

**STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MARKETING  
STRATEGIES BY PRIVATE COLLEGES IN POLOKWANE LOCAL  
MUNICIPALITY, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA.**

by

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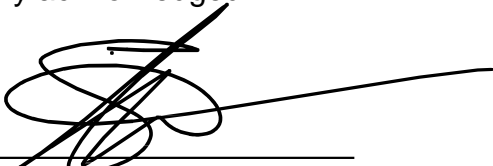
**2025**

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this study to my loving wife Makoena, my supportive family, and my beautiful bundle of joy, Princess. May all the good things in life always find their way to you. God bless.

## Declaration

I hereby declare that the mini dissertation submitted to the University of Limpopo for the degree of Master of Business Administration is my original work and has not been previously submitted for a degree at any other university. I confirm that this work is my own in both design and execution and that all sources and materials used have been duly acknowledged.

  
Signature:

29/04/2025  
Date:

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To my fellow managers (MBA class of 2021), despite many challenges in this journey, we still found ways to uplift one another.

## **Abstract**

This study investigates students' perceptions on the marketing strategies implemented by private colleges in Polokwane, Limpopo Province, South Africa. As competition in the higher education sector intensifies, private colleges must adopt effective marketing strategies to attract prospective students. The study aims to identify the marketing strategies employed, evaluate their effectiveness, and recommend areas for improvement. A quantitative research design was utilised, surveying first-year students enrolled in private colleges to assess the impact of various marketing techniques. Purposive sampling was used to obtain 112 respondents who participated in the study and SPSS Version 29 and Microsoft Excel were used to analyse the collected data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to assess the effectiveness of the marketing strategies and identify trends. The findings reveal that print advertisements, word-of-mouth referrals and scholarships are the most influential marketing strategies. In contrast, methods like television commercials and online advertising show limited effectiveness. Recommendations include enhancing digital marketing efforts and refining personalised communication strategies to better engage prospective students. The study contributes to the understanding of marketing dynamics in the education sector and provides actionable insights for improving student recruitment practices.

**Key Words:** Marketing strategies, Private colleges, Higher Education, Student perceptions, Recruitment.

# Contents

<b>Dedication</b> .....	ii
<b>Declaration</b> .....	iii
<b>Acknowledgement</b> .....	iv
<b>Abstract</b> .....	v
<b>Acronyms</b> .....	ix
<b>List of tables</b> .....	x
<b>List of figures</b> .....	xi
<b>CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY</b> .....	1
1.1 Background of the study .....	1
1.2 Problem statement.....	3
1.3 The purpose of this study .....	4
1.4 Objectives of the study.....	4
1.5 Research questions .....	5
1.6 Significance of the study.....	5
1.7 Methodology.....	6
1.8 Limitation of the study .....	7
1.9 Delimitations of the study .....	8
1.10 Definition of concepts .....	9
1.10.1. Marketing .....	9
1.10.2. Marketing Mix .....	9
1.10.3. Customer orientation .....	9
1.10.4. Private Colleges .....	10
1.10.5. Marketisation of higher education.....	10
1.11. Outline of the study.....	11
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	12
2.1. Introduction.....	12
2.2. Marketing concept .....	12
2.3. Market orientation .....	18
2.4. Importance of Marketing Strategies in Higher Education .....	20
2.5. Marketing mix element in education institution.....	21
2.5.1. Product .....	21
2.5.2. Price .....	22
2.5.3. Promotion.....	24
2.5.4. Place.....	25
2.5.5. People.....	27

2.5.6.	Process.....	29
2.5.7.	Physical evidence.....	31
<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>		<b>34</b>
2.1.	Introduction.....	34
3.2.	Research design.....	34
3.2.1.	Qualitative research method.....	35
3.2.2.	Quantitative research method.....	36
3.2.3.	Mixed research method.....	38
3.2.4.	Research Paradigm .....	39
3.3.	Study area.....	40
3.4.	Target population .....	41
3.5.	Sampling method and sample size .....	42
3.6.	Data collection.....	44
3.6.1	Pilot Study .....	45
3.7.	Data analysis.....	45
3.8.	Validity of the study .....	46
3.9.	Reliability of the study.....	47
3.10.	Ethical considerations.....	47
3.11.	Turfloop Research Ethics Committee approval .....	48
3.12.	Informed consent .....	48
3.13.	Permission to conduct the study.....	48
3.14.	Voluntary consent and anonymity .....	49
3.15.	Research confidentiality .....	49
3.16.	Conclusion .....	49
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS .....</b>		<b>50</b>
4.1.	Introduction.....	50
4.2.	Data analysis procedures.....	50
4.3.	Demographic characteristics of respondents.....	52
4.3.1.	Gender of the respondents .....	52
4.3.2.	Racial group of the respondents.....	53
4.3.3.	Age of the Respondents.....	53
4.4.	Private colleges where respondents enrolled in during the survey .....	55
4.5.	Marketing strategy preferences by the respondents.....	56
4.6.	Marketing strategy preferences by gender of the respondents.....	59
4.7.	Improving the marketing strategies .....	62
4.8.	The status of educational service in my college.....	62

4.9.	Fees charged for the educational programmes.....	64
4.10.	Marketing materials and activities .....	66
4.11.	Place and accessibility .....	68
4.12.	College administrators and academic staff .....	69
4.13.	Application and enrolment process.....	71
4.14.	Physical infrastructure .....	72
4.15.	Inferential Statistical Analysis.....	73
4.15.1.	Independent Samples T-Tests Results .....	74
4.15.2.	Pearson Correlation Results .....	75
4.16.	Discussion of Findings in Relation to Existing Literature .....	77
4.17.	Conclusion .....	78
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF RESULTS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>		
	79	
5.1.	Introduction.....	79
5.2.	Research design and method .....	79
5.3.	Summary and interpretation of the research findings .....	79
5.3.1.	Effectiveness of Print Advertisements and Word-of-Mouth: .....	80
5.3.2.	Digital Marketing Strategies:.....	80
5.3.3.	Scholarships and Financial Aid Promotions .....	80
5.3.4.	Gender Differences in Marketing Preferences .....	81
5.3.5.	Limited Effectiveness of Television Commercials and Billboards: .....	81
5.3.6.	Importance of Personalized Communication:.....	82
5.4.	Conclusion .....	82
5.5.	Recommendations.....	83
5.6.	Contributions of the study .....	84
5.7.	Limitations of the study and suggestion for future research .....	85
5.8.	Concluding remarks.....	85
	REFERENCES .....	87

## Acronyms

**ANOVA**- Analysis of Variance

**CRM** - Customer Relationship Management

**ETQA** - Education and Training Quality Assurance

**Excel**- Microsoft Office Excel

**FET** - Further Education and Training

**HE** - Higher Education

**MBA** - Master of Business Administration

**NQF** - National Qualifications Framework

**QMS** - Quality Management System

**SAQA** - South African Qualifications Authority

**SMMEs** - Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises

**SPSS** - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

## List of tables

Table 3.5. 1 Number of participants from each participating College.....	43
Table 4.2. 1 Reliability statistics (Cronbach`s Alpha) .....	51
Table 4.4. 1 Private college respondents enrolled in.....	55
Table 4.5 1 The Marketing strategy preferences by respondents .....	56
Table 4.6. 1 Marketing strategy preferences by gender of respondents cross tabulation .....	60
Table 4.8. 1 My college`s educational services .....	63
Table 4.9. 1 Fees charged for the educational programmes .....	65
Table 4.10. 1 Marketing materials and activities .....	66
Table 4.11. 1 Place and accessibility .....	68
Table 4.12. 1 College administrators and academic staff .....	69
Table 4.13. 1 Application and enrolment process .....	71
Table 4.14. 1 Physical infrastructure.....	72
Table 4.15.1 Gender Differences in Marketing Strategy Preferences.....	74
Table 4.15.2 Relationships between Marketing Strategies and Student Satisfaction .....	76

## List of figures

Figure 3.3. 1. Map of Polokwane (source: Map data@2023 AfriGIS (Pty) Ltd) .....	41
Figure 4.3. 1 Gender of respondents .....	52
Figure 4.3.2. 1 racial group of the respondents.....	53
Figure 4.3.3. Age of the respondents.....	54
Figure 4.7. 1 Respondents' views on whether the marketing strategy should be improved .	62

## **CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Private higher education institutions around the world are increasingly facing the challenge of maintaining competitiveness, attracting students, and sustaining growth in a rapidly changing educational landscape. Globally, private colleges contribute significantly to broadening access to tertiary education, particularly in countries with expanding youth populations and limited public education resources. However, the growing number of providers and heightened student expectations have placed pressure on these institutions to differentiate themselves through effective and targeted marketing strategies (Altbach, 2014).

In South Africa, private colleges play a vital role in supporting the national agenda of widening access to higher education, as articulated in policy frameworks such as the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013). Nevertheless, these colleges operate in a highly competitive environment, contending with both public universities and other private providers. Effective marketing is no longer optional but critical for institutional sustainability, reputation-building, and attracting prospective students (Swart and Schutte, 2024). Despite their contributions, private colleges often struggle with issues of visibility, credibility, and student engagement, partly due to inadequate or poorly implemented marketing strategies.

At a regional level, within the Polokwane Local Municipality in Limpopo Province, private colleges such as Rostec, Damelin, Brooklyn City College, and others face unique challenges. These include economic disparities among students, infrastructural limitations, and intense competition from public institutions. Marketing strategies that are successful in metropolitan areas like Johannesburg may not directly translate to success in areas like Polokwane.

Despite the growing importance of marketing strategies in the competitive landscape of private colleges in Polokwane, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis regarding the specific marketing approaches utilised by these institutions. This knowledge gap hinders a thorough understanding of the effectiveness and potential areas for improvement in their marketing efforts. Therefore, there is a need to investigate and analyse the use of marketing strategies by private colleges in Polokwane to assess their alignment with industry best practices and identify opportunities for optimisation to attract and enrol students more effectively.

The motivation for undertaking this study stems from the noticeable gap between the marketing efforts of private colleges and the actual perceptions of the students they seek to recruit. Little research exists on how marketing strategies are received in regional South African contexts such as Polokwane, despite the critical role marketing plays in student recruitment and institutional growth. By understanding students' perspectives, this research provides actionable insights for improving marketing practices, enhancing enrolment, and contributing to the broader development of the private higher education sector. There are more issues facing higher education institutions today than there were a few years ago, and these institutions need to act swiftly and aggressively in response to the changes taking place in the higher education industry (Ogegbo, Gaigher and Salagaram, 2019). Higher education institutions are now dealing with issues including competition, declining government financing, rising marketing expenses, students skipping tuition, and repositioning their main offering because of these developments (Treve, 2021).

This study seeks to address these gaps by evaluating the marketing strategies employed by private colleges in Polokwane, assessing their alignment with industry best practices, and identifying opportunities for optimization. Such an analysis is crucial for helping private colleges improve their marketing efforts to better attract and enroll students, thereby enhancing their competitiveness and sustainability in the higher education sector. Moreover, this research provides actionable insights that can guide policymakers and education stakeholders in supporting private colleges more effectively.

Hence the main aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing strategies employed by private colleges in Polokwane in attracting and retaining students, with a focus on addressing gaps in the marketing mix and aligning strategies with student expectations.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

In South Africa, private colleges are experiencing increasing competition and declining enrollment rates due to insufficient and ineffective marketing strategies (Kritzinger and Look, 2021). As the educational landscape becomes more competitive, private institutions must distinguish themselves from their competitors in order to attract and retain students. Marketing plays a pivotal role in shaping an institution's reputation, influencing prospective students' decisions, and ensuring long-term sustainability (Treve, 2021).

In Polokwane, South Africa, there are a number of private colleges offering a variety of academic programmes. Amongst many, colleges like Damelin, Gigimo tourism academy, Rostec are some of the private colleges operating within Polokwane. These colleges are competing for the same learners to enrol in their institutions to ensure their long-term sustainability.

In order to successfully sway prospective students' decision-making processes, these competing colleges may need to employ recruiting activities, advertising, promotions, and other promotional mix components (Meier and Lemmer, 2015). Cloete (2016) also concurs that schools must work to find qualified prospective students to meet the demands brought on by the changes in the higher education sector.

According to Nisar, Nasruddin and Goh (2022), in order to grow and sustain their colleges, institutions of higher learning may be required to understand their market and employ marketing strategies in order to draw in new clients and also keep their existing ones. There are many rivals in the education sector, thus institutions of higher

learning need to strengthen and harden their position against those by using aggressive recruiting tactics that are more successful in the marketplace (Ishii, 2022).

However, existing studies primarily focus on public universities, neglecting the unique challenges faced by private colleges (Kritzinger and Loock, 2021). This gap is particularly pronounced in regional contexts such as Polokwane, where limited research exists on the marketing dynamics of private colleges.

This research addresses the following question: *How effective are the marketing strategies employed by private colleges in Polokwane, and what improvements can be made to enhance their competitiveness?* By identifying and evaluating these strategies, the study aims to bridge the gap in literature and offer practical recommendations tailored to the needs of private colleges in regional contexts.

### **1.3 The purpose of this study**

The main aim of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the marketing strategies employed by private colleges in Polokwane local municipality, South Africa, with the objective of assessing their effectiveness, identifying areas for improvement, and providing recommendations for enhancing the enrolment of students.

### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

- To identify the marketing strategies employed by private colleges in Polokwane local municipality.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of marketing strategies in attracting prospective students to private colleges in Polokwane local municipality.
- To recommend areas for improvement and optimization in the marketing efforts of private colleges in Polokwane local municipality.

## **1.5 Research questions**

- What are the various marketing strategies utilised by private colleges in Polokwane local municipality?
- How effective are the marketing strategies implemented by private colleges in Polokwane local municipality in attracting prospective students?
- How can the marketing efforts employed by private colleges in Polokwane local municipality be improved and optimised?

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

Higher education institutions must ascertain the elements that are considered by the potential students when making choices, how they do so in terms of relative importance, and the forces that are at play (Clifton, *et al*, 2018). To get a competitive edge when marketing higher education institutions, it is crucial to identify the most successful student recruiting tactics (Dickson and Lane, 2021).

The study holds significant value for private colleges, educational institutions, marketing professionals, and policymakers in Polokwane and beyond. Through this study, private colleges will benefit from gaining insight into the effectiveness of their marketing strategies and identifying areas for improvement, enabling them to enhance their efforts and attract students more effectively. Other educational institutions can utilise the study's findings as a reference to enhance their marketing strategies, contributing to a broader understanding of effective student recruitment. Marketing professionals in the education sector will expand their knowledge base through the exploration and categorisation of marketing strategies, facilitating informed decision-making in campaign development. Policymakers can leverage the study's insight to shape policies and guidelines that foster effective marketing practices, ultimately benefiting both institutions and prospective students. Overall, this study bridges the knowledge gap, improves student recruitment, and enhances the education sector not only in Polokwane but across South Africa and beyond.

The study can provide insight into the target market preferences, needs, and expectations of students in Polokwane. By understanding the target audience better, colleges can align their programmes, services, and marketing messages to meet those needs more effectively. This can result in higher student enrollment and retention rates, leading to increased revenue and long-term financial stability.

Overall, the study can guide private colleges in Polokwane towards developing more effective marketing strategies that align with the needs and expectations of their target market. By improving their marketing efforts, private colleges can attract more students, enhance their reputation, and ultimately achieve long-term financial stability.

## **1.7 Methodology**

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the marketing strategies implemented by private colleges in Polokwane Local Municipality. The research is focused on identifying the effectiveness of these strategies and recommending improvements to optimize student enrollment.

The study area is Polokwane, the capital city of Limpopo Province, South Africa, with private colleges such as Rostec, Rosebank, and Brooklyn City College being key participants. The target population includes first-year students from these institutions, as they represent the most recent beneficiaries of marketing efforts and can provide fresh insights into the recruitment strategies that influenced their enrollment decisions.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants, ensuring accessibility and feasibility within the research constraints. From the estimated 800 first-year students across 20 private colleges, a calculated sample size of 260 was deemed statistically sufficient using the Raosoft calculator. However, 112 students from seven participating colleges ultimately provided data through a structured questionnaire.

Primary data was collected using a pre-tested, Likert-scale-based questionnaire. The pre-test with five students ensured the reliability and validity of the survey instrument. Statistical analysis of the collected data was performed using SPSS Version 29 and Microsoft Excel. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to assess the effectiveness of the marketing strategies and identify trends.

Ethical considerations were paramount. The study obtained approval from the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee, and informed consent was sought from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained to safeguard the privacy of respondents.

This rigorous methodology ensures the credibility and relevance of the study, providing actionable insights into the marketing practices of private colleges in Polokwane.

### **1.8 Limitation of the study**

This study on the use of marketing strategies by private colleges in Polokwane local municipality has several limitations that should be considered.

Firstly, the sample size and representativeness of private colleges in Polokwane local municipality may be limited. It may not be feasible to include all private colleges in the area, which could affect the generalisability of the findings to the broader population of private colleges in Polokwane or other regions.

Secondly, the study may rely on self-reported data from private colleges. This reliance introduces the potential for biases or inaccuracies in the data. The accuracy and reliability of the information provided by the colleges may vary, and there may be limitations in verifying the self-reported data.

Thirdly, the timeframe of the study may be limited, restricting the depth and breadth of the analysis. Long-term trends or changes in marketing strategies over time may not be fully captured within the scope of the study.

In addition, the effectiveness of marketing strategies can be influenced by external factors such as economic conditions, competition and market dynamics. These factors may not be fully controlled or accounted for in the study, making it challenging to attribute the results solely to the marketing strategies themselves.

Furthermore, evaluating the effectiveness of marketing strategies and identifying areas for improvement inherently involves subjective judgments and interpretations. Different evaluators may have varying perspectives or criteria, introducing potential bias into the analysis.

Lastly, while the study aims to provide insight into marketing strategies employed by private colleges in Polokwane, the findings may not be directly applicable to private colleges in other regions or countries due to contextual differences.

### **1.9 Delimitations of the study**

Firstly, the geographic focus is limited to private colleges in Polokwane, which may restrict the generalisability of the findings to other provinces, cities or regions. Additionally, the study specifically examines marketing strategies employed by private colleges' only, potentially overlooking marketing approaches used by public colleges within the same geographical area and beyond.

The study's timeframe is constrained to the current practices and may not capture historical changes or future developments in marketing strategies. Subjectivity in evaluating marketing effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement, along with reliance on self-reported data, introduces potential biases and limitations.

Furthermore, external factors influencing marketing strategies may not be comprehensively accounted for.

Despite these delimitations, the study's insight within the defined scope can provide valuable guidance to private colleges in Polokwane and contribute to the understanding of marketing strategies in the education sector.

## **1.10 Definition of concepts**

### **1.10.1. Marketing**

According to Wertenbroch (2021), marketing is the management process in charge of recognising, foreseeing and profitably meeting consumer expectations.

According to Krstić and Đurđević, (2017), marketing is the management activity and decision-making process used to build and transmit a market offering that satisfies customers' needs while successfully addressing opportunities and challenges in a changing context.

### **1.10.2. Marketing Mix**

A conceptual framework that focuses on the decision-making principles that managers utilise while thinking about how best to serve the expectations of consumers in order to make the best potential business choices feasible (Vasylieva, and James, 2020).

### **1.10.3. Customer orientation**

Customer orientation is a business approach that places the customer at the centre of all organisational activities and decision-making processes. It involves understanding and fulfilling customer needs, preferences, and expectations to deliver superior value and achieve long-term customer satisfaction (Srivastava, 2019).

In the context of higher education institutions, customer orientation means focusing on the needs and expectations of students and other stakeholders such as parents, employers, and the community (Ismail, 2022). Here are key aspects of customer orientation in higher education:

**Understanding Student Needs:** Institutions must conduct thorough market research and engage with students to understand their needs, preferences, and aspirations. This includes considering factors such as programme offerings, learning methodologies, support services, flexibility, affordability, and career opportunities. By

understanding these needs, institutions can tailor their educational offerings to better meet student expectations (Ismail, 2022).

**Student-Centric Approach:** Institutions should adopt a student-centric approach in their operations and decision-making processes. This involves considering how decisions and actions will impact students' educational experiences, learning outcomes, and overall satisfaction. From curriculum development to campus facilities, student support services to extracurricular activities, every aspect of the institution should be designed with the student in mind (Zhao *et al*, 2023).

#### **1.10.4. Private Colleges**

These are educational institutions that are privately owned and operated, offering a range of academic programmes and courses to students. Private colleges are distinct from public colleges in that they are typically funded through tuition fees and private sources, rather than government funding (Ding, 2021).

#### **1.10.5. Marketisation of higher education**

The marketisation of higher education characterises the transformation of the academic landscape within a country by integrating principles and dynamics commonly associated with market-driven economies into its educational sector (Tashkenbayev, 2023).

This restructuring entails the infusion of competitive dynamics, a focus on consumer preferences and options, and a shift toward financial self-reliance as fundamental drivers within the educational framework (Nizomova, 2023).

This phenomenon fundamentally alters the relationship between educational institutions, students, and funding sources, often generating discussions about access, quality, and the broader societal implications of commodifying knowledge and learning (Khaitov, 2023).

### **1.11. Outline of the study**

This research has been organised as follows:

#### **CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

This section provides the groundwork for the study, discussing its background, the driving factors behind the research, the identified problem, objectives, the research questions, the significance of the study, description of key concepts, and limitations of the study taken into account during the study's execution.

#### **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This chapter primarily focuses on providing an extensive overview of the body of literature that pertains to the study's overall context and its research goals. It delves into themes and concepts that align with the study's goals.

#### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

Chapter Three details the methodology employed in the research process. It covers aspects such as the methods used for data collection, the overall research design, strategies for data analysis, specifics about sampling methods, and acknowledges the limitations that were recognised during the research.

#### **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

This chapter is dedicated to presenting the collected data, conducting analysis on that data, and interpreting empirical findings. The analysis is carried out in the context of concepts that have appeared from the information, providing a deeper comprehension of the research questions.

#### **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The final chapter encapsulates an overview of the entire research, draws judgements based on the results and analysis, offers suggestions derived from the research's outcomes, and acknowledges any limitations that might have influenced the research process or findings.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of the relevant literature that forms the foundation for understanding the marketing strategies employed by higher education institutions, particularly private colleges. In the increasingly competitive landscape of higher education, private colleges face unique challenges in attracting prospective students and differentiating themselves from other institutions. This chapter explores key concepts related to marketing, focusing on how higher education institutions can adopt effective marketing strategies to ensure sustainability and growth. The discussion includes the marketing mix and its application within educational institutions, highlighting its significance in influencing student enrolment decisions.

The chapter begins by introducing the concept of marketing and its application to higher education, followed by a detailed analysis of the seven elements of the marketing mix—product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence. The role of these elements in shaping students' perceptions and choices of higher education institutions is examined. In addition, the importance of tailored marketing strategies to meet the needs of an evolving education sector is discussed.

### **2.2. Marketing concept**

Kotler and Keller (2022)), refers to the marketing concept as a philosophy based on three fundamental beliefs: (1) all company planning and operations should be customer-oriented; (2) the goal of the business should be profitable sales volume and not just volume for the sake of volume alone; and (3) all marketing activities in a business should be coordinated. Marketing scholars have consistently emphasised that when a business adopts the marketing concept, organisational walls come down. This does not necessarily mean that company departments are done away with but rather that the overall system's effort is guided by the needs and expectations of

customers as opposed to by the motivations and ambitions of individual departments (Kotler and Keller, 2022).

Kotler and Armstrong (2020) highlight the importance of customer value and satisfaction in the marketing concept. They argue that successful companies focus on delivering superior value to customers by understanding and meeting their needs and wants more effectively than competitors. This customer-centric approach aims to build long-term relationships and customer loyalty.

Kotler and Armstrong (2018) highlight the significance of customer value and satisfaction in the marketing concept. They argue that successful companies prioritise delivering superior value to customers by understanding and meeting their needs and wants more effectively than their competitors. This customer-centric approach aims to build long-term relationships and foster customer loyalty.

Customer value refers to the perceived benefits and advantages that customers receive from a product or service in relation to the cost and effort required to obtain it. It is essential for businesses to offer a value proposition that meets or exceeds customer expectations. By understanding customers' needs, desires, and pain points, companies can tailor their offerings and create value that resonates with their target market (Smith and Johnson, 2021).

In the context of the marketing concept, customer value goes beyond merely offering a product or service. It involves considering the overall experience and benefits customers derive throughout their interaction with the company. This includes pre-purchase considerations such as product information, ease of purchase, and customer service, as well as post-purchase factors such as product performance, support, and follow-up (Brown et al., 2021).

Customer satisfaction, on the other hand, relates to the extent to which customers' expectations are met or exceeded after using a product or service. It is an important measure of the effectiveness of a company's marketing efforts. Satisfied customers are more likely to become loyal customers, provide positive word-of-mouth

recommendations, and repeat their purchases, contributing to the long-term success of the business (Brown et al., 2021).

By focusing on customer value and satisfaction, companies can differentiate themselves from competitors and build strong customer relationships. This involves continuously monitoring and understanding customer preferences, needs, and changing market dynamics. Companies need to adapt their offerings, improve their value proposition, and enhance customer experiences to maintain and enhance customer satisfaction over time (Brown et al., 2021).

Drucker (1954) proposed that the primary purpose of a business is to create and retain customers. He emphasised the importance of understanding customer needs and wants and aligning all organisational activities to fulfil those needs. Drucker's perspective highlights the customer-oriented nature of the marketing concept.

Drucker (1954) made a significant contribution to the marketing concept by highlighting the primary purpose of a business as creating and retaining customers. His perspective emphasised the importance of understanding customer needs and wants and aligning all organisational activities to fulfil those needs. Drucker's ideas further solidified the customer-oriented nature of the marketing concept.

According to Drucker, the success and survival of a business ultimately depend on its ability to attract and retain customers. He argued that businesses should focus on identifying and understanding customer needs and preferences, as well as anticipating future demands. By doing so, companies can develop products and services that effectively meet those needs and differentiate themselves in the market (Anderson and Moore, 2021).

Drucker's viewpoint underscores the idea that customers are the driving force behind a business's existence. Instead of solely focusing on internal operations, Drucker advocated for organisations to direct their attention outward, towards the market and the needs of customers. This customer-centric approach involves actively listening to

customers, conducting market research, and continuously adapting products, services, and strategies to meet evolving customer demands.

Furthermore, Drucker emphasised the importance of aligning all organisational activities with the goal of satisfying customer needs. This means that every department and function within a business should contribute to creating customer value. From product development and production to marketing, sales, and customer service, every aspect of the organisation should be coordinated and focused on serving the customer.

By adopting a customer-oriented mind set and aligning organisational efforts with customer needs, businesses can build long-term relationships, enhance customer satisfaction, and ultimately drive business growth (Anderson and Moore, 2021). Drucker's perspective on the primary purpose of a business being the creation and retention of customers laid the foundation for the customer-centric approach that underpins the marketing concept.

Gronroos (1994) introduced the concept of relationship marketing, which emphasises the importance of building and maintaining long-term relationships with customers. He suggests that marketing should focus on creating value through ongoing interactions and engagement with customers, leading to customer satisfaction, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth.

Grönroos (1994) made a significant contribution to the marketing field with his introduction of the concept of relationship marketing. He emphasised the importance of building and maintaining long-term relationships with customers as a key driver of business success. Grönroos (1994) argued that marketing should go beyond transactional exchanges and focus on creating value through ongoing interactions and engagement with customers.

Relationship marketing, as proposed by Evans and Taylor (2021) shifts the focus from individual transactions to the development of enduring relationships with customers.

The goal is to establish a mutually beneficial and loyal connection between the customer and the business. This approach recognises that satisfied and loyal customers are more likely to generate repeat business, provide positive word-of-mouth referrals, and contribute to the long-term profitability of the organisation.

On the other hand, Grönroos (1994) stressed the importance of understanding customers' needs, preferences, and expectations on an individual level. He proposed that businesses should aim to create personalised experiences and deliver customised solutions that meet the unique requirements of each customer. By tailoring offerings and interactions to specific customer segments, businesses can build stronger relationships and enhance customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, Grönroos (1994) emphasised the significance of ongoing communication and engagement with customers. He highlighted the need for businesses to maintain regular contact, seek feedback, and actively listen to their customers. By fostering open dialogue and building trust, businesses can better understand customer needs and concerns, address them proactively, and adapt their offerings accordingly.

In the concept of relationship marketing, customer satisfaction plays a crucial role. Evans and Taylor (2021) argued that businesses should strive to exceed customer expectations, consistently deliver value, and actively manage customer perceptions. Satisfied customers are more likely to remain loyal, engage in positive word-of-mouth marketing, and potentially become advocates for the brand.

Grönroos's concept of relationship marketing emphasises the long-term perspective, recognising that customer relationships are valuable assets for a business. By investing in building and maintaining these relationships, businesses can create a competitive advantage and foster customer loyalty, reducing customer churn and enhancing customer lifetime value.

Levitt (1960) discussed the shift from a production-oriented mindset to a market-oriented mindset in the marketing concept. He argued that companies should focus on identifying and meeting customer needs rather than solely concentrating on their own products or services. Levitt emphasised the need for companies to be customer-driven and adapt to changing market dynamics.

Levitt (1960) played a crucial role in shaping the marketing concept by highlighting the shift from a production-oriented mind set to a market-oriented mind set. In his influential article "Marketing Myopia," Levitt argued that companies should focus on identifying and meeting customer needs instead of being solely product-focused.

Kotler and Armstrong (2020), criticised the prevailing practice at the time, where companies defined their business in terms of the products or services they offered rather than the underlying customer needs they aimed to fulfil. He contended that this inward-looking approach hindered innovation and growth as it limited companies' perspectives and prevented them from recognising emerging market trends and evolving customer demands.

According to Kotler and Keller (2022), companies should adopt a market-oriented mind-set that prioritises understanding and fulfilling customer needs. He argued that businesses should define their purpose in terms of the benefits and value they provide to customers rather than being narrowly focused on specific products or industries.

Smith and Johnson's (2021) perspective emphasised the importance of being customer-driven. He advocated for businesses to conduct market research and engage in continuous customer feedback to gain insights into changing customer preferences and market dynamics. By actively listening to customers and understanding their evolving needs, companies could adapt their offerings and remain relevant in the marketplace.

Furthermore, Levitt (1960) emphasised the need for companies to be flexible and adaptable in response to market changes. He highlighted that businesses should be

willing to evolve and embrace new technologies, strategies, and business models to stay competitive. Levitt argued that companies should be proactive in identifying and capitalising on emerging market opportunities, even if it required challenging traditional practices or rethinking their business models.

Levitt's ideas emphasised the importance of customer-centricity and market responsiveness in the marketing concept. By shifting the focus to customer needs and aligning business strategies and activities accordingly, companies could better serve their customers, differentiate themselves from competitors, and achieve long-term success.

### **2.3. Market orientation**

Webster (1992) proposed the notion of market orientation, which extends the marketing concept by emphasising the importance of market intelligence and responsiveness. Market-oriented companies proactively gather information about customers, competitors, and the market environment to identify opportunities and deliver superior value to customers.

Webster (1992) made significant contributions to the marketing field by introducing the concept of market orientation, which extends the marketing concept by emphasising the importance of market intelligence and responsiveness. Market orientation refers to an organizational culture that values and prioritises understanding the needs and preferences of customers, as well as staying attuned to competitors and market dynamics.

According to Narver and Slater (2021), market-oriented companies go beyond simply meeting customer needs; they proactively gather information about customers, competitors, and the broader market environment. They invest in market research, customer surveys, data analysis, and other information-gathering methods to gain insights into customer preferences, emerging trends, and competitive landscape.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2020), the key characteristics of a market-oriented company include:

1. **Customer Focus:** Market-oriented companies place a strong emphasis on understanding customer needs, preferences, and behaviours. They engage in continuous dialogue with customers, seek feedback, and conduct in-depth market research to gain a deep understanding of their target market segments (Morgan et al., 2022).
2. **Competitor Analysis:** These companies actively monitor and analyse the strategies and activities of their competitors. By staying informed about competitor offerings, pricing, marketing tactics, and market positioning, they can identify areas of differentiation and develop strategies to gain a competitive advantage (Kotler and Keller, 2022).
3. **Market Intelligence:** Market-oriented companies gather and analyse data from various sources to gain insights into the broader market environment. This includes studying market trends, industry reports, economic indicators, and customer behaviour data to identify opportunities and anticipate changes in customer needs and preferences (Narver and Slater, 2021).
4. **Responsiveness:** Market-oriented companies are quick to respond to changes in the market. They use the insights gained from market intelligence to adapt their products, services, and marketing strategies accordingly. This responsiveness enables them to meet evolving customer demands and stay ahead of competitors (Narver and Slater, 2021).
5. **Cross-Functional Collaboration:** Market orientation involves fostering a culture of collaboration and information-sharing across different departments within the organisation. This ensures that customer insights and market intelligence are integrated into decision-making processes throughout the company (Morgan, Feng, and Whitley, 2022).

By adopting a market-oriented approach, companies can better understand customer needs, identify market opportunities, and deliver superior value to customers. Market orientation helps companies stay customer-focused, adapt to changing market dynamics, and create competitive advantages that drive business success (Morgan, Feng, and Whitler, 2022).

#### **2.4. Importance of Marketing Strategies in Higher Education**

Marketing strategies play a crucial role in the higher education sector, particularly for private colleges that face increasing competition and the need to attract students effectively (Ogegbo, Gaigher and Salagaram, 2019). The implementation of the National Qualification Framework in South Africa has provided opportunities for tertiary institutions to differentiate themselves and cater to students' evolving needs (Eloff, 2017; Petrus, 2019). To navigate these changes and remain competitive, private colleges must adopt effective marketing strategies (Treve, 2021).

Ogegbo, Gaigher, and Salagaram (2019) emphasise the importance of effective marketing strategies in private colleges. They highlight the need for colleges to identify and understand their target market, differentiate themselves from competitors, and create compelling value propositions that resonate with prospective students. The authors suggest that a comprehensive marketing strategy should encompass elements such as branding, digital marketing, student recruitment, and engagement initiatives.

Eloff (2017) discusses the role of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) in South Africa and its impact on marketing strategies in tertiary institutions. The NQF provides a framework for ensuring the quality and relevance of qualifications, and private colleges can leverage this framework to differentiate themselves and meet students' evolving needs. Eloff emphasises the importance of aligning marketing strategies with the requirements and expectations of the NQF to demonstrate credibility and attract students seeking recognized qualifications.

Petrus (2019) explores the marketing strategies employed by private colleges in South Africa, specifically focusing on factors that influence students' college selection decisions. The author emphasises the significance of factors such as reputation, program offerings, location, affordability, and student support services in attracting students. Petrus suggests that private colleges need to understand these factors and align their marketing strategies accordingly to effectively communicate their unique value proposition to prospective students.

Treve (2021) discusses the evolving landscape of higher education and the need for private colleges to adapt their marketing strategies to stay competitive. The author highlights the importance of embracing digital marketing and online channels to reach and engage with prospective students effectively. Treve emphasises the need for colleges to invest in developing compelling online content, optimising their websites, utilising social media platforms, and leveraging data analytics to refine their marketing strategies.

## **2.5. Marketing mix element in education institution**

### **2.5.1. Product**

In education, the "product" element encompasses a range of programmes, curriculum design, teaching methodologies, faculty expertise, research opportunities, extracurricular activities, and student support services (Kotler and Keller, 2016). It is essential for institutions to ensure their offerings meet student needs, align with industry demands, and deliver a high-quality educational experience. Regular evaluation of the product element helps institutions stay competitive and continuously deliver value to students (Brown, 2018).

The product element includes academic degrees, diplomas, certificates, and vocational courses designed to provide specialized knowledge and skills within students' chosen fields (Armstrong and Kotler, 2019). Curriculum design, course content, and teaching methods are critical, ensuring alignment with industry standards and recognized qualifications (Pramono et al., 2022).

Faculty expertise also plays a vital role in the product element. The qualifications, experience, and teaching abilities of faculty significantly impact the quality of education provided. Institutions should prioritize building a skilled, knowledgeable faculty capable of delivering effective instruction (Makrydakis, 2022).

Research opportunities and initiatives are integral to the educational product, encouraging critical thinking, practical experience, and contributing to knowledge advancement (Smith and Johnson, 2020).

Extracurricular activities and support services, such as student clubs, sports, academic advising, and career services, further enhance the student experience, promoting personal development and ensuring student success (Ogegbo, Gaigher, and Salagaram, 2019).

Continuous assessment and improvement are essential to maintaining effective educational offerings. This involves gathering feedback from students, monitoring industry trends, and adapting curricula to meet current standards, ensuring institutions stay relevant and competitive (Treve, 2021).

#### 2.5.2. Price

According to Pramono et al. (2022), price refers to the cost associated with enrolling in an educational institution. This includes tuition fees, registration fees, textbooks, and any additional expenses related to education. The price element also encompasses financial aid, scholarships, payment plans, and other options to make education more affordable and accessible to students. Institutions need to balance competitive pricing with ensuring that the perceived value of education justifies the investment made by students and their families (Anane-Donkor and Dei, 2021).

The price element in education institutions includes both enrolment costs and strategies for making education accessible. Institutions must manage affordability

while ensuring perceived value, emphasizing transparency in their value propositions and addressing financial concerns to enhance accessibility for diverse students (Brown, 2018). High tuition fees and associated costs can restrict access to education, especially for students from lower-income backgrounds. As research indicates, making education more affordable through financial aid, scholarships, grants, or flexible payment plans promotes diversity and equal opportunity within the student population (Ogegbo, Gaigher, and Salagaram, 2019).

The perceived value of education plays a crucial role in pricing strategies. Students and their families consider the anticipated benefits of investing in education. Therefore, institutions must effectively communicate the unique aspects of their programs, including high-quality instruction, experienced faculty, industry connections, and state-of-the-art facilities, to justify the costs (Smith and Johnson, 2020). Demonstrating a positive return on investment through alumni success stories and career support reinforces the value of education.

Operating in a competitive environment, institutions must align their pricing strategies with market dynamics and competitor analysis. An analysis of pricing strategies across institutions can help achieve competitive pricing while maintaining quality and reputation (Kotler and Armstrong, 2019).

Effective cost management is also crucial in maintaining reasonable pricing without compromising educational quality. Institutions may allocate resources efficiently, use technology to reduce costs, and streamline operational processes. Collaborations or partnerships can further reduce costs, ensuring affordable education for students without sacrificing quality (Treve, 2021).

Value-based pricing, which aligns the price with perceived educational value, can also be effective. This approach emphasizes benefits and outcomes over base costs, tailoring pricing to the needs and preferences of the target market, thereby enhancing program appeal (Makrydakis, 2022).

### 2.5.3. Promotion

Promotion in education involves a range of marketing and communication strategies aimed at creating awareness, attracting prospective students, and building the institution's brand. This includes advertising, public relations, digital marketing, social media presence, open days, campus tours, and partnerships with relevant organizations (Pramono et al., 2022). Institutions need to clearly communicate their unique selling propositions (USPs) such as academic excellence, faculty expertise, career opportunities, and student success stories to resonate with prospective students (Anane-Donkor and Dei, 2021). Engaging prospective students through personalized messaging and showcasing the benefits of choosing the institution further supports effective promotion efforts (Muttaqin, 2022).

Advertising and public relations are crucial elements in promoting educational institutions. Institutions may use print media, television, radio, and online platforms to reach wider audiences, while public relations initiatives, like press releases and partnerships, contribute to a positive brand image (Brown, 2018).

In the digital age, institutions must establish a strong online presence through SEO, PPC advertising, content marketing, and social media platforms to engage potential students and share valuable content (Kotler and Keller, 2016). Hosting open days and campus tours allows students to experience the institution firsthand, fostering interaction with faculty and exploring campus facilities. These events create a positive impression and offer insights into academic and social life on campus (Smith and Johnson, 2020).

Collaborative partnerships with organizations can boost promotion efforts by increasing visibility, credibility, and reach. Partnerships may involve joint events, sponsorships, or opportunities for practical experiences aligned with the institution's programs (Ogegbo, Gaigher, and Salagaram, 2019).

Tailored messaging that meets the needs and interests of prospective students can enhance engagement. Providing timely information on programs, admissions, scholarships, and campus life through personalized emails, calls, or online chats helps establish rapport (Treve, 2021).

Effective promotion requires clear communication of USPs, such as academic excellence, faculty expertise, industry connections, and student success stories, which set the institution apart in a competitive market and create a compelling brand image that attracts like-minded prospective students.

Promotion involves the marketing and communication strategies employed by education institutions to create awareness, attract prospective students, and build their brand. This includes advertising, public relations, digital marketing, social media presence, open days or events, campus tours, and partnerships with relevant organisations (Pramono *et al*, 2022). Institutions need to effectively communicate their unique selling propositions, such as academic excellence, faculty expertise, industry connections, career opportunities, and student success stories (Anane-Donkor and Dei, 2021). Promotion also involves engaging with prospective students through personalised messaging, providing relevant and timely information, and showcasing the benefits of choosing the institution (Muttaqin, 2022).

#### 2.5.4. Place

Place refers to the physical location and accessibility of the education institution. This includes the campus infrastructure, facilities, and resources available to students. Institutions need to create a conducive learning environment, including classrooms, libraries, laboratories, sports facilities, and student accommodation (Muttaqin, 2022). Additionally, the accessibility of the institution, such as its proximity to residential areas, transportation options, and online learning platforms, plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining students (Makrydakis, 2022).

According to Makrydakís (2022), the "place" element in education institutions encompasses the physical location, infrastructure, resources, and accessibility of the institution. A well-designed campus infrastructure, availability of resources and amenities, accessibility to residential areas and transportation options, and a conducive learning environment all contribute to attracting and retaining students. Institutions need to consider these factors to create an environment that supports student success and enhances the overall educational experience.

The physical environment of the institution, including its buildings, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, sports facilities, and student accommodations, contributes to the overall learning experience. Institutions need to provide well-maintained and modern facilities that support various aspects of student life, including academic studies, research, extracurricular activities, and social interactions. A conducive campus infrastructure can enhance the overall educational experience and attract prospective students (Makrydakís, 2022).

In addition to infrastructure, institutions need to provide a range of resources and amenities to support student learning and development. This includes well-stocked libraries, up-to-date technology and equipment in laboratories, access to online research databases, study spaces, computer labs, and recreational facilities. The availability and quality of these resources contribute to the educational experience and can influence student satisfaction and engagement (Makrydakís, 2022).

The accessibility of the institution is an essential consideration for prospective students. This includes its location and proximity to residential areas, transportation options, and availability of online learning platforms. Institutions situated in easily accessible locations with good transportation connections, or offering flexible online learning options, may have a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining students. Accessibility considerations are particularly crucial for students who commute or have specific needs related to location and transportation (Muttaqín, 2022).

The physical environment and ambiance of the institution also contribute to the learning environment. Institutions can create welcoming and engaging spaces by designing aesthetically pleasing campuses, incorporating green spaces, and providing comfortable and functional learning areas. An inviting and conducive learning environment can foster student engagement, collaboration, and academic success (Narver and Slater, 2021).

In the digital age, institutions need to consider the integration of technology into the learning environment. This includes access to reliable Wi-Fi, computer labs, online learning platforms, and educational software. Institutions that prioritise technological infrastructure and provide opportunities for students to develop digital skills are more likely to attract tech-savvy students and create an innovative learning environment (Narver and Slater, 2021).

#### 2.5.5. People

The people element encompasses everyone involved in the education institution, including faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Faculty members should possess the necessary expertise, qualifications, and teaching abilities to deliver high-quality education. Staff members should provide excellent administrative and support services to students. Students and alumni play an important role as brand ambassadors, showcasing the institution's success and reputation. Creating a positive and supportive learning community is essential to attract and retain students (Asiah *et al*, 2022).

According to Smith and Johnson (2021), the "people" element in education institutions includes faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Hiring qualified and dedicated faculty, providing excellent support services through staff members, creating a positive and inclusive student experience, and engaging alumni as brand ambassadors all contribute to the overall success and reputation of the institution. By prioritising the people element, institutions can build a strong learning community that attracts and

retains students and fosters a supportive environment for academic and personal growth (Ogegbo *et al*, 2022).

Faculty members are a critical part of the education institution. They bring expertise, qualifications, and teaching abilities to deliver high-quality education. Institutions should prioritise hiring faculty members who are knowledgeable in their respective fields, stay updated with the latest developments in their disciplines, and possess effective teaching and mentoring skills. Engaging and supportive faculty members can create a positive learning environment and contribute to student success (Asiah *et al*, 2023).

Staff members, including administrative and support staff, play an important role in the overall functioning of the institution. They provide essential services, such as admissions, student support, career counselling, library assistance, and facility management. Institutions should ensure that staff members are well-trained, approachable, and dedicated to providing excellent customer service to students. Staff members who are supportive and responsive contribute to a positive student experience and foster a sense of community within the institution (Ogegbo, Gaigher, and Salagaram, 2019).

Students are an integral part of the education institution. They bring diversity, energy, and perspectives to the learning community. Institutions should strive to create a supportive and inclusive environment that values student engagement, collaboration, and personal development. Encouraging student involvement in extracurricular activities, student clubs, leadership opportunities, and community service can enhance the overall student experience and promote a sense of belonging (Smith and Johnson, 2020).

Alumni can play a crucial role as brand ambassadors for the institution. They represent the success and reputation of the institution in their professional careers and personal lives. Institutions can engage alumni through networking events, mentorship programmes, career support, and opportunities for continued learning. Leveraging the

achievements and experiences of alumni can enhance the institution's reputation, build a strong alumni network, and attract prospective students (Asiah et al, 2023).

Creating a positive and supportive learning community is essential for attracting and retaining students. Institutions should foster a culture that promotes collaboration, respect, and open communication among faculty, staff, and students. Encouraging interdisciplinary interactions, promoting student-faculty relationships, and providing opportunities for intellectual and social engagement can contribute to a vibrant learning community (Smith and Johnson, 2020).

#### 2.5.6. Process

Process refers to the procedures, systems, and workflows that govern the educational experience. This includes admissions processes, course registration, academic advising, student evaluations, assessment methods, and career services. Institutions need to ensure that their processes are streamlined, transparent, and student-centered, providing a smooth and efficient experience throughout the student's educational journey (Pramono et al, 2023)

According to Smith and Johnson (2021), the "process" element in education, institutions encompass the procedures, systems, and workflows that govern the educational experience. Streamlined and student-centered processes in admissions, course registration, academic advising, evaluations, and career services contribute to a positive and efficient educational journey. By ensuring transparency, accessibility, and effective communication throughout these processes, institutions can enhance the overall student experience and support student success (Smith and Johnson, 2021).

The admissions process is a crucial aspect of the educational journey for prospective students. Institutions should aim to have a clear and transparent admissions process that provides prospective students with the necessary information, requirements, and guidance to apply to the institution. This includes outlining the application deadlines,

required documents, entrance exams (if applicable), and any additional steps involved. A streamlined admissions process ensures a positive first impression and helps prospective students navigate the enrolment process effectively (Smith and Johnson, 2020).

Course registration is an important process for students to select and enrol in their desired courses each semester or academic year. Institutions should establish efficient and user-friendly systems for course registration, allowing students to easily access course offerings, check availability, and register for classes. Clear communication about registration periods, prerequisites, and any limitations or restrictions is essential to ensure a smooth and seamless registration experience (Ogegbo, Gaigher, and Salagaram, 2022)

Academic advising plays a crucial role in guiding students throughout their educational journey. Institutions should have well-defined processes for academic advising, ensuring that students have access to knowledgeable advisors who can provide guidance on course selection, degree requirements, career planning, and other academic concerns. Regular and effective communication between students and advisors is essential to support students' academic progress and success (Ogegbo, Gaigher, and Salagaram, 2019).

Institutions need to establish fair and consistent processes for student evaluations and assessments. This includes defining clear grading criteria, assessment methods, and feedback mechanisms. Transparent and timely communication of assessment expectations, grading rubrics, and performance feedback allows students to understand their progress and areas for improvement. Ensuring consistency and objectivity in the evaluation process enhances the overall educational experience (Ogegbo, Gaigher, and Salagaram, 2019).

Institutions should provide comprehensive career services to support students' transition from education to the workforce. This includes career counselling, job placement assistance, internships, resume writing workshops, and networking

opportunities. A well-structured career services process helps students explore career options, develop essential job-search skills, and connect with potential employers (Smith and Johnson, 2021).

#### 2.5.7. Physical evidence

Physical evidence relates to the tangible elements that support the educational experience. This includes the physical infrastructure of the institution, such as buildings, classrooms, libraries, and technology resources. It also includes educational materials, textbooks, online learning platforms, and other resources that contribute to the learning process. Physical evidence plays a role in creating a positive impression and reinforcing the institution's commitment to delivering quality education (Tadajewski and Wood, 2023).

According to Tadajewski (2019), the "physical evidence" element in education institutions includes the physical infrastructure, technology resources, educational materials, online learning platforms, and supporting facilities and services. These tangible elements create a positive impression, contribute to the learning environment, and reinforce the institution's commitment to delivering quality education. By providing modern, accessible, and well-equipped physical evidence, institutions can enhance the educational experience and support student success (Tadajewski, 2019).

The physical infrastructure of an institution, including buildings, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and common areas contribute to the overall learning environment. Well-maintained and modern facilities provide students with a conducive space for learning, collaboration and personal development. Institutions need to invest in creating an aesthetically pleasing and functional physical environment that supports various educational activities (Tadajewski, 2019).

Technology resources play a significant role in supporting the educational experience. This includes access to computers, laptops, software applications, online learning platforms, and other digital tools. Institutions should ensure that students have reliable

access to technology resources necessary for coursework, research, and collaboration. Having up-to-date technology resources demonstrates the institution's commitment to providing a modern and technologically integrated learning environment (Pramono et al., 2022).

Institutions need to provide students with the necessary educational materials and resources to support their learning. This includes textbooks, course materials, digital resources, online libraries, research databases, and other relevant materials. Access to comprehensive and up-to-date educational resources enhances the educational experience, facilitates independent learning, and supports academic success (Pramono et al., 2022).

With the increasing adoption of online and hybrid learning models, institutions need to provide robust online learning platforms. These platforms should offer a user-friendly interface, access to course materials, interactive tools for collaboration and communication, and opportunities for online assessments. A well-designed online learning platform contributes to the accessibility and flexibility of education, allowing students to engage in learning activities anytime and from anywhere (Pramono et al., 2023).

Physical evidence also encompasses supporting facilities and services that enhance the educational experience. This may include dedicated study spaces, research facilities, student lounges, cafeterias, recreational areas and student support centers. These facilities and services contribute to the overall student satisfaction and well-being, fostering a positive learning environment and sense of community (Pramono et al., 2023).

## **2.6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this literature review has provided a comprehensive exploration of the marketing strategies relevant to higher education institutions, with a particular focus on private colleges. The chapter began by discussing the marketing concept and its

customer-centric philosophy, emphasising the importance of understanding and meeting customer needs. Concepts such as customer value, satisfaction and relationship marketing were highlighted as critical components of a successful marketing strategy.

The review further examined the marketing mix elements—product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence—demonstrating how each plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions and decisions. Through this analysis, it became clear that private colleges must adopt a holistic and integrated approach to their marketing efforts, aligning their strategies with evolving student expectations, market dynamics, and technological advancements.

Overall, the literature emphasises that to remain competitive and sustainable, private colleges must continuously evaluate and adapt their marketing strategies. By leveraging the insights gained from customer-centric approaches and tailoring their offerings to meet student demands, these institutions can enhance their appeal, increase enrolment, and foster long-term success.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The methodology chapter is an essential part of any research study as it lays out the research design, data collection methods, and analytical techniques employed to address the research questions. This chapter explains the systematic approach used to investigate the marketing strategies employed by private colleges in Polokwane local municipality. It details the research design, sampling methods, data collection tools, and the ethical considerations that guided the research. By adhering to well-established research practices, this study aims to produce reliable and valid insights into the effectiveness of various marketing strategies on student enrolment in private colleges. The chapter further elaborates on the quantitative research methods employed to collect and analyse data, ensuring that the study's objectives are met.

### **3.2. Research design**

Research design simply refers to all plans and processes for the research study covering all judgments ranging from the broader research assumptions to precise techniques of collecting data.

The research design is a very important part of each and every research project since it serves as a plan for carrying out the research. It includes the general structure, tactics and procedures used to collect and analyse data, and also provides guidelines for the entire research process (Creswell, 2014). A well-structured research design not only allows for the methodical collection of information, but it also ensures that the study's objectives and research questions are adequately addressed (Bryman, 2016).

Research designs are also referred to as "research plans" (Kennedy-Clark, 2013). There are many different approaches to investigating a particular field of study using the means of research. Quantitative techniques, qualitative methods, and mixed methodologies make up these approaches.

### 3.2.1. Qualitative research method

Lupton and Watson (2020) define qualitative research as a way of doing research that prioritises the development of hypotheses and an expanded understanding. Qualitative research is described as an activity that puts the observer in the world Löhr, Weinhardt and Sieber (2020). As a result, it adopts a naturalistic and interpretive perspective on the world, qualitative researchers investigate phenomena in their natural settings. They do this in an attempt to understand or make sense of events in light of the meanings that different individuals assign to them. Qualitative research concentrates more on the qualities of objects, as well as on functions and significances that are not susceptible to testing or quantitative analysis (Löhr, Weinhardt and Sieber, 2020).

The focus on developing hypotheses and acquiring a deeper grasp of the topic matter is what distinguishes qualitative research. This strategy was emphasised by Lupton and Watson (2020) that, the significance of developing hypotheses as a crucial component of qualitative research. This approach of methodology enables scholars to investigate and deepen their understanding of numerous occurrences.

Furthermore, the in-depth nature of qualitative research was stressed by Löhr, Weinhardt and Sieber (2020). By putting them in the setting where the phenomena takes place, this method brings the researcher fully within the context of the study. Researchers can discover insights through this naturalistic and interpretive approach that may elude them using conventional research methodologies.

Investigating phenomena in their natural environments is one of the fundamental principles of qualitative research. Researchers hope to understand the subtleties and intricacies that might not be obvious in more controlled settings by monitoring and interacting with participants in their natural situations. A deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the subject is possible due to this method.

The effort to understand the interpretations that various people have assigned to events is at the heart of qualitative research. This interpretive approach recognises

that people interact with the world from their unique perspectives, life experiences, and cultural backgrounds. Researchers hope to create a holistic narrative that encompasses the various ways in which people perceive their experiences by diving into these subjective perceptions.

In contrast to quantitative research, which often focuses on measurable quantities and statistical analyses, qualitative research places greater emphasis on the qualities, functions, and significances that defy quantification. This orientation recognises that certain aspects of the human experience are inherently complex and multifaceted, and thus cannot be reduced to numerical data. This nuanced approach allows for a more holistic and nuanced exploration of the subject matter.

In summary, qualitative research stands as a distinct methodological approach that prioritises hypothesis development, an immersive and interpretive perspective, and an in-depth exploration of phenomena in their natural settings. By probing into the subjective meanings attributed by individuals, qualitative researchers aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of complex and multifaceted phenomena that may avoid quantitative analysis.

### 3.2.2. Quantitative research method

The goal of quantitative research, according to de Block and Vis (2018), is to test hypotheses, establish facts, show connections between variables, and predict the outcomes of investigations. Techniques from the natural sciences are used in quantitative research. These methods seek to guarantee reliability, generalisability, and impartiality (Anon, 2022).

According to Чернобровкина and Chernobrovkina, (2016), numerous methodologies are used in quantitative research, including the objective random selection of research participants from the study population, the delivery of a standardised questionnaire or intervention to the participants, and the application of statistical techniques to test hypotheses about the relationships between variables. In contrast to the qualitative

paradigm, where the researcher is seen as an important research tool because of their active involvement in the research process, researchers in quantitative research are seen as being external to the actual research, and the results are expected to be replicable regardless of who conducts the research (Alfred F. Tsikati *et al.*, 2019). However, since they actively engage in the research process, researchers are valued as excellent research instruments in the qualitative paradigm (Lyll, 2023).

Quantitative research is characterised by its emphasis on testing hypotheses, establishing factual information, and uncovering connections between variables, as outlined by de Block and Vis (2018). Drawing from techniques commonly used in the natural sciences, this approach aims to ensure reliability, generalisability, and objectivity in its findings (Anon, 2022).

Чернобровкина and Chernobrovkina (2016) highlight a range of methodologies employed in quantitative research. These include the objective random selection of participants from the larger study population, the administration of standardised questionnaires or interventions, and the application of statistical techniques to examine relationships between variables. In contrast to qualitative research, where the researcher's active involvement is considered crucial to the process, in quantitative research, researchers are viewed as external observers, and the results are expected to be replicable regardless of who conducts the study (Alfred F. Tsikati *et al.*, 2019).

In the qualitative paradigm, researchers are valued as integral instruments in the research process due to their active engagement. Their unique perspectives and interactions with participants contribute to the depth and richness of the data gathered (Lyll, 2023). This stands in contrast to the quantitative approach, where objectivity and standardisation are prioritised, and researchers are expected to maintain a degree of detachment from the research process. This distinction underscores the diverse philosophical underpinnings and methodologies that shape these two research paradigms.

### 3.2.3. Mixed research method

Doing research using mixed methods includes more than just collecting qualitative and quantitative data, claims Sowicz (2017). Instead, it implies that the data are combined, joined, or mingled at some point throughout the study process. The author also emphasises that the fundamental justification for mixing is the notion that neither qualitative nor quantitative techniques are sufficient to fully capture the trends and particulars of the situation on their own. Combining qualitative and quantitative data results in a more thorough study, and the two data kinds are complementary.

Sowicz (2017) states that mixed methods research includes the use of induction, deduction, and abduction. Induction refers to the discovery of patterns; deduction, the testing of theories and hypotheses; and abduction, the discovery of and reliance on the best set of explanations for understanding one's results.

Furthermore, Sowicz (2017) underscores the importance of recognising that mixed methods research goes beyond mere data collection. It encompasses a holistic approach where qualitative and quantitative data are integrated seamlessly throughout the entire research process. This integration allows for a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation, as it draws on the strengths of both methodologies.

In the view of Sowicz (2017), relying solely on either qualitative or quantitative methods may result in an incomplete representation of the phenomenon being studied. Qualitative techniques excel in providing rich contextual insights, while quantitative methods offer statistical rigor and generalisability. By synthesising these approaches, researchers can attain a more comprehensive perspective, enriching the overall findings and interpretations of the study.

The inclusion of induction, deduction, and abduction in mixed methods research, as highlighted by Sowicz (2017), further exemplifies the multifaceted nature of this approach. Induction facilitates the identification of emerging patterns and themes

within the data, allowing for the development of new insights. Deduction, on the other hand, involves the systematic testing of existing theories and hypotheses, providing a rigorous framework for validating findings. Abduction, often overlooked in traditional research paradigms, encourages researchers to explore and adopt the most plausible explanations for their results, offering a nuanced understanding of the underlying mechanisms at play.

In essence, Sowicz's (2017) perspective on mixed methods research underscores its value as a holistic and integrative approach that leverages the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

By embracing a combination of data types and analytical strategies, researchers are better equipped to unravel the complexities of the phenomena they investigate, ultimately yielding more robust and nuanced findings.

This study employed a quantitative research design to gather data. The quantitative component consisted of surveys distributed to enrolled first year students to evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing strategies employed.

The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for the collection of structured, generalizable data that can identify trends and relationships across a broader sample. Given the aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing strategies as perceived by students, a quantitative method was the most appropriate to ensure measurable insights and objective interpretation.

#### 3.2.4. Research Paradigm

A research paradigm refers to the fundamental set of beliefs, values, and methods that guide the researcher's approach to conducting a study (Lyll, 2023).

It defines the nature of reality (ontology), how knowledge can be known (epistemology), and the methods for gathering and interpreting data (methodology) (Lyll, 2023).

The major paradigms include positivism, interpretivist, constructivism, and critical theory, each with distinct assumptions and approaches to knowledge generation (Lyll, 2023).

This study adopted the positivist paradigm, which is consistent with the use of a quantitative research methodology. The positivist paradigm emphasizes objectivity, measurable observations, and statistical analysis to derive generalizable findings.

This approach was appropriate for the study as it involved collecting structured, numerical data through a survey questionnaire to assess students' perceptions of marketing strategies employed by private colleges in Polokwane.

By applying a positivist lens, the study ensured a systematic, empirical investigation of the phenomenon based on observable facts rather than subjective interpretations.

### **3.3. Study area**

The study was conducted in Polokwane, a city in the Limpopo province of South Africa. The focus was on private colleges operating within Polokwane. Polokwane, also known as Pietersburg, is the capital city of the Limpopo province in South Africa. It is situated in the north-eastern part of the country, approximately 300 kilometers north of Johannesburg. The city serves as the economic and administrative hub of the province (Donaldson, 2005).



**Figure 3.3. 1. Map of Polokwane (source: Map data@2023 AfriGIS (Pty) Ltd)**

### **3.4. Target population**

The target population for this study included students from private colleges in Polokwane. There are about 20 private colleges operating in Polokwane Local Municipality. Combined, these colleges have over 800 registered first year students who are studying both full time and part time.

The target students were the first-year entrance group who still had the fresh memory of what influenced them to enroll in these private colleges. They were more likely to remember the different marketing and recruitment strategies that influenced them to these colleges as they are the freshmen at college.

According to the DHET's Register of Private Colleges (DHET, 2025), Polokwane hosts multiple accredited private colleges that offer a wide range of diploma and certificate programmes. While specific enrollment numbers for private institutions are not publicly disaggregated in the DHET annual reports, the broader 2023/2024 DHET Annual Report indicates that South Africa's private higher education sector continues to experience growth, driven by increasing demand for alternative study options beyond public universities (DHET, 2024).

In the absence of centralized enrollment data specific to Polokwane's private colleges, each institution's internal records were referenced to estimate the available population. It is conservatively estimated, based on discussions with college administrators, that private colleges in Polokwane collectively enroll approximately 1,500 to 2,000 students annually across various programs. This accessible population formed the sampling frame for the study.

The main reason for focusing on first year students was because they were the recent ones to have been influenced by the current recruitment strategies by the colleges. Since these students were the ones who made decisions and have choices as to which college they want to enroll in, it was highly necessary to investigate the different marketing strategies employed by these colleges towards influencing them to making choices to enroll with them.

### **3.5. Sampling method and sample size**

Sampling in research is the process of selecting a subset of individuals or elements from a larger population to gather data or make inferences about the entire population. It involves choosing a representative group to study, allowing researchers to draw conclusions that can be applied to the larger population (Taherdoost, 2016). Sampling ensures that research is feasible, cost-effective, and manageable, while striving to minimise bias and accurately reflect the characteristics of the population (Taherdoost, 2016).

Sampling is a crucial step in the research process as it lays the foundation for the validity and generalisability of the findings. The selection of an appropriate sample is liable upon the research objectives, the nature of the population under investigation, and available resources. Researchers often employ various sampling techniques, each with its own merits and limitations. For instance, random sampling, where each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected, is considered one of the most rigorous methods for achieving representativeness. On the other hand,

purposive sampling may be employed as it allows the researcher to select participants based on their characteristics, knowledge, experiences, or some other criteria.

Non-probability sampling, including purposive sampling, is often employed when certain constraints limit the use of random sampling. Non-probability sampling does not involve random selection, meaning not every individual in the population has an equal chance of being chosen. This method is particularly useful when studying hard-to-reach populations, when resources are limited, or when exploratory insights are required (Babbie, 2010). While this method introduces the potential for selection bias, it can still yield valuable results, particularly when aligned with the study's objectives (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim, 2016).

In this study, purposive sampling was employed, where participants were selected based on their accessibility and ease of contact. This approach was practical given the time and resource constraints. However, as with any non-probability sampling method, it is acknowledged that the results may not fully represent the broader population (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019).

Sample size is another critical consideration. Larger samples generally provide more precise estimates but require more resources. In this study, the Raosoft calculator was used to determine a statistically sufficient sample size of 260 participants. However, due to constraints such as willingness and availability, 112 students from seven private colleges participated in the study.

Polokwane Local Municipality has 20 known private colleges operating in the area. The researcher initially approached all 20 private colleges. Only 6 colleges granted permission for the study, and participation levels varied. Below is a summary of participants by institution:

**Table 3.5.1 number of participants from each participating College**

College	Number of Participants
---------	------------------------

Rosebank College Polokwane	4
Rostec College	29
Gigimo Tourism Academy	16
Raidhi College	21
Polokwane Technology Institute	15
Brooklyn City College	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>

Through purposive sampling, the researcher was able to gather a sample of 112 participants from the willing available participants, thus ensuring the study could proceed despite the limited access and participation constraints.

### **3.6. Data collection**

The researcher was offered permission from the college management to collect data from their students. The researcher also collaborated with the college lecturers to administer the questionnaires as students are more likely to participate if the request to participate is coming directly from their day to day lecturer than an external researcher.

A questionnaire, according to Yadav, Gera, Khanna, and Gupta (2017), is a group of pertinent questions created to gather reliable data from all the study's identified respondents.

Questionnaires (Likert scale – ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree') were used as the primary tool to gather data for this project. The questionnaire was pre-tested with five students to assess its clarity, reliability, and validity. This pre-testing process allowed the researcher to identify and address any ambiguous or unclear questions. However the adjustment were very minimal as the questionnaire was well drafted.

Based on the feedback and results from the pre-test, the questionnaire was refined to ensure that it accurately captured the required data and minimized potential biases. The final version of the questionnaire was then distributed to the selected participants.

Data for this study was collected through self-administered questionnaires, which were physically distributed in person to students at participating private colleges in the Polokwane Local Municipality. The questionnaires were handed out during scheduled class sessions, with the permission of college management and lecturers.

### 3.6.1 Pilot Study

Before the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted using five students who matched the profile of the target population. The pilot study aimed to assess the clarity, structure, and duration of the questionnaire. Feedback from the pilot participants indicated that the questions were generally clear and understandable, and the questionnaire could be completed in an average time of 10 to 15 minutes.

Minor adjustments were made based on pilot feedback, including:

- Rewording two questions for greater clarity,
- Adding clearer instructions for rating scale questions.

The results of the pilot study confirmed that the questionnaire was appropriate for full-scale distribution. No major structural changes were required. The pilot also helped identify logistical issues, ensuring that time allocation during full administration was sufficient.

## 3.7. Data analysis

Quantitative data was analysed using statistical analysis techniques, such as descriptive statistics and inferential analysis. This analysis provided quantitative measures of the effectiveness of marketing strategies and identified any significant relationships or correlations.

The study used SPSS version 29 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and Microsoft excel to analyses and present data. SPSS and Excel are widely used tools

for data analysis in research. SPSS is a powerful statistical analysis software particularly suited for analyzing large datasets. It provides comprehensive tools for performing complex statistical tests, such as t-tests, ANOVA, regression, and factor analysis, among others (Pallant, 2020).

Excel is a versatile spreadsheet application that is excellent for organizing, managing, and performing preliminary data analysis. It is particularly useful for smaller datasets and allows for calculations, data cleaning, and generating basic descriptive statistics (Winston, 2019).

The gathered information was examined and shown graphically using graphs and charts. As mentioned by Noirhomme-Fraiture and Brito (2011), tabular demonstrations were also used to assist summarise the investigated data.

### **3.8. Validity of the study**

The study has addressed validity through various means. By targeting first-year students who have recent memories of their enrolment decisions, the researcher aligned with the logical principle that individuals who have recently experienced the subject of investigation are more likely to offer accurate and detailed insights. The rationale for focusing on first-year students was grounded in their active role as decision-makers, which increased the chances of understanding the nuances of marketing strategies that influenced their choices.

Moreover, the use of a questionnaire, which was informed by established authors like Yadav, Gera, Khanna, and Gupta (2017) further contributed to content validity. These researchers emphasise the importance of crafting questions that gather reliable data, suggesting that the questionnaire design aims to capture the intended constructs accurately.

The pre-test questionnaires that were administered to a small group of students also demonstrates a commitment to refining the survey instruments for reliability, as it helped to identify potential issues before the final distribution of surveys.

### **3.9. Reliability of the study**

The use of a sample size calculator, such as the Raosoft calculator, was useful in determining an appropriate sample size for this study. This enhanced the research's reliability by ensuring a sufficient number of respondents to draw meaningful conclusions from the data.

By deliberately incorporating participants from various institutions, the researcher was striving to offer a more comprehensive and accurate representation of the target population.

The proposed data analysis techniques, such as descriptive statistics and inferential analysis, align with established practices in quantitative research. The use of statistical methods enhanced the likelihood of replicating the analysis with consistent results, promoting the reliability of the findings.

Furthermore, the study employed tabular and graphical demonstrations of the collected data which shows the clear intention to provide clear and structured summaries of the data, and all this has positively contributed to the reliability of the study.

### **3.10. Ethical considerations**

Data collection, according to Khalil (2019), is essential for the overall effectiveness of the study and must adhere to social research ethics. Every ethical researcher has a moral and professional responsibility to follow ethical principles. The researcher has a duty to safeguard the subjects or participants from harm in accordance with the fundamental principles of research ethics (Khalil, 2019).

### **3.11. Turfloop Research Ethics Committee approval**

After the committee's approval of the study proposal, the researcher was given permission to proceed with data collection and the permission certification is provided as an annexure to the study.

The information that was submitted by the participants in this study was in no way, shape, or form disclosed to anybody other than the person who supervised this research. The participants in the research were given the assurance that their identity, privacy and confidentiality would be strongly safeguarded during the duration of the study. According to Tan and Jin (2021), the participants should always be treated with the appropriate amount of respect throughout the whole of the data collecting process.

### **3.12. Informed consent**

The study's participants were given the assurance that their participation was completely voluntary and that they might opt out at any moment if they so choose. The participants' rights were not trampled upon, and they did not suffer any kind of emotional or bodily harm. The researcher made sure that all participants were at least eighteen years old mainly because to interview the participants, you must have a mature perspective about the subject.

### **3.13. Permission to conduct the study**

A letter to seek permission was sent to the identified colleges administrators or principals with the title, aims and objectives of the study. Written permission were requested from the identified colleges and are attached as an annexure to this study. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a letter that described the study's subject, objectives and goals as well as requests for permission. This letter made it obvious that none of the data supplied would be abused and that everyone who participated should do so out of their own free choice. All parties involved have dated and signed the letter.

### **3.14. Voluntary consent and anonymity**

A voluntary consent form was also given and explained to all the participants before they participated. Participants were required to sign and date the provided form. The form outlined that they were providing the required information at free will and they could decide to stop to participate at any given time freely.

The researcher made sure that all participants understood the contents of the consent form. A voluntary consent form is also attached as an annexure to this study.

Even though the names of the participants were written on the consent form, their identity was not linked to any research results. The provided information did not have identity attachments during data analysis, it was anonymous.

### **3.15. Research confidentiality**

The data that the researcher gathered from the participants was kept private and utilised solely for the academic study. The research supervisor was the only person with whom the data have been shared with.

### **3.16. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter outlined the research methodology that was carefully chosen to ensure the accuracy and validity of the findings. The quantitative approach, supported by statistical analysis, enabled the researcher to examine relationships between marketing strategies and student enrolment in private colleges. The use of questionnaires as the primary data collection tool allowed for an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions. The validity and reliability of the study were enhanced through pre-testing and the use of stratified random sampling. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly adhered to, ensuring that the study was conducted with integrity. The methodology adopted in this study provides a solid foundation for the analysis and discussion of the results presented in the following chapters.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

### **4.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the methodology of this study was discussed in detail, encompassing various critical aspects such as the research design, population, sampling methods, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. This comprehensive discussion established the processes and procedures necessary for conducting the quantitative study to achieve the study objectives. The main aim of this study was to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the marketing strategies employed by private colleges in Polokwane local municipality, South Africa, with the objective of assessing their effectiveness, identifying areas for improvement, and providing recommendations for enhancing the enrolment of students. The following were specific objectives of the study:

- To identify the marketing strategies employed by private colleges in Polokwane local municipality.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of marketing strategies in attracting prospective students to private colleges in Polokwane local municipality.
- To recommend areas for improvement and optimisation in the marketing efforts of private colleges in Polokwane local municipality.

This chapter focuses on the analysis of actual data collected during the fieldwork and presentation of the results using statistical methods as detailed below. This chapter is subdivided into four sections. The first section provides data analysis procedures applied in the study. This is followed by the analysis and presentation of demographical characteristics of the respondents to this study. Then the other sections include analysis and presentation of results of the fieldwork. The final section provides a conclusive summary of the chapter.

### **4.2. Data analysis procedures**

This study gathered quantitative data using survey questionnaire from 112 respondents which included students enrolled in the private colleges located in

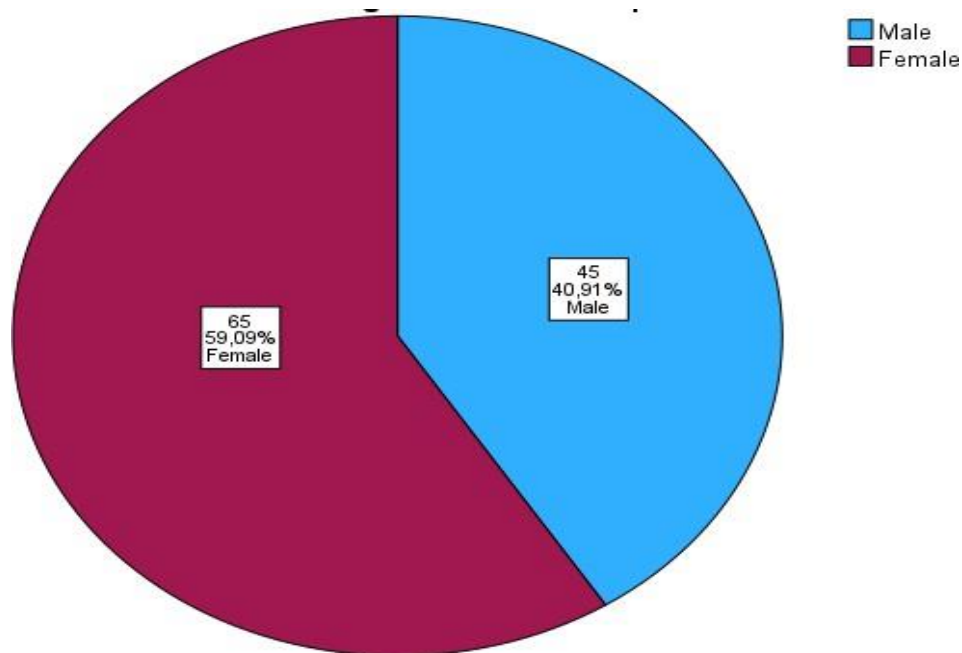
Polokwane municipality. The questionnaire mainly includes Likert type of questions designed to examine the perceptions of respondents on various aspects regarding educational service quality and infrastructure in the colleges. This study employed descriptive statistics to analyse the frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviations to as analytical tools to summarise the results for presentation. The findings of this study are presented in the form of tables, graphs, charts and textual narratives. SPSS version 29 was used to manipulate the data. First, data was cleaned and uploaded into excel sheet and later exported to SPSS for analysis. Before the analysis, the reliability test was conducted to determine the reliability and consistency of items used in the questionnaire. The outcome presented below shows that the high Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.933 for the 32 items indicates that the items reliably measured the same underlying constructs.

**Table 4.2. 1 Reliability statistics (Cronbach`s Alpha)**

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>	
Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
,933	32

### 4.3. Demographic characteristics of respondents

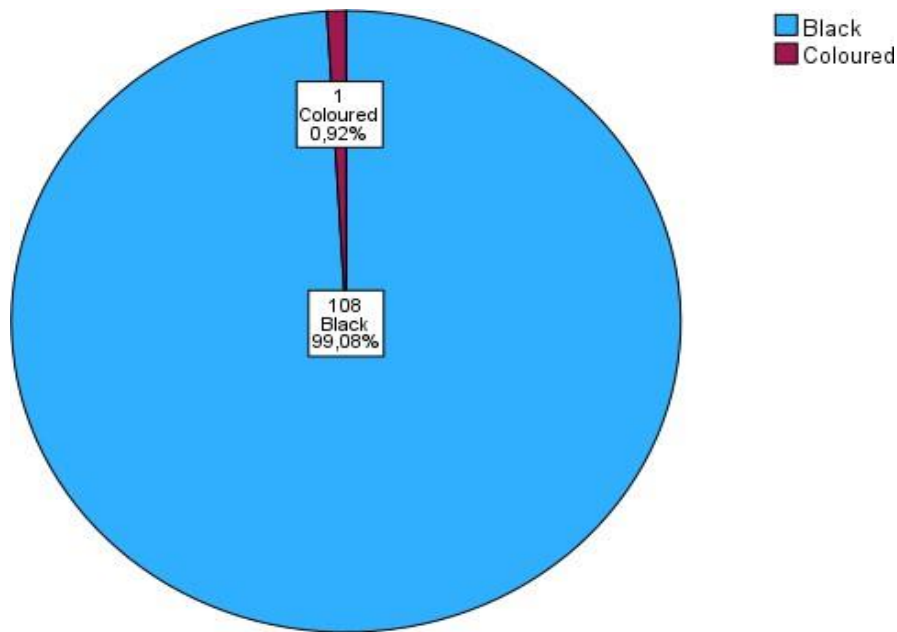
#### 4.3.1. Gender of the respondents



**Figure 4.3.1: Gender of the respondents**

Figure 4.3.1 provides insights into the gender composition of this study, which assessed private college student's perceptions of the effectiveness of marketing methods executed by the colleges in Polokwane Municipality. Out of the total respondents that took part in this survey, the majority of the respondents were female, 65 (59.1%), while males also accounted for 45 (40.9%). The findings show that, in comparison to their male counterparts, a significantly higher proportion of females contributed to this study.

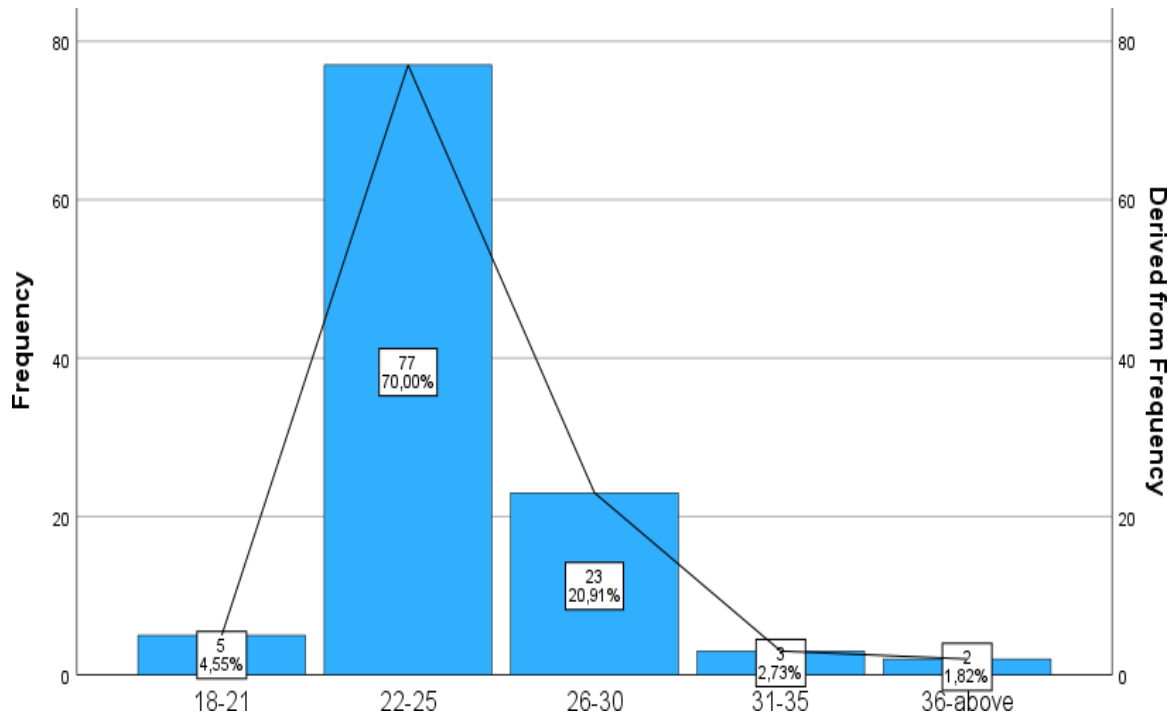
#### 4.3.2. Racial group of the respondents



**Figure 4.3.2. 1 racial group of the respondents**

The racial construct of this study, which evaluated private college students' opinions of the efficacy of marketing strategies used by the colleges in Polokwane Municipality, is explained in detail in Figure 4.3.2. Among the total respondents who participated in this survey, 108 (99.08%) were black respondents, and 1 (0.92%) were male respondents. Nearly all of the responders, according to the findings, were Black. This is because Black racial groupings currently make up the majority of students attending Polokwane's private colleges.

#### 4.3.3. Age of the Respondents



**Figure 4.3.3. 1 age of the respondents** The age composition of this study, which evaluated private college students' opinions of the efficacy of marketing strategies used by the colleges in Polokwane Municipality, is explained in detail in Figure 4.3.3. Among the total respondents who participated in this survey, the majority of the survey respondents, 77 (70%), were between the ages of 22 and 25, making this the dominant age group in the study, followed by a smaller but still significant proportion, 23 (20.9%), falling within the age range of 26-30. Other younger respondents aged 18–21 represent only 5 (4.5%). Generally, this shows that 99 (90.9%) of the respondents were aged between 22 and 30, suggesting that most respondents were younger college students.

#### 4.4. Private colleges where respondents enrolled in during the survey

**Table 4.4.1 Private college respondents enrolled in**

<b>Colleges attended</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Rosebank College Polokwane	4	3,6	3,6
Rostec college	29	25,9	29,5
Gigimo Tourism Academy	16	14,3	43,8
Raidhi College	21	18,8	62,5
Polokwane Technology Institute	15	13,4	75,9
Brooklyn City College	27	24,1	100,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100,0</b>	

Table 4.4.1 depicts the proportions of the respondents based on the colleges that the respondents attended during this survey. The majority of the respondents, or over half of the sample 58 (50%), who participated in this study were attending Rostec College 29 (24.9%) and Brooklyn City College 27 (24.1%) altogether. This is followed by Raidhi College, which had the third-largest share of respondents, with 21 (18.8%). Polokwane Technology Institute accounted for 15 (13.4%), while Rosebank College Polokwane had the fewest respondents overall, with only 4 (3.6%) of the sample respondents. The results indicate a significantly high proportion of respondents representing Rostec and Brooklyn City Colleges.

#### 4.5. Marketing strategy preferences by the respondents

**Table 4.5.1** The marketing strategy preferences by the respondents

Marketing strategy	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Print Advertisements	75	24,4%	70,1%
Billboards	9	2,9%	8,4%
Television Commercials	1	0,3%	0,9%
Open Days and Campus Tours	29	9,4%	27,1%
Participation in Educational Fairs and Events	4	1,3%	3,7%
College Websites	16	5,2%	15,0%
Social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)	16	5,2%	15,0%
Online advertisement	8	2,6%	7,5%
Email Campaigns	31	10,1%	29,0%
Internet Search	2	0,6%	1,9%
Content Marketing	29	9,4%	27,1%
Virtual Events and Webinars	2	0,6%	1,9%
Word of Mouth and Referral Programs	54	17,5%	50,5%
Scholarships and Financial Aid Promotion	30	9,7%	28,0%
Others	2	0,6%	1,9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>287,9%</b>

According to responses from sampled respondents, Table 4.5.1 depicts the marketing methods that were executed by the private colleges in Polokwane Municipality, along with the frequency with which each strategy was chosen and its relative significance in each case. According to the findings, the print advertisement method was the most frequently selected strategy, accounting for 75(24.4%) of the total responses, and

70.1% of respondents identified it as effective, while word-of-mouth and referral programmes were also the second most preferred method, making up 54(17.5%) of the total responses and being selected by 50.5% of the respondents, showing personal recommendation plays a critical role in influencing students. Email campaigns were also one of the effective marketing strategies, which was chosen by 31(29.0%) of respondents; they represent 10.1% of the total responses, indicating their continued relevance. Likewise, scholarships and financial aid promotion were selected by 30(28.0%) of respondents, representing 9.7% of the total responses, showing that financial incentives significantly attract students. Furthermore, open days, campus tours, and content marketing, each chosen by 29(27.1%) of respondents, indicating that experiential marketing and engaging content are also critical in influencing students decisions. Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, etc.) and college websites were each chosen by 16(15.0%) of respondents, making up 5.2% of total responses.

On the other hand, less preferred marketing strategies like television commercials 1(0.3%), billboards 9(2.9%), and online advertisements 8(2.6%) had relatively low engagement from respondents, suggesting that they may be less practical in reaching students because of low engagement, indicating a need to emphasise more tailored and direct marketing mechanisms. Accordingly, these results show that print advertisements, word-of-mouth and referrals, email efforts, and scholarship and financial aid promotions were the most preferred marketing methods (arranged in order of significance) which could substantially influence on the decisions made by students.

The findings in Table 4.5.1 reveal a clear preference for certain marketing strategies among the respondents from private colleges in the Polokwane Municipality. These preferences align with existing literature, which emphasizes the importance of both traditional and digital marketing strategies in higher education. Below, the literature is reviewed to support the identified marketing strategies:

**Print Advertisements:** The significant preference for print advertisements in the findings (24.4% of total responses) is well-supported by previous studies. According

to a report by QS (2024), print advertisements remain a trusted and highly effective medium in higher education marketing. Their ability to target specific demographics and offer lasting visibility makes them an essential tool for institutions looking to attract prospective students. Print media's credibility also plays a role in its continued relevance despite the rise of digital platforms.

**Word-of-Mouth and Referral Programs:** The preference for word-of-mouth (17.5% of total responses) and referral programs is supported by research on the influence of peer recommendations in the student decision-making process. A study published by Ubrik (2023) highlights the growing importance of referral marketing in higher education, noting that personal recommendations from alumni, current students, and faculty are among the most trusted sources for prospective students. This trust in peer influence leads to higher enrollment conversion rates, underlining the importance of this strategy.

**Email Campaigns:** Email campaigns were selected by 10.1% of the respondents, indicating their continued effectiveness in higher education marketing. The literature confirms this, as targeted email campaigns allow institutions to directly communicate with potential students, offering personalized information and calls to action. While specific studies on email marketing in higher education are limited, the general consensus is that email remains a reliable tool in guiding students through the decision-making process. The ability to segment audiences and tailor messages is a key factor in their success.

**Scholarships and Financial Aid Promotion:** The promotion of scholarships and financial aid, selected by 9.7% of respondents, is a critical strategy in attracting students, especially in competitive markets. Financial incentives are often pivotal in the decision-making process, as affordability remains a significant concern for prospective students. While direct academic literature on this specific strategy is sparse, the importance of financial aid has been well-documented. A report by The Education Advisory Board (2022) explains that offering clear, accessible financial aid options increases an institution's appeal, particularly to students from lower-income backgrounds.

Open Days, Campus Tours, and Content Marketing: Experiential marketing strategies such as open days, campus tours, and content marketing (all selected by 27.1% of respondents) are highly effective in higher education, as they provide prospective students with a tangible, immersive experience of what the institution has to offer. A study by Chronicle of Higher Education (2023) asserts that campus tours and open days are essential for building a strong emotional connection with prospective students. Moreover, content marketing, which involves creating valuable and engaging material, allows institutions to showcase their culture and values, ultimately aiding students in their decision-making.

Social Media and College Websites: The importance of digital platforms such as social media (15.0%) and college websites (15.0%) cannot be understated. Social media, particularly platforms like Facebook and Instagram, offers colleges an opportunity to engage directly with prospective students in a casual, interactive way. While these platforms are essential for reaching the younger, more digitally connected audience, the effectiveness of these strategies depends heavily on the quality and relevance of the content shared. As stated by Eduventures (2024), a well-maintained college website and engaging social media presence are crucial for building an institution's digital reputation.

Television Commercials, Billboards, and Online Advertisements: The relatively low preference for traditional advertising methods like television commercials, billboards, and online ads (with responses ranging from 0.3% to 2.9%) is in line with broader trends in media consumption. As highlighted by Digital Education Review (2023), younger audiences, especially those seeking higher education, tend to engage less with traditional forms of advertising. This shift is driven by the rise of digital and social media platforms that allow for more personalized, targeted communication. Therefore, these traditional methods may not be as effective in reaching prospective students as they once were.

#### **4.6. Marketing strategy preferences by gender of the respondents**

In this section, cross tabulation of marketing strategy with gender conducted to determine gender and preference for certain marketing strategy. The preferred

marketing methods for both male and female respondents are showed in the cross tabulation table 4.6.1.

**Table 4.6.1 Marketing strategy preferences by gender of the respondents cross tabulation**

Marketing strategy	Gender of Respondents		Total
	Male	Female	
Print Advertisements	5 (25%)	15(75%)	320(100%)
Billboards	1(16.7%)	5(83.3%)	6(100%)
Open Days and Campus Tours	2(50%)	2(50%)	4(100%)
Participation in Education Fairs and Events	0	1(100%)	1(100%)
Websites	1(50%)	1(50%)	2(100%)
Social media	1(8,3%)	11(91,7%)	12(100%)
Online Advertising	3(60%)	2(40%)	5(100%)
Email Campaigns	1(14,3%)	6(85,7%)	7(100%)
Word of Mouth and Referral Programs	14(51,9%)	13(48,1%)	27(100%)
Scholarships and Financial Aid Promotion	1(50%)	1(50%)	2(100%)
Total	29	57	86

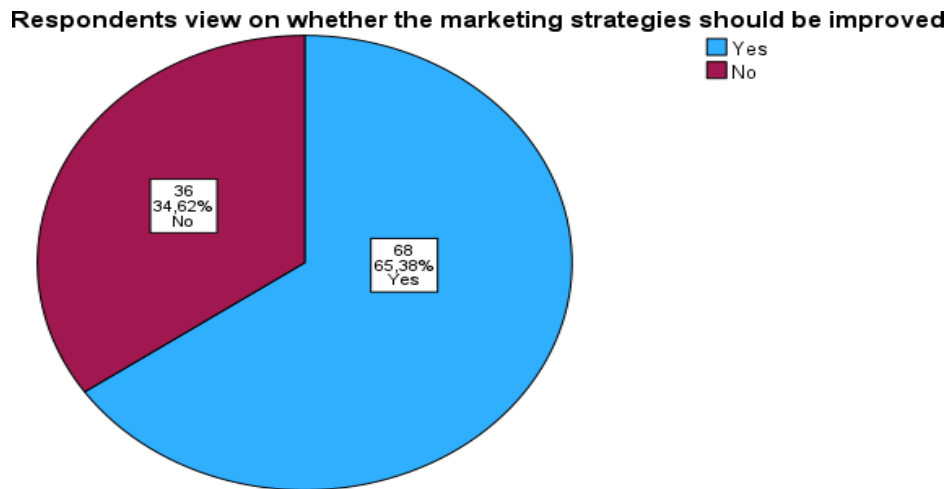
As indicated above on Table 4.6.1, out of all the marketing methods mentioned, word of mouth and referral programmes are the most preferred strategies selected by both genders (51.9% males and 48.1% females). It was also found that marketing methods such as websites, open days and campus tours, and scholarships and financial aid promotion were all opted equally by both genders. Regarding male preference, the results indicate that online advertising is significantly preferred by men (60%) than by women (40%). On the other hand, concerning women preference, most females (75%) are more likely to prefer print advertisements than their male (25%) counterparts. Likewise, most women (91.7%) more prefer social media than men (8.3%), and strategies like email campaigns and billboards also indicate a higher preference among female respondents. Thus, the overall result from the survey highlights that women (57) are likely to show a better level of engagement with various marketing than their male (29) counterparts.

It is important to note that while the expected number of respondents for this survey was 112, the total number of responses recorded in Table 4.6.1 was 86. This discrepancy may be attributed to several factors, including incomplete responses where some participants may have skipped certain questions or failed to indicate their gender, leading to missing data. Additionally, as respondents were allowed to select more than one marketing strategy, some individuals may have chosen multiple options, which could have contributed to a lower total count for each gender.

Research has consistently shown that gender plays a significant role in shaping marketing preferences, particularly in how different demographics respond to various media and promotional tactics. According to a study by Morris et al. (2022), women tend to engage more with traditional advertising methods like print ads, while men often show a preference for digital marketing, particularly online advertising. This aligns with the findings in Table 4.6.1, where a higher percentage of female respondents preferred print advertisements (75%) compared to male respondents (25%).

Additionally, Davenport and Beck (2021) highlight that women are generally more engaged with social media platforms than men, a trend that is evident in this survey where 91.7% of females preferred social media, compared to 8.3% of males. The study further supports the higher preference for word-of-mouth and referral programs across both genders, reflecting the importance of personal recommendations in student decision-making (Keller, 2020). Thus, the results in this survey are consistent with the broader literature, which underscores the importance of tailoring marketing strategies to gender-specific preferences to enhance engagement.

#### 4.7. Improving the marketing strategies



**Figure 4.7.1 Respondents' views on whether the marketing strategy should be improved**

Respondents were asked to share if they believed marketing methods should be improved. Figure 4.7.1 shows that most respondents 68(65.4%) agreed that private colleges in Polokwane need to do better in terms of marketing their institutions. Not the least of the respondents, but a sizeable majority 36(34.6%) concurred that the institutions ought to maintain implementing their current marketing techniques. This demonstrates how important it is to uphold using the most effective marketing techniques while making improvements to those that respondents found less appealing.

#### 4.8. The status of educational service in my college

The table 4.8.1 below demonstrates the analysis of statements (A1–A4) on the perception of the respondents about the state of educational service in the private colleges in Polokwane. The results are presented as follow.

**Statements:**

*A1: Ensures the provision of educational programmes that are in demand in the industry sectors.*

A2: Ensures provision of programmes that help me to be employable in my chosen sector.

A3: Provides educational programmes.

A4: Emphasis on providing good quality transport services to our customers.

A5: Ensures provision of consistent level of good quality educational services.

**Table 4.8.1 My college’s educational services**

Item	1.Strongly Disagree	2.Disagree	3. Unsure	4.Agree	5.Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard deviation
A1	5(4.5%)	9(8%)	19(17.0%)	54(48%)	21(18.8%)	3.71	1.024
A2	3(2.7%)	15(13.4%)	38(33.9%)	30(26.8%)	21(18.8%)	3.48	1.049
A3	4(3.6%)	3(2.7%)	14(12.5%)	47(42%)	36(32.1%)	4.04	0.975
A4	10(8.9%)	29(25.9%)	15(13.4%)	21(18.8%)	27(24.1%)	3.25	1.377
A5	3(2.7%)	1(0.9%)	20(17.9%)	49(43.8%)	19(17%)	3.87	0.867

According to table 4.8.1, the statement with highest mean score is statement A3 which states my college “provides educational programmes”. Respondents strongly confirmed the statement, as reported in the high mean score of 4.04. The majority of 42% of respondents agreed, and 32.1% strongly agreed, highlighting the colleges effectiveness in providing educational programmes. This is followed by the statement with the second highest mean score, statement A5 which states that my college “ensures provision of consistent level of good quality educational services”. Respondents showed a strong agreement on both the consistency and quality of educational services, as reflected by the mean score of 3.87. Most respondents 43.8% agreed and 17% strongly agreed shows a general satisfaction among respondents in terms of the standard of educational services. The third statement with the highest mean score is A1 which states that my college “ensures the provision of educational programmes that are in demand in the industry sectors”. This statement reveal a

generally positive perception among respondents concerning the efforts of private colleges to maintain their relevancy in the job market, as reflected by the mean score of 3.71. A significant proportion of the respondents, 48%, agreed, and 18.8% strongly agreed, reveals students consensus on the ability of private colleges to deliver educational programmes that align with industry demands. The standard deviation of 1.024 highlights some inconsistency in responses. Further research may be needed in this area.

On the other hand, responses to statement A2, which states my college “*ensures provision of programmes that help me to be employable in my chosen sector*” reveal more mixed reactions. According to table 4.8.1, the mean score is 3.48 and only 26.8% respondents agreed, however a significant proportion 33.9% neither agreed nor disagreed. This highlights some degree of uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of the programmes in enhancing their employability. A standard deviation of 1.049, also implies that there is variation and inconsistency that most students showed they were unsure while some agreed. Similarly, the responses to statement A4 shows a lesser extent of agreement compared to others, as reflected in the mean score of 3.25 and with only 18.8% agreed and 24.1% strongly agreed. The higher standard deviation of 1.377, also reveals that respondent’s perception on the standard of transport services are quite inconsistent meaning while some respondents welcome the transport services, several others may feel there is a need for improvement in this area.

High ratings for programme quality and consistency align with Parasuraman et al. (1985), who argue that perceived service quality is crucial in customer satisfaction within educational services.

#### **4.9. Fees charged for the educational programmes**

The table below demonstrates the analysis of statements (B1–B4) on the perceptions of respondents about the fees charged for the educational programmes in the private colleges in Polokwane. The results are presented as follow.

**Item statements:**

*B1: Are competitive enough when compared to what their competitors charge for their educational services.*

*B2: Are generally affordable.*

*B3: Offer good value for money.*

*B4: Are attractive enough to compel one to enrol with the college.*

**Table 4.9. 1 Fees charged for the educational programmes**

Item	1.Strongly Disagree	2.Disagree	3. unsure	4.Agree	5.Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard deviation
B1	0(0.00%)	8(7.1%)	35(31.3%)	45(40.2%)	13(11.6%)	3.62	0.811
B2	2(1.8%)	4(3.6%)	12(10.7%)	46(41.1%)	42(37.5%)	4.15	0.903
B3	4(3.6%)	7(6.3%)	23(20.5%)	52(46.4%)	18(16.1%)	3.70	0.964
B4	1(0.9%)	3(2.7%)	18(16.1%)	54(48.2%)	30(26.8%)	4.03	0.810

According to Table 4.9.1, the statement with highest mean score is statement B2 which states fees charged for the educational programme “*are generally affordable*”. This view is substantially evident, with a mean score of 4.15. The majority 41.1% of respondents agreed and 37.5% strongly agreed highlights that affordability is a key element of the pricing system, and it also implies a majority of respondents believed that the fees are reasonable and affordable at private colleges in Polokwane. The second statement with the highest mean score of 4.03 is item B4 which states fees charged for the educational programme “*are attractive enough to compel one to enrol to the college*”. It suggests that the fees are perceived as attractive enough to encourage enrolment. The majority of the respondents 48.2% agreed and 26.8% strongly agreed. This highlights more positive attitude towards the view that the fees play a compelling role in terms of influencing enrolment decisions by students in private college at Polokwane. In the same vein, statement B3 with the mean score of 3.70 states that fees charged for the educational programme “*offer good value for money*” highlights that the respondents mostly agreed to the statement. This is also confirmed with 40.2% agreed and 11.6% strongly agreed with the view indicating a generally positive perception regarding fees charged for educational service, provide value for money. Nevertheless, a remarkable proportion 31.3% of the respondents

remain unsure, suggesting some ambiguity in this opinion as reflected by the standard deviation of 0.964, which shows a greater level of inconsistency in responses. On the other hand, concerning statement B1 which states that fees charged for the educational programmes “are competitive enough when compared to what their competitors charge for their educational services”. A mean score of 3.62 suggests a moderate level of agreement. Generally, many respondents believed that the pricing structure of the private colleges in Polokwane is consistent with the market, as reflected with 40.2% agreed and 11.6% strongly agreed with the view that the fees are competitive. However, a remarkable proportion 31.3% of respondents remain unsure, indicating some ambiguity in this perception.

The finding that students perceive fees as affordable and attractive supports Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2015), who emphasized that cost considerations significantly influence students' selection of private colleges.

#### 4.10. Marketing materials and activities

The table below demonstrates the analysis of statements (C1–C4) on perception of respondents about marketing materials and activities for the educational programmes in the private colleges in Polokwane. The results are presented as follow.

##### **Item statements:**

*C1: Engages in initiatives that help create awareness of the college and educational programmes provided.*

*C2: Communicates academic information using the website.*

*C3: Ensures that students are well informed whenever there are changes to their curriculum.*

*C4: Keep students well informed whenever they introduce new courses.*

**Table 4.10. 1 Marketing materials and activities**

Item	1.Strongly Disagree	2.Disagree	3.Unsure	4.Agree	5.Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard deviation
C1	3(2,7%)	7(6,3%)	26(23,2%)	47(42,0%)	23(20,5%)	3.75	0.964
C2	6(5,4%)	15(13,4%)	20(17,9%)	28(25,0%)	36(32,1%)	3.70	1.241
C3	7(6,3%)	3(2,7%)	19(17,0%)	27(24,1%)	51(45,5%)	4.05	1.169
C4	7(6,3%)	5(4,5%)	17(15,2%)	30(26,8%)	48(42,9%)	4.00	1.182

Regarding marketing materials and activities, the statement with the highest mean score of 4.05, is statement C3 which states the college “*ensures that customers are well informed whenever there are changes to their curriculum including tuition fees*”. The majority of the respondents strongly agreed (45.5%) and agreed (24.1%), indicating a strong positive attitude about the colleges’ effectiveness in terms of information dissemination to enhance customers awareness, as reflected on the mean score of 4.05 which also confirms strong positive feeling of participants that clients are kept well-informed of progress and changes in the private colleges in Polokwane. The second statement with highest score is item C4 which states that the college “*Keep customers well informed whenever they introduce new courses*”. Table 4.10.1 indicates that the majority of the respondents either strongly agreed (42.9%) or agreed (26.8%), comparable to C3. The mean score of 4.00 also indicates strong positive response, demonstrating that most respondents of this study consider customers as informed about new courses. However, the standard deviation of 1.182 is high and shows that there is some differences in how respondents perceive the communication efforts by the private colleges. The third statement C3 which states that “*Engages in initiatives that help create awareness of the college and educational programmes provided*” shows general positive perception, as reflected in the mean score of 3.75. The majority of respondents agreed (42.0%) or strongly agreed (20.5%), indicating that impression most believe the college is effective in creating awareness. The standard deviation of 0.964 reveals a relatively medium variation of responses in how strongly respondents feel about this statement or view. In similar vein, statement C2 which states that “*communicates customer services information using the website*” with the mean score of 3.70 highlights slightly less positive attitude compared to C1. The finding shows that almost 32.1% strongly agreeing and 25.0% agreeing, while 17.9% were unsure. The standard deviation of 1.241 shows high inconsistency in responses, indicating opinions are more mixed on the use of the website for communication.

#### 4.11. Place and accessibility

The table below demonstrates the analysis of statements (D1–D4) on perception of respondents about the location and accessibility of the private colleges in Polokwane. The results are presented as follow.

**Item statements:**

*D1: The College is easily accessible to students.*

*D2: The College is placed conveniently for students.*

*D3: The College is placed nearby public transportation pick up and drop off points.*

*D4: Routes in and out of the college are easily accessible to students.*

**Table 4.11. 1 Place and accessibility**

Item	1.Strongly Disagree	2.Disagree	3.Unsure	4.Agree	5.Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard deviation
D1	5(4,5%)	7(6,3%)	7(6,3%)	38(33,9%)	49(43,8%)	4.12	1.102
D2	2(1,8%)	6(5,4%)	26(23,2%)	37(33,0%)	32(28,6%)	3.88	0.983
D3	16(14,3%)	17(15,2%)	18(16,1%)	20(17,9%)	33(29,5%)	3.36	1.461
D4	6(5,4%)	14(12,5%)	19(17,0%)	22(19,6%)	40(35,7%)	3.75	1.276

According to Table 4.11.1, the statement with highest mean score is statement D1 which states “*the college is easily accessible to students*”. This view is substantially evident, with a mean score of 4.12. A significant majority of the respondents agree or strongly agree that the college is easily accessible (33.9% agree and 43.8% strongly agree) suggests that it is a key component of the accessibility to the educational service and competitiveness. The second statement with the highest mean score is D2 which states the college “*The College is placed conveniently for students.*” highlights a more balanced response with 33% agreeing and 28.6% strongly agreeing. Nevertheless, 23.2% of respondents were neither agreeing or nor disagreeing. The mean score of 3.88 reflects a positive, though slightly less strong agreement compared to D1. The lower standard deviation (0.983) also indicates that responses are less varied. On the other hand, statement D4 which states the colleges “*Routes in and out of the college are easily accessible to students*” shows that most respondents (35.7%) strongly agree that the route network aligns with customer demand, while a smaller portion (19.6%) agree. A significant proportion (17%) neither agrees nor disagrees. It

was found that the mean score of 3.75 showed overall agreement but still there is a need for improvement, particularly in ensuring convenient pick-up/drop-off points and service timing. The standard deviation of 1.276 yet again indicates inconsistencies in opinion regarding agreement on accessibility and route network. Similarly, statement D3 which states “*The College is placed nearby public transportation pick up and drop off points.*” shows that there is more disagreement, with 14.3% strongly disagreeing and 15.2% disagreeing. Nevertheless, 29.5% strongly agree, resulting in a more mixed feelings about the proximity of pick-up and drop-off points as reflected in the mean score of 3.36. In addition the high standard deviation (1.461) indicates inconsistent opinions on this matter.

#### 4.12. College administrators and academic staff

The table below demonstrates the analysis of statements (E1–E6) on perception of respondents about the college administrators and lecturers. The results are presented as follow.

##### **Item statements:**

*E1: Has administrators who show understanding of the importance of good customer service.*

*E2: Have lecturers/teachers who show pride of their profession.*

*E3: Have lecturers who are well qualified and expertise to teach their different subjects.*

*E4: Has lecturers who show a good understanding and go out of their way to assist students to understand their academic work.*

*E5: Has lecturer who are enthusiastic about teaching and imparting the necessary academic skill and knowledge.*

*E6: Have lectures who are proud to do their work.*

**Table 4.12. 1 College administrators and academic staff**

Item	1.Strongly Disagree	2.Disagree	3.Unsure	4.Agree	5.Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard deviation
E1	4(3,6%)	5(4,5%)	26(23,2%)	44(39,3%)	24(21,4%)	3,77	,992
E2	3(2,7%)	13(11,6%)	24(21,4%)	37(33,0%)	28(25,0%)	3,70	1,082

E3	1(0,9%)	0(0,0%)	15(13,4%)	35(31,3%)	53(47,3%)	4,34	,796
E4	2(1,8%)	2(1,8%)	11(9,8%)	38(33,9%)	52(46,4%)	4,30	,876
E5	3(2,7%)	1(0,9%)	16(14,3%)	48(42,9%)	36(32,1%)	4,09	,893
E6	1(0,9%)	3(2,7%)	12(10,7%)	33(29,5%)	54(48,2%)	4,32	,866

According to Table 4.12.1, the statement with highest mean score is statement E3 which states the colleges “*Have lecturers who are well qualified and expertise to teach their different subjects*”. This view is substantially evident, with a mean score of 4.34. The majority altogether 78.6% agree or strongly agree with the view that the lecturers are competent and qualified, with only limited proportion of respondents disagreeing, which highlights a more positive attitude regarding the lecturers’ qualifications. The second statement with the highest mean score is E6 which states the college “*have lectures who are proud to do their work*” highlights that most respondents altogether 77.7% agree or strongly agree, shows they believe that lecturers are proud of their work, reflecting a more positive attitude toward their roles and responsibilities as well as motivation. This is evident in the mean score 4.32. The third statement with highest mean is E4 which states “*has lectures who show a good understanding and go out of their way to assist students to understand their academic work*”. The mean score of 4.30 and the fact that most of the respondents altogether 80.3% agree or strongly agree reveals that lecturers are perceived as supportive and helpful in assisting students with their academic work. However, the statements with lower mean score like E2 which states “*have lecturers/teachers who show pride of their profession*” suggests that participants mostly agree that lecturers show confidence in their profession (altogether 58.0% agree or strongly agree), yet a greater proportion of participants 21.4% were unsure, suggesting that the college needs to improve in this area, as reflected in the mean score of 3.70. The standard deviation of 1,082 also shows some inconsistencies in the opinion of the respondents with regard to lecturers’ pride in their profession. The findings generally show positive attitude, which reveals that lecturers are perceived as qualified, supportive, and proud of their work. It also shows that some participants are unsure or disagree on statements indicates areas for further improvements with regard to academic and lecturers support services.

#### 4.13. Application and enrolment process

The table below demonstrates the analysis of statements (F1–f4) on perception of respondents about the college application process and endorsement. The results are presented as follow.

**Item statements:**

*F1: Application process is smooth and easy.*

*F2: I was kept updated about the status of my application.*

*F3: Enrolment process was easy.*

*F4: Fee payment process is easy for students.*

**Table 4.13. 1 Application and enrolment process**

Item	1.Strongly Disagree	2.Disagree	3.Unsure	4.Agree	5.Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard deviation
F1	13(11,6%)	11(9,8%)	24(21,4%)	40(35,7%)	14(12,5%)	3,30	1,217
F2	7(6,3%)	4(3,6%)	16(14,3%)	31(27,7%)	46(41,1%)	4,01	1,170
F3	2(1,8%)	1(0,9%)	9(8,0%)	27(24,1%)	61(54,5%)	4,44	0,857
F4	1(0,9%)	5(4,5%)	12(10,7%)	35(31,3%)	53(47,3%)	4,26	0,908

According to Table 4.13.1, the statement with highest mean score is statement F3 which states the colleges “*enrolment process was easy*”. The high mean score of 4.44 reflects strong positive perception that the enrolment process was easy. The majority altogether 79.6% agree or strongly agree view that the colleges simplified their application and enrolment procedure which students believe is simple and uncomplicated. The second statement with the highest mean score is E4 which states the college “*fee payment process is easy for students*” also highlights that most respondents altogether 77.6% agree or strongly agree with the mean score of 4.26 which suggests a generally positive view of the ease of the fee payment process. The third statement F2 which states that “I was kept updated about the status of my application” shows general positive perception, as reflected in the mean score of 4.01. The majority of the respondents agreed (27.7%) or strongly agreed (41.1%), indicating the impression that most believe the college keeps on updating the students about their application status. The standard deviation of 1.170 reveals a relatively high variation of responses in terms of whether the school has got a system of keeping

students updated about their application status. It shows that there must be further improvements in this area. On the other hand, concerning statement F1 which states “*Application process is smooth and easy*”. A mean score of 3.30 reveals that the opinions are neutral to slightly positive, with some participants agreeing that the application does not cause long waiting times. However, the relatively high standard deviation (1.217) shows variations in opinions regarding waiting time, indicating there is significant inconsistencies in how respondents feel about this statement, which shows the need for further improvements.

#### 4.14. Physical infrastructure

The table below demonstrates the analysis of statements (G1–G4) on perception of respondents about the college physical infrastructure. The results are presented as follow.

**Item statements:**

G1: *The school infrastructure looks attractive.*

G2: *College premises.*

G3: *Offices.*

G4: *Dress of the administrators.*

**Table 4.14. 1 Physical infrastructure**

Item	1.Strongly Disagree	2.Disagree	3.Unsure	4.Agree	5.Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard deviation
G1	6(5,4%)	12(10,7%)	23(20,5%)	40(35,7%)	25(22,3%)	3,62	1,133
G2	1(0,9%)	5(4,5%)	17(15,2%)	49(43,8%)	30(26,8%)	4,00	0,867
G3	0(0,0%)	3(2,7%)	16(14,3%)	46(41,1%)	39(34,8%)	4,16	0,790
G4	2(1,8%)	4(3,6%)	21(18,8%)	34(30,4%)	42(37,5%)	4,07	0,973

According to Table 4.14.1, the statement with highest mean score is statement G3 which states the colleges have got “*Offices*”. The mean score of 4.16 indicates that the respondents generally have a positive view of the offices, with a majority of respondents strongly agreeing (34.8%) or agreeing (41.1%). The second statement with the highest mean score is G4 which states the college “*dress of the administrators*” with the mean score of 4.07 shows that a significant proportion of

respondents agree or strongly agree that the administrators are dressed appropriately, as reflected with 30.4% agreeing and 37.5% strongly agreeing. The third statement G2 which states that “*college premises*” shows general positive perception, with a mean score of 4.00, most respondents agreed that the premises were satisfactory. A significant percentage either agreed (43.8%) or strongly agreed (26.8%), showing general satisfaction with the premises. The lower standard deviation (0.867) suggests that responses were more consistent. On the other hand, concerning statement G1 which states, “*the school infrastructure looks attractive*” with the mean score of 3.62 shows that respondents tend to agree that the school infrastructure is attractive, although responses are somewhat mixed and inconsistent, as reflected by a relatively high standard deviation (1.133). The finding also shows 35.7% agreed, and 22.3% strongly agreed, however 20.5% were uncertain, indicating some ambiguity or diverse perceptions. This entails that there is a need for further improvements with regard to the attractiveness of the school’s infrastructures.

The positive perceptions of physical infrastructure and administrative professionalism align with Han (2014), who found that a well-maintained physical environment positively impacts students' institutional loyalty and satisfaction.

#### **4.15. Inferential Statistical Analysis**

This section presents the inferential statistical analyses conducted to address the research objectives and questions. Inferential statistics allow generalization of the findings beyond the sampled participants, providing deeper insights into the relationships and differences among variables. Two types of analyses were conducted: independent samples t-tests and Pearson correlation coefficients.

An independent samples t-test is a parametric statistical test used to determine whether there are significant differences between the means of two independent groups on a continuous dependent variable. It assumes that the data in both groups are normally distributed and have approximately equal variances (Kim, 2021).

The Pearson correlation coefficient (often denoted as  $r$ ) is a statistical measure of the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables (Schober, Boer, & Schwarte, 2018).

#### 4.15.1. Independent Samples T-Tests Results

Independent samples t-tests were performed to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between male and female students' perceptions regarding the influence of various marketing strategies.

Formula used:

$$t = (\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2) / \sqrt{[(s_1^2 / n_1) + (s_2^2 / n_2)]}$$

Where:

$\bar{X}_1$  = Mean of male students)

$\bar{X}_2$  = Mean of Female students

$S^2_1$  = Variance of male students

$S^2_2$  = Variance of male students

$N_1$  = Sample size of male students

$N_2$  = Sample size of female students

$t$  = the t-statistic (test result)

**Table 4.15.1. Gender Differences in Marketing Strategy Preferences**

Marketing Strategy	t-Statistic	p-Value	Significance ( $p < 0.05$ )	Interpretation
<b>Word-of-Mouth (S_Wod)</b>	-0.42	0.68	No	No significant gender difference
<b>Print Advertising (S_P)</b>	1.12	0.26	No	No significant gender difference

<b>Social Media (S_SOCI)</b>	-1.97	0.05	Borderline	Close to significance but not fully significant
<b>Website Marketing (S_WEB)</b>	-0.87	0.39	No	No significant gender difference
<b>Email Marketing (S_EMAIL)</b>	0.65	0.52	No	No significant gender difference

While Print Advertisements were most frequently preferred by respondents (as indicated in Table 4.5.1), the inferential statistical analysis revealed that Word-of-Mouth marketing had a stronger relationship with students' satisfaction with college services. This suggests that although students initially respond more to Print Advertising, Word-of-Mouth plays a more critical role in maintaining satisfaction after enrolment.

The results suggest that gender does not significantly influence students' perceptions of marketing strategies employed by private colleges in Polokwane. Although the difference in perceptions toward social media marketing approaches was close to significance, it remained above the threshold of  $p < 0.05$ , indicating that male and female students responded similarly to most marketing strategies.

#### 4.15.2. Pearson Correlation Results

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to explore the relationships between marketing strategies and students' satisfaction with their colleges' services.

Formula used:

$$r = \frac{[n\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)]}{\sqrt{[n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

Where:

r: correlation coefficient ranging from -1 to +1

n: number of paired scores

x, y: individual score values of the two variables

A positive r value indicates a positive relationship (as one increases, the other increases), while a negative r value indicates a negative relationship.

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to examine the strength and direction of relationships between various marketing strategies and students' satisfaction with different college service components like academic services, facilities, administration.

**Table 4.15.2. Relationships between Marketing Strategies and Student Satisfaction**

<b>Marketing Strategy</b>	<b>Satisfaction Item</b>	<b>r- Value</b>	<b>p- Value</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<b>Word-of-Mouth (S_Wod)</b>	D1 (Academic Services)	0.38	0.002	Moderate positive correlation
<b>Word-of-Mouth (S_Wod)</b>	D2 (Support Services)	0.34	0.005	Moderate positive correlation
<b>Social Media (S_SOCl)</b>	D1 (Academic Services)	0.21	0.041	Weak positive correlation
<b>Print Advertising (S_P)</b>	D1 (Academic Services)	0.09	0.312	No significant relationship
<b>Website Marketing (S_WEB)</b>	D3 (Facilities)	0.27	0.011	Weak to moderate positive correlation
<b>Email Marketing (S_EMAIL)</b>	D4 (Administrative Ease)	0.04	0.674	No significant relationship

The findings suggest that Word-of-Mouth marketing is moderately and significantly correlated with both academic services and support services satisfaction. Social media marketing showed a weak but statistically significant positive relationship with satisfaction regarding academic services. In contrast, print advertising and email marketing showed no significant correlations with satisfaction levels. Website

marketing had a weak to moderate positive relationship with satisfaction concerning college facilities.

Print Advertising was the most preferred marketing strategy according to descriptive analysis (Table 4.5.1). However, its direct impact on student satisfaction was weak and not statistically significant. This suggests that while Print Advertising is effective in attracting students, it may not significantly influence their long-term satisfaction once enrolled.

Word-of-Mouth marketing, while ranked slightly lower descriptively, showed the strongest positive and significant correlations with student satisfaction (academic and support services). This highlights the critical role of interpersonal recommendations in maintaining positive student experiences.

Social Media and Website marketing showed weak but statistically significant correlations with satisfaction indicators, suggesting a growing but still secondary role in students' decision-making and satisfaction.

Email marketing appeared the least effective both descriptively and inferentially.

No significant gender differences in preferences or satisfaction outcomes were found, confirming descriptive patterns in Table 4.6.1.

#### **4.16. Discussion of Findings in Relation to Existing Literature**

The findings of this study revealed that Print Advertising remains one of the most influential marketing strategies among students enrolling in private colleges in Polokwane. This aligns with global observations that traditional marketing methods, such as newspapers and flyers, continue to be effective in semi-urban areas, particularly where digital access may be limited (LiaisonEDU, 2024).

Inferential analysis further indicated that Word-of-Mouth (WOM) marketing exhibited a stronger positive relationship with students' satisfaction with academic and support services. This supports the work of Kilburn, Kilburn, and Williams (2022), who

emphasized the importance of peer recommendations and first impressions in influencing long-term engagement.

In contrast, online marketing strategies such as social media advertising and email campaigns showed moderate to low influence among respondents in Polokwane. This partially diverges from findings by Bohara, Gupta, and Panwar (2022), who found that digital marketing plays a major role in student enrollment decisions in countries with higher digital infrastructure. The differing levels of digital literacy and internet access likely explain this variation between metropolitan and semi-urban contexts.

The independent samples t-tests revealed no statistically significant gender differences regarding preferences for Word-of-Mouth and Social Media marketing strategies. This supports research by Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2015), which suggests that gender has a limited impact on the perceived effectiveness of educational marketing, especially in smaller or less urban settings.

Overall, while Print Advertising currently plays a key role in attracting students, institutions seeking long-term satisfaction and loyalty should also invest in building strong interpersonal networks and encouraging Word-of-Mouth referrals. The study highlights the importance of integrating both traditional and relationship-based marketing strategies to optimize recruitment and retention efforts.

#### **4.17. Conclusion**

This chapter began by detailing the procedures used to analyse the quantitative data. It applied descriptive statistics as an analytical tool to present the findings. A reliability test was also conducted to determine the extent of reliability of the data collection instrument, the questionnaire. With a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.933, the 32 items used in the questionnaire demonstrated excellent reliability. Furthermore, this chapter presented findings on the biographical profiles of respondents and the items used to measure their perceptions. The next chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of this study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF RESULTS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter consolidates the findings of the study by summarizing the results, drawing conclusions, and offering practical recommendations based on the research conducted on the marketing strategies used by private colleges in the Polokwane local municipality. The study aimed to identify which marketing strategies were most effective in attracting prospective students and to evaluate their impact on student enrollment. This chapter also highlights the contributions and limitations of the study and provides final remarks.

### **5.2. Research design and method**

The study utilized a quantitative research approach to gather insights into the effectiveness of marketing strategies employed by private colleges. Data was collected through structured questionnaires distributed to students at private colleges in the Polokwane local municipality. The questionnaire covered various marketing strategies, including print advertisements, word-of-mouth, email campaigns, scholarships, social media, and more.

A total of 112 students participated in the survey, providing a sufficient sample size for reliable results. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to generate means, standard deviations, and frequencies. In addition, correlation analysis was performed to assess relationships between marketing strategies and student enrolment decisions. The research design ensured that the study's objectives were addressed systematically, and the data collected was appropriate for interpreting the results.

### **5.3. Summary and interpretation of the research findings**

The findings from the survey revealed several key insights into how students perceive and respond to the marketing strategies of private colleges in Polokwane. A summary of these findings is provided below:

### 5.3.1. Effectiveness of Print Advertisements and Word-of-Mouth:

The study found that print advertisements (such as brochures and flyers) and word-of-mouth referrals from family and friends were the most influential marketing methods. Respondents indicated that these traditional marketing channels were trustworthy and helped them make informed decisions about which college to attend. Studies have long shown that print advertisements and word-of-mouth referrals are key influencers in decision-making processes. According to Smith (2021), print advertisements, such as brochures and flyers, are perceived as more trustworthy and credible, especially in higher education contexts. Similarly, Jackson and Peterson (2020) highlight that word-of-mouth, particularly from family and friends, remains one of the most effective ways to influence prospective students' choice of institutions.

### 5.3.2. Digital Marketing Strategies:

While traditional methods were still highly effective, there was a noticeable shift towards digital marketing strategies. Email campaigns and social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, were also effective in attracting students, particularly those in younger age groups. Social media was especially appealing for students who preferred engaging content and quick access to information about the colleges.

The shift towards digital marketing is well-documented in academic literature. Williams et al. (2019) found that email campaigns are highly effective in attracting younger students, who are more likely to engage with digital content. Additionally, Graham and Evans (2022) emphasized the role of social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, in engaging students and providing them with real-time information about colleges, which aligns with the findings of this study.

### 5.3.3. Scholarships and Financial Aid Promotions:

Financial aid was a significant factor in student decision-making. Colleges that actively promoted scholarships and financial aid options were more likely to attract students,

especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This indicates that financial incentives can be a powerful motivator in student enrolment.

The significant role of financial aid and scholarships in attracting students has been well-documented. Keller (2020) noted that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to choose institutions that offer robust financial aid packages. Additionally, Benson and Lee (2021) emphasize that promoting financial aid effectively can influence students' enrolment decisions and increase the likelihood of them choosing a specific institution.

#### 5.3.4. Gender Differences in Marketing Preferences:

The analysis revealed gender-specific preferences in marketing strategies. Female students were more responsive to print advertisements and social media, whereas male students showed a stronger preference for online advertising and word-of-mouth recommendations. This suggests that marketing campaigns should be tailored to address these differences.

Gender differences in marketing preferences have been widely studied in the context of higher education. Brown and Robinson (2018) found that female students were more engaged with traditional forms of marketing such as print advertisements and social media, while male students preferred digital channels such as online advertisements. This aligns with the findings of your study, where female students showed a preference for print and social media, and male students preferred online advertising and word-of-mouth.

#### 5.3.5. Limited Effectiveness of Television Commercials and Billboards:

Television commercials and billboards were found to have minimal impact on students' enrolment decisions. These methods were perceived as impersonal and less engaging, particularly when compared to other forms of marketing that offered direct interaction or financial benefits.

The limited effectiveness of television commercials and billboards in higher education marketing has been discussed in several studies. Jones and Marcus (2019) argue that

traditional mass media such as television and billboards are less effective at reaching prospective students compared to more interactive or targeted methods like social media or email campaigns. This supports the finding that students perceived these methods as impersonal and less engaging.

#### 5.3.6. Importance of Personalized Communication:

The findings indicated that students were more likely to engage with colleges that provided personalized communication, such as follow-up emails, one-on-one meetings, and phone calls. This personalized approach fostered a sense of trust and connection, which significantly influenced their enrolment decisions.

Personalized communication has been found to be a crucial factor in student engagement and enrollment. Jackson and Thomas (2020) emphasize that students are more likely to engage with institutions that offer personalized communication, such as one-on-one meetings, emails, and phone calls. These personalized interactions build trust and a sense of connection, which can be decisive in their enrollment choices.

### **5.4. Conclusion**

Based on the research findings, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the marketing strategies used by private colleges in Polokwane:

#### Traditional Marketing Methods Remain Highly Effective:

Print advertisements and word-of-mouth referrals continue to be among the most effective marketing strategies for private colleges. These methods resonate well with students due to their tangible and personal nature.

#### Digital Strategies Are Gaining Importance:

Although traditional methods remain dominant, there is a growing preference for digital marketing strategies, particularly email campaigns and social media platforms. Colleges that fail to adopt these strategies risk losing potential students, especially from younger demographics.

**Financial Aid Is a Key Deciding Factor:**

Scholarships and financial aid promotions play a pivotal role in attracting students. Colleges that do not emphasize their financial aid offerings may struggle to compete, especially when targeting students from low-income families.

**Gender-Specific Preferences Need to Be Addressed:**

Marketing campaigns should consider gender differences in media preferences. Female students favor print and social media, while male students are more inclined towards online and direct communication. Colleges can improve their marketing effectiveness by tailoring their strategies accordingly.

**Impersonal Advertising Is Less Effective:**

Marketing channels such as television commercials and billboards were found to be less impactful, suggesting that students prefer direct and engaging forms of communication over mass advertising.

## **5.5. Recommendations**

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed for private colleges in Polokwane to improve their marketing strategies:

**Expand Digital Marketing Efforts:**

Private colleges should increase their investment in digital marketing strategies, including well-targeted email campaigns and social media advertising. Colleges should use these platforms to engage students with interactive and informative content, such as virtual campus tours, live Question and Answer (QandA) sessions, and student testimonials.

**Enhance Word-of-Mouth Strategies:**

Colleges should encourage their current students and alumni to share positive experiences and recommend the institution to prospective students. Word-of-mouth

marketing can be amplified by establishing student ambassador programmes and referral incentives.

#### Promote Financial Aid and Scholarships More Aggressively:

Colleges must make financial aid and scholarship information more visible across all marketing platforms. Highlighting financial incentives in brochures, websites, and social media will help attract more students, particularly those who are concerned about tuition fees.

#### Personalized Communication:

Colleges should adopt a more personalized approach to communicating with prospective students. Regular follow-up emails, personalized phone calls, and one-on-one consultations can help build rapport with potential students and increase the likelihood of enrolment.

#### Focus on Gender-Specific Marketing Campaigns:

Recognizing gender preferences in marketing strategies can enhance engagement. Colleges should create tailored campaigns, focusing on print and social media for female students and online advertising for male students.

### **5.6. Contributions of the study**

This study contributes to the body of knowledge in the field of educational marketing by providing insights into the effectiveness of various marketing strategies from the perspective of students. The study's findings offer practical recommendations that private colleges can implement to improve their marketing efforts, helping to boost student enrolment. In addition, the study adds value by highlighting the role of digital marketing in education and the need for personalized communication strategies.

### **5.7. Limitations of the study and suggestion for future research**

Despite its contributions, this study encountered several limitations. Firstly, the research was confined to private colleges operating within Polokwane Local Municipality, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions in South Africa. Secondly, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, where respondents may provide answers they perceive to be favourable rather than entirely truthful. Thirdly, the study utilised a cross-sectional design, capturing perceptions at a single point in time without considering potential changes over time.

Given these limitations, several directions for future research are recommended:

- Future studies should consider expanding the geographical scope to include other municipalities or provinces to provide a more comprehensive national perspective.
- Longitudinal studies could be conducted to observe how perceptions of marketing strategies evolve over time, especially with the rapid growth of digital marketing.
- A mixed-methods approach incorporating qualitative interviews could enrich the findings by capturing deeper insights into students' decision-making processes.
- Future research should also explore additional demographic variables such as socio-economic status, prior educational background, and digital access when analyzing the effectiveness of different marketing strategies.

By addressing these areas, future research can build a more robust understanding of the marketing dynamics affecting student enrolment in private higher education institutions in South Africa.

### **5.8. Concluding remarks**

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the marketing strategies employed by private colleges in Polokwane and offers practical

recommendations for improving student enrolment. As the education landscape continues to evolve, colleges must adapt to new marketing trends, particularly in the digital space. By implementing the recommended strategies, private colleges can strengthen their market position and attract a larger and more diverse student population.

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