Sehoole, 2015). The university's use of course-specific information in their recruitment strategy proved influential in attracting students, validating Marshall, Smart & Alston's (2009: 37) findings that course information is a critical factor in a learner's selection of an HEI.

The growing competitiveness in the HEI landscape, fuelled by the rise of private institutions, underscores the need for well-crafted marketing strategies (Krstić & Lazarević, 2013: 30). However, these strategies need to be sensitively tailored to the target audience. Spaul's work (2013: 436-447) highlights the implications of South Africa's dual school system (public and private) on marketing plans. To illustrate, a promotional campaign by a private institution might emphasize academic prestige and extensive course options, whereas a public institution might highlight affordable tuition fees and community engagement, resonating more with rural learners. This approach necessitates that HEIs avoid blanket recruitment strategies and instead adapt to the nuances of their target demographics.

The importance of digital mediums in marketing strategies is also stressed (Kotler and Keller, 2012: 541-54), but the reality of rural learners' limited access to these platforms due to connectivity issues or lack of devices must be considered (Smedescu, et al.,

2016: 295). For instance, a rural-focused recruitment strategy might blend traditional methods such as radio advertisements, community outreach programs, and school visits with digital methods where possible, ensuring broader coverage.

In summary, understanding the unique challenges and needs of rural learners is imperative in creating effective recruitment strategies for this demographic. By tailoring recruitment efforts and utilizing an appropriate mix of traditional and digital platforms, HEIs can better meet their recruitment goals in rural areas applications, and smartphone loyalty programs in your list. Smedescu, et al. (2016: 295) further state that "in this digital age, the website, presence on new social media platforms, and participation within the preferred communication venues are criteria by which prospective students rate an institution. However, these may be unavailable to rural learners due to problems or connectivity or not possessing smart phone devices.

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of promotional strategies used by an HEI for student recruitment in the Zululand District.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- To identify promotional strategies used for student recruitment in rural areas.
- To determine the engagement between schools and the HEI in recruiting first year learners from rural areas.
- To establish challenges faced by rural learners regarding access to information on higher education.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the preferred promotional strategies for student recruitment used by HEIs to reach rural students?
- How engaged are schools and universities to ensure effectiveness of the HEI promotional strategies in recruiting first-year learners from rural areas?
- What challenges do learners face within rural areas in accessing information on higher education

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has the potential to contribute to several areas of engagement in the higher education landscape. HEIs would benefit from this study in terms of knowing and understanding the issues and challenges of institutional recruitment in communities that are considered marginalised, both, in terms of geography (rurality) and development (facilities and resources) with a view to aligning its recruitment strategies to the needs of the marginalised communities.

In addition, HEIs would gain knowledge and understanding of the needs of learners from rural communities, so that appropriate support structures and processes can be identified and instituted to support the needs of such learners in order to recruit and retain them until completion of their studies.

This study is also significant to the discipline area of marketing. The study has the potential to contextually and theoretically inform the discipline in terms of marketing strategies and content of marketing that aligns it with the needs and realities of marginalised communities so that target marketing will become more efficient.

This study is also significant for schools, learners and parents in marginalised communities in that they would come to know and understand the realities and extent of being exposed to higher education studies with a view to finding ways of increasing the knowledge, understanding and participation possibilities in higher education.

Several research questions arose from the review of the literature above: How do different promotional strategies affect recruitment of rural learners to HEIs? Similarly, which factors do learners consider when choosing an HEI? With regard to student and university relationships, how does the institution's location influence the selection process?

Based on the empirical literature, we hypothesise the following: (1) Rural learners are more likely to choose a higher institution of education due to its proximity (Samani *et al.* 2019: 52).

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The structure of the dissertation is laid out in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Structure of this dissertation

Chapters	Chapter title	Outline of content
Chapter 1	Overview of the study	An overview of the study was outlined in this chapter, including the background to the study, problem statement, aims, objectives, and significance.
Chapter 2	Literature Review	Synthesises and discusses literature relevant to recruiting Rural learners into HEIs including the theoretical framework.
Chapter 3	Research Design and Methodology	A detailed subscription of methods used to achieve the aim and objectives of the study including a description of ethical considerations.
Chapter 4	Data Presentation and Analysis	Presentation of results from analysis of data and discussion of findings in the light of relevant literature.
Chapter 5	Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Trajectories	The conclusion and limitations of the study and appropriate recommendations.

1.9 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, the researcher provided the background, problem statement and the aim of the study. The significance of the study was explained. The following chapter will present an in-depth review of the relevant literature to anchor the significance of this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review section provides a critical analysis of existing promotional and recruitment strategies and factors influencing decision making when learners from rural areas select their prospective HEIs. The topics highlight the importance of, and outline different types of, promotional and recruitment strategies as well as factors that learners consider when selecting a university. This chapter also discusses key essentials that an HEI should consider when developing a recruitment strategy with particular attention to how these strategies are promoted.

2.2 LITERATURE SEARCH STRATEGY

For this study, a variety of databases and search engines such as Google Scholar were used. EBSCO HOST was used to access different databases such as JSTOR, ProQuest and Academic Search Complete.

Key search terms and phrases used included: “South African matriculants and student recruitment”, “higher education institutions”, “promotion strategies”, “student recruitment strategies”, “rural high schools”.

Only full articles that were written in English and were within the ten-year period were used. Policy and framework documents for higher education were used because they guide education in South Africa and are very important for this study.

According to the research team from MBA Skool (Anon 2020:1), promotional strategies are described as different methods used by companies or institutions to advertise, promote and sell their goods. This study discussed promotional strategies used by an HEI to recruit students from rural schools. According to Marshall, Smart and Alston (2009: 37), regardless of different external promotional strategies, learners value the infrastructure of the institute, convenience and courses available. In addition, course information was the most effective recruitment strategy and an influential factor

when learners were choosing a higher education institution, besides financial considerations and the institution's facilities.

A company's presentation seems important because millennials "are not willing to offer a second shot at first impression," according to a study (Lindbeck and Fodrey 2010: 143). Because students are impacted by the school's reputation and word-of-mouth recommendations, great consideration should be paid to how the institution is presented (Gamache, Pampalon and Hamel 2010: 32).

In this context, properly designed promotional strategies not only serve to attract the desired profile of learners but they help to motivate and correctly place learners into programmes best suited for them (Gamache, Pampalon and Hamel 2010: 14).

In order to successfully recruit students for tertiary education, recruitment agents must clearly identify and interpret the factors that affect students' decision-making. They must also develop recruitment strategies and other organizational promotional tools to increase the proportion of students who choose their HEI as their top-choice institution (Agrey and Lampadan 2014: 392).

Al-Fattal (2010: 31–38) asserts that HEIs seek to identify the requirements of students and endeavour to discover strategies for communicating to learners how these needs might be satisfied. The author goes on to say that many HEIs continue to misjudge students' needs and design programs that do not take their needs into consideration. According to the literature, an organization can only create a program that is effective in satisfying students' requirements after it has established communication channels with students. This is only achievable once the organization knows what the students expect of that HEI.

2.3 HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework defined higher education as "education offered at both private and state-owned institutions of higher learning where the student graduates with either a national senior certificate, a diploma followed by a bachelor, master or a doctoral degree" (Department of Education 2014: 111).

According to a report by the Council for Higher Education, “the systemic problem of the higher education system is its overall coherence, rationality and appropriateness in relation to socio-economic development needs” (Council for Higher Education 2016). It also relates to the scope of the overall enrolments, participation rates and numbers of institutions; the shape of the nature of institutions, their obligations and focus, the levels and range of their programme offerings, their field or disciplinary orientations; and modes of delivery whether contact or distance education (Council for Higher Education 2016).

After the official end of apartheid in South Africa, efforts have been made to increase access to higher education, particularly by the democratically elected government since 1994. Leibowitz and Bozalek (2014: 91) argue that there has been a clear commitment to extending access to a more diverse group of South African students, as evidenced by policy initiatives such as ring fenced funding for bursaries and extended curriculum programs. However, policy implementation is always subject to real-world constraints, which can influence the policy outcomes. The Department of Basic Education acknowledges that there is a significant disparity in educational opportunities that disadvantages poorer, rural provinces (Department of Basic Education 2012). Despite efforts to improve access to education, le Roux and Breier (2012: 196) note that educational opportunities for 75% of black South Africans have not improved significantly since the end of apartheid.

2.3.1 Higher education recruitment theory

After examining many definitions of the term, this study defines student recruitment as the process of studying the program for which learners are being recruited, followed by the identification, evaluation, and selection of the best prospects. According to Beneke and Human (2010) and Beneke (2011), effective recruitment necessitates taking steps to ensure that recruits can integrate into and perform their obligations in the program for which they have been hired. HEIs must improve students' preparedness by strengthening and expanding advice and guiding services through their recruitment strategies since information, advice, and guidance are essential procedures that help in placing students effectively in programs.

2.3.2 High education promotional theory

A study by Guildbault (2016: 56) looked into how HEI might use marketing to develop and nurture student connections just like a company does with its clients. In the US and the UK, marketing of HEIs is common, and the use of marketing in higher education is well established (Hemsl, Brown and Oplatka 2006:14). For instance, the HEI promotes itself by branding and advertising to students and other organizations (Chapleo and Reader 2014; Khanna, Jacob and Yadav 2014; Lowrie 2007; Williams and Omar 2014). According to research, market orientation can help an organization compete by establishing and maintaining superior value through the application of the marketing mix, connecting customer needs to organizational strengths, and taking the interests of the customer into account when analyzing the competition.

2.4 THE EXTENDED MARKETING MIX

The traditional market mix, also known as the "4 Ps" of marketing, includes product, price, place, and promotion. These four elements are used by businesses to develop effective marketing strategies and tactics (Fahy and Jobber 2012: 9). Product refers to goods or services that a business offers to consumers including features, design, packaging, and branding. Price refers to the amount that a customer must pay to purchase the product or service. This can include discounts, financing options, and payment terms. (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick 2019: 3) provides a comprehensive overview of the traditional market mix and how it has evolved in the digital age.

Promotion is marketing communication that educates, persuades, and reminds potential customers about a product in order to sway their judgment or provoke a reaction. The promotional mix is in charge of educating the target market about a product or service's existence and the advantages it offers consumers. Place is concerned with decisions on the management of the distribution channels that will be used, the locations of retail locations, and the required amounts of inventory (Fahy and Jobber 2019: 10).

However, the extended marketing mix was better suited for this study. The extended marketing mix, also known as the "Seven Ps," includes the traditional four Ps and adds people, process, and physical evidence. Academics favor including the three Ps of processes, physical facilities, and people into the conventional marketing mix, according to Holtzhausen (2010: 40). (Groucutt, 2005: 159). The extended marketing mix aids in the creation of a more thorough marketing plan by helping to account for all the factors that may influence a customer's impression of a good or service. Each of these is discussed below. The extended marketing mix helps to take into account all the elements that can affect a customer's perception of a product or service, and therefore helps to create a more comprehensive marketing strategy. These are described individually below.

2.4.1 People

Customers and workers of a company represent the people aspect of the service marketing mix, according to Holtzhausen (2010: 40). To establish long-lasting, positive relationships with the consumers, the company must determine whether its personnel have good relationships with the customers and whether they provide the level of service that is expected (Kasper et al. 2006: 374).

Lecturers and administrative personnel make up HEIs (Samani et al. 2019: 51). The administrative team is crucial because they are frequently potential students' first point of contact with the HEI. The instructors are crucial as well since they may improve the institution's reputation and draw in new students by maintaining a high academic reputation (Enache 2011: 27).

2.4.2 Physical facilities

Physical facilities, such as classrooms, libraries, and residence halls, can influence a student's decision to enrol in a particular institution. Students may be more likely to choose a school with modern, well-maintained facilities, as this can create a more positive learning environment and enhance the overall student experience (Holtzhausen 2010: 44).

2.4.3 Processes

Processes, such as the admissions process and registration process, can also impact a student's decision to enrol in a particular institution. Institutions with streamlined, efficient processes may be more attractive to students, as these can make the process of enrolling and starting school easier and less stressful (Holtzhausen 2010: 55).

Additionally, Holtzhausen (2010: 56) claims that HEIs should use their physical facilities and processes as a marketing tool to attract students. For example, an institution can highlight its state-of-the-art classrooms or its online registration system in its marketing materials in order to differentiate itself from other schools (see Figure 2.1).

2.5 PROMOTIONAL MIX ELEMENTS

The promotional mix used by a firm to communicate customer value and build relationships with customers is defined by Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 408) as a collection of promotional techniques or aspects. In a study conducted by Schüller and Raticová (2011: 27), the most crucial marketing resources for prospective students looking for information about a HEI were identified. In addition to direct interaction at events like open houses, roadshows, fairs, and competitions, these techniques also included web presentations, advertising, university ratings, and recommendations (Schüller and Raticová, 2011: 58). The different components of the promotional mix, including advertising, interactive marketing, word-of-mouth marketing, and personal selling, are all related by these promotional instruments. Potential students believed that sales promotion and advertising were efficient promotional mix factors for hiring (Alhakimi and Qasem, 2014: 53).

Constantinides and Stagno (2012: 8) found that the most effective promotional mix techniques were "taster days and campus tours, official university websites, and university brochures," according to their analysis. All of these relate to the broader promotional mix components of both advertising and experiences and events. According to the reviewed literature, there is no one best promotional mix component that may be used to attract students; rather, there are a variety of promotional mix components that are all influenced by factors related to the student body, such as location, age, and financial situation. Studying potential students' environments and

consumption patterns can provide insight into consumer behaviour, according to Alhakimi and Qasem (2014: 53). An institution must first understand its potential student pool in order to recruit students. This idea is backed up by Bonnema and van der Walddt (2008: 320), who claim that marketing communication specialists in higher education have not yet identified distinct subgroups with comparable characteristics within the prospective student target market and do not always know which preferred sources students consult when choosing a tertiary institution for further or higher education. Furthermore, little is known about the information requirements of prospective students when they choose which university to attend.

Figure 2.1 shows graphically how the components of the promotional mix fit into the broader marketing strategy, where the latter is the long-term planning of the business goal that the organization seeks to realize.

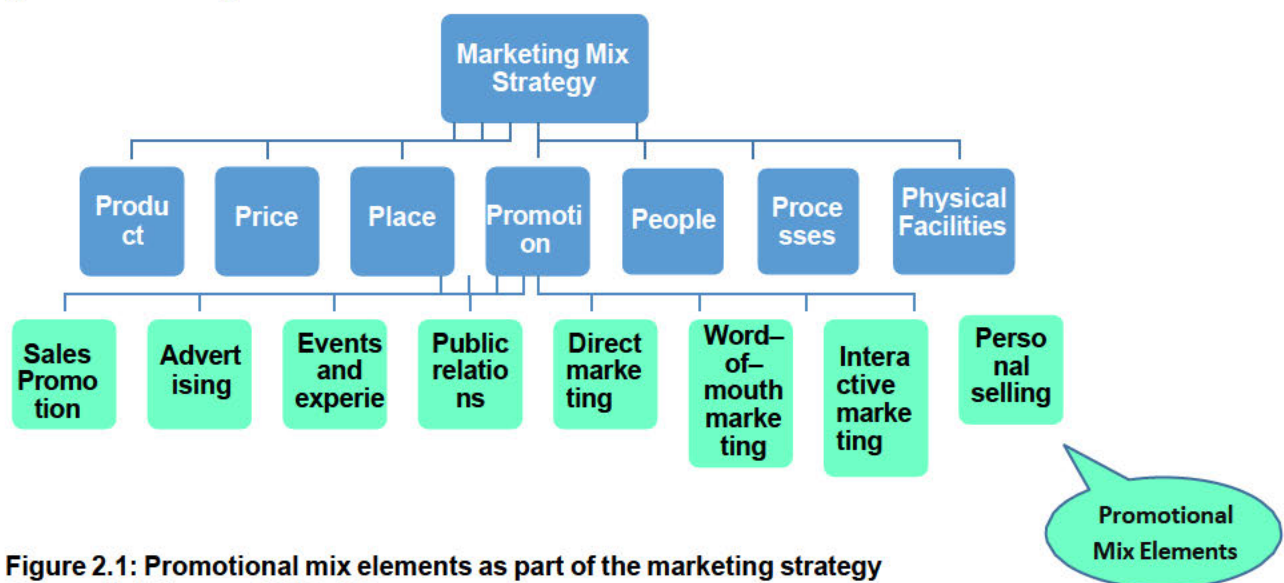


Figure 2.1: Promotional mix elements as part of the marketing strategy

Source: Holtzhausen (2010: 39)

2.6 STEPS IN DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE MARKETING COMMUNICATION

The following stages must be taken in order to build a successful integrated communication and promotion campaign, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 415-422).

2.6.1 Identifying the target audience

The target audience must be understood clearly from the outset. The target audience may include present or potential customers who influence or make purchasing decisions. Individuals, teams, special publics, or the general public could make up the audience (Kotler and Armstrong 2012: 415).

2.6.2 Determining the communication objectives

Once the target market has been identified, the marketer must plan for the intended outcome, or a buy response. The consumer and marketer may, however, occasionally only reach an agreement on a transaction after protracted negotiations. The next step is for the marketing communicator to determine the target audience's position and the stage it needs to be moved to (McDonald and Wilson , 2016:78)

2.6.3 Designing a message

The next step is to create a successful message after determining the target audience's response and readiness stage. The AIDA (attention, interest, desire, and action) principles of marketing state that the message should, in theory, do all four (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012: 417).

2.6.4 Choosing media

The most important step in developing an effective integrated communication and promotion program is that the communicator must select the channels of

communication (Kotler and Armstrong 2012: 418-420). There are two broad types of communication channels: personal and non-personal.

2.6.5 Communication channels

This form of communication involves direct interaction between two or more people. They may speak with each other in person, over the phone, over email, or even in an online chat. While the company has direct control over some personal communication channels, other personal communications about the product may be sent to customers via channels that the company does not directly control. In many product categories, word-of-mouth marketing has a significant impact. For expensive, risky, or extremely prominent products, personal influence is quite important (Berger and Iyengar 2013: 567-579).

2.6.6 Non-personal communication channels

This form of communication lacks response and is impersonal. Major media, environments, and events include print, broadcast, display, and online media are examples of major media. Designed surroundings known as atmospheres can influence or strengthen a customer's propensity to purchase a product (Kayode 2014:98). Events are planned occurrences used to reach certain audiences with messages.

2.6.7 Selecting the message source

The target audience's impression of the communicator, whether in personal or non-personal communication, determines the message's impact. More people will listen to messages coming from sources they can trust (Kotler and Armstrong 2012: 420).

2.6.8 Collecting feedback

The communicator must investigate the message's impact on the intended audience after sending it (Kotler and Armstrong 2012: 420).

2.7 RELEVANCE OF COMMUNICATION AND LEARNERS' HEI SELECTION

Al-Fattal (2010: 34) suggests that after students decide to pursue higher education, they typically seek information on how to proceed. Initially, they draw from their general knowledge of different institutions that may meet their needs. However, some students may lack sufficient internal information to decide, and they initiate an external search for information.

At this point, marketers must evaluate the level of information needed by the student and/or their parents and the sources they use to gather such information. With this knowledge, marketers can establish communication channels and initiate a promotional effort to provide learners with more information. Effective use of marketing promotional elements is crucial in communicating information to potential students, enabling them to make informed decisions (refer to Table 4.52).

2.8 FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS' CHOICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

A review of the literature revealed that a student's choice of a HEI was influenced by a number of similar factors, including mass media, parental preferences, peer influence, location, costs, features of the host countries, learning environments, political environments, student welfare concerns, educational costs, and facilities (Baharun, Awang and Padlee 2011: 412).

In this context, literature also indicated that a learning institution must understand what influences the learners' choice for their promotional strategies to be effective. Kemboi, Kindiki and Misigo (2016: 3) state that there is a relationship between personality types and career choices. When an individual's career fits their personality, they are more inclined to enjoy that chosen career, to stay in the job for a longer period (Holland 2016: 124). Therefore, learners were likely to be satisfied with the course that they select before entering university if it is in line with their career choice. In contrast, when learners make changes in their course, the study indicated that the choices of subject selected is not in line with their future career choices.

Strydom, Koch and Shay (2017: 201) assert that the national availability of higher education has resulted in an increased number of black African learners entering South African public universities. Furthermore, the authors suggest that the majority of learners entering HEIs were under-prepared because they had come from low socio-economic backgrounds and were first-generation learners with a greater risk of dropping out.

Literature indicates that there are multiple factors that influence a student's choice of literature. Rural learners are also less likely to have college-educated parents (Provasnik *et al.* 2007), another predictor of college enrolment and completion (Byun *et al.* 2012).

When compared to their urban counterparts, rural learners frequently experience more financial hardship, and this hardship seems to have a negative impact on college enrollment and achievement (Byun *et al.* 2012: 50). However, rural learners have different educational aspirations than non-rural learners in addition to having limited access to resources that support college preparation, enrolment, and completion. According to the literature, rural youth are less likely to pursue higher education than non-rural youth (Teiken 2016: 40).

According to studies, instructors, administrators, and staff in rural areas support higher education, especially for students who excel academically (Carr and Kefalas, 2009; Corbett 2007; Sherman and Sage 2011). The promotion of individualistic ideals in schools and educators' presumptions about rural "issues" are likely to contribute to the advancement of these educational goals (Sherman and Sage, 2011: 7).

2.8.1 Reputation of the institution and programme availability

According to Agrey and Lampadan (2014: 393), elements that affect students' decisions about a HEI include prestige, academic repute, and degree or program flexibility. They consider recognition on a national and international level, campus features like the caliber of the facilities and services, job prospects after graduation, the institution's location, and the length of time needed to complete the program.

Adequate promotion in relation to the target audience is one technique to overcome these problems.

According to a survey by Moody (2020: 35), the majority of prospective first-year college students are currently conducting university research using social media and mobile devices as key components of their investigation into college options. University and college admissions administrators find it essential to consider new strategies in addition to conventional recruiting techniques that are intended to reach and attract potential students because current students have a significant interest in social media and are dedicated to mobile devices and other technologies (Chegg 2015: 44).

Mkamba (2011:122) further stated that the high dropout rate in South Africa was due to bad profession choice, subpar grade 12 performance, and a lack of effective career counselling. Moreover, Ming (2010: 5) counselled educational institutions to get to know their clients, comprehend their demands, and create methods to meet those needs if they wish to draw in a sustainable part of the student market while also addressing equity.

2.8.2 Influence of family and friends

Evidence from students at Emily Davies School, according to Brookes (2013: 45), reveals that the young people's parents and stepparents had a significant influence on how they felt about higher education. In a very small number of instances, there were glaring differences between a young person's beliefs about, say, the goal of higher education or the significance of a specific institution or course, and what they reported about their parents' perspectives.

2.8.3 Influences of teachers and location of HEI

According to Marshall, Smart and Alston (2009: 37), teachers also play a significant role in selecting careers. Teachers are often the only professional guides that learners receive at their high school during the career selection process. Marshall, Smart and

Alston (2009: 37) further confirm that a combination of convenience and location in connection to distance from home resulted in 4.337% of the total variance among the responses.

2.8.4 Qualification offering and employment prospects

Five elements are emphasized by Agrey and Lampadan (2014: 403) as having an impact on students' final decision regarding a HEI. The importance of factors like a contemporary campus, sophisticated computer labs, and fully stocked libraries is illustrated by the fact that the learning environment and employment prospects rank at the top. The need for credentials that, following completion, open up respectable work chances is one of these causes. The quality of the instruction is also considered to be a significant selection factor (Keskinen, Tiuraniemi and Liimola 2008: 646).

2.9 PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR RURAL AREAS RECRUITMENT

Sales promotions, according to Kotler and Keller (2012: 478), comprise a variety of short-term incentives designed to encourage consumers to try a product or service or to make a purchase, such as:

- Consumer promotions, such as free samples, price reductions, coupons, premium gifts with purchases, competitions, sweepstakes, money refunds, and frequent buyer or loyalty incentives.

- Trade-oriented promotions, such as advertising, display allowances or discounts, and training of distributors' sales forces, are intended to enhance a company's advertising and personal selling efforts.

Samani *et al.* (2019: 51) define promotion of an HEI as “all the methods that institutions use to speak to their target markets to convey the intent, the educational activities and the benefits of their programmes”. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 408), an organisation's total promotional mix consists of the specific blend of promotional tools or elements that the organisation uses to persuasively communicate customer values and build customer relationships. De Meyer (2017: 399) also stated that advertisements mean non-personal presentation of information, ideas, goods and

services by an identified sponsor. Therefore, HEIs need to establish and maintain a sound relationship with their prospective students.

Many HEIs use indoor as well as outdoor advertisements (Smedescu *et al.* 2016: 293). These authors further assert, “Brochures and leaflets are other tools used in a large measure by universities, usually advertising them among interested high school learners and parents” (Smedescu *et al.* 2016: 293). According to Andersen *et al.* (2015: 230); Levitz (2011: 420) and Beneke (2011: 222), strategies that are used internationally include corporate identity elements, radio advertising, outdoor advertising, cinema advertising, TV advertising, internet advertising, banner advertising, bus branding, street pole advertising, e-mail marketing, corporate marketing video, school talks, career exhibitions and open days.

Tertiary education should be made possible through reasonable measures and be progressively more accessible. Literature shows that admissions offices at different institutions utilise a variety of resources in the recruitment of students. Fuente (2016: 19) states that admissions offices primarily use the following strategies for the recruitment of prospective students: college planning conferences, high school visits, career fairs, campus visits and email campaigns in addition to general phone and e-mail communication/follow-up. According to Pentina and Neely (2011: 220), school-university links need to be developed for all schools to maintain the motivation for learners to succeed, particularly among pupils from families with limited cultural capital. Policymakers and institutional leaders need access to more sophisticated research and data sets if they are to monitor performance and act to enhance equity in all its manifestations. Contextual data should be used for making admission decisions including the so-called ‘competitive’ universities.

There are a multitude of marketing techniques that may be employed throughout the decision-making process, and many promotional tools are utilized by universities such as brochures, websites, social media, prospectus, media relations, alumni networks, etc. Literature has identified gaps between the information that potential learners want, and the information provided by universities. James-Maceachern and Yun (2017: 11)

identify the following as stages that international Chinese learners go through before deciding which higher education institution to attend:

- “Awareness stage” in which a student determines that they wish to pursue higher education – this may be in their home country or in an international destination.
- “Information stage” in which international learners gather information about institutions and/or destinations for higher education and begin to narrow their choices or consideration set, and a
- “Decision stage” whereby the student makes the choice of the individual institution.

Available literature does not make note of rural South African students. This study will evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment and promotional strategies of HEIs in the recruitment of Rural learners in South Africa.

2.9.1 Recruitment strategies

Social network platforms help for quick dissemination of information to alumni, current, and prospective students, and to get them connected. Distance learning, a sort of onshore or offshore education provided remotely through an interactive virtual platform for learners who would ordinarily not be physically present at a school, is a transformation that the internet has brought in the education sector (Aaen and Dalsgaard 2016). However, there is insufficient research on this topic. In particular, little research has investigated effective social media promotional strategies are at recruiting rural learners

Turley-Ames (2018: 230), found that connecting members of different communities with learners in rural high schools can help learners identify their ideal career path. In California the Liberal Arts High programme was developed in which professors travelled to rural high schools to give presentations based on their areas of expertise and to share information about their respective universities, mainly being Idaho State. During visits, learners made personal connections with outstanding college faculty members. In addition to providing valuable financial support, programmes like this aid

the development of relationships with rural high schools and institutions of higher learning.

2.9.2 Promotional strategy: open days

A research study carried out with rural Chinese learners revealed that they choose international HEIs based on affordability, prestige and quality (Hannukainen 2015: 320). To recruit more learners from rural and poor areas, universities in China have simplified enrolment and given financial support to learners from families with difficulties. Apart from the favourable enrolment policy and grants, some universities have found other ways to help learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (Xinhua Insight 2017: 101). One-to-one services in career guidance are now common in many colleges to help students to find their desired jobs and make a new start both for themselves and their families. Colleges such as the Beijing Institute of Technology also have programmes to help these learners visit foreign universities at no cost.

Representatives of the HEIs reported that they consider relationships with schools to be critical. This is since schools provide these institutions with access to their target market – in effect, acting as “information gatekeepers” (Schiffman and Kanuk 2017: 54). Other suggestions include maintaining a comprehensive and frequently updated web site, implementing an online applications system whereby scholars can apply via a web interface, and ensuring that admissions staff are well trained and accessible, therefore being in a position to comprehensively deal with basic and advanced queries simultaneously. However, this data does not mention the accessibility of online options for rural students.

A study conducted by Beneke and Human (2015: 2) found that 8% of their participants claimed that they did not wish to have a relationship with an institution prior to the application period. Beneke and Human (2015: 6) further stated that institutions hold ‘open days’ on an annual basis whereby interested scholars might visit the institution to experience the campus and communicate with current learners and staff. However, the data does not represent rural schools engaging in open days, it may be assumed

that rural schools always have issues relating to the resources constraint to transport a large group of learners to the institution.

2.9.3 State funding for HEIs

There are few options for institutions to foster student ambition, institutional expansion, or growth in the education sector (Nwedu 2019: 23). According to Nwedu (2019: 24), Western HEIs have made outstanding efforts in using scholarships to entice potential candidates and sustain current students well into retention. One reason Western HEIs have grown popular worldwide for study and research is because of this. These universities provide prospective and existing students with a variety of grants or bursaries, some of which may be tailored for different need-based and underrepresented students and have few restrictions on country.

2.9.4 Prospectus, fliers, media

The use of online and printed prospectuses, as well as fliers is one of the marketing strategies with which Western universities sell their products to potential students. Printed fliers containing a brief programme and university information can be placed in foyers for picking by anyone Nwedu (2019: 24). As marketing materials, prospectuses and fliers provide a wealth of information for prospective applicants and new current learners regarding a university and its programmes Nwe.

Nwedu (2019: 21) found that attention is being shifted from printed prospectuses to online prospectuses because the latter is cost-effective. However, the fact is that not even printed prospectuses can be seen at very many African universities.

The use of printed posters to advertise admissions recruitment is a common trend in some of the universities. Therefore, it is imperative for universities in the continent to adopt a prospectus-based recruitment strategy, among every other strategy reviewed herein. This calls for designing a prospectus providing a variety of information on a university, its products, and any information necessary to assist prospective applicants to make a comparative choice for their studies Nwedu (2019: 26).

2.9.5 Promotional tools of interactive marketing

Beneke and Human (2010: 11) state that recruitment involves designing the institution's offerings to meet the target market's needs and desires, using effective pricing, communication and distribution to inform, motivate and service the markets. Therefore, HEIs need to establish and maintain a sound relationship with their prospective students. According to de Meyer (2017: 17), advertisements mean non-personal presentation of information, ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor. Personal selling is a form of person-to-person communication in which a seller attempts to assist or persuade prospective buyers to purchase the organisation's product or service. Direct marketing occurs when an institution communicates with prospective learners using an interactive database driven communication media such as direct selling, telemarketing, direct mail, the internet and various broadcast media and print media to encourage a response from prospective students.

Promotional activities are more effective when they are sustained and targeted at prospective customers, for example, learners in their final year of high school.

2.9.6 ADVERTISING AS INTERACTIVE MARKETING

2.9.6.1 Definition of advertising

Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of concepts, products, or services by an identified sponsor through print media (newspapers and magazines), broadcast media (radio and television), network media (telephone, cable, satellite, wireless), electronic media (audiotape, videotape, videodisk, CD-ROM, Web page), and display media, according to Kotler and Keller (2012: 504). (Billboards, signs, posters).

Advertising is the most well-known and widely used promotional element and effective way to reach a wide audience, claims Healey (2013: 5). Advertising can be used to draw attention to a new good or service, explain its benefits, suggest uses for it, set it

apart from rival products, persuade customers to buy it, and establish or improve one's brand image. The message is what the organization wants to convey, and the medium is the means by which they will do it. As a result, the two fundamental components of advertising are the message and the channel.

2.9.6.2 Promotional tools of advertising

According to Healey (2013: 5) and Kotler and Keller (2012: 508), communication types/mediums used in advertising are television, radio, magazines, newspapers, direct mail, outdoor advertising, yellow pages, internet, public spaces, product placement and point of purchase. Most universities are familiar with this promotional tool and many HEIs can be viewed via indoor as well as outdoor advertisements (Smedescu *et al.* 2016: 293). According to these authors, “Brochures and leaflets are another tool used in a large measure by universities, usually advertising them among interested high school learners and parents” (Smedescu *et al.* 2016: 293). Schüller and Rašticová (2011: 58) list the following tools used in higher education advertising:

- Fliers – which provide details about qualifications offered.
- Radio – these advertisements speak about events such as open days.
- Billboards – the university logo is promoted in this way.
- Printed press – newspapers and magazines cover qualifications offered and open days.
- Posters – which announce shows or competitions.
- Images on public transport vehicles – displaying the university logo and qualification offerings.
- Websites – these include presentations at the university as well as other advertising.
- Video or movie spots – this includes placement of the university logo or study options in movies or trailers.

2.9.6.3 Advantages and disadvantages of advertising

According to Healey (2013: 4), most advertising is relatively expensive and due to its non-personal nature, it is difficult to get feedback, know how your message is received, or close a sale. Further advantages and disadvantages are listed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Advantages and disadvantages of advertising

Medium	Advantages	Disadvantages
Newspapers	Flexibility; timeliness; good local market coverage; broad acceptance and high believability.	Short life; poor reproduction quality; small “pass-along” audience.
Television	Combines sight, sound, and motion; appealing to the senses; high attention and high consumer reach.	High absolute cost; high clutter; fleeting exposure and less audience selectivity.
Direct mail	Audience selectivity; flexibility; no advert competition within the same medium and personalisation.	Relatively high cost and “junk mail” perception.
Radio	Mass use; high geographic and demographic selectivity as well as low cost.	Audio presentation only; lower attention than television; non-standardised rate structures and short-lived exposure.
Magazines	High geographic and demographic selectivity; credibility and prestige; high-quality reproduction; long life and good pass-along readership.	Long advert purchase lead time and some waste in circulation.
Yellow pages	Excellent local coverage; high believability; wide reach and low cost.	High competition; long advert purchase lead-time and creative limitations.
Newsletters	Very high selectivity; full control; Interactive opportunities and relatively low cost.	Costs could escalate.
Brochures	Flexibility: full control and can dramatise messages.	Overproduction could lead to wasted expenditure.
Telephone	Many users and the opportunity to give a personal touch.	Relative high cost and increasing consumer resistance.
Internet	High selectivity; interactive possibilities and relatively low cost.	Increasing clutter; requires a certain level of technological skills from consumers and is only available to those who have Internet access.
Public Space	Valuable and cost-effective way to reach consumers and it can be	Unwanted information overload.

	innovatively used	
Product Placement	Flexibility, cost effective and large reach.	Advertisers become reliant on relationship with network producers which could lead to exploitation of the advertiser.
Outdoor Advertising	Effective medium for reminding customers about a product or service, has a good reach and one of the lowest in cost.	Messages must be short and highly coloured to be easily noticeable and effective and environmental laws have limited the use of billboards.
Point of Purchase	Low cost and easy to select target market.	Easily ignored by customers who are focused on their shopping.

Source: Kotler and Keller (2012: 513)

According to Kotler and Keller (2012: 478), sales promotions include various short-term incentives to encourage trial or purchase of a product or service including:

- Consumer promotions – for example, samples, price promotions, and coupons, premiums gifts with purchase, contests, sweepstakes, money refunds, frequent shoppers or loyalty incentives.
- Trade oriented promotions are designed to support a firm's advertising and personal selling efforts – examples are advertising, display allowances or discounts and training of distributors' sales force.
- Business and sales force promotions – for example, a contest among sales representatives for the highest sales.

Research indicated that learners do not consider traditional university promotional tools such as websites, prospectuses and other written material as playing a significant role in their choice and decision-making. This may be because learners just do not find these sources as trustworthy for their decision-making (Anderson and Whalley 2015: 524). It could also be that the internet is assumed to be widely available to everyone when in fact many pupils, especially from disadvantaged communities, either have limited, or unreliable or intermittent access to internet. This suggests that HEIs may need to consider other ways of promoting themselves to the recruitment market.

Kotler and Keller (2012: 541-542) list interactive marketing communication examples as web sites, search adverts, display adverts, email, mobile marketing, mobile

applications as well as smart phones loyalty programmes. Smedescu *et al.* (2016: 295) state that “in this digital age the website, presence on new social media platforms and activity within the preferred communication environments are criteria by which prospective learners assess a university”.

In terms of student recruitment, an important relationship exists among potential learners who log into social networks and the probability of them applying to an HEI (Constantinides and Stagno 2012: 4).

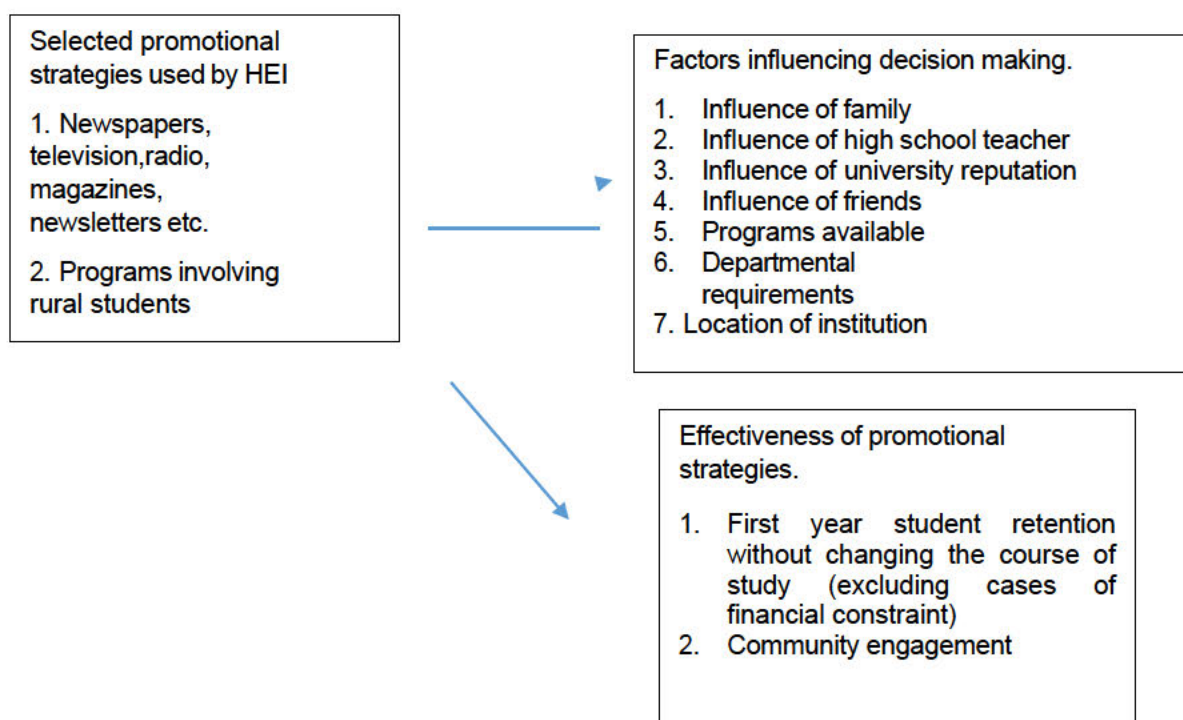
2.10 EFFECTIVENESS OF RECRUITMENT SYSTEM

Nwedu (2019: 55) explains the concept of student retention and how it has attracted much attention in recent times. Policymakers, accrediting bodies, taxpayers, general public, and mostly students, their families and alumni have become highly interested in student retention especially during the learners first year.

Literature shows that some African universities, including South African universities, have been unprogressive in the marketing of their products to potential learners, leading to a high dropout rate or course switching during a student's first year. In this context, South African HEIs are faced with numerous challenges including academic preparedness, significant numbers of English second language students, large classes and inadequate curriculum design (Jaffer, Nga'ambi, Czrniewicz 2018: 560). Jaffer, Nga'ambi, Czrniewicz (2018: 300) state that South Africa higher education is under pressure to increase participation from diverse groups of learners and to produce the skills required for a rapidly changing society. The authors further suggest that the demand to increase the diversity of the student population of South Africa higher education means that student recruitment gains in importance.

The learner respondents from rural backgrounds indicated that financial aid, value, how well the institution will prepare them for a career, quality of faculty, quality of specific programmes, and quality of facilities were the factors that most strongly influenced their postsecondary education institution choices.

Figure 2.2: The effectiveness of promotional strategies of HEIs in the recruitment of rural students.



2.10.6 Retention

Literature shows that the concept of student retention has attracted much attention recently.

Nwedu (2019: 4) identified the concept of student retention as also being used to refer to the dropout rate. Consequently, student retention has been defined variously as students continued study until successful completion, or the length of time that learners continue to study at a particular institution.

Aljohani's (2016: 7) classification of constructs or variables of student attrition in theoretical models is dependent on the type and theoretical background of the models. For example, with the psychological model of student attrition factors are related to the characteristics of the learners themselves, whereas sociological models consider the impact of social and institutional factors.

2.10.7 Community engagement

The concept of community engagement is described by the Carnegie Foundation (2016: 2) as a collaborative effort between higher education institutions and their communities, which involves an exchange of knowledge and resources that benefits both parties through a partnership built on reciprocity. According to the foundation, these partnerships not only address social issues and contribute to the public good, but also enrich teaching, learning, and research, and equip students with the skills they need to become engaged citizens. Service learning is one approach to integrating community engagement into the curriculum, and research indicates that such experiences have positive effects on student retention, academic success, understanding of course material, and sense of civic responsibility.

2.10.8 Events and experiences

According to Kotler and Keller (2012: 478), events and experiences are organisation sponsored activities and programmes designed to create daily or special brand-related

interactions with consumers, including sports, arts, entertainment, and cause events, as well as less formal activities.

2.10.9 Advantages and disadvantages of advertising

Kotler and Keller (2012: 479) suggest that events and experiences can come in various forms, including sports, entertainment, festivals, art exhibitions, causes, factory tours, organisations, museums, and street activities. According to Smedescu et al. (2016: 294), student representatives often organise events at higher education institutions (HEIs), which are open to the public. Some of these events are funded by the HEI, while others are sponsored by external companies. The authors also note that HEIs offer different types of events, such as campus tours for potential students and their parents.

Universities such as Northwestern, Harvard, University of Alaska and many more enjoy the presence of a museum, which is still a form of promotional event, attracting both learners and high school students, parents and people with a penchant for art, in general. Universities also organise charity events, such as the Winchester prom organised by the Faculty of Law within the University of Winchester.

2.10.10 Advantages and disadvantages of events and experiences

According to Emerald Frog Marketing (2018: 97), events are an excellent way of communicating with customers. This increases the number of contacts a business has and can raise awareness of the business' brand, product or service across the marketplace. Disadvantages can be cost in regard to stand space, graphics, staffing, accommodation and travel, competition among different events and incorrect planning to attract the target audience.

2.11 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.11.6 Theoretical framework

This section presents the conceptual framework that aims to show the relationship between the effectiveness of promotional strategies of HEIs in the recruitment of rural learners, which has been motivated by the connection between promotion and information communication technology (ICT) (Wilkins and Huisman 2012: 627). Promotion is also an important tool for HEIs in the enrolment and information process.

The factors 'image' and 'reputation' have been incorporated within the conceptual framework. Image and reputation are interrelated with people, process and promotion. According to Ivy (2001: 278) and Pratminingsih and Soedijati (2011: 34), the connection between image and people is motivated by HEI staff and their role to interact, inform and manage prospective learners during the enrolment process. Enache (2011: 50) further states that HEIs can also strengthen their image through promotion and encouragement of well-thought-of processes. The interaction between staff and learners can thus affect the perceived image of the HEI and therefore be linked to people. Image and process are also interrelated, due to each HEI's management of a smooth enrolment phase. This management can improve the higher educational service quality of the university and since the service quality experienced by learners could affect the image, this is an important factor for HEIs.

As it is difficult to improve an already damaged reputation, promotional activities are important for HEIs. The enrolment phase plays an important role for HEIs as it informs learners through sharing knowledge regarding the educational services offered. This knowledge can be fruitful during the retention stage as well as the graduation phase since it can improve the reputation of the HEI (Enache 2011: 20).

2.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed literature-related to the effectiveness of promotional strategies of HEIs in recruiting rural students. It is apparent that different factors affect rural grade 12 learners in selecting HEIs. However, the literature does not portray how rural schools engage with promotional and recruitment strategies executed by institutions. It may be assumed that rural schools have challenges relating to the resources needed to be effectively recruited by HEIs.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research methodology of the study and outlines key items such as the research philosophy and research strategy. The rationale for the target population, sampling method and sampling size is discussed. The process of data collection, the questionnaire construction and pilot study will be outlined as this is a research instrument used to collect data.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is the conceptual blueprint within which research is conducted (Akhtar 2016: 12), The research design describes the basic structure of the research project and the plan for carrying out an investigation that is focused on research questions as the central concern for a particular phenomenon (Saunders *et al.* 2016). In this study, a multimethod approach using both descriptive quantitative and qualitative cross-sectional designs was used, where both qualitative and quantitative approaches guided data collection. This approach was selected because one approach was not adequate to answer the research question.

3.2.1 Descriptive quantitative design

Quantitative research is the process of collecting and analysing numerical data. It can be used to find patterns and averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalise results to wider populations (Kumar 2014: 103). Quantitative study designs are specific, well structured, have been tested for their validity and reliability, and can be explicitly defined and recognise. Due to the type of information that was required from the learners, the research strategy adopted was a descriptive quantitative design, and, due to the sample size, the most suitable data collection tool was a survey questionnaire. Descriptive design provides an accurate picture of what already exists, how often it occurs (known as frequency) and categorises information

before analysis. This type of design helps in generating numerical information describing the prevalence of its variables in percentages, ratios, raw numbers, ranges, means and standard deviations (Saunders 2015: 10) The researcher used descriptive research in order to evaluate the effectiveness recruitment strategies used by HEIs to recruit rural students.

3.2.2 Descriptive qualitative design

Descriptive design is used to gain in-depth information about the characteristics within a particular field of study and can be used to develop theory, identify problems with current practice and make judgements (Lambert 2012: 255-256). The researcher selected this approach to the planned qualitative enquiry to identify problems with current practice and make judgements regarding the effectiveness of recruitment strategies used by HEIs to recruit rural students.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm is the set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed. Research paradigms can be characterised by the way scientists respond to three basic questions: ontological, epistemological and methodological questions (Perera 2018: 14).

3.3.1 Quantitative research paradigm

Positivism is the philosophical view that all knowledge must be verified through scientific methods such as experiments, observations and logical/mathematical proof (Hasa 2020: 12). Quantitative research is underpinned by the positivist paradigm. The fundamental assumption of the positivist paradigm is that there is a reality out there that can be studied and known. Positivists believe that reality is objective, orderly and fixed and the researcher is independent from those researched. The positivist paradigm is deductive in nature and knowledge of human behaviour is gained from observation and reason as well as making sense of the answers to research questions.

Ranjit (2015: 103) states that in quantitative research, the measurement and classification requirements of the information that is gathered demands that study designs are more structured, rigid, fixed and predetermined. This ensures accuracy in measurement and classification. Furthermore, in quantitative research enough detail about a study design is provided for it to be replicated for verification and reassurance (Ranjit, 2015: 104). In the current study, objective data was obtained from respondents using questionnaires.

3.3.2 Qualitative research paradigm

The qualitative research approach is consistent with the worldview known as constructivist or naturalistic paradigm. Constructivism is the concept that humans construct knowledge through their intelligence, experiences and interactions with the world (Hasa 2020: 20). The constructivist or naturalist researchers believe that there is no single reality, that data obtained is subjective, and that the researcher acts as the instrument during data collection (Kuyini 2017: 15). Each participant, when responding to the interview questions, constructs reality. The researcher in the current study interviewed participants with the aim of obtaining their truth and reality regarding how effective recruitment strategies from HEIs are when recruiting rural learners.

3.4 Study population

According to Kumar, James and Alam (2014: 74), the study population can be a group of individuals from whom the information is required or can be obtained to find answers to the research questions. The population were learners in all five high schools in the rural area of Mahlabathini and educators from the high schools where learners were registered.

3.4.1 Recruitment of participants

Before the study was conducted, ethics clearance was granted by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC Number: 085/21) (Appendix 1) of DUT. Permission was thereafter sought and granted by the Department of Education (Appendices 2a

and 2b) and school principals (Appendices 3a, 3b and 3c). Participants that were 18 years and older were requested to sign a consent form (Appendix 4b). Only learners 18 years and older were selected to participate in this study. The researcher met with the learners in the hall at the end of a lesson as agreed with the principal and the class teacher. The researcher described the aim of the study and how they were expected to participate. A letter of information, which outlined the details of the study, was provided to the participants (Appendix 4a). They read it in the presence of the researcher to answer any questions that learners could have and to clarify any issues. They were assured of confidentiality and that they were not going to be compromised in any way if they decided not to participate in the study or if there were any questions that they did not feel comfortable responding to. Once they understood the contents of the information letter and agreed to participate, they were handed a consent form to sign, to record their agreement.

3.4.2 Target population

The target population were learners who were Grade 12 learners, 18 years of age and Life Orientation educators at the five high schools because they prepare learners for life after high school. Grade 12 learners were preferred because they were in their last

year of high school and were expected to be moving to tertiary institutions the following year and were deemed to provide good data sources.

Table 3.1: Names of high schools in the area and number of Grade 12 learners

Name of High School	Area	Number of Grade 12 learners
Zwelonke	Ntiningwe	121
Nhlungwane	Nhlungwane	75
Bhekifa	Ewela Reserve	65
Sibanisakhe	Dumaneni	88
Vukuza	Manekwane	60
Total		349

Note: The figures shown in Table 3.1 are the total number of matriculants in each school, including learners who are above and below 18 years of age. However, the data extracted for this study only included learners who were 18 years and older due to the time constraints of the parental consent form delays.

3.5 SAMPLING

Sampling is a process that is used to select the group that the researcher will collect the data from. Stacpac (2017: 5) states that a sample reflects the characteristics of the population from which is drawn.

3.5.1 Sampling Technique

Sampling is a technique of selecting individual members or a subset of the population to make statistical inferences from them and estimate characteristics of the whole population (Anon 2017).

3.5.2 Sampling of learners

Census sampling of grade 12 learners who were 18 years of age and above was undertaken. A census method includes all members of a population that are eligible to participate (Meletiou-Mavrotheris and Paparistodemou 2015:385-404). Principals or Deputy Principals and Life Orientation Educators from the targeted High schools, in rural communities, were selected for interviews. These educators were in a good position to provide rich data regarding the challenges faced by learners within their communities and how effective is the promotional tools used by HEI with the rural communities. One principal, deputy principal or LO teacher was sampled from each high school.

3.5.3 Sampling of educators

Principals or Deputy Principals and Life Orientation Educators from the targeted High schools, in rural communities, were selected for interviews. These educators were in a good position to provide rich data regarding the challenges faced by learners within their communities and how effective is the promotional tools used by HEI with the rural communities. One principal, deputy principal or LO teacher was sampled from each high school.

3.5.4 Sample size

In most cases due to the large size of the population, researchers are not able to include all individuals within the population because of time and financial constraints (Faber and Fonesca 2014: 5). The sample size was determined by practical concerns

such as time and other resources.

3.5.5 Calculation of sample size for learners

Sample size for quantitative part was calculated using the following method:

$$N = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

$$N = 349 / (1 + 349(0.05)^2)$$

$$N = 186.38$$

$$n = 186 \text{ Learners}$$

A 95% confidence level and $P = .05$ are assumed for the equation where “n” is the sample size, “N” is the population size, and “e” is the level of precision (Faber and Fonesca 2014: 8). One hundred and eighty-six were eligible to be sampled to participate in this study.

Table 3.2: Sample size for learners per school

Name of High School	Sampled Grade 12 learners
Zwelonke	56
Nhlungwane	27
Bhekifa	14
Sibanisakhe	23
Vukuza	34
Total	154

The calculated sample size was 186, however some learners were below the age of 18 and there was a delay in obtaining assent consent. As a result, the sample size only included learners who were 18 years and older, hence the above sample size of 154 learners (Table 3.2). A study by Chen and Feng (2013: 12) found that students in rural high schools tend to be older, on average, compared to their urban counterparts. The authors attribute this to the fact that many rural areas have limited access to early childhood education, which can result in students starting school later and therefore being older when they reach high school.

Inclusion criteria for learners

- Grade 12 learners from rural high schools of Mahlabathini Zululand district who were 18 years and older.

Exclusion criteria

- Rural high school learners of Mahlabathini Zululand district who were not in grade 12.
- Grade 12 learners from rural high schools of Mahlabathini Zululand district who were younger than 18 years old.

3.5.6 Sample size for educators

In this study, for qualitative sample size, seven educators were selected among principals, or their deputies or Life Orientation (LO) educators as described below:

- Zwelonke High school: Principal and LO educator
- Nhlungwane High school: Principal and LO educator
- Vukuza High school: Principal and LO educator
- Bhekifa High school: LO Educator
- Sibanisakhe High School: LO and Principal.

At Bhekifa High School, this study only selected one LO Educator since the Principal and Deputy Principal were in a meeting. Sandelowski (2015: 201) recommends that qualitative sample sizes are large enough to allow the unfolding of a “new and richly textured understanding” of the phenomenon under study, but small enough for deep, case-oriented analysis. Other qualitative research experts argue that there is no straightforward answer to the question of ‘how many’ and that sample size is contingent on a number of factors relating to epistemological, methodological and practical issues. It has previously been recommended that qualitative studies require a minimum sample size of at least 12 to reach data saturation (Clarke and Braun 2013; Fugard and Potts 2014). Therefore, a sample of seven educators was deemed sufficient for the qualitative analysis and scale of this study.

Inclusion criteria for educators

- All principals or deputy principals of the selected schools.
- All Life Orientation educators.

Exclusion criteria

- Educators who were not principals, deputy principals or LO educators.

3.6 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Daniel, Kumar and Omar (2016: 92) state that research strategies can be categorised as quantitative, qualitative or multi-method.

3.6.1 Quantitative research strategy

A deductive approach to research is one that people typically associate with scientific investigation (Sheppard 2020: 4). A deductive research approach is aligned with quantitative research. Quantitative research is the process of collecting and analysing numerical data. It can be used to find patterns and averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalise results to wider populations.

Therefore, due to the type of information that was required from the learners, the research strategy adopted was quantitative and, due to the sample size, the most suitable data collection tool was a survey questionnaire. Daniel, Kumar and Omar (2016: 92) state that research strategies can be categorised as quantitative, qualitative, or multi-method.

3.6.2 Qualitative research strategy

Inductive analysis is an emergent research strategy, where the researcher reads through the data and identifies codes and concepts as they emerge (Bingham *et al.* 2022: 2). Qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data (text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research (Bhandari *et al.* 2021: 34). The main focus of qualitative research is to understand, explain, explore, discover and clarify situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences of a group of people (Kumar 2014: 103). The parameters of the scope of a study and information gathering methods and processes, are often flexible and evolving; hence, most qualitative designs are not as structured and sequential as quantitative ones. Qualitative research is commonly used in the humanities and social sciences, in subjects such as education. This study collected data that involved personal experiences, opinions and analysed non-numerical data. An inductive research approach is consistent with qualitative research.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Bhandari et al. (2022: 1) states that data collection is a systematic process of gathering observations or measurements; data collection allows you to gain first-hand knowledge and original insights into your research problem.

3.7.1 Quantitative data collection tool

The questionnaire was created with full consideration for the body of literature on recruiting tactics for universities and factors influencing high school students. The

questionnaire was divided into four components, each of which sought to gather data that would improve the HEIs' use of promotional techniques.

Section 1 asked questions about the learner's age, gender, race, and region of high school attendance. It was advantageous to gather this data from the students since it enabled comparisons and contrasts of advertising tactics and demographic characteristics. The learners' preferred promotional tactics were the subject of the second segment. This made it easier to accomplish the study's primary goal. The third segment examined the effectiveness of the HEIs' promotional techniques and determined how successful they were at persuading the student to enroll in courses at the HEI. The decision-making process for choosing a HEI to study at was covered in more detail in the fourth part.

The latter three sections followed a Likert scale which allowed for ease of interpretation and removal of any bias, as the learner was given a set of options and asked to select a position on a five-point scale.

3.7.2 Pre-testing of the questionnaire

The tool was pretested once provisional approval was obtained for the university's ethics committee and gatekeeper permission obtained from the Department of Education. A remote meeting was held with the principal of one school to arrange the date and time for pretesting the tools. The researcher conducted the pilot study at

Sibanisakhe High School to evaluate the effectiveness of the data collection tool on the 12 October 2021 at Mahlabathini Circuit, Zululand district. Ten grade 12 learners and two educators where the pilot study was conducted were randomly selected. That was to ensure that the target population had similar characteristics to those involved in the main study. The researcher always maintained ethical principles. Recruitment of potential respondents was done as for the main study. Those who were willing to be part of the pilot study signed informed consent forms (Appendices 1b and 2b). Consent forms were collected and placed in a sealed envelope before questionnaires were handed out. The researcher distributed questionnaires and each respondent was accommodated in an unused classroom. The researcher kept to the Covid protocol as follows: both the researcher and respondents had face masks on all the time. Good ventilation and lighting were ensured in the room by opening windows to also help with ventilation. Hands were sanitized particularly after exchange of documents such as consent forms and questionnaires and surfaces were disinfected between each respondent. Respondents were asked to give feedback on how they found the questionnaire, for example, if the statements were easy to understand and respond to. No amendments needed to be made to the questionnaire, as respondents had no complaints. The school and respondents who were used to pre-test the tool was excluded from the main study.

3.7.3 Qualitative data collection tool

An interview schedule was used to collect data and was made up of section A, which comprised demographic information, and Section B with open-ended questions to guide the interviews. These questions were formulated using the information that emerged from the literature review and included eleven questions in total (Appendix B). Probing questions were used to ascertain meaning and clarify responses and obtain more information from participants.

3.7.4 Quantitative data collection

Data collection began once the researcher had received full approval from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (REC 085/21) and approval from the KZN

Department of Education (Appendix D) had been granted. The researcher secured appointments with the respective schools through the Heads of Schools. The class teachers agreed to the time and venue for meetings with learners. Learners were met in their classroom where the purpose of the study was explained and they were assured of anonymity and confidentiality because each participant would be given a pseudonym. The researcher responded to queries the learners had for clarity. Thereafter they were given an information letter (Appendix 2A) to read, and they signed a consent form to register their agreement to participate in the study (Appendix 3B). These were immediately collected and placed in a sealed envelope before questionnaires were distributed so that they could not be linked with completed questionnaires. Questionnaires were administered to all grade 12 learners who met the criteria and agreed to participate in the selected schools within the chosen geographical location. The researcher was present to check that respondents did not discuss the questions, which could influence their responses. All completed questionnaires were checked for completeness, collected by the researcher immediately after completion, and placed in sealed envelopes. This process was repeated in all schools until data collection was completed. Covid protocols were followed as described in the pre-testing of the tool.

3.7.5 Qualitative data collection

Times were agreed upon with seven educators for semi-structured face-to-face interviews. This method of data collection increases the possibility of yielding rich and detailed feedback. The interviews were conducted in the educators' offices. The interviews were iterative in nature, with a constant back and forth interaction between the participant and the researcher. Nevertheless, during the interviews, the researcher tried to ensure that the educators did most of the talking, thus allowing the educators to give their accounts of their experiences of institutional marketing.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.8.1 Quantitative analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analysed using version 26.0 of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Data was initially coded and captured on an Excel spreadsheet and then uploaded into the SPSS statistical package. Relevant statistical tests for descriptive analysis and inferential statistics to identify relationships and differences were calculated. Factor analysis tests were undertaken for validity purposes.

Binomial test: Tests whether a significant proportion of respondents select one of a possible two responses. This can be extended when data with more than two response options is split into two distinct groups (Saunders *et al.* 2016).

Chi-square test of independence: Used on cross-tabulations to see whether a significant relationship exists between the two variables represented in the cross-tabulation. When conditions are not met, Fisher's exact test is used (Saunders *et al.* 2016).

3.8.2 Qualitative analysis

The analysis of the data followed Tesch's eight-step thematic analysis method as outlined in Creswell and Poth's (2014: 186) research methodology. These steps involved first reading through all the transcripts to get a general understanding of the collected data. Notes were made in the margins to capture any emerging thoughts or ideas. Topics were identified and listed, and similar topics were clustered together. Codes were created for each topic and written alongside corresponding segments in the data. Additional topics or codes were also noted next to relevant sections of the text. The most appropriate descriptive language was used to create sub-categories for the topics. Finally, related categories were grouped together to create a comprehensive list of emerging categories.

The recorded semi-structured interviews were transcribed. The data was scrutinised to identify any recurrent patterns. A theme is a cluster of linked categories conveying similar meanings and usually emerges through the inductive analytic process, which characterizes the qualitative paradigm. Themes for this study were orientated around learner recruitment process and learner profiles (demographics, university preparedness, career choices, learner performance and graduate attributes) as well as other themes. Qualitative data addressed the objectives of this study to identify themes which is referred to as thematic content analysis (Clarke and Braun 2013:12).

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.9.1 Permission

The DUT institutional Research Ethics Committee cleared and approved the study. Permission was requested from the Department of education and the inspectorate of the Zululand district. School principals were also asked for permission to access schools.

3.9.2 Informed consent

Participants in the study were asked to sign consent after they had understood the description, purpose and understanding of the nature of the study. Participants and respondents also had to understand how they were expected to participate in the study and what risks were involved, if any.

3.9.3 Non-maleficence

This ensures that no harm comes to participants and respondents. The researcher conducted the interviews safely without any threat to the participants as well as respondents. Covid 19 protocols were adhered to in order to prevent and lower the risk of infection. Participating in the study was voluntary and participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences for them. No sensitive questions were asked during interviews and there were no sensitive statements in the questionnaire.

3.9.4 Confidentiality and anonymity

Consent forms were collected and placed in a sealed envelope before the interviews began and questionnaires were distributed. This was done so that no link was made between the participants and the completed questionnaires. Answer sheets and completed questionnaires were placed in a separately marked sealed envelope. Hard copies such as consent forms and questionnaires were stored in a locked cupboard and only the researcher had access to it. Names of all those who participated in the study were not used, codes were used instead. Soft copies were kept in a marked folder in a password-protected computer known only to the researcher. These will be kept for five years thereafter deleted and shredded by the researcher.

3.10 INTEGRITY

The researcher was truthful and honest with all those who participated in the study. No deception was used; the researcher was open and transparent with those who

participated in the study. Data was collected honestly. No one was coerced or forced to participate, and all participated voluntarily.

3.10.1 Autonomy

An information letter was handed to those who participated (Appendix 2A) that explained the purpose of the study and participants signed a consent form (Appendix 3A). This was done before commencement of data collection. Participation was voluntary and participants had the right to refuse to participate in the study and could withdraw from the study at any time and could refrain from answering any questions if they wished. This would not compromise participants in any way.

3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Trustworthiness denotes quality of the research instrument and data collection approach. According to Saunders *et al.* (2016), in qualitative research, trustworthiness is achieved through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, respectively.

3.11.1 Credibility

Credibility denotes confidence in the truth of the data, and the interpretations provided regarding the content (Saunders *et al.* 2016). The first step to ensure credibility was that the researcher was transparent with all participants about the purpose of the study and the study process. In addition, purposive sampling was used to sample interviewed participants. The researcher listened to voice recordings and read transcriptions several times to ensure completeness of collected data.

3.11.2 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to accurate reporting of the meaning of data provided by the participants during interviews (Saunders *et al.* 2016). Interviews were audio-recorded with the permission from participants to confirm the accuracy of data. The researcher used quotes directly from what participants said to support the themes and subthemes that emerged during the data analysis.

3.11.3 Dependability

Dependability is the stability of data over time and conditions indicating consistency and stability of evidence-gathered content (Saunders *et al.* 2016). The researcher adhered to the research principles. The same interview guide was used for all participants to ensure that the findings of the study would be repeated in a similar environment. All materials obtained during the study, including hard and electronic materials, were kept safe in case they are required in a dispute about data and consent.

3.11.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which data can be applied practically to other settings (Saunders *et al.* 2016). The researcher documented the research process to ensure applicability of the study to other contexts. This was done to ensure that it could be applied in another context.

3.12 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Pandey and Pandey (2021: 59) state that “the analysis of data should be adequate to reveal its significance and the methods of analysis used should be appropriate. The validity and reliability of the data should be checked carefully”. For validity, it could simply be asked: is the data collection instrument measuring what it is supposed to be measuring? (Ranjit 2017: 166) This concept is used to ensure that the questions asked, and the way they are asked, are appropriate enough to allow the researcher to

respond to the research objectives. Validity is defined by Heale and Twycross (2015: 12) as the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in a quantitative study.

3.12.1 External validity

Firstly, face validity is based on the logical connection between questions and the study's objectives. To establish face validity, each item on the research instrument must have a logical link to an objective (Ranjit 2017: 167). In this study, face validity was established by linking objectives to the questionnaire.

Secondly, content validity ensures that the items and questions on the instrument adequately cover the issue being measured.

It is essential to ensure that the coverage of the issue is balanced, and each aspect has similar and adequate representation in the items or questions. Researchers judge content validity based on the extent to which statements or questions represent the issue being measured, as judged by the researcher, current literature, and experts in the field (Ranjit 2017: 167). In this study, content validity was ensured by researching relevant and up-to-date literature related to promotional strategies and learner recruitment.

Thirdly, concurrent validity compares how well an instrument compares with a second assessment concurrently done. This was ensured by performing a correlation check of a similar study against the results of this study (Ranjit 2017: 167).

Finally, criterion validity measures the extent to which a measure is related to an outcome.

This form of validity had been incorporated into the questionnaire by ensuring that the language used was generic enough so that it was easier to be understood by both learners and teachers (Taherdoost 2016: 32).

In terms of reliability, a research tool is said to be reliable if it is consistent, stable, predictable, and accurate under constant conditions. The greater the consistency and stability in an instrument, the greater its reliability (Ranjit 2017: 168).

Parallel forms of reliability involve having two different versions of the same data collection instrument, administered at different times, to ensure that exposure to one instrument does not affect participants' responses to the other. The correlation coefficient between the two data collection instruments measures this form of reliability (Gabrenya 2017: 1).

3.12.2 Internal validity

According to Bryman (2012: 30), if results under a specific category are found to waiver when the study is done more than once, the researcher will consider it to be an unreliable measure. As a result, data for this study was obtained from two different populations (i.e., grade 12 learners, and principals, deputy principals of Life Orientation educators). Triangulation is normally used to establish validity in qualitative research. For this study, in order to establish validity, the researcher actively sought alternative explanations to what appear to be research results.

3.12.3 Reliability

The concept of test-retest reliability is based on the idea that a dependable data collection instrument should remain stable over multiple administrations with minimal variations in the results. A reliability coefficient is used to measure this reliability test. For instance, if a data collection instrument is given to respondents and then administered again to the same respondents a month later, the correlation between the two administrations can determine the reliability of the instrument (Gabrenya 2017: 2).

Inter-rater reliability measures the level of agreement among raters who assign a rating to a data collection method, primarily in the case of interviews. This type of reliability test can be measured in various ways, such as the percentage of agreement among raters or a correlation coefficient referred to as Kappa (Gabrenya 2003: 4).

To ensure accuracy, the questionnaire was designed in a manner that directly relates to the study's objectives, and a Likert scale was used. Therefore, the questionnaire was both valid and reliable.

3.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the research design that was used to collect data, supported by the works of other distinguished researchers. The research paradigm approach and design were described in detail showing how data was collected to achieve the aims mentioned in the introductory chapter. Moreover, in this chapter the building blocks of the study were discussed from the sampling procedures and the recruitment strategy to the data collection and data analysis. Ethical considerations were explained. This gives an idea of the path and the guiding principles the study has followed thus assisting the researcher to plan accordingly. The following chapter presents the findings and discussion thereof.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the descriptive analysis of the research methodology used in this study. The chapter discussed research philosophy as well as the strategy that would be employed to conduct the study. Vital aspects that speak directly to the study's objectives, such as the target population and sampling, were discussed. This chapter presents analysis of data that was obtained through a self-administered questionnaire administered to grade 12 learners in rural schools located in Zululand District, Mahlabathini and interviews with teachers. Data presented in this chapter helped the researcher to understand how learners receive higher education institutional information to make informed decisions when accessing higher education. Permission for data collection at the respective rural schools was granted telephonically.

4.2 PRESENTATION OF QUANTITATIVE RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY OF GRADE 12 LEARNERS

This chapter presents results of the four sections of the questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire dealt with demographic details and thus findings related to age and gender were analysed. The second and third sections of the questionnaire dealt with the preference and effectiveness of promotional strategies, respectively, alongside the results of the responses to this have been critiqued. The fourth section of the questionnaire dealt with factors influencing the decision-making process regarding selecting an HEI to study at. Analysis revealed helpful information that has been used to offer recommendations to HEIs. Data collected through a survey of grade 12 learners in five rural areas of KZN, Zululand District, Mahlabathini were analysed using SPSS version 28.0.

4.3 SAMPLE REALISATION

Five schools were selected for the purpose of this study namely, Zwelonke High School, Nhlungwane High School, Bhekifa High School, Sibanisakhe High School and Vukuza High School. Data were collected from learners who were in grade 12. The sample size was calculated to be 186 respondents; however, 154 respondents were sampled. The researcher only sampled respondents from the age of 18 years and above because there was delay with obtaining assent consent for respondents below the age of 18 years. One hundred and fifty-four questionnaires were completed by learners. Table 4.1 presents the number of learners per school who participated in the study.

Table 4.1: Sample realisation

Schools	Zwelonke High School	Nhlungwane High School	Bhekifa High School	Sibanisakhe High School	Vukuza High School	Total
Number of Learners	56	27	14	23	34	154

4.4 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The sample size consisted of 154 respondents from five high schools as per Table 4.2. Zwelonke high school had the highest number of respondents 36.4% (n = 56) who participated, with Bhekifa high school having the least number of respondents 9.1% (n = 14).

Table 4.2: Number of respondents across high schools

Name of High School	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bhekifa	14	9.1	9.1
Nhlungwane	27	17.5	26.6
Sibanisakhe	23	14.9	41.6
Vukuza	34	22.1	63.6
Zwelonke	56	36.4	100.0
Total	154	100.0	

4.5 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

4.5.1 Gender of respondents per high school

The results showed that the majority of respondents were female 60% (n = 93) and Zwelonke high school had the highest number of female respondents 40.9% (n = 38) and 29.5% (n = 18) males among all high schools (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Gender of respondents per high school

	High School						
Gender	Zwelonke	Nhlungwane	Bhekifa	Sibanisakhe	Vukuza	Total	Percentage
Male	18	12	5	13	13	61	40
Female	38	15	9	10	21	93	60
Total	56	27	14	23	34	154	100

4.5.2 Gender of total respondents

The total number of female respondents in this study were 60% (n = 93) slightly higher than that of males 40% (n = 61) (Figure 4.2). According to a study by the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (South African Government 2021) there were 327 974 male candidates (44.7%) and 405 224 (55.3%) female candidates that wrote national grade 12 examinations in 2021. “For every 100 females in grade 12 there are only 85 males and for every 100 females in grade 12 only 8 females will complete an undergraduate degree within six years, with even lower numbers for males, 5” (BusinessTech 2017). Given that the split between male and female learners in this study is relatively even, this would mean that marketing to any gender would be acceptable.

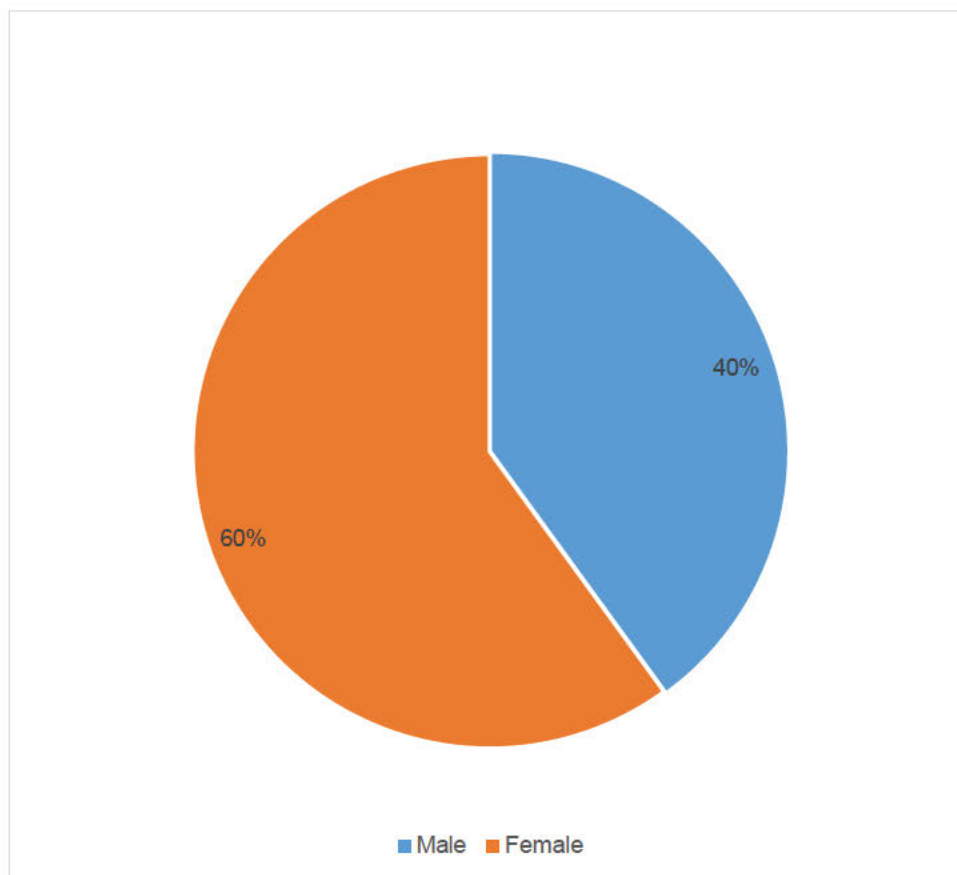


Figure 4.1: Gender of respondents

4.6 AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Results of respondents' ages indicated that age ranged from 18 to 22 years. The majority of respondents 61.7% ($n = 95$) were 18 years old. The least number of respondents 3.2% ($n = 5$) were 21 years old (Table 4.4). For this study, only learners who were of legal age (18 years old) were allowed to participate due to the concerns regarding the delayed response for parental consent. However, this is not a reflection of the national age group of grades 12. A study conducted by Athorne (2015: 12) showed that learners attain the age of 18 in Grade 12 if they are in their age-related grade. Statistically, less than 50% of learners are in grade 12 at age 18, with some in lower grades and others having already dropped out of school completely having never attained grade 12.

Table 4.4: Age of respondents

Age		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18	95	61.7	61.7	61.7
	19	32	20.8	20.8	80.8
	20	16	10.4	10.4	89.7
	21	5	3.2	3.2	93.6
	22	6	3.9	3.9	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	100.0	

4.7 AGE BY GENDER

Results indicated that the majority of female respondents 72% (n = 67) were 18 years old, followed by males 45.9% (n = 28) (Table 4.5). The least number of respondents 3.2% (n = 5) were 21 years old and were male, no female respondents were 21 years or older.

Table 4.5: Age of respondents by gender

Gender * Age Cross tabulation						
Gender	Age					Total
	18	19	20	21	22	
Male	28	17	6	5	5	61
Female	67	15	10	0	1	93
Total	95	32	16	5	6	154

4.8 PREFERENCE OF PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

Students were asked to rate their preference for learning about HEIs through each of the promotional mix aspects in this question. To determine the learners' preferred recruitment tactics for rural students, an analysis of the replies for each component of the promotional mix was done.

4.8.1 Level of preference for receiving promotional information through advertising

The results presented below indicate the preference for different advertising strategies that were used by HEIs.

4.8.1.1 Television (TV)

Television advertisements elicited mixed responses from respondents; however, the majority of respondents 56.5% (n = 87) expressed that TV advertisements were their most preferred promotional strategy (Table 4.6). This could be because television combines sight, sound, and motion, is appealing to the senses and gains high attention and high consumer reach (Healey 2013: 4).

Table 4.6: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through television advertising

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Desired	87	56.5	56.5
Neutral	56	36.4	92.9
Not preferred at all	11	7.1	100.0
Total	154	100.0	

4.8.1.2 Books

Table 4.7 shows that as an information strategy, books yielded widely neutral responses from the respondents where the majority of respondents 46% (n = 71) expressed to be neutral, and 35.7% (n = 55) preferred books as a promotional strategy. This might imply that the majority of respondents did not use this promotional strategy. This could be due to the growth of the internet, resulting in more consumption of information online. This has resulted in a reduction of the youth referencing/reading physical books (Abhi 2022: 78).

Table 4.7: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through advertising (books)

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Desired	55	35.7	35.7
Neutral	71	46.1	81.8
Not preferred at all	28	18.2	100.0
Total	154	100.0	

4.8.1.3 Newspapers

Table 4.8 indicates that the majority of respondents 47.4% (n = 73) were neutral towards newspapers as a strategy for advertising of HEIs. Only a small percentage, 37% (n = 57) desired this form of strategy. Newspapers have a short shelf life. In the age where information moves fast, the production and distribution process of newspapers is not keeping up with the demand for information (Healey 2013: 4).

Table 4.8: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through advertising (newspapers)

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Desired	57	37.0	37.0
Neutral	73	47.4	84.4
Not preferred at all	24	15.6	100.0
Total	154	100.0	

4.8.1.4 Brochures

Table 4.9 shows that most respondents 46.1% (n = 71) were neutral towards brochures as a strategy of information sharing by HEIs. Only 22.7% (n = 35) of respondents preferred brochures leaving 31.2% (n = 48) respondents who did not desire this type of advertising. According to an article by B and B Press UK (2020), brochures are not the best marketing method to grab a reader's attention.

Table 4.9: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through advertising (brochures)

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Desired	35	22.7	22.7
Neutral	71	46.1	68.8
Not preferred at all	48	31.2	100.0
Total	154	100.0	

4.8.1.5 Events

The results indicated that most respondents 37.7% (n = 58) did not prefer events as promotional material for HEIs and only 26% (n = 40) respondents desired this method. According to Smedescu *et al.* (2016: 294) student representatives arrange many events funded by the HEIs, many of which are available for the public to attend. However, in this study respondents did not prefer events as a promotional strategy. This means that events were organized but some students did not desire to attend.

Table 4.10: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through advertising (events)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	40	26.0	26.0
	Neutral	56	36.4	62.3
	Not preferred at all	58	37.7	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.1.6 Public spaces

Results indicated that the majority of respondents 44.2% (n = 68) desired public spaces for information about HEIs and only 23.4% (n = 36) respondents did not desire

this (Table 4.11). Healey (2013: 4) asserts that public spaces are a valuable and a cost-effective way to reach consumers and they can be innovatively used.

Table 4.11: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through advertising (public spaces)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	68	44.2	44.2
	Neutral	50	32.5	76.6
	Not preferred at all	36	23.4	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.1.7 Outdoor advertising

Table 4.12 indicates that the majority of respondents 43.5% (n = 67) expressed being neutral to outdoor advertising as a promotional strategy. Following closely to this result were respondents 37.7% (n = 58) who desired this method of advertisement. Healey (2013: 4) states that outdoor advertising is an effective medium for reminding customers about a product or service.

Table 4.12: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through advertising (outdoor advertising)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	58	37.7	37.7
	Neutral	67	43.5	81.2
	Not preferred at all	29	18.8	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.1.8 Publications

Table 4.13 shows that the majority of respondents 39% (n = 60) were neutral and 35.7% (n = 55) did not prefer publications. This could be because the majority of respondents were not attracted to reading due to reading online publications. Smith (2018: 12) found that over 75% of respondents in their study reported using social media to research and learn about potential colleges, and over 90% reported using mobile devices to access information about colleges and universities. These

Findings highlight the importance of considering the role of social media and mobile technology in higher education recruitment strategies.

Table 4.13: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through advertising (publications)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	39	25.3	25.3
	Neutral	60	39.0	64.3
	Not preferred at all	55	35.7	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.1.9 Descriptive statistics for promotional material

Promotional material that had the highest mean among the promotional mix elements was events ($M = 2.10$) with a standard deviation (SD) 0.792. Publications followed closely with $M = 2.10$ and SD.777. Newspapers and TV had $M = 1.79$ and 1.51 with SD .695 and .629 respectively (Table 4.14). Most universities are familiar with advertising as a promotional tool and many HEIs use indoor as well as outdoor advertisements (Smedescu *et al.* 2016: 293).

Table 4.14: Descriptive statistics for level of preference for receiving promotional information through advertising

Promotional Material	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Newspaper	154	1	3	1.79	.695
Television	154	1	3	1.51	.629
Books	154	1	3	1.82	.715
Brochures	154	1	3	2.08	.732
Events	154	1	3	2.12	.792
Public Spaces	154	1	3	1.79	.798
Outdoor Advertising	154	1	3	1.81	.730
Publications	154	1	3	2.10	.777
Valid N (listwise)	154				

4.8.2 Level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing

Respondents were asked questions regarding receiving promotional information through direct marketing. The following sections cover the different direct marketing elements.

4.8.2.1 Direct mail

The results in Table 4.15 show that respondents strongly preferred direct mail as a promotional strategy as most respondents 70.8% (n = 109) indicated to desire this method of advertising. Only a small number of respondents, 11% (n = 17) did not desire this method. Smedescu *et al.* (2016: 295) assert that direct marketing can create a stronger emotional bond, whilst prospective learners are still in high school, they can receive information from HEIs.

Table 4.15: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing (direct mail)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	109	70.8	70.8
	Neutral	28	18.2	89.0
	Not preferred at all	17	11.0	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.2.2 Leaflets

The results showed that the majority of respondents 57% (n = 89) were neutral towards leaflets as a promotional strategy and only 24% (n = 37) desired this method of advertising (Table 4.16). Smedescu *et al.* (2016: 293) assert that brochures and leaflets are other tools that are largely used by universities to advertise usually among interested high school learners and parents.

Table 4.16: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing (leaflets)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	37	24.0	24.0
	Neutral	89	57.8	81.8
	Not preferred at all	28	18.2	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.2.3 Direct response-advertising handouts

The results showed that 51.9% (n = 80) respondents were neutral and only 29.2% (n = 45) desired handouts as a promotional strategy (Table 4.17). This implies that the majority were neutral because they did not use handouts. Handouts are a piece of printed information provided free of charge, especially to accompany a lecture advertising something. These are used by universities in their marketing (Nwedu 2019: 21).

Table 4.17: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing (handouts)

Response		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	45	29.2	29.2
	Neutral	80	51.9	81.2
	Not preferred at all	29	18.8	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.3 Online marketing

The results indicated that the majority of respondents 45.5% (n = 70) were neutral and 37.7% (n = 58) did not prefer online marketing (Table 4.18). Contrary to these results, Nwedu (2019: 21) found that attention was being shifted from printed prospectuses to online prospectuses because the latter is more cost-effective.

Table 4.18: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing (online marketing)

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Desired	26	16.9	16.9
Neutral	70	45.5	62.3
Not preferred at all	58	37.7	100.0
Total	154	100.0	

4.8.3.1 Telemarketing

The majority of respondents 63% (n = 97) did not prefer telemarketing while 20.1% (n = 31) were neutral and only 16.9% (n = 26) desired telemarketing (Table 4.19). This implies that this strategy was strongly not preferred by the respondents. Moody (2020: 35) found that the majority of potential first-year college students are now researching universities using social media and mobile devices as major components of their investigative efforts related to college choice. Because of current students' significant

interest in social media and their dedication to mobile devices and other technologies, university and college admissions administrators find it essential to consider new strategies.

Table 4.19: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing (telemarketing)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	26	16.9	16.9
	Neutral	31	20.1	37.0
	Not preferred at all	97	63.0	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.3.2 Websites

The results showed that regarding websites 44% (n = 68) of respondents stated that they did not prefer this method, 37% (n = 57) were neutral and 18.8% (n = 29) desired this promotional strategy (Table 4.20). The results concur with research, which indicates that learners did not consider traditional university promotional tools such as websites, prospectuses and other written material as playing a significant role in their choice and decision making. This may be because learners did not find these sources trustworthy for their decision-making (Anderson and Whalley 2015: 44).

Table 4.20: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing (websites)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	29	18.8	18.8
	Neutral	57	37.0	55.8
	Not preferred at all	68	44.2	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.3.3 Interactive marketing

The results indicated that 58.4% (n = 90) did not prefer interactive marketing, 25.3% (n = 39) were neutral and 16.2% (n = 25) desired interactive marketing (Table 4.21). This implies that the majority of respondents did not prefer this method of promotional strategy. De Meyer (2017: 17) states that direct marketing occurs when an institution communicates with prospective learners using an interactive database driven communication encourage a response from prospective students.

Table 4.21: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing (interactive marketing)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	25	16.2	16.2
	Neutral	39	25.3	41.6
	Not preferred at all	90	58.4	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.3.4 Short messaging service (SMS) text marketing

The results showed that 50% (n = 77) were neutral, 29.9% (n = 46) did not prefer it and 20.1% (n = 31) desired SMS marketing (Table 4.22). The results showed that the majority were neutral with this strategy implying that the majority of the respondents did not use this method. However, literature states that SMS marketing allows you to reach your customer base quickly and easily by sending out regular and targeted SMS campaigns (Kotler 2010: 5).

Table 4.22: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing (SMS)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	31	20.1	20.1
	Neutral	77	50.0	70.1
	Not preferred at all	46	29.9	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.3.5 Display adverts

Results showed that the majority of respondents 61% (n = 94) desired displayed adverts while 25.3% (n = 39) were neutral and 13.6% (n = 21) did not prefer this (Table 4.23). This implied that respondents expressed that they desired this promotional strategy. Schüller and Rašticová (2011: 58) state that images on public transport vehicles displaying the university logo and qualification offerings was a form of higher education advertising.

Table 4.23: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing (display adverts)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	94	61.0	61.0
	Neutral	39	25.3	86.4
	Not preferred at all	21	13.6	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.3.6 Mobile marketing

The results showed that 46.4% (n = 71) did not prefer mobile marketing, 32% (n = 49) were neutral and 21.6% (n = 33) desired this method (Table 4.23). This implies that the majority of respondents did not prefer this strategy. Contrary to these results, a recent study by Johnson (2019: 4) supports the findings of Moody (2020: 35) and

suggests that social media and mobile technology are critical components of the college search process for prospective students. Johnson found that over 80% of surveyed students reported using social media to research colleges and universities, and nearly 95% reported using mobile devices to access information about HEIs. These results demonstrate the need for higher education administrators to consider the role of social media and mobile technology in their recruitment efforts in order to effectively reach and engage potential students.

Table 4.24: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	33	21.4	21.6
	Neutral	49	31.8	53.6
	Not preferred at all	71	46.1	100.0
	Total	153	99.4	
Missing	System	1	.6	
Total		154	100.0	

4.8.3.7 Mobile applications

The results showed that 63% (n = 97) did not prefer mobile applications. An equal number of respondents 18.8% (n = 29) expressed the desire or were neutral towards this strategy (Table 4.25). This implies that the majority of respondents did not prefer this method. According to a recent study by Johnson and Thompson (2017: 39), social media and mobile technology are increasingly being used by college students in the decision-making process when choosing a higher education institution. The authors found that almost 80% of surveyed students reported using social media to research colleges and universities, and over 90% reported using mobile devices to access information about schools.

Table 4.25: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing (mobile applications)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	29	18.8	18.8
	Neutral	28	18.2	37.0
	Not preferred at all	97	63.0	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.3.8 Smart phone loyalty programmes

The results indicated that 81.2% (n = 125) did not prefer, 11.7% (n = 18) desired and 7.1% (n = 11) were neutral on smart phone loyalty programmes (Table 4.25). This implies that this strategy was strongly not preferred. However, Smedescu *et al.* (2016: 295) outline that “in this digital age the use of smart phones loyalty programs and website, presence on new social media platforms and activity within the preferred communication environments are criteria by which prospective learners assess a university”.

Table 4.26: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing (smart phone loyalty programmes)

Response		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	18	11.7	11.7
	Neutral	11	7.1	18.8
	Not preferred at all	125	81.2	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.3.9 Descriptive statistics regarding direct marketing

The results showed that promo-strategies direct marketing (direct mail) had the lowest mean whilst smart phone loyalty programmes had the highest mean. The other mean

values ranged between 1.40 and 2.69. The results showed that the lowest standard deviation was .670 and the highest .681.

Table 4.27: Descriptive statistics for level of preference for receiving promotional information through direct marketing

Promo-strategies	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Direct marketing (direct mail)	154	1	3	1.40	.681
Leaflets	154	1	3	1.94	.649
Handouts	154	1	3	1.90	.688
Telemarketing	154	1	3	2.46	.768
Direct response advertising	154	1	3	1.41	.692
Online marketing	154	1	3	2.21	.711
Short messaging service (SMS) text marketing	154	1	3	2.10	.703
Interactive marketing	154	1	3	2.42	.757
Websites	154	1	3	2.25	.755
Search adverts	154	1	3	2.34	.690
Online courses	154	1	3	2.18	.742
Display adverts	154	1	3	1.53	.725
Mobile marketing	154	1	3	2.24	.793
Mobile applications	154	1	3	2.44	.792
Smart phone loyalty programmes	154	1	3	2.69	.670
Valid N (listwise)	154				

4.8.4 Level of preference for receiving promotional information through word-of-mouth marketing

4.8.4.1 Person to person

The distribution for person-to-person marketing was strongly desired amongst 66% (n = 101), neutral 29% (n = 45) and not preferred at all 5% (n = 8) (Table 4.28). The results deviated minimally from the respondents' level of preference in section B. Based on the survey results, there was a positive correlation between the level of preference and effectiveness of word-of-mouth marketing associated with the HEIs. This could be attributed to access to electronic devices, as identified by Smedescu *et al.* (2016: 295) "this type of tool is fundamentally linked to social media".

Table 4.28: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through word-of-mouth marketing (person to person)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	101	65.6	65.6
	Neutral	45	29.2	94.8
	Not preferred at all	8	5.2	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.4.2 Social media

The results showed that 55.2% (n = 85) of the respondents were neutral, 30.5% (n = 47) desired it and 14.3% (n = 22) did not prefer this promotional strategy (Table 4.29).

Table 4.29: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through word-of-mouth marketing (social media)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	47	30.5	30.5
	Neutral	85	55.2	85.7
	Not preferred at all	22	14.3	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.4.3 Social media blogs

The results showed that 83.8% (n = 129) did not prefer blogs, 11% (n = 17) were neutral and 5.2% (n = 8) desired using blogs (Table 4.30). This could be because the majority of the respondents did not use blogs when it comes to HEI promotional strategies.

Table 4.30: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through word-of-mouth marketing blogs

Response		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	8	5.2	5.2
	Neutral	17	11.0	16.2
	Not preferred at all	129	83.8	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.4.4 Entertainment

The results showed that 40.3% (n = 62) were neutral, 33.1% (n = 51) desired it and 26.6% (n = 41) did not prefer entertainment (Table 4.31). The results showed that the majority were neutral on this strategy. This could imply that the majority of the respondents did not use entertainment when it comes to HEI promotional strategies.

Table 4.31: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through word-of-mouth marketing (entertainment)

Response		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	51	33.1	33.1
	Neutral	62	40.3	73.4
	Not preferred at all	41	26.6	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.4.5 Festivals

The results showed that 37% (n = 57) were neutral, 33.8% (n = 52) did not prefer it and 29.2% (n = 45) desired festivals (Table 4.32). This shows that the majority of the respondents were neutral to this strategy. According to Kotler and Keller (2012: 479), events and experiences can be a part of or take the form of: sports, entertainment, festivals, art exhibitions, causes, factory tours, organisations, museums and street activities.

Table 4.32: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through word-of-mouth marketing (festivals)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	45	29.2	29.2
	Neutral	57	37.0	66.2
	Not preferred at all	52	33.8	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.4.6 Art exhibitions

The results showed that 45.5% (n = 70) did not prefer it, 42.2% (n = 65) were neutral and 12.3% (n = 19) desired to use art exhibitions as a promotional strategy (Table 4.33). This shows that the majority of the respondents were neutral to this strategy. According to Kotler and Keller (2012: 479), events and experiences can be a part of or

take the form of sports, entertainment, festivals, art exhibitions, causes, factory tours, organisations, museums and street activities.

Table 4.33: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through word-of-mouth marketing (art exhibitions)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	19	12.3	12.3
	Neutral	65	42.2	54.5
	Not preferred at all	70	45.5	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.4.7 University tours

The results indicated that 46.8% (n = 72) desired university tours, 26.6% (n = 41) were neutral and 26.6% (n = 41) did not prefer this promotional strategy (Table 4.34). This shows that the majority of the respondents expressed a desire for this promotional strategy. This is because many schools have university tours and learners enjoy these.

Table 4.34: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through word-of-mouth marketing (university tours)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	72	46.8	46.8
	Neutral	41	26.6	73.4
	Not preferred at all	41	26.6	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.4.8 Descriptive statistics regarding different promotional material mix

The results displayed in Table 4.35 showed that person to person had the lowest mean whilst blogs had the highest mean. The other mean values ranged between 1.40 and

2.79. The results showed that the lowest standard deviation was.588 and the highest.735.

Table 4.35: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through word-of-mouth marketing

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Person to person	154	1	3	1.40	.588
Social media	154	1	3	1.84	.652
Online communities	154	1	3	2.18	.736
Blogs	154	1	3	2.79	.523
Entertainment	154	1	3	1.94	.773
Festivals	154	1	3	2.05	.795
Art exhibition	154	1	3	2.33	.687
University tours	154	1	3	1.80	.835
Street activities	154	1	3	1.95	.735
Valid N (listwise)	154				

4.8.5 Level of preference for receiving promotional information through public relations

4.8.5.1 Publications

The results showed that most responses publication received was for neutral 52.6% (n = 81), it had also received the lowest responses for not preferred at all 18.2% (n = 28) (Table 4.36). This shows that the majority of the respondents were neutral when it comes to publications. A study by Kim, Mirusmonov and Lee (2014:12) found that the use of print materials, such as brochures and fliers, had little impact on the decision-making process of prospective students when choosing a higher education institution. The authors suggest that this may be due to the proliferation of online information sources, which may make print materials less relevant or influential for students.

Table 4.36: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through public relations (publications)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	45	29.2	29.2
	Neutral	81	52.6	81.8
	Not preferred at all	28	18.2	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.5.2 Sponsorships

The results showed that 49.4% (n = 76) were neutral, 44.2% (n = 68) desired and 6.5% (n = 10) did not prefer sponsorships (Table 4.36). This shows that the majority of the respondents were neutral to this promotional strategy. Smedescu *et al.* (2016: 294) found that student representatives arrange many events funded by their HEIs, many of which are available for the public to attend. In some instances, events are sponsored through companies.

Table 4.37: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through public relations (sponsorship)

Response		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	68	44.2	44.2
	Neutral	76	49.4	93.5
	Not preferred at all	10	6.5	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.5.3 Speeches

The results showed that 48.1% (n = 74) were neutral, 37.7% (n = 58) desired and 14.3% (n = 22) did not prefer speeches (Table 4.38). This shows that the majority of the respondents were neutral regarding this promotional strategy. This might be

because respondents do not prefer speeches as promotional strategies (Beneke (2011: 222).

Table 4.38: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through public relations (speeches)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	58	37.7	37.7
	Neutral	74	48.1	85.7
	Not preferred at all	22	14.3	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.5.4 Identity media

The results showed that 57.8% (n = 89) were neutral, 22.7% (n = 35) desired and 19.5% (n = 30) did not prefer identity media (Table 4.39). This shows that the majority of the respondents expressed being neutral to this promotional strategy. (Beneke, (2011: 222) stated that strategies used internationally seemed to attract learners through corporate identity elements.

Table 4.39: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through public relations (identity media)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	35	22.7	22.7
	Neutral	89	57.8	80.5
	Not preferred at all	30	19.5	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.5.5 Public service

The results indicated that 42.2% (n = 65) were neutral, 39% (n = 60) desired and 18.8% (n = 29) did not prefer public service (Table 4.40). This shows that the majority of the respondents were neutral to this promotional strategy.

Table 4.40: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through public relations (public service)

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Desired	60	39.0	39.0
	Neutral	65	42.2	81.2
	Not preferred at all	29	18.8	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.8.5.6 Public relations

The results showed that sponsorships had the lowest meaning whilst identity media had the highest mean. The other mean values ranged between 1.62 and 1.97. The lowest standard deviation value was .688 with the highest being .735 (Table 4.41).

Table 4.41: Level of preference for receiving promotional information through public relations

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Publications	154	1	3	1.89	.682
Sponsorships	154	1	3	1.62	.606
Speeches	154	1	3	1.77	.684
Identity media	154	1	3	1.97	.651
Public Service	154	1	3	1.80	.735
Valid N (list-wise)	154				

4.9 EFFECTIVENESS OF PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES (DECISION FACTORS)

The following section discusses the factors influencing the respondents' decision-making process. The questions asked learners to select how important each of the identified factors were in influencing their decision to study at an HEI. Each of the factors are discussed below.

4.9.1 Departmental requirements

Agrey and Lampadan (2014: 403) highlight factors that affect students' final selection of a HEI. The department requirement and job prospects rank at the top. Most learners felt that this factor was very important, and it had the highest number of 'very important' responses 90% (n = 138). This factor was given due regard and should be promoted as it is the most important factor for learners in the discipline of subjects' selection at high school level to meet departmental requirements at HEIs (Table 4.42).

Table 4.42: Departmental requirements

Respondents		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	138	89.6	89.6
	Important	14	9.1	98.7
	Neutral	1	.6	99.4
	Not important at all	1	.6	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.9.2 Programmes available

Agrey and Lampadan (2014: 403) indicate that one of the factors is the desire to know what programmes are available which will lead to worthy job prospects upon completion. Table 4.43 indicated that most respondents felt that this factor was very important, and it had the highest number of 'very important' responses 88% (n = 135).

Table 4.43: Programmes available

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	135	87.7	87.7
	Important	17	11.0	98.7
	Neutral	1	.6	99.4
	Not important at all	1	.6	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.9.3 Cost of qualification

The cost implications of attending a HEI is not only the cost of the tuition fees, but also the costs associated with transport, accommodation, learning material and time (Samani *et al.* 2019: 51). Most respondents, 84% (n = 130) felt that cost of the qualification was very important (Table 4.44).

Table 4.44: Cost of qualification

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	130	84.4	84.4
	Important	20	13.0	97.4
	Neutral	1	.6	98.1
	of little importance	2	1.3	99.4
	Not important at all	1	.6	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.9.4 Years required completing qualification

Agrey and Lampadan (2014: 393) highlighted an important factor that influences the student's choice, which is the time required for the completion of the programme. The results of the study show agreement with this statement as most respondents 86% (n = 132) felt that this factor was very important (Table 4.45).

Table 4.45: Years required completing qualification

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	132	85.7	85.7
	Important	19	12.3	98.1
	Neutral	3	1.9	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.9.5 Reputation of university

The results shown in Table 4.46 indicate that 84% (n = 129) of respondents felt that the reputation of the HEI is very important. Focusing specifically on reputation, Drewes and Michael (2006: 797) indicate that applicants with lower grades make significantly different choices than those with exemplary grades. Ciriaci and Muscio (2014: 13) agree with this, as they maintain that good universities attract good students.

Table 4.46: Reputation of university

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	129	83.8	83.8
	Important	19	12.3	96.1
	Neutral	4	2.6	98.7
	Little importance	1	.6	99.4
	Not important at all	1	.6	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.9.6 Location of university

Most respondents 89% (n = 137) felt that location of the HEI was very important (Table 4.47). Drewes (2006: 797) indicates that learners prefer universities closer to home as the additional costs of living far away makes such institutions less attractive.

Table 4.47: Location of university

Responses		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	137	89.0	89.0
	Important	14	9.1	98.1
	Neutral	1	.6	98.7
	Not important at all	2	1.3	100.0
	Total	154	100.0	

4.9.7 Decision making factors

The location of the institution was shown to be an important factor as well as the reputation of the university. With a mean of slightly above 1 as shown in Table 4.48, respondents confirmed that departmental requirements, programmes availability and cost, as well as years required to complete such qualification are important or very important in choosing an institution.

Table 4.48: Descriptive statistics for effectiveness of promotional strategies (decision making factors)

		Departmental Requirements	Programmes available	Cost of qualification	Years required to complete qualification	Reputation of University	Location of University
N	Valid	154	154	154	154	154	154
Mean		1.13	1.15	1.21	1.16	1.22	1.16
Std. Deviation		.453	.468	.579	.420	.586	.550

4.10 CORRELATION

The rule of thumb shown below explains the strength of relationships using Pearson's correlation. The higher the strength of a relationship the greater the relationship between variables.

Value of ρ	Strength of relationship
-1.0 to -0.5 or 1.0 to 0.5	Strong
-0.5 to -0.3 or 0.3 to 0.5	Moderate
-0.3 to -0.1 or 0.1 to 0.3	Weak
-0.1 to 0.1	None or very weak

Table 4.49: Correlations

		Advertising	Direct marketing	Public relations	Word Mouth of	Decision factors
Advertising	Pearson Correlation	1	.391**	.010	.252**	-.009
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	.899	.002	.910
	N	154	153	154	154	154
Direct marketing	Pearson Correlation	.391**	1	.149	.548**	-.216**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		.066	<.001	.007
	N	153	153	153	153	153
Public relations	Pearson Correlation	.010	.149	1	.259**	.028
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.899	.066		.001	.732
	N	154	153	154	154	154
Word Mouth of	Pearson Correlation	.252**	.548**	.259**	1	.006

The results in Table 4.49 show that there is a strong correlation between direct marketing and word-of-mouth (0.548). This implies that direct marketing influences

word-of-mouth advertising. There is another moderate correlation between advertising and direct marketing (0.391). The results show a low correlation between word-of-mouth and advertising (0.252) and another low correlation between word-of-mouth and public relations (0.259).

4.11 RELIABILITY STATISTICS

To assess the consistency of the questionnaire, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was computed by taking multiple measurements on the same subjects. A reliability value of at least 0.70 is usually considered acceptable, although lower thresholds may be appropriate depending on the study's nature and context (Tavakol and Dennick 2011: 53). In general, higher reliability coefficients indicate more satisfactory reliability of a research instrument. The table provided shows the Cronbach's alpha score for each item in the questionnaire. It is noteworthy that one section had reliability scores exceeding the recommended Cronbach's alpha value, whereas the other sections were close to the recommended value. This suggests that there was an acceptable, consistent scoring of the statements.

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Table 4.50: Reliability statistics

Reliability Statistics		
Section B: Preference of Promotional Strategies		
Advertising		
1. Reliability Statistics:	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items.556 8
Direct Marketing		
2. Reliability Statistics	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items.705 15
Word-of-mouth		
3. Reliability Statistics	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items.621 9
Public relations		
4. Reliability Statistics	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items.630 5
DECISION FACTORS		
1. Reliability Statistics	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items.571 6

4.12 REGRESSION

Based on R^2 of the variance in decision-making factors, all variables of preference in promotional strategies do not predict the decision to study in a university. This applies to the variables presented below (advertising, direct marketing, public relations and word of mouth). They do not influence the decision in terms of knowledge of the department requirements, programme availability, cost, reputation and location.

4.12.1 Advertising on decision factors

Table 4.51: Advertising on decision factors

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.009 ^a	.000	-.006	1.743

a. Predictors: (Constant), Advertising

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.039	1	.039	.013	.910 ^b
	Residual	461.857	152	3.039		
	Total	461.896	153			

a. Dependent Variable: Decision factors

b. Predictors: (Constant), Advertising

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.109	.743		9.565	<.001
	Advertising	-.006	.049	-.009	-.114	.910

a. Dependent Variable: Decision factors

The information in the Table 4.51 shows that advertising accounts for 0% ($R^2 = .000$) of the variance in knowledge of the department requirements, programme availability, cost, reputation, location, $F(1, 152) = .013$, $p = .910$. Advertising insignificantly predicts decision factors, $\beta = -.006$, $p = .910$. However, Alhakimi and Qasem (2014: 53) state that potential learners found the promotional mix elements of sales promotion and advertising to be effective when they were utilized to recruit potential students.

Based on R^2 of the variance in decision-making factors, advertising does not predict the decision to study in a university. This applies advertising does not influence the decision in terms of knowledge of the department requirements, program availability, cost, reputation and locate

4.12.2 Direct marketing on decision factors

Al-Fattal (2010: 34) states that if a student lacks enough internal information to choose a higher education institution (HEI), they will start looking for external sources of information. In response, the marketer must evaluate the level of information needed by the student or their parents, as well as the sources they use to gather this information. Armed with this knowledge, the marketer can establish communication channels and launch a promotional campaign to provide students with more information. It is essential at this stage to use marketing promotional elements effectively to communicate information to potential students, empowering them to make informed decisions (see Table 4.52 for reference).

Table 4.52: Direct marketing on decision factors

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.216 ^a	.047	.040	1.706

a. Predictors: (Constant), Direct marketing

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	21.552	1	21.552	7.408	.007 ^b
	Residual	439.284	151	2.909		
	Total	460.837	152			

a. Dependent Variable: Decision factors

b. Predictors: (Constant), Direct marketing

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	9.506	.919		10.341	<.001
	Direct marketing	-.078	.029	-.216	-2.722	.007

a. Dependent Variable: Decision factors

The information in Table 4.52 shows that direct marketing accounts for 4.7% ($R^2 = .047$) of the variance in knowledge of the department requirements, programme availability, cost, reputation, location., $F(1, 151) = 7.408$, $p = .007$. Advertising insignificantly predicts decision factors, $\beta = -.078$, $p = .007$. Direct marketing occurs when an institution communicates with prospective learners using an interactive database driven communication media approach such as direct selling, telemarketing, direct mail, the internet and various broadcast media and print media to encourage a response from prospective learners (De Meyer, 2017: 17).

Based on R^2 of the variance in decision making factors, direct marketing predicts the decision to study in a university insignificantly. The results show that direct marketing contributes less than 5% and has little influence on the decision in terms of knowledge of the department requirements, programme availability, cost, reputation, location.

4.12.3 Public relations on decision factors

Baker and Hunt (2018) found that rural high school students' decision-making process when choosing a higher education institution was influenced by several factors, including academic reputation, financial aid, and campus size (Baker and Hunt 2018). Another study found that rural high school students were more likely to choose a higher education institution that was located closer to home and had a lower cost of attendance (Mokwa *et al.* 2016: 97).

Table 4.53: Public relations on decision factors

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.028 ^a	.001	-.006	1.743

a. Predictors: (Constant), Public relations

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.358	1	.358	.118	.732 ^b
	Residual	461.538	152	3.036		
	Total	461.896	153			

a. Dependent Variable: Decision factors

b. Predictors: (Constant), Public relations

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.821	.613		11.134	<.001
	Public relations	.023	.066	.028	.343	.732

a. Dependent Variable: Decision factors

The information in Table 4.53 shows that public relations accounts for 1% ($R^2 = .001$) of the variance in knowledge of the department requirements, programme availability, cost, reputation, location., $F(1, 152) = .118$, $p = .732$. Advertising insignificantly predicts decision factors, $\beta = 0.023$, $p = .732$.

Based on R^2 of the variance in decision making factors, direct marketing predicts the decision to study in a university insignificantly. This applies direct marketing contributes less than 5% and has little influence on the decision in terms of knowledge of the department requirements, programme availability, cost, reputation, location.

4.12.4 Word-of-mouth on decision factors

Word-of-mouth is a powerful influence on the decision-making process of rural high school students when choosing an HEI. According to a study published in 2018, word-of-mouth was the most influential factor in the decision-making process of rural high school students when selecting a higher education institution (Baker and Hunt 2018). The information in Table 4.54, shows that word of mouth on decision factors where $R^2 = .000$, adjusted $R^2 = -.007$ and Std. Error of the Estimate = 1.743

Other studies have found that the opinions and recommendations of family, friends, teachers, and counsellors play a significant role in the decision-making process of rural high school students when choosing an HEI (Mokwa *et al.*, 2016; Stoner *et al.*, 2017:76).

Table 4.54: Word- of-mouth on decision factors

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.006 ^a	.000	-.007	1.743

a. Predictors: (Constant), Word of Mouth

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.016	1	.016	.005	.943 ^b
	Residual	461.880	152	3.039		
	Total	461.896	153			

a. Dependent Variable: Decision factors

b. Predictors: (Constant), Word of Mouth

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.968	.822		8.478	<.001
	Word of Mouth	.003	.044	.006	.072	.943

a. Dependent Variable: Decision factors

4.13 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the qualitative aspect of the study which aimed to explore the experiences of educators from rural schools thus giving insight into how learners respond to advertisements to access HEIs. This section focuses on the findings from the in-depth semi-structured interviews with principals and Life Orientation educators from secondary schools. The interviews were aimed at inciting information rich responses through their actual experiences regarding how advertising impacts learners.

Data gathered during these interviews illuminated the actual experiences of both educators and learners from marginalized communities. Data triangulation was achieved through the use of results from the questionnaire with findings obtained from primary data collected through the interviews to enhance the lived experience of the learners from marginalised communities. Verbatim quotations are used, accentuating the voice of the interviewees and not that of the researcher.

4.13.1 Study participants

Participants for the interviews were chosen from the schools where the questionnaire was administered. All participants were allocated pseudonyms to protect their identity and preserve their anonymity, thus complying with the ethical requirements of this study (Table 4.55).

Table 4.55: Interview participants (educators)

High School	Principal	Life Orientation Educator
Vukuza	Mrs LN Mathenjwa	Ms BN Mkhonto
Zwelonke	Mr BV Masinga	Ms AS Lamula
Nhlungwane	Mr S Dlodlo	Ms Dindi
Bhekifa		Ms Madida

Due to their positions at their respective high schools, all participants were seasoned and experienced educators with years of experience in the education system.

4.13.2 Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis

During the process of the data analysis, interviews were transcribed verbatim and then analysed by the researcher to identify ideologies, themes and sub-themes. The themes, sub-themes and perception were analysed and interpreted by the researcher to conclusion and develop recommendations. Themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 4.56.

Table 4.56: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Promotional strategies	1.1 Giving information to educators 1.2 Educators as secondary information givers
2. Effectiveness of promotional strategies	2.1 Visit by HEI 2.2 Experience with visits to schools. 2.3 Educators willingness to assist learners
3. Lack of access to HEI information for rural students	3.1 Disadvantages due to lack of information 3.2 General comments by participants

Theme 1: Promotional strategies

Participants were asked how often they receive information about HEIs? Findings showed that participants have never received information directly from HEIs; their main form of information was via the media. Samani *et al.* (2019: 51) define promotion for an HEI as “all the methods that institutions use to speak to their target markets to convey the intent, the educational activities and the benefits of their programmes”. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012: 408), an organisation’s total promotional mix consists of the specific blend of promotional tools or elements that the organisation uses to persuasively communicate customer value and build customer relationships. De Meyer (2017: 399) also stated that advertisements mean the non-personal presentation of information, ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor. Therefore, HEIs need to establish and maintain a sound relationship with their prospective students. Participants had this to say:

None – We often receive it from the media but not from the institution representatives.
[Mr SM Dlodlo]

Not at all we don’t get any information from any higher education which means we lack information as a school. [Ms BN Mkhonto]

We have never received any information from tertiary institutions, only from the grapevine and LO teachers who collect information at their own expense to help learners. [Mrs LN Mathunjwa]

These findings, however, do not concur with literature, which states that most universities are familiar with this promotional tool and many HEIs can be viewed via indoor as well as outdoor advertisements (Smedescu *et al.* 2016: 293). These authors further assert: “Brochures and leaflets are tools used in a large measure by universities, usually advertising them among interested high school learners and parents” (Smedescu *et al.* 2016: 293). Andersen *et al.* (2015: 230), Levitz (2011: 420), and Beneke (2011: 222), state that strategies used internationally seem to attract learners through corporate identity elements, radio advertising, outdoor advertising, cinema advertising, TV advertising, internet advertising, banner advertising, bus

branding, street pole advertising, e-mail marketing, corporate marketing video, school talks, career exhibitions and open days.”.

Sub-theme 1.1: Information giving to educators

The study further found that participants needed workshops from HEIs to gain information, which would enable them to give career guidance to learners. They stated:

They must conduct workshops and send representatives to schools, or they can provide career workshops for learners. [Mr BV Masinga]

Institutions must provide our school with their handbook to assist LO educators. [Ms Dindi]

HEIs must create direct contact with us so that there will be regular and frequent interaction when needed. [Mr SM Dlodlo]

Sub theme 1.2: Educators as secondary information givers

Participants were asked if they are sufficiently equipped as secondary information givers, considering that they are in rural areas. Findings indicated many of them felt that educators were not well equipped. They had this to say:

We are not sufficiently equipped; we rely on the internet which is too wide for us. [Mr SM Dlodlo] No, we have to fend for ourselves out of our pockets to search for information. [Ms LN Mathunjwa]

I am not equipped so I use Google to obtain some of the information. [Ms Madida]

Theme 2: Effectiveness of promotional strategies

Participants were asked how the school was informed about HEIs. Findings showed that many participants were not informed about HEI. If high school educators were given information to pass on to learners about HEIs, this would help them make informed decisions about the institutions and its offerings, and ultimately result in greater first year student retention, thus preventing early dropouts and non-completion of university studies. Nwedu (2019: 12) explains the concept of student retention and how it is attracting more attention. Policymakers, accrediting bodies, taxpayers, the general public, and mostly students, their families and alumni have become highly interested in student retention, especially during the learners' first year. Literature shows that some African universities, including South African universities, have been unprogressive in marketing their products to potential learners, leading to a higher dropout rate or course switching during a student's first year. South African HEIs are faced with numerous challenges including academic preparedness, significant numbers of English second language students, large classes and inadequate curriculum design (Jaffer, Nga'ambi, Czrniewicz 2018: 560).

This is what they said.

No, the school only has information which is researched by the educator about high institution. [Ms. BN Mkhonto]

No, the school is not well informed about the higher education institutions because educators have limited information. [Ms Dindi]

Not many independent people have assisted our school, but their information was limited. [Mr SM Dlodlo]

Sub-theme 2.1: Visits by Higher Education Institution

In addition, findings indicated that HEIs did not visit participants' schools to recruit learners.

Higher education institutions must visit the schools more often and empower educators to also empower learners for them to be ready for higher education. [Ms BN Mkhonto]

No, they do not come to our school to recruit learners. [Mrs. LN Mathunjwa]

Not at all because no higher education institution visits our schools. [Ms Dindi]

Not much, few independent people visited school in 2019-2021 to assist learners with registrations but their info was limited. [Mr SM Dlodlo]

Jaffer, Nga'ambi, Czrniewicz (2018: 300) state that the South African higher education is under pressure to increase participation from diverse groups of learners and to produce the skills required for a rapidly changing society. The authors then further suggest that pressure results in student recruitment gaining increasing importance. In addition, participants from rural backgrounds indicated that financial aid, value, how well the institution will prepare them for a career, quality of faculty, quality of specific programmes, and quality of facilities were the factors that most strongly influenced their postsecondary education institution choices.

Subtheme 2.2: Experiences with visits to schools

When participants were asked about the experience of schools being informed about HEIs, findings are that there was no experience, or the experience was negative since HEIs did not give schools any information. Participants stated:

We have no experience from the HEI but the positive experience that we have was from the limited information that we researched. [Ms BN Mkhonto]

The experience was negative because my school did not receive any information from HEI. [Mrs LN Mathunjwa]

Negative, none on any institution visited Zwelonke High School. [Mr BV Masinga]

Negative, learners end up taking wrong information from social media. [Ms AS Lamula]

Negative, our learners end up not furthering their studies at tertiary school due to lack of knowledge. [Ms Dindi]

Subtheme 2.3: Educators' willingness to assist learners.

Furthermore, the study found that when participants were asked how well they would say they were prepared to help learners apply at HEIs? Participants were willing to assist learners with various processes such as collecting information about HEIs and helping them to choose a program to study

Participants stated the following:

As educators we are willing to help as long as we can, along with learners, receive information from the higher education. [Ms BN Mkhonto]

I tried to collect information for my learners to help them to choose careers. I tried to assist learners with my limited knowledge. [Mrs LN Mathunjwa]

However, some participants stated that they were not prepared and expressed themselves as follows.

Not prepared at all, we are helping learners with the limited information we have. [Mr BV Masinga and Ms AS Lamula]

As an LO educator, I am not well prepared; I only assist my learners with what I know. [Ms Madida]

The school relies on life orientation educators to prepare the learners for registrations, but their preparedness could be improved further than it is. [Mr SM Dlodlo]

Theme 3: Lack of access to HEI information for rural students

Rural learners often face challenges due to a lack of information from HEIs when choosing a university. One recent study found that Rural learners were less likely to receive information about higher education options and financial aid from colleges and

universities compared to their urban counterparts (Hiller *et al.* 2020: 52). This lack of information can make it difficult for Rural learners to make informed decisions about their higher education options and can lead to feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about the future.

Sub-theme 3.1: Disadvantages due to lack of information

Participants were asked the extent of disadvantages that rural learners are exposed to at school and the impact on their decision-making regarding their choice of an HEI. Findings indicated that learners made wrong decisions. This is how they expressed their views:

Sometimes learners make wrong decisions due to lack of resources. [Mr BV Masinga] They make wrong decisions because of lack of knowledge and resources. [Ms AS Lamula]. Deep rural learners don't get a chance to attend career expos like urban learners that's leads them to not get exposed to other careers that are offered by institutions. [Ms Dindi]

Furthermore, participants mentioned:

Learners feel as if they are rejected because they are not visited by tertiary institutions for learner recruitment. Where the learners are called for career guidance, learners have to pay and travel to school / venues near town. [Mr SM Dlodlo]

They are very unfortunate, and they end up choosing the wrong careers, wasting the time and money of their poor parents. [Ms LN Mathunjwa]

Learners pass with bachelors but do not go to higher education since they do not have information. [Ms BN Mkhonto]

Due to lack of information, they find it hard to secure the space in higher institutions. [Ms Madida]

Sub theme 3.2: General comments by participants

The participants indicated the following general comments:

Higher education institutions must work hand in hand with rural schools in aligning schools in subject choices. Kindly consider visiting our schools directly because learners don't have funds, as a rural school we lack resources, computers and a library. [Mr BV Masinga]

We request any institutions to come to our rural school direct not to take learners to the nearest urban school because most of them do not afford it. The entire school does not have a single computer to help learners, no library, and no laboratory. [Ms AS Lamula]

In addition, participants stated that.

We would like to request any tertiary institutions to help our learners in rural areas a lot, since they are not exposed to the 4th industrial revolution, which can equipment on how to apply online. [Ms LN Mathunjwa]

The school will appreciate it if people from the higher education can visit more often to tell learners how they can apply because we lack resources such as computers, so they can access things like CAO to see their status. [Ms BN Mkhonto]

4.14 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of promotional strategies of HEIs in the recruitment of rural students. This involved an extensive review of literature associated with promotional strategies used in marketing and the way HEIs market their services. This chapter builds upon and contrasts the findings of this study with the surveyed literature to answer the aim of this study as well as the objectives. To this end the research findings were presented in the form of graphs and figures. The responses to the findings were compared to and contrasted against the surveyed literature from Chapter 2 and used to address the objectives of this study. Based on the results, discussion and interpretation of findings from this chapter, the conclusion and recommendations will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE TRAJECTORIES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study's goal was to look into the efficiency of HEIs' recruitment tactics for students from rural areas. A corresponding questionnaire was distributed together with an evaluation of pertinent literature on higher education marketing, promotional tactics, and factors influencing prospective students' choice of a HEI. The study's goals could be addressed as a consequence of the analysis of the results. As a result, this chapter makes use of all earlier chapters to emphasize the results of the primary study and literature review, offer suggestions to HEIs, and suggest areas for further research. The following recommendations are based on the available data, however more study should be conducted to find new tactics and assess their efficacy.

5.2 FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH STUDY

The findings of the research study will be discussed in two parts as below.

5.2.1 Findings from the literature review

The reviewed literature provided an extensive overview of marketing in HEIs, with a specific emphasis on the factors influencing learners when selecting an institution. The study identified common elements that influence a student's decision, such as media, location, expenses, facilities, and more. To recruit learners, HEIs must identify and interpret these factors, and then design recruitment efforts and other promotional tools to attract potential students.

Promotion is a crucial element of the marketing strategy, which typically comprises four primary elements: product, price, promotion, and place. HEIs use various promotional mix elements, such as advertising, personal selling, and direct marketing, to convey the benefits of their programmes and attract potential students. However, the promotional mix elements used are influenced by student demographics, including location, age, financial status, and more.

According to the findings of Alhakimi and Qasem (2014: 53) and Bonnema and Van der Walldt (2008: 1), a variety of promotional mix elements can be used to recruit students instead of just one. These promotional mix elements are all influenced by student demographics like location, age, financial situation, and other factors.

The study's authors believe that advertising is the most well-known and widely used component of the promotional mix and that it "[is] effective when used to recruit potential students" (Healey 2013: 5). (Alhakimi and Qasem 2014: 53). This is supported by the original research findings.

Communication was briefly reviewed because communication of information that is relevant and appealing to potential learners is key to a successful marketing promotional strategy (Al-Fattal 2010: 37).

5.2.2 Findings from the primary research

The findings from the primary research are used to evaluate the degree to which the research objectives have been met and are presented here as per the research questions.

5.2.2.1 What are the preferred promotional strategies for student recruitment from the HEIs?

Public relations (PR) refer to the communication efforts and activities that an HEI undertakes to maintain and improve its relationship with different stakeholders such as students, faculty, staff, and the wider community.

The results from this study regarding the promotional strategies, public relations showed that sponsorships had the lowest mean while identity media had the highest mean.

The other mean values ranged between 1.62 and 1.97. The lowest standard deviation value was .688 with the highest being .735.

The data presented in this study suggests that university tours may be a better option for HEIs to recruit rural students. The results for the promotional method, public relations, showed that identity media had the highest Mean, indicating that it was the most effective method used by the respondents. Additionally, university tours were not specifically mentioned in the study, but the fact that identity media had the highest mean indicates that students may be more engaged by methods that allow them to physically visit the campus and get a sense of the university's atmosphere and culture.

University tours can provide students with an opportunity to see the campus, meet current students and professors, and get a sense of the institution's academic programmes and student life. This can help students make more informed decisions about which institution to attend and what programme to pursue. Furthermore, literature on the topic of university tours has shown that these visits can have a positive impact on students' decisions to attend a particular institution. For example, a study by Perna and Titus (2003: 52) found that "college visits were positively related to enrollment intentions". Another study by Smart (2010:17) reported that "college visits are one of the most important predictors of college choice".

Results from data presented in this study suggest that HEIs should consider investing in university tours as a recruitment strategy to reach and engage rural students. University tours can provide students with an opportunity to see the campus, meet current students and professors, and get a sense of the institution's academic programmes and student life, which can help them make more informed decisions about which institution to attend and what programme to pursue.

5.2.2.2 How effective are the higher education institutions promotional strategies in recruiting rural students?

Literature suggests that HEIs' promotional strategies can be effective in recruiting rural students. For example, a study published in the Journal of College Admissions found that targeted outreach efforts, such as visiting high schools and hosting college fairs, can be effective in increasing the enrollment of rural learners (Smith et al., 2018). Another study published in the Journal of Higher Education found that personal contact and communication with rural students, such as through phone calls and emails, can be effective in increasing their likelihood of enrolling in college (Jones & Brown, 2017). Additionally, providing information about financial aid and support services, such as counseling and tutoring, can also be effective in encouraging rural learners to pursue higher education (Anderson et al., 2015). However, it is important to note that this effectiveness might vary depending on the specific institution, the region in which it is located, and the specific population of rural learners being targeted.

5.2.2.3 What recommendations could be offered to the HEIs to potentially improve the recruitment of rural students?

There are a number of recommendations that could be offered to HEIs to potentially improve the recruitment of rural students, as identified by recent literature. Some of these include:

Develop targeted recruitment strategies

The data collected in this study highlights the need for HEIs to develop targeted recruitment strategies that focus on the unique needs and challenges facing rural students. Therefore, it is recommended that HEIs should reach out to rural communities through local schools and community organisations, as well as provide information and resources specifically tailored to Rural learners by leveraging technology. HEIs should leverage technology to reach rural students, such as using online and social media platforms to provide information and resources and offering virtual tours and other online resources.

Build partnerships

HEIs should build partnerships with local organisations and businesses in rural communities to increase awareness of their programmes and services among Rural learners (Kerr 2017:12).

Offer flexible and distance learning options

HEIs should consider offering flexible and distance learning options to rural students, such as online and hybrid programmes, to make it easier for them to access higher education (Chen and Hsu 2013).

Provide financial assistance

HEIs should provide financial assistance to Rural learners to help them cover the costs of tuition, books, and other expenses associated with higher education (Kerr 2017:20)

Provide support services

HEIs should provide support services to rural students, such as academic advising and mentoring, to help them navigate the application process.

5.2.2.4 Recommendations made regarding decision making by learners to improve the recruitment of rural students

The questionnaire also included an open-ended question that required learners to list any other factors they considered important influencing their decision to study at a particular HEI. Learners either left this section blank or stated “none”. This indicates that, for this cohort of learners, the identified factors formed a closed list of influential factors for them.

The questions from the questionnaire primarily addressed objective three, which was to offer recommendations to the HEIs to potentially improve the recruitment of rural students.

In terms of factors influencing the decision-making process, learners felt most strongly about departmental requirements, programmes available, cost of qualifications, years required to complete qualification, reputation of the university and location of

university. Analysis of the results from sections B, C and D shows that the location of the university was vital for promotional mix elements, in terms of the level of preferences, effectiveness of the HEIs promotional mix elements, and the factors that influence the decision-making process.

Based on the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire and surveyed literature, in order to potentially increase student recruitment, it is recommended that the marketing strategy employed by HEIs consider a combination of each of the following:

5.2.2.5 Recommendation One: Demographics

In order to ensure that the message is communicated to potential learners to attract their attention, the university should design promotional strategies that are appealing to 18 to 22 years old.

5.2.2.6 Recommendation Two: Promotional mix elements

Promotional mix elements should use a combination of television advertising, books, newspapers, brochures, events, outdoor advertising, and publications. Learners felt very strongly about these in terms of not preferring various elements of this promotional method. Students do not prefer reading, so books, newspapers, and brochures are not going to be useful channels of communication. This study found that Rural learners often faced challenges due to a lack of information from HEIs when choosing a university. Therefore, it is recommended that HEIs should increase their use of online platforms such as social media and websites and events, as promotional strategies. This will allow them to reach a wider audience, including those in rural areas who may not have easy access to traditional forms of advertising.

HEIs should utilise social media to provide more detailed and accurate information about the programmes and opportunities they offer. This will help students to make more informed decisions about which institution to attend and what programme to pursue. It is essential for HEIs to communicate effectively with rural high schools, as this will help ensure that Rural learners have access to the information and resources, they need to make informed decisions about their higher education and career paths.

Failing to do so will perpetuate a cycle of underrepresentation of Rural learners in higher education and limit their access to the opportunities provided by the 4th industrial revolution. This should include the promotional mix elements such as advertising, interactive marketing and direct marketing, as there is a strong correlation that exists between them in terms of the greater the level of preference, the more effective the promotional mix element was at recruiting rural students.

The results reveal that rural learners needed information from HEIs, therefore they need to strengthen communication channels with learners from rural schools.

It is recommended that HEIs should not rely solely on websites as a promotional strategy since results indicated that rural learners in the current study did not prefer this method for receiving information from HEIs. Instead, HEIs should focus on building relationships with high schools in the rural areas and personalising their communication strategies based on the specific needs and preferences of their target audience. This can be done through regular visits to the schools, hosting of information sessions, and providing resources to teachers and students.

In addition to these face-to-face interactions, HEIs should also invest in peer education/buddy systems where university students visit rural schools to familiarise rural learners with online searches and platforms.

Overall, the data suggests that HEIs should focus on building relationships with rural high schools and utilise a combination of face-to-face interactions and online resources to reach and engage rural students, rather than relying solely on traditional promotional strategies such as websites and prospectuses.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the objectives of this study was to offer recommendations to the HEIs to potentially improve the recruitment of rural students. Based on the analysed responses to the questionnaire and surveyed literature, to potentially increase student recruitment, it is recommended that the marketing strategy employed by the HEIs holistically consider a combination of all three of the following recommendations:

5.3.1 Recommendations for students

Based on the data collected in this study, the following recommendations are made for students. Students should research the various HEIs in their district and consider applying to institutions outside of their district as well, as this may increase their chances of finding a good fit. However, taking into consideration the financial constraints of many rural students, it is also recommended that alongside their search for HEI placement, they also perform well in their studies to have the option to apply for bursaries in addition to NSFAS.

Students should pay attention to the promotional mix elements used by the HEIs that they are interested in, such as advertising, direct marketing, and interactive marketing, as these may give them a better understanding of the institution and its resources.

Students should consider the cost of qualification, years required to complete the qualification, departmental requirements, programmes available, location of the university, and reputation of the university, as these are important factors that can influence their decision to study at a higher education institution.

Students should actively seek out information about financial aid and support services offered by HEIs, as these can make a big difference in making college accessible and affordable for rural students.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations were made for demographics, promotional mix elements, and influential factors that should be communicated to potential rural students:

- Institutions should design promotional strategies that appeal to the age group between 18 to 23 years old and advertise on the websites and social media platforms that this age group frequents.
- The majority of learners in the sample were between 18 and 23 years of age,

so the institutions should consider this when designing promotional materials.

- The institutions should use gender-neutral promotional materials to cater to both male and female students.
- Institutions should consider expanding the district that is normally marketed to, to reach rural learners from the Zululand District.
- The institutions should use a combination of advertising, direct marketing, and interactive marketing, as these were the most preferred and most effective promotional mix elements according to this study.
- The institutions should communicate information related to departmental requirements, programmes available, cost of qualification, years required to complete the qualification, reputation of the university and location of the university, as these were identified as the most important factors influencing a student's decision to study at a higher education institution.

5.4.1 Recommendations on promotional mix material

Based on the data provided, it is recommended that HEIs focus on the following promotional mix elements when developing their recruitment strategies:

Advertising: This was identified as the most preferred promotional mix element, with respondents stating it was their most preferred method, mostly being face-to-face interactions, organised events, and tours. HEIs should focus on advertising to promote their programmes and services effectively.

Interactive marketing: HEIs should be cautious when using interactive marketing and consider the preferences of their target audience before implementing it as most learners in the current study did not prefer it.

Direct marketing: HEIs should consider using direct marketing as a secondary strategy.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

According to Ross and Zaidi (2019: 261) limitations represent weaknesses within the

study that may influence outcomes and conclusions of the research. The research study was conducted in one district of KZN within a group of rural high school grade 12 learners. Recommendations may not be applicable to all rural schools in KZN. Data for this study was collected under the spectra of a devastating global pandemic, COVID-19, which delayed the researcher from having access to these learners as they were not back in school at that time. Only grade 12 learners were sampled, it might have helped to sample students of lower grades in which school subjects are chosen so that it is empirically known if they know where they will study further on the courses that they choose. Another limitation for this study was only sampling students who were older than 18 years and above, due to the fact that parent consent forms were extremely delayed.

5.6 DIRECT MARKETING INFLUENTIAL FACTORS

Direct marketing occurs when an institution communicates with prospective learners using an interactive database driven communication media such as direct selling, telemarketing, direct mail, the internet and various broadcast media and print media to encourage a response from prospective learners (De Meyer 2017:17).

The results showed that promo-strategies direct marketing – direct mail had the lowest mean while smart phone loyalty programmes had the highest mean. The other mean values ranged between 1.40 and 2.69. The results showed that the lowest standard deviation was .670 and the highest .681. The data presented in this study indicates that the majority of grade 12 learners in rural areas of KZN, Zululand District, Mahlabathini, prefer to receive higher education institutional information through online platforms and face-to-face interactions. This suggests that direct marketing strategies such as mailing brochures or sending emails may not be as effective in reaching and engaging these students directly.

Additionally, the data shows that the majority of respondents were female and that the majority of respondents were from Zwelonke High School, which suggests that different schools may have different preferences in terms of how they receive information. This highlights the importance of personalising communication strategies

and tailoring them to the specific needs and preferences of the target audience. Furthermore, the data also shows that the students value detailed and accurate information about the programmes and opportunities offered by HEIs, as well as a welcoming and inclusive environment, which suggests that direct marketing may not provide the level of detail and personalisation that students are looking for when making decisions about their higher education.

Overall, the data suggests that HEIs should focus on building relationships with rural high schools and utilising online platforms to reach and engage rural students, rather than relying solely on direct marketing strategies.

5.7 FURTHER RESEARCH

Study opportunities in this field exist in terms of:

- A larger target population so as to include a greater number of districts, as this could help improve the range of student recruitment.
- Look at departments where there are vast differences in the gender gap for learners and determine the rationale for such in order to have more educators who can interact with learners every day.
- Look at what makes the learning environment and employment opportunities the two most important factors that learners consider when selecting an HEI to study at.
- Similar research could be conducted at other high schools which are failing to obtain information from HEIs.

5.8 FINAL CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this research study, the objective was to evaluate the efficacy of promotional strategies employed by HEIs for student recruitment. The review of the literature was conducted and it was determined that a successful marketing strategy should consider the factors that influence a student's decision to study at a particular HEI, as well as how and through which medium to communicate these factors to learners via a promotional mix element.

The factors influencing a student's decision to study at HEIs was reviewed in terms of their level of importance, a perspective that can help them refine their marketing campaigns to promote information related to factors that the majority of the learners consider important. In this instance, such information related to the learning environment, employment opportunities, qualifications offered, facilities and services of the university, and reputation of the university. These should be communicated to potential learners as these aspects received the highest responses for 'very important' factors selected by students.

The study found that it is important for HEIs to prioritize and promote information related to the learning environment, employment opportunities, qualifications offered, facilities and services of the university, and reputation of the university, as these factors were rated as very important by most students. A marketing strategy that combines these factors with the appropriate promotional mix elements could potentially improve the recruitment of rural learners for HEIs.

Furthermore, the study showed that the effectiveness of promotional mix elements varies depending on geographic location and field of study. Learners' preferences for specific promotional mix elements were strongly correlated with their effectiveness in recruiting students to study at an HEI. By analysing the responses of current HEI students, the most important factors and most effective promotional mix elements can be identified, leading to the development of marketing strategies that address these factors using the most effective promotional mix elements. The findings from the literature review and primary research successfully addressed the research questions and objectives of the study.

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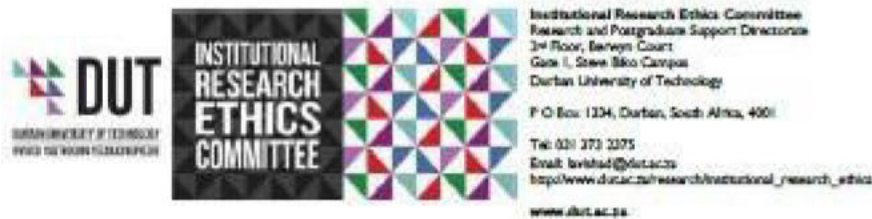
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: University ethics clearance certificate



20 October 2021

Ms B H G Makhuba
79 Storm Road
Greenwood Park
Durban
4051

Dear Ms Makhuba

The effectiveness of promotional strategies of Higher education Institutions in the recruitment of rural students
Ethical Clearance number IREC 085/21

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your notification regarding the piloting of your data collection tool.

Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

In addition, the IREC acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that **FULL APPROVAL** is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Prof J K Adam
Chairperson: IREC

Appendix 2a: Letter of request of permission from the Department of Education

79 Storm Road
Greenwood Park
Durban North
20 May 2021

Head of Department Education
Department of Education KwaZulu-Natal
228 Pietermaritzburg Street
Pietermaritzburg
3201

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

My name is Buyisile Makhuba, currently registered for a Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management Degree at the Durban University of Technology.

I hereby seeking your consent to get permission to conduct a research study with grade 12ulate rural high school leaners. The title of the study **The effectiveness of promotional strategies of Higher Education Institutions in the recruitment of rural learners**I am hereby seeking your consent to conduct the study at the following high schools

- Zwelonke High School, Ntiningwe area.
- Nhlungwane High School, Nhlungwane area.
- Bhekifa High School, Ewela Reserve area
- Sibanisakhe High School, Dumaneni area.

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools, consent form and information letter to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the provisional approval letter which I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor, Dr G. M Kankisingi on 031-373 2704, or on email Gustaveck@dut.ac.za

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs B.H Makhuba (Masters Candidate)

Cell phone: 0822132113

E-mail: buyisilem@dut.ac.za

Appendix 2b: Approval letter from the Department of Education



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 392 1051
Tel: 033 392 1053

Email: buyi.ntuli@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Buyi Ntuli

Ref.:2/4/8/7170

Mrs Buyisile Heavy Girl Makhuba
79 Storm Road
Greenwood Park
DURBAN
2041

Dear Mrs Makhuba

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE RECRUITMENT OF RURAL STUDENTS:", in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 29th September 2021 to 31st August 2023.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mrs Buyi Ntuli or Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

/ Dr. EY Nizama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 29th September 2021

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

Appendix 3a: Letter of request of permission from the school principals

79 Storm Road
Greenwood Park
Durban North
[20 May 2021]

Zwelonke High School
P.O BOX 558
Mahlabatini
School Principal
3865

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

My name is Buyisile Makhuba, currently registered for a Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management Degree at the Durban University of Technology.

I hereby seeking your consent to get permission to conduct a research study with your grade 12ulate school. The title of the study: **Promotional Strategies on the Recruitment of Rural learners from the Zululand District into Higher Education Institutions.**

I also request permission to conduct this study within the school premises. Please note that the study will not be conducted during the teaching periods. The researcher will do the interviews after school or during the free periods.

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools, consent form and information letter to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the provisional approval letter which I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor,
Dr G. M Kankisingi on 031-373 2704, or on email Gustavek@dut.ac.za

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Buyisile Makhuba (Masters Candidate)

Cell phone: 0662294337

E-mail: buyisilem@dut.ac.za

Appendix 4a: Letter of information for learners



Dear participant,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Please note the following:

The interviews will be digitally recorded for the analysis purposes. Please be informed that data will be stored in a protected computer with a password and audiotapes will be safely stored in external Hard drive and kept safely from my supervisor's cupboard (in his office). There will be no one except my supervisor and I who would gain access to those recordings. The cupboard will always be locked for the security purposes and after 5 years they will be destroyed by the supervisor. At the end of the study, the findings will be shared to participants, schools and through paper publication and presentations not your personal demographic information.

Title of the research study: Promotional Strategies on the Recruitment of Rural learners from the Zululand District into Higher Education Institutions

Principal investigator/s/researcher: Mrs B.H Makhuba, Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management Candidate

Co-investigator/s/supervisor: Dr G M Kankisingi, Qualification: Doctor of Administration

Brief introduction and purpose of the study: This study explores how Higher Education Institution promotes its student recruitment across rural schools. The intention of the study is to assist Higher Education Institution by addressing the problem of which is the best way to recruit the desired number of rural learners and reduce the number of walk-in's learners and wrong choice of careers. The study will be beneficial to the Higher Education Institution by allowing them to better focus their promotional strategies which could potentially grow the students.

Outline of the procedures: You are humbly requested to participate in the interview A place where there will be no noise, private and comfortable will be used for interviews. The

interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. The session will be between 30 to 45 minutes.

Risks or Discomforts to the participant: No risks to health or any discomfort is anticipated during data collection.

Benefits: There will be no benefit.

Reason/s why the Participant May be Withdrawn from the Study: Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time that they wish to do so. Should you wish to withdraw there will be no adverse consequences as participation is voluntary.

Remuneration: You will not receive remuneration, as participation is voluntary.

Cost of the study: None.

Confidentiality: Your name will not be included in the final write up of the study; instead a code will be used.

Research-related injury: There is no anticipated injury for participating in the study.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries: Please contact the researcher, myself, Buyisile Makhuba (031 373 5715). Dr.G. M Kankisingi my supervisor (Gustavek@dut.ac.za) or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Langaniso on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za.

Appendix 4b: Consent for learners



Full Title of the Study: Promotional Strategies on the Recruitment of Rural learners from the Zululand District into Higher Education Institutions

Name of Researcher/s: Buyisile Heavy-Girl Makhuba Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Mrs Buyisile Heavy-Girl Makhuba, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 085/21
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerized system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Participant	Date	Time	Signature / Right
Thumbprint			

I Buyisile Heavy-Girl Makhuba herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Researcher	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)	Date	Signature

Appendix 5a: Letter of information for parents / Legal guardians



Dear parent / legal guardian, thank you for your willingness to let your child participate in this study.

Please note the following:

The interviews will be digitally recorded for the analysis purposes. Please be informed that data will be stored in a protected computer with a password and audiotapes will be safely stored in external Hard drive and kept safely from my supervisor's cupboard (in his office). There will be no one except my supervisor and I who would gain access to those recordings. The cupboard will always be locked for the security purposes and after 5 years they will be destroyed by the supervisor. At the end of the study, the findings will be shared to participants, schools and through paper publication and presentations not your personal demographic information.

Title of the research study: Promotional Strategies on the Recruitment of Rural learners from the Zululand District into Higher Education Institutions

Principal investigator/s/researcher: Mrs B.H Makhuba, Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management candidate.

Co-investigator/s/supervisor: Dr G M Kankisingi, Qualification: Doctor of Administration

Brief introduction and purpose of the study: This study explores how Higher Education Institution promotes its student recruitment across rural schools. The intention of the study is to assist Higher Education Institution by addressing the problem of which is the best way to recruit the desired number of rural learners and reduce the number of walk-in's learners and wrong choice of careers. The study will be beneficial to the Higher Education Institution by allowing them to better focus their promotional strategies which could potentially grow the students.

Outline of the procedures: You are humbly requested to participate in the interview. A place where there will be no noise, private and comfortable will be used for interviews. The interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. The session will be between 30 to 45 minutes.

Risks or Discomforts to the participant: No risks to health or any discomfort is anticipated during data collection.

Benefits: There will be no benefit.

Reason/s why the Participant May be Withdrawn from the Study: Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time that they wish to do so. Should you wish to withdraw there will be no adverse consequences as participation is voluntary.

Remuneration: You will not receive remuneration, as participation is voluntary.

Cost of the study: None.

Confidentiality: Your name will not be included in the final write up of the study; instead a code will be used.

Research-related injury: There is no anticipated injury for participating in the study.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries: Please contact the researcher, myself, Buyisile Makhuba (031 373 5715). Dr.G. M Kankisingi my supervisor (Gustavek@dut.ac.za) or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Langaniso on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za.

Isengezo 5b: Incwadi yemininingwane yabazali / Abaqaphi abasemthethweni



Mzali othandekayo / umnakekeli osemthethweni, siyabonga ngokuzimisela kwakho ukuvumela ingane yakho ukuthi ibambe iqhaza kulolu cwaningo. Uyacelwa ukuthi uqaphele okulandelayo: Izingxoxo kuzoqoshwa ngekhompiyutha ngezinhloso zokuhlaziywa. Uyaziswa ukuthi ukuqoshwa okuzothathwa ngesikhathi sokuxoxisana kuzogcinwa ngokuphepha ku-Hard Drive yangaphandle futhi kugcinwe ngokuphepha ekhabethe lomqondisi wami (ehhovisi lakhe). Ngeke kube khona omunye ngaphandle komphathi wami nami engizokwazi ukufinyelela kulokho okuqoshwa. Ikhabethe lizohlala likhiyiwe ngezinjongo zokuphepha futhi ngemuva kweminyaka engu-5 zizohlukaniswa. Ekupheleni kocwaningo, okutholwayo kuzokwabelwa ababambiqhaza, izikole ngokushicilelwa kwamaphepha kanye nezethulo hhayi imininingwane yomuntu uqobo yengane yakho.

Isihloko socwaningo lokucwaninga: Ukusebenza kwamasu akhangisayo ezikhungo zemfundo ephakeme ukunxenxa umfundi wasemaphandleni.

Umphenyi / umphenyi oyinhloko: UNkk. BH Makhuba (Umfundi weziqu seMastazi kumkhakha we Sayensi yezokuphatha nokuphathwa kolwazi)

Osizana nomphenyi wocwaningo: UDokotela uG.M Kankisingi (Iziqu zobudokotela kumkhakha wezokuphathwa kwamabhezini).

Isingeniso esifushane nenhloso yocwaningo: Lokhu kufunda ukuthi izikhungo zemfundo ephakeme zikhuthaza kanjani ukunxeka kwabafundi ezikoleni zasemaphandleni, inhloso yocwaningo ukusiza izikhungo zemfundo ephakeme nokubhekana nenkinga okuyindlela engcono yokunyusa isibalo sokunxenxa abafundi basemakhaya, nokunciphisa isibalo sabafundi abangena kuzikhungo ngaphandle kwezicelo nokukhetha imikhakha yezemfundo engabalungele.

Uhlaka lwezinqubo: Ingane yakho iyacelwa ngokuzithoba ukuthi ibambe iqhaza kwinhlolekhono. Indawo ekhululekile, ethule futhi eyimfihlo izokhethwa ukuthi yenze izingxoxo. Indawo lapho kungeke kube khona msindo, eyimfihlo nekhululekile izosetshenziselwa izingxoxo. Izingxoxo zizorekhodwa ngesikhangiso sedijithali kamuva. Iseshini izoba phakathi kwemizuzu engama-30 kuye kwengama-45.

Izingozi noma ukuphazamiseka komhlanganyeli: Azikho izingozi empilweni noma kunoma yikuphi ukukhathazeka okucatshangelwe ngesikhathi sokuqoqwa kwedatha.

Izinzuzo: Ukutholwa kwalolu cwaningo kuzosiza ezikhungweni zemfundo ephakemengokubavumela ukuthi bagxile kangcono kumasu abo wokukhulisa ukunxenxa kwabafundi basemaphandleni

Isizathu / ukuthi kungani umhlanganyeli angase aKhishwe eSifundweni:

Uma kwenzeka ufisa ukuhoxa ngeke kube nemiphumela emibi njengoba ukubamba iqhaza kungokuzithandela.

Imali: Ngeke umntwana wakho athole iholo ngoba ukubamba iqhaza kwakhe kungokuzithandela.

Izindleko zocwaningo: Azikho.

Ukuyimfihlo: Igama lomntwana wakho angeke lifakwe kumqulu wocwaningo; ikhodi iyosetshenziswa.

Ukulimala okuhlobene nocwaningo: Akukho ukulimala okubhekeke ukuthi kwenzeke kumntwana wakho ngokubamba iqhaza kucwaningo.

Abantu abangaxhumana uma kwenzeka kuba nenkinga noma imibuzo: umcwaningi uNkk Buyisile Heavy-Girl Makhuba kulenombolo 0822132113 noma buyisilem@dut.ac.za, uDokotela uG.M. Kankisingi (Umqaphi wenhlololuvo) 031-373 5454 noma kumphathi wocwaningo lwesikhungo nezimiso zokuphatha ku-031-373 2375. Izikhalazo zingabikwa kumqondisi: Ucwaningo, kanye nokwesekwa kweziqu, uDokotela L. Linganiso ku-031-373 2577 noma researchdirector@dut.ac.za`

Appendix 5c: Consent letter for parents / Legal guardians



Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- **Mrs Buyisile Heavy-Girl Makhuba** about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - **Research Ethics Clearance**
Number: IREC 085/21 __,
- ☐ I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- ☐ I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my child's sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- ☐ In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- ☐ I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw consent and participation of my child in the study.
- ☐ I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare my child prepared to participate in the study.
- ☐ I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my child's participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Legal Guardian Date Time Signature / Right Thumbprint
I Buyisile Heavy-Girl Makhuba herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Researcher Date Signature

Full Name of Witness (If applicable) Date Signature Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable) Date Signature

Isengezo 5d: Incwadi yemvume yomzali



Isitatimende sesivumelwane sokubamba iqhaza esifundweni sokucwaninga:

- Ngiaqinisekisa ukuthi ngitsheliwe umcwaningi, uNkk Buyisile Heavy-Girl Makhuba, mayelana nemvelo, ukuziphatha, izinzuzo kanye nezingozi zalolu cwaningo - Ukususwa Kwezimiso Zokucwaninga

Inombolo: _____,

- Ngiphinde ngithole, ngifunde futhi ngiyiqonde imininingwane ebhaliwe ngenhla mayelana nocwaningo.
- Ngiyazi ukuthi imiphumela yocwaningo, kufaka phakathi imininingwane yomntwana wami mayelana nobulili bami, ubudala, usuku lokuzalwa, ukuqala kanye nokuxilongwa kuyobekwa ngokungaziwa kumbiko wocwaningo.
- Ngokubheka izidingo zocwaningo, ngiyavuma ukuthi umbiko oqoqwe kumntwana wami ingacubungulwa ohlelweni lwekhompyutha ngumcwaningi.
- Ngingakwazi, nganoma yisiphi isigaba, ngaphandle kokubandlulula, ngihoxise imvume yomntwana wami ukuthi ahlanganyele kulolu cwaningo.
- Nginethuba elanele lokubuza imibuzo futhi (ngokuzithandela kwami) ngizibikezele ukuthi ngilungele ukuthi umntwana wami azibandakanye kulolu cwaningo.
- Ngiaqonda ukuthi ukutholakala okusha okuphawulekayo kuthuthukiswe phakathi nalolu cwaningo okungenzeka okuphathelene nokuhlanganyela komntwana wami kuzokwenziwa kimi.

Igama eliphelele lomhla wokubamba iqhaza Usuku Isikhathi

Isignesha / Kwesokudlal-Thumbprint

Mina, Buyisile Heavy-Girl Makhuba lapha ukuqinisekisa ukuthi umhlanganyeli ngenhla ugcwele waziswa ngesimo, ukuziphatha nezingozi zesifundo esingenhla.

_____	_____	_____
Igama eligcwele lomcwaningi	Usuku	Isignesha

_____	_____	_____
Igama eliphelele loFakazi (uma likhona)	Usuku	Isignesha

_____	_____	_____
Igama eligcwele longamele ingane ngokumthetho	Usuku	Isignesha

Appendix 6a: Demographic data

Date of interview:

Please answer the following questions in the spaces provided by placing X in the most appropriate option.

Demographic Data		
1. Age	Above 18- 20 years	20 - 25 years
2. Gender	Male	Female
3. Name of High school		District

Appendix 6b: Interview guide

The effectiveness of promotional strategies of Higher Education Institutions in recruiting rural student in the Zululand District, KwaZulu Natal

1. Promotional Strategies

- How often would you say you receive information about Higher Education Institutions
- Have your educators communicated to you about various higher education institution

2. Influencing Decision Making

- How much would you say your teachers, parents and friend's opinion matters to you when selecting a university?
- Does how far or how close an institution is matter in your decision making?

3. Effectiveness of Promotional Strategies

- Do you think your School is well informed about high education institutions?
- Do you have any experience with being in contact with High Education Institutions?
- Would you say these experiences were positive or negative?
- Due to these experiences how well would you say you are prepared to apply to study at Higher Education Institution

Thank you for your participation

Appendix 7. Editing certificate

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BA HDE MTech(Hom)

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EDITING CERTIFICATE

Re: **Buyisile H. Makhuba**

Master's dissertation DUT: **The Effectiveness of Promotional Strategies of Higher Education Institutions in the Recruitment of Rural Students**

I confirm that I have edited this dissertation and the references for clarity, language and layout. I returned the document to the author with track changes so correct implementation of the changes and clarifications requested in the text and references is the responsibility of the author. The intellectual content of the document is the responsibility of the author. I am a freelance editor specialising in proofreading and editing academic documents. My original tertiary degree which I obtained at the University of Cape Town was a B.A. with English as a major and I went on to complete an H.D.E. (P.G.) Sec. with English as my teaching subject. I was a part-time lecturer in the Department of Homoeopathy at the Durban University of Technology for 13 years and supervised many master's degree dissertations during that period.

Dr Richard Steele

22 February 2023

per email

Appendix 9: Turnitin report

Feedback Studio - Work - Microsoft Edge
https://ev.turnitin.com/app/carta/en_us/?student_user=1&u=1032324680&o=1929865933&lang=en_us

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OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE STUDY

Globally, including in the United States of America, less than one in five rural residents aged 25 years and above have a university degree. The key challenge has often been the underlying culture and socioeconomic status of those from rural areas (Marcus and Krupnick 2017: 1). It has not been possible to obtain exact figures of the percentage of learners from rural backgrounds in South African universities. According to Czemiewicz and Brown (2014: 11), lack of figures in the South African context makes it difficult to collect data based on rural students' recruitment. These learners are often included either in the general category of 'disadvantaged students' or assumed to be in the group of learners who are on financial aid. For those who opt for university education, a considerable number of them belong to the first generation in their family to pursue higher education. Consequently, high school students from rural areas often face a lack of peer groups or reference points to consult when considering university alternatives. Additionally, rural schools frequently lack counseling services that can offer advice, support, and facilitate connections (Marcus and Krupnick 2017: 2). There is an assumption that rural learners frequently have difficulty choosing appropriate careers. This could be due to multiple reasons including: lack of information, peer pressure, incorrect advice from friends, parents, teachers, lack of adequate professional guidance, career counselling, and the prestige attached to certain jobs (Dlamini 2017: 65).

This study was motivated by observing long queues of walk-in learners, indicating that learners did not apply ahead of time to study at higher education institutions (HEIs). Often this results in learners selecting the wrong career due to lack of proper career guidance and an increased dropout rate. Al-Fattal (2010: 31) asserts that in regard to students' needs, intentions, and desires to enrol at a particular HEI, marketers try to determine what the students' needs are and find a way to relay to the learners that these needs can be met. The author argues that a significant proportion of higher education institutions (HEIs) inaccurately anticipate students' needs