ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIRECT MARKETING AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AS INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO STUDENT RECRUITMENT PROGRAMME

by

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DISSERTATION

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I declare that **ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIRECT MARKETING AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AS INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO STUDENT RECRUITMENT PROGRAMME is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references and that this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.**

………………………………….....   ……………………………….

Full names   **Signature**

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DEDICATION

For the joy of the Lord is my strength, this study is dedicated my family:

To my mother Elizabeth

To my son Mokgethwa

To my sisters Gloria and Poppy

To my twin brother, Matome and Mothupi

To my younger brother Marcus

To my nephew Katlego

To Thantsha 's Family

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategies used by the University of Limpopo's Marketing and Communication, Student Recruitment division. The study focuses on the use of IMC strategies including direct marketing, which includes marketing through branding, face- to -face interaction with customers and other elements including advertising. The other aspect of the marketing strategy is digital communication, which includes social media and web marketing that the university uses to market themselves to their prospective students. The use of marketing strategies by higher institutions of learning was addressed in the literature review and the importance of implementing the strategies was also discussed.

The study focused further on direct marketing and digital communication strategies following low student number enrolments in 2016, especially in the faculties of Science and Agriculture, as well as in Management and Law. The study examined the way in which the university presents and sells itself, promotes its services and maintains the relationship between students, both international and domestic. In this work, IMC strategies were explained and outlined for understanding, which allows for proper implementation of the strategies.

The use of General Systems Theory (GST) served as a theoretical outline for this study to highlight the importance of marketing strategies that operate in a systematic way. The use of GST also advocated for the implementation of marketing strategies as a system. The theory was able to link both IMC strategies and the organisation of higher learning, wherein IMC is a system itself. There are elements of IMC that work together to create a system in an organisation. GST supports education as it was stated that educational institutions deal with marketing strategies which, need to be approached in a systematic way (Buckey, 1968). Institutions of higher learning are composed of many systems, which should not be viewed as individual, separate units, but as contributing parts to the effective functioning of the whole marketing strategy.

The research design utilised grounded theory for philosophical methodological underpinning. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews taken from nine, (9) high school leaners from Zimbabwe and South Africa. International high

school participants were attending an exhibition in different places in Zimbabwe, such as Harare (Gateway High School). In South Africa, data was collected from different areas, such as Capricorn, Vhembe, Mopanae and Blouberg in Limpopo province. Branding and the use of social media was also a concern. Most participants concluded that the university needs to upgrade its marketing strategies and focus more on the digital communication as teenagers spend time on their digital devices, which can be helpful in accessing the information they need.

KEY CONCEPTS:

Direct Marketing, Digital Communication, Branding for University, Branding Personality, Brand Positioning, Social Media, Grounded Theory, Higher Institutions of Learning

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explored the role of marketing communication activities of an institution of higher learning, the University of Limpopo, in the recruitment of prospective students in South Africa and in Zimbabwe. The study focused on how marketing communication activities are related to the enrolment of learners. In particular, the study analysed how prospective students choose an institution of higher learning within a rural environment.

Communication of messages about degree programmes and other activities, such as research and innovation, is one of the main activities conducted by universities. Organisations such as universities thus recruit and sell their services by sending messages to prospective students. Marketing communication at the University of Limpopo is one of the functions that directly influence student enrolment figures. In this context, creating a message and sending it to a receiver is called a marketing communication process. Organisations need to focus on making sure that their messages are effective and eye catching.

If messages are not adapted to the needs of the prospective student, the results of marketing communication efforts could be affected by message clutter, which makes it hard for organisations and their brands to be seen. In this case, media also become more fragmented due to distributed global delivery and digital convergence. To maximise marketing communication tools, the best way is to integrate them so that organisations can recruit in better ways. Since the introduction of the concept Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), scholars such as Kotler (2003:53) advocated its use in various environments. In addition, IMC changes the way organisations communicate with their customers (Duncan, 2002:22). It has become a tool for universities to market their services, and they have adopted it in order to increase the number of enrolments and services promotion (Fill, 2005:295).

The introduction of IMC strategies has led to changes in the marketing strategies such as universities to market, recruit and sell their products. Such strategies assist organisations to keep track of the ever-changing business communication and market trends. The effectiveness of direct marketing and new digital communication may help to create a positive image of the university. At the time of writing, the University of Limpopo still utilises traditional marketing strategies based on the four Ps – product, price, place, and promotion – which may not be effective if there is no integration of marketing communication efforts. Dev and Shultz (2005) argue that although the four Ps should work together in a marketing mix, and that one cannot function without the other, this is not suitable for universities anymore. The planning and management of marketing activities through the identification of the four Ps were the first marketing communication strategies used during the 19th century, where institutions visited neighbouring schools to inform them about their services (Halm, 2006).

The four Ps have been replaced by IMC strategies towards the 21st century in the 21st century (Kotler, 1995). This was followed by the realisation by the departments of marketing and communication in organisations that they can save more by implementing IMC strategies (Kotler, 1995). IMC strategies such as direct marketing, digital communication, advertising, sponsorship, public relations, personal selling and sales promotion were introduced in the marketing field in 1990 (Halm, 2006).

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

One of the challenges facing organisations such as universities is the transition of marketing strategies, since such organisations depend on various stakeholders for them to survive. As a result of lower-than-expected enrolment, many higher learning institutions need transition - in terms of the utilisation of recruiting strategies. There are several factors which affect student enrolment, facilities and services offered in many organisations. Such factors were explored in this study. There are marketing communication strategies that can be utilised so that the influence of some of these factors can be minimised. It appears that direct marketing and digital communication strategies are partially utilised at the University of Limpopo. However, the use of such

strategies determines the future success of an organisation, because many of them (organisations) depend on these strategies in order to achieve their objectives.

Many institutions of higher learning in South Africa are facing lower-than-expected student enrolments (DHET, 2015). According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (2015), the total number of undergraduate students who entered public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for the first time decreased from about 165 000 students in 2009 to 158 000 in 2013. The department further states that while the pattern in enrolments has been uneven over the past five years, with the number of new undergraduate enrolments peaking to more than 179 000 in 2011, it dropped in 2015 and 20116. The decline in enrolment has mainly been evident since 2012. Among public institutions, the University of South Africa (UNISA) had the most significant decline in first-time entrants over the past two years, from 52 000 students in 2012 down to almost 34 000 in 2013.

The University of Limpopo has not remained unaffected by this phenomenon. The university encountered a drop in enrolments from 5 137 in 2012 to 4 861 in 2016. This drop was brought about by high school learners' inability to obtain information about the university, while others were not sure about career, which were offered (DHET 2015). From 2012 to 2016, the enrolment at the university was, and is, still below expectation. This study intends to assess the effectiveness of direct marketing and digital communication in terms of how it is utilised and how it could be used to contribute to student enrolment at the University of Limpopo. The inability of organisations (such as the University of Limpopo) to meet their goals lies in their correct implementation of effective use of IMC strategies (Du Plessis, Van Heerden & Cook, 2010).

It is the responsibility of an organisation to utilise IMC marketing strategies because of their proven ability to bring awareness about the organisation and its activities in an integrated manner. The effective use of direct marketing and digital communication, through an integrated approach, could come with good results. The use of social networks or social media can become a good marketing strategy if utilised properly. Organisations can achieve a high number of enrolments provided they use the correct

strategies. For organisations to survive, IMC strategies should be taken seriously and be properly understood.

The comparison of the effectiveness of social media pages is an example of how these can be used to market. This study attempted to investigate the effectiveness of the current use of direct marketing and digital communication as part of the strategies used by the Student Recruitment Programme.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature was reviewed from available research based on the effectiveness of direct marketing and digital communication by different organisations. Different subtopics were discussed to provide an understanding of integrated marketing communication strategies which the university uses for recruitment purposes.

1.3.1 The effectiveness of direct marketing

Direct marketing is a form of marketing which involves personal interaction with customers (Chen, 2006). Chen (2006) further states that interaction between learners and the recruitment officer makes things easy for learners, enabling them to ask questions about the university.

Rosepan (2001:10) argues that direct marketing can be seen as communicating directly to customers without the use of intervening commercial communication media. In competitive markets, direct marketing has become a key method of enhancing promotion campaigns as well as developing strong customer relationship campaigns. Personal interaction with learners can only be effective if considered as official because it gives immediate feedback about the university. When students are offered a place in more than one international university, they are confronted with making a choice as to which university they will actually attend. The decision-making process experienced by students is influenced by psychological, social and economic factors as well as direct marketing of the university (Jackson, 1978). It is, therefore, not surprising that most students find it difficult to come and join the University of Limpopo

from their international homes. There are some factors contributing to decision-making of students from international countries (SADC). These include, culture, beliefs and family. In direct marketing, decision-making is a problem when marketers do not implement these strategies.

As a result, the use of IMC in organisations can help achieve their objectives. Direct marketing is a strategic marketing tool under IMC strategies. Direct marketing can also be applied through different factors which can also assist organisations to achieve their goals (Malan and L'estrange, 1991). The effectiveness of direct marketing can be achieved through the application of different factors, which the university has not yet noticed. In most literature, local students are also finding it hard to make a decision as to which university they wish to study at. It is the marketing strategies of an organisation that need to make things clear to the prospective students. Further research by Pimpa (2004: 24-29.) classifies the choices of international and local education into the decision to study abroad, choice of country, city, academic programme and of university. These factors can be identified as branding, positioning and product presentation (Hobsons, 2013). The following subsections will thus discuss branding, market positioning and product presentation.

1.3.1.1 Branding

A university brand is defined as a manifestation of the institution's features that distinguish it from others, reflecting its capacity to satisfy students' needs, engendering trust in its ability to deliver a certain type and level of higher education, and helping potential recruits to make wise enrolment decisions (Lehmann & Pan, 1993). The use of branding by the University of Limpopo should be taken seriously because this also affects the enrolment. Lehmann and Pan (1993) state that strong branding assists universities to be more assertive when they recruit students from different areas. One strategy that could prove useful for universities is to differentiate themselves in the market and provide an element of brand distinctiveness which enables the potential customers to perceive the brand personality of the organisation (Mugo, 2002).

The marketing strategy surrounding branding is important, especially when the organisation operates in the educational field. To Aaker (1999), a brand is important for creating value and for building relationships because branding is seen as a unique set of brand associations that establishes these relationships with customers. In addition, for universities whose survival for the most part depends on external stakeholders, understanding external participation of their brand is important (Kotler, 1995).

International countries perceive the quality of an institution through its branding, and in the way that they market themselves (Smith, 2010). Branding can also play a role of 'push and pull' in the marketing of international and local students. The push factor that initiates a student decision to undertake an international study operates within the source country and ranges from historical or geographic proximity, perception of the quality of tertiary education available in the country and its wealth. This indicates the importance of market positioning, where the tertiary institution is situated, the quality of education, proper marketing strategies and its wealth.

1.3.1.2 Market positioning and product presentation

The effectiveness of direct marketing can also be determined by the marketing placement of the University of Limpopo. Lovelock, Patterson and Walker (2001:15) state that customers' perceptions of a product are determined by the product's position in the market and by the producer's marketing strategies. The University of Limpopo can achieve its marketing objectives by positioning its services and products in the customer's mind and by maintaining its relationship with its customers, entering students and high school learners. Payne (1993) had earlier maintained that the concept of positioning stems from the consideration of how the university is willing to communicate and to deliver their services to the customers in order to receive good perceptions from the customers.

1.3.2 The use of digital communication to recruit learners for the University

Digital communication is one of the IMC, strategies which organisations or universities use to market and to promote their services. The use of digital communication involves technological devices such as computers and mobile phones. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In fact, the word 'digital' has to do with technology. Digital communication is the use of media technology for the delivery of marketing communication messages across a wired connection, like the internet, at the request of the recipient (du Plessis et al,2010:371).

The use of digital communication facilitates shared consumer experiences that communicate the essence, values and other important information about organisations such as universities. Digital communication uses social networks as a tool for marketing, and its engagement thereof determines its effectiveness as a marketing tool for the institution.

1.3.2.1 Social networking

Social media are powerful tools for marketing and promoting products for big and small organisations. Social media have advanced from simply providing a platform for individuals to stay in touch with their family and friends. Technology-related developments such as the rise of powerful search engines, advanced mobile devices and interfaces, peer-to-peer communication vehicles, and online social networks, have extended marketers' ability to reach shoppers through new touch points (Shankar, 2011:30). The use of social media for marketing as a strategy helps universities to recruit and to build relationships with learners. Apart from other marketing strategies, universities need to look beyond and implement other forms of recruitment tools, including social media (Choudaha & Chang, 2012).

1.3.2.2 Social media engagement

The effectiveness of social media usage by the university can only be achieved through engagement. Thompson (2007) states that university should consider that first- time entering students and high school learners are digital natives because they spend most of their time on digital communication. According to Cheung, Mathew and Xiao (2011), social media engagement offers the university a level of the customer's physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship. It may be argued that social media engagement may assist the university to create a solid relationship with customers through social network platforms. It is important for universities to establish a communication flow with learners at an early stage in order to achieve high enrolments (Heath, 2007).

1.4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: GENERAL SYSTEMS THEORY(GST)

The theory which that was used in this study is General Systems Theory, which focuses on the exchange of information between organisations and stakeholders or customers. General System Theory assumes that information can be controlled or uncontrolled. The communication of an organisation is like a system which can be utilised by strategic marketing communication skills (Kuhn, 1968:157). The theory focuses on the interaction between various systems in an organisation, which help to create a good relationship between the organisation and its customers (Skyttner, 1996:16). The theory is applicable to the study because the focus is the integrated marketing communication system which is used by the University of Limpopo. In this manner, Seric, Saura and Molina (2014) illustrated the correlation between IMC perception Advanced ICT perception through a systems-theory approach, as depicted in Fig. 1.1

Fig. 1.1: IMC perception and Advanced ICT perception through a systems-theory approach
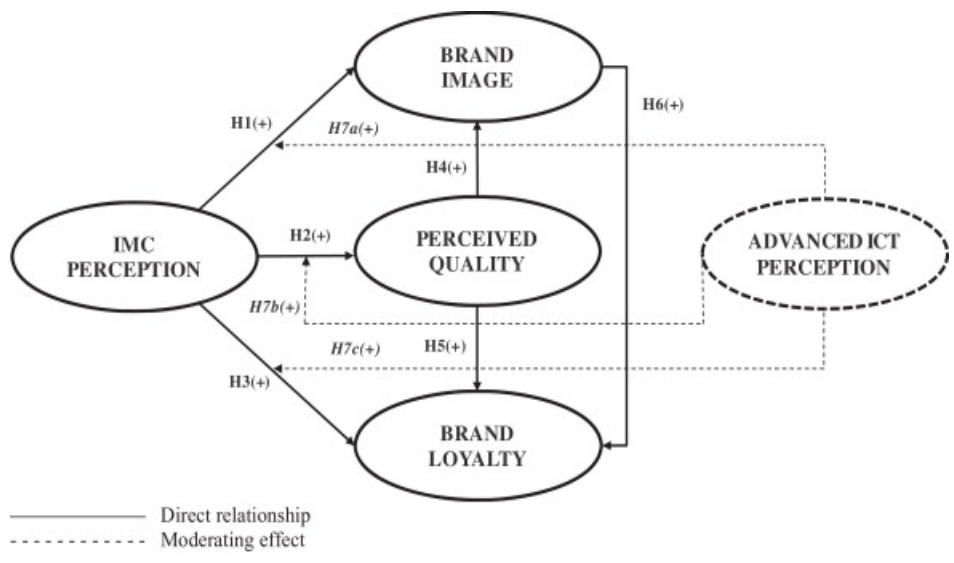
(Šerić, *et al 2014*)

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to assess and investigate the IMC strategies used by the University of Limpopo for recruitment of first entering students. The study focused more on the high school learners who will be going to institutions of higher learning.

1.5.1 Aim

The aim of the study was to assess the effectiveness of IMC strategies, specifically direct marketing and digital communication, in the student recruitment office at the University of Limpopo.

1.5.2 Research objectives

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- Assess the effectiveness of direct marketing strategies used by the University of Limpopo recruitment office.

- Investigate the nature of the social network used as part of digital marketing to recruit high school learners by the University of Limpopo's recruitment office.
- Analyse the University of Limpopo's' Website and Facebook as digital marketing tools used to recruit high school prospective students.

The objectives helped the study to achieve relevant information on the marketing strategies used by the University of Limpopo.

1.6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research orientation for this study was qualitative. The choice of a qualitative approach is informed by the fact that it provides a more complete understanding of the problem of the study (Creswell, 2008). Bless, Higson and Sithole (2013:16) state that the qualitative research method uses smaller samples from which findings provide a better understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. The qualitative approach is relevant because the study is exploratory in nature, leading to deep knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Luttrell, 2005:183).

1.6.1 Research design

The study used Grounded Theory in its research design. This is an inductive process that was aimed at extracting propositions from the data. Grounded theory constitutes an innovative methodology, facilitating the discovery of theory from data (Glaser & Strauss,1967: 27-49).

According to Cho and Lee (2014:1-20), grounded theory is also used in studies relating to different relational identities in intercultural friendships. Grounded theory also enables the identification and description of phenomena, their main attributes, and the core, social or social psychological processes, as well as their interactions in the trajectory of change (Charmaz, 2006). According to Charmaz (2007), "It allows the researcher to explicate what is happening or has happened within a setting or around a particular event". Grounded theory was used in this study because through its theoretical sampling aspect it granted an opportunity for the researcher to explore different aspects, develop a theory which offers an explanation about the main concern of the population of your substantive area and how that concern is resolved or Ong

(2012:417-432). The results obtained from the study showed whether or not the marketing strategies used by the university are effective in informing the students' choice of a university. Interviews with high school learners, who may be prospective students, were conducted to collect the data.

1.6.2 Population

The population of the study was learners from different high schools and first- entering students at the University of Limpopo and student recruitment officers. Population is defined as the mass of individuals to which the study refers, and which has to be delimited unambiguously beforehand with regard to research questions and operationalisation (Flick, at el,2011).

1.6.3 Sampling

The study used a purposive, non-probability sample of nine (9) high school learners from South Africa and Zimbabwe. Purposive sampling is an information selection tool widely used to attain a specific population related to a specific cause (Tongco ,2006: 147-158). It is a deliberate choice of information due to the qualities the information possesses. Purposive sampling also allows the researcher to decide on what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can, and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernad ,2002). The use of high school learners came about because of the low number of enrolments of first-year students at the University of Limpopo and its services, and this defined the purpose of the sample.

1.6.4 Data collection

Data collection methods refer to research tools employed to investigate, to study a problem and to discover the facts regarding the study at hand (Bazeley, 2013:8). The quality of research is determined by the instrument used for data collection.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from high school learners in South Africa and Zimbabwe. An interview is seen as an interaction between people with a purpose (Rubin, 2012). Rubin and Rubin (1995: 27) argue that:

> In semi-structured interviewing, the interviewer requires more focused information and asks specific questions to gain it. In essence, the researcher opens the discussion, listens and uses prompts to guide the respondent.

They further state that "the use of more focused interview questions is consistent with the grounded theory approach but they are generally used at a later stage in the data collection process" (RubinRubin,1995 p:35). As Wimpenny and Gass(2000:485) indicate, in grounded theory 'ongoing analysis will influence the questions that are asked, with the direction of the interview becoming driven by the emerging theory'. Using semi-structured interviews still allows some flexibility: for example, they permit the interviewer to pursue issues of particular significance that relate to the research question (Rose 1994:23).

. "Interviews are one of the most well-recognised forms of qualitative research used by university marketers" (Mason, Cooper, & Turner, 2012) Interviews are often used for evaluating and assessing the interviewer, to test hypotheses, to sample opinions and to gather data (Bloom, Cohen, & Freeman, 2012). Semi-structured interviewing requires detailed planning, even though the interview is not fully structured. Interviewers must make sure that the interview generates relevant data (Mason at el, 2012:69).

The researcher used a recorder to record responses from interviewees. The tape recorder was switched on immediately when the interview started. The interviewer used learners from high schools who attended the exhibition and interviewed them after the exhibition, and the interview topic guide was based on the marketing strategies of the University of Limpopo.

The researcher requested the time with the participants after the exhibition. The data was collected after the event since the main exhibition normally takes place in the main hall where universities address learners. Learners were approached after the event and were interviewed, based on the marketing strategies used by the University

of Limpopo. Learners from different schools were interviewed after the event to get their views based on the presentations from the representatives of the university.

Since the event or career exhibition did not involve parents of the learners attending the exhibition, the researcher communicated with the teachers representing each school about the interviews. Permission was requested from the teachers so that the researcher could be able to conduct the interview with the learners.

1.6.5 Data analysis

Qualitative data collected through interviews was analysed using NVivo and thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyse, and to report patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher perused the data to get its overall sense and jotted down preliminary interpretations. Data collected was divided into categories and relationships among the categories were determined (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013:158). The study analysed the data collected from the interviews and extracted themes for understanding and clarity on the effectiveness of direct marketing and digital communication by the University of Limpopo.

Data was analysed according to the procedures of grounded theory; and, after each interview was analysed, the researcher reflected on the questions that could be added to improve the quality and relevance of the data collected as per guidelines of the grounded theory method in research.

1.6. QUALITY CRITERIA

This section discusses the quality criteria for qualitative research and which are different from the quality criteria of quantitative research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) components of quality in qualitative research are: trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

1.6.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a demonstration of whether evidence for results reported is sound and whether the argument made based on the results are strong. The researcher ensured that the identity of the participants was not known and the information provided was accurate and trustworthy. The researcher made sure that any information related to the study or participant was safe. The document was checked by a supervisor for qualitative validity and all information collected was scrutinised for correctness and its alignment with the study's aims and objectives.

1.6.2 Credibility

The researcher made sure that the data or information accumulated from the participants was well demonstrated and understood, trustworthy and accurate. Bless at el (2013) state that credibility seeks to ensure that the findings depict the truth of the reality under study. In other words, that they make sense. The effectiveness of the marketing strategy of the university was determined by the participants' responses.

1.6.3 Transferability

This information allowed the researcher to compare and assess similarities between given situations and other contexts from which the findings emerged (Bless at el, 2013). The study provided a detailed description of the context in which the data was collected. The data was interpreted fairly under the supervision of an experienced researcher.

1.6.4 Dependability

Data collected was also analysed and presented in terms of the research design. All steps of data collection were followed and presented accurately. Bless at el (2013) state that a clear and thoughtful research strategy should be followed, and each step should be completed. The researcher ensured that the study was well presented and every step of the research design or method was well followed and presented.

1.6.5 Conformability

The researcher made sure that the findings of the study were similar to the aims of the study. The information that was gathered had to be of quality and had to be helpful. According to Bless at el (2013), it is important to show that each step has been completed thoroughly and carefully. The data collected was fair and trustworthy. The findings assisted other organisations which specialise in marketing and communication.

1.7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to contribute to existing literature on integrated marketing communication strategies as applied by universities and other higher education institutions. On a practical level, the results of the study could be utilised by the University of Limpopo's management as well as the Marketing and Communication department to tailor, effective marketing strategies with respect to student recruitment. This would also help them to come up with effective marketing and digital communication strategies. The outcomes of the study would help the university to strengthen their branding tools and to come up with new ideas on branding.

1.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section discusses the ethical considerations for this study. The ethical considerations relate to the protocols used in the study.

1.8.1 Permission for the study

Before undertaking the study, the researcher acquired permission from the Department of Marketing and Communication of the University of Limpopo

Management. For the researcher to be able to collect data, permission was requested from Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC). The TREC certificate is attached as Appendix 1. The information provided by the participants was not be shared with any person other than the supervisor. The study participants were assured of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity, which were maintained throughout the study. Bless, at el (2013) state that the participants should always be treated with due respect.

1.8.2 Autonomy and informed consent

The participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from participating in the study at any time should they wish to do so. The participants' rights were not being violated and they were not harmed in any way, either physically or psychologically. The researcher ensured that all high school participants were from the age of eighteen and above. The need of a mature view of the study was a prerequisite to interview participation.

1.8.3 Confidentiality

The information that the researcher collected from the participants was confidential and used for academic purposes. The data was protected and would not be given to anyone under any circumstances (Bless, at el,2013).

1.8.4 Justice

All participants were treated equally regardless of their age, gender, race or religion (Bless,at el ,2013). The researcher did not take into consideration the differences in the participants in terms of age, gender, etc. Instead, they were treated equally.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the importance of the study and the tools used to gather data from different participants. The use of GST was also explained and how it was related and used in the study as well as in the research methodology which directed the study. Ethical consideration was also outlined in-depth and the way in which the participant's privacy was taken seriously by the researcher.

2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews all current literature on the topic with the purposes of determining what constitutes to the latest theory related to the topic. It also reviews the latest research on the topic, for the purposes of attempting to compare the findings of this study with current research, in the final chapters.

The literature reviewed in this chapter discusses the following aspects: integrated marketing communication in organisations, and specifically as practised at universities; theoretical perspectives on integrated marketing communication inorganisations, including the systems theory; previous research on recruitment of learners by universities; previous research on prospective students' choice of university and the factors related their choice; and, research conducted on marketing communication and recruitment of prospective students in Africa, as well as in South Africa.

The literature review also discusses the theoretical perspective adopted in this study. This study considered the General Systems Theory (GST) (von Bertalanffy,1968) as the relevant theoretical perspective for the analysis of integrated marketing communication at the University of Limpopo. The rationale for the use of the GST is that the study is conducted from a viewpoint that without the use of tailor-made direct marketing messages, universities may find it hard to reach prospective students. The GST argues that if some parts of the system are not functional, the whole system

cannot function; thus, this theoretical perspective is analogous to the argument for an integrated approach – where all different aspects of the communication context have to be considered in order to deliver marketing communication messages effectively.

The systems approach was selected for this study for the following reason, as outlined by Angelopulo and Barker (2013: 231)

> The systems approach is widely used and multidisciplinary. In its most basic form, the approach emphasises the importance of maintaining the equilibrium and interdependence of the various systems and subsystems in society.

The traditional marketing communication mix is characterised by a one-way communication relationship between organisations and their stakeholders, as Angelopulo and Barker (2013:178) argue. A pillar of many organisations, including universities, was that of functional management. However, traditional marketing took a new direction and organisations are no longer focusing on the usual marketing, elements which used to be the key to marketing strategies. Many organisations used to focus on the old marketing tools which are the 4Ps; price, promotion, product and place Kotler and Keller (2009).

The traditional marketing mix lost its appeal and new marketing strategies, based on the notion of integration were introduced (Kotler & Keller,2009). Angelopulo and Barker (2013:183) support this assertion by stating that the paradigm shifts from the traditional marketing mix, coupled with one-way communication approaches, "is away from the concept of promotional mix and its focus on advertising and sales promotion activities, towards an integrated communication approach that includes all marketing activities".(Kotler & Keller,2009, explains that the concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) "involves selecting some of the marketing tools that reinforce and support each other in the implementation process".

Many organisations saw the importance of introducing IMC concept. Angelopulo and Barker (2013:183) explained that IMC

> advocates that marketers make a paradigm shift from promotion to their target markets, in the sense of advertising being a uni-directional set of activities, to communicating with their target markets, which emphasises a two-way flow of information.

Marketing communication strategies thus moved away from mass traditional marketing towards more personalised customer-orientated and technologically driven orientations.

The establishment of new methods of marketing came with development in private and public organisations. It is no longer advisable for organisations to focus on one-way communication since it limits their success and the achievement of their objectives. The success of an organisation is based on the implementation of IMC and the achievement of organisational objectives. However, the practice of IMC strategies determines the future of an organisation. A good understanding of utilising IMC strategies assists an organisation to be effective and innovative. Integrated Marketing Communication can also be used to improve the marketing system of organisations and to introduce important ways of reaching organisational objectives. The objectives or goals which universities have in common are to increase enrolment and quality education.

The concept of IMC changed the way marketing communication strategies were perceived by organisations. The concept of IMC became popular in the marketing sphere and was introduced into educational institutions in the early '90s (Kitchen, Schultz, Kim, Han and Li, 2004). This new concept in the marketing industry was a key tool for many organisations. A review of the literature on IMC will provide the theoretical framework for this chapter, followed by a review of recent research conducted at the University of Limpopo.

2.2 ASPECTS OF MARKEITNG COMMUNICATION

This section discusses the literature review related to this study. The literature review in this section focuses on marketing communication, direct marketing and how high school students choose universities.

2.2.1 Integrated marketing communication

Integrated marketing communication has become a trending topic in the academic field and marketing departments. The term is now being used in many organisations both worldwide and locally. Integrated marketing communication is the integration of all marketing elements or tools to synthesise the communication efforts that companies use to promote their services.

Schultz and Schultz (2004:24) defined IMC as a concept of marketing communication planning that "combines and evaluate strategic roles of different communication disciplines to get clarity, consistency and greater impact". Polonsky, (1994), states that "IMC need thorough understanding before it can be implemented in small- and large-scale organisations". Schultz and Schultz (2004:24) define IMC as a concept of marketing communication planning that recognises the strategic roles of a variety of communication tools.

Kotler (2003a:123) defines IMC as a "concept under which companies carefully integrate and coordinate its communication channels to deliver a clear, consistent and compelling message about an organisation and its products". These scholars see IMC as a concept of integrating all marketing tools into one marketing strategy which will be useful in the marketing industry. This can also be a solution to problems which organisations encountered using a traditional marketing communication mix.

Black at el (1999:134) defines IMC as "a planning approach that attempts to coordinate, consolidate and bring together all the communications messages, programs, and vehicles that affect customers or prospects for a manufacturer or service organisation's brands". Duncan (2002) suggests that IMC is a process of managing customer relationships that drives an organisation's value. Baldinger (1996) argues that marketing communication (MC) tools can create competitive advantage, boost sales and profits, while saving money, time and stress. Marketing communication wraps communications around customers and helps them move through the various stages of the buying process. The organisation simultaneously consolidates its image, develops a dialogue and nurtures its relationship with customers (Tremblay & Schultz 1999)

The introduction of IMC adds value in the planning and evaluation of strategic roles of communication tools. The use of IMC can also be a breakthrough from those marketing tools that which were not effective in some areas of the organisation. Therefore, the integration of communication elements delivers a specific message to customers which generates cooperation and customer relationships. Percy (1997), states that the integration of communication elements provide clarity, consistency and it maximises communication impact.

Integrated marketing communication has made a difference in the global market. The global marketplace has become more developed after the introduction of IMC and it leads to a focused marketing environment. It is believed that many organisations around the world recognise the importance of IMC and its implementation (Kitchen,1999).

Misunderstanding IMC will lead to difficulties, and organisations will not manage to implement strategies (Reid, 2005). The use of IMC tools is very important, especially for universities, since marketing tools are valued as an important part of an organisation. Zimuto, (2013) have given some advice to organisations on how to implement IMC and become more successful in the twenty-first century.

Integrated marketing communication is a professional development that expands the higher education institutions' marketing strategy by communicating consistent messages throughout the institution at every contact point. The use of IMC in higher learning have been taken seriously. Schultz and Schultz (2003) claim that many institutions of higher learning focus on the use of IMC using the supply chain approach and functional areas within an organisation. This approach is no longer useful since customers make their own choices on products and this change every day.

The use of IMC at a learning institution assists marketing managers to plan and create a clear and interactive approach. Therefore, many organisations appreciate the significance IMC strategies (Hartly,1999). Gould (2002) advises that the integration of marketing elements by organisations can help achieve the desired objectives and goals. It is believed that integrated marketing communication has various elements which include the major techniques that marketers use to communicate with customers and audiences.

These elements of IMC include direct marketing and digital communication. It is obvious that marketers strive for the right mix of promotional elements to ensure that their product is well-received. The use of direct marketing as a marketing tool has been successful for many organisations. Direct marketing and digital communication form part of IMC strategies; they consist of different aspects of marketing.

Although direct marketing and digital communication are centres of attraction, there are other IMC strategies which are useful for developing an organisation. Direct marketing and digital communication form part of IMC strategies, providing a clear understanding of the implementation of IMC in an organisation (Duncan, 2002). Direct marketing is not considered as part of the promotional mix, but it has become an integral part of IMC of many organisations and can be beneficial if well implemented.

2.2.2 Direct marketing and integrated marketing communication

Direct marketing has become a key marketing strategy to improve promotions and to develop strong customer relations between students and the organisation. This is a distinction, with many scholars such as Duncan and Everet, (1993) stating that direct marketing uses a new discipline in some institutions of higher learning. Korgaonkar, Karsonand Akaah, (1993) defines direct marketing as "an interactive system of marketing strategy that uses one or more advertising media to affect a measurable response and/or transaction at any location". Therefore, all those traditional marketing methods that were used to organise campaigns are no longer enough in developing effective marketing campaigns. Direct marketing methods are needed to increase marketing campaign responses and to create good customer relationships.

Moschis and Korgaonkar (1990) also argue that in terms of Korgaonkar, at el, (1993) definition, "direct marketing does not include other forms of non- store retailing such as door to door sales and vending machines". Ogivly (1989) is one of a few scholars who define direct marketing as any advertising activity that creates and exploits direct marketing relationships between an organisation and its customer as an individual. Direct marketing can also be categorised as a subset of marketing which generates a direct content, reply and connection between an organisation and its potential

customer and which inspires business activities between them by targeting certain media.

Direct marketing is integrated with internal resources and strength to achieve its competitiveness and capacity in the marketplace (Kotler,1991). Baker(1992:120) argue that "success in competition amongst organisations which are in any target market or substitutable market, depends on the competitive advantage of an organisation or its products". However, some organisational success is hindered by organisational and technical difficulties in the competitive world. Therefore, successful marketing strategies could have an influence on enrolment at universities. Smith (1993) is of the view that direct marketing must be balanced against other marketing activities to satisfy customers' needs and to achieve organisational objectives.

The advantages of direct marketing are identified by Smith (1993), who claims that direct marketing could be used effectively by an organisation. Direct marketing always offers a way for consumers to respond to their messages and to encourage them to respond immediately. O'Brien and Harris (1993) argue that direct marketing also gives attention to each consumer as an individual, therefore, it usually allows higher flexibility in comparison with other marketing techniques.

Telemarketing is very flexible for creating message content and for receiving an immediate response. However, it is possible to simulate 'test marketing' among a pre-defined consumer group. Before a marketing campaign is started, the effect on the market can be estimated based on the results of the test-run. The advantage of direct marketing also includes a customer relationship with the organisation. The university must be in a good relationship with the customer. Direct marketing is based on customer relationships, such as universities create a relationship with high school learners (Tapp, 2008).

Therefore, a relationship with customers is very important in an organisation. In this sense, Ryals and Knox (2001:460) state that "direct marketing and customer relations make customers be loyal towards the institutions and the products because of the created relationship". The most important tool for the effectiveness of direct marketing is frequent interaction and to have a good relationship with customers. Ngai, Xiu and Chau (2009:20)) argue that:

Universities should create a relationship with customers for identification, which involves targeting customer analysis and customer segmentation, leading to the discovery of the population most likely to become customers.

However, customer relationship attraction consists of considering customer characteristics and carrying out direct marketing. Customer retention involves direct marketing, loyalty programmes and strategic management skills (Tapp, 2008). The basic aim of direct marketing and customer relationships are to generate a measurable response and good enrolment at universities. This is normally supported by branding around the targeted market (Stone & Jacobs 2008:190-200). It is very important to develop successful direct marketing programmes which involve identifying customers who are most likely to respond to a campaign.

Universities are required to develop branded products and communication tools for target customers (Tapp,2008). This usually involves marketers choosing key mechanisms to produce a reaction, including lists/media, creative and branded material (Stone & Jacobs, 2008). Direct marketing can create interest in a new product or service and persuade customers to purchase a short-term reward (Verhoef,2003). Many organisations rely on direct marketing since it is quicker and it can formulate a good relationship with customers. It is noted that marketers are then required to change customised products and communications for the target customers (Tapp, 2008).

However, direct marketing is perceived as the management of all marketing communication that aims to create a solid relationship with consumers and stakeholders (Stones & Jacobs, 2008). The relationship between an organisation and its customers depends on a clear, sound foundation, which indicates an effective way of implementing DM. There are channels which organisations use to deliver direct marketing messages such as direct mail via post, fax, email, voicemail, or mobile message, telemarketing, direct response advertising, inserts, door to door leafleting, mail order catalogues, face- to- face selling and online shopping (Jacoby & Chestnut,1978). These channels provided customers with access to a wealth of individually - designed products anywhere in the world. It quite clear that some of the

channels need knowledge and product participation. Tap (2008) argues that a direct marketing channel is effective in terms of building a strong and long-term customer relationship. The use of direct marketing as an IMC tool assist organisations with the identification of a target market. In this way an organisation can maintain its relationship is through branding.

2.2.3 Branding

As discussed earlier, IMC was developed to build and maintain a marketing relationship with customers and stakeholders. The integration of marketing tools was to develop and change the way organisations market their products and service. To reflect what role IMC plays in branding, it is necessary to understand that communication in the business world is every communication between the company and the customers (Percy, 2008). Percy (2008) further suggests that a well-implemented IMC results in good company branding. Noble, Haytko and Phillips (2009:55) defines a brand as "a product or service whose dimensions differentiate it in some way from other products or services designed to satisfy the same need". According Kotler and Keller (2009:185), a brand is an "intangible asset that directly affects the value of the company ".

The survival of most organisations depends on external stakeholders. Universities use branding to help develop subjective perceptions of the brand that helps customers to make the right career choices at the right institution. Simmons (1993:321), defines branding as "the value attributed to the brand through satisfying customer experience". The use of branding in an organisation influences the way customers value an organisation.

Branding provides customers with the arrangement, difference and identification of goods and services and which allows simplifying how consumers solve the problem. For university brands, such the University of Limpopo, having a strong brand is important because there is not a tangible product for consumers to associate with the brand. Underwood, Bond and Bae (2001:120) argue that a strong brand contains components that are 'identifiable, permanent, and meaningful" for consumers. It seems that branding should be used to strengthen the relationship between universities and external stakeholders. Brand promises in an organisation are not

primarily about focusing on customers. Instead, a more balanced perspective is needed by also focusing on staff. If employees are greatly committed to a set of values, they are more likely to deliver the brand's promise (Chapman, 2010). Developing a different brand that consumers and staff can easily identify with is a strategy for university marketing departments to improve the brand acknowledgement of an organisation. Strong branding contains components that are alike, continuing and meaningful for consumers (Wallace, at el, 2014). The consistency and strong branding of an organisation creates an impact in the customer's mind and thus strengthens the relationship between a customer and the product. Blackston (1993) argues that branding should be used to strengthen the ties between universities and external stakeholders and developing branding in institutions of higher learning can easily make external stakeholders identify with the university.

However, looking at branding as a tool, it represents the culture, practice and the tradition of an organisation. Some authors like Alessendri, Young and Kings (2007) suggest that an institution's overall image is evident in its total visual presentation, including its name, logo, tagline and colour scheme. The researchers further state that branding helps a university to differentiate itself from others in the marketplace and to provide a recognisable visible image. However, branding incorporates the perceptions of the university from both its internal and external audiences. Consumers develop their perceptions of the brand through contact with it (the brand), advertisement, marketing and unique packaging (Patterson, 1999). However, brand image is theorised as consumer perceptions of brand qualities and associations from which those consumers derive symbolic value. Alessandri et al (2007) suggest that an organisation's overall distinctiveness is evident in the organisation's total visual presentation, including their name, logo, tagline and colour scheme.

Branding is very important for universities and it creates a solid relationship between customers and organisations (Young & Kings,2007. Branding conveys the message of what an organisation is to customers. Customers connect with the brand and every time they think of an organisation or the university, the branding of that institution will come first into their minds. Research conducted by Ross (2005) indicates that branding is an important originator in creating a brand association and in increasing brand equity. Yet, the brand creates a good image for an institution. Other institutions

believe in branding as a marketing strategy that helps them achieve their objectives. Jansen, Van Den Bosch and Volberda (2005) argue that branding has the potential to express the university's characteristics and to develop trust from customers.

Branding can help with enrolment when it is effectively practised and managed and when it is used by marketing as a tool of advertising their courses and other services the university offers.

Patterson (1999) suggests that organisational brand attributes the emotional response people have with the organisation. Balmer (2003) states that brand creates a strong emotional tie between who the consumer aspires to be and the image they would like to project to others. Branding assists the customer to navigate in a crowded market and makes things simple for customers to differentiate from competitors and makes them able to express themselves.

Aaker (1997) suggests that branding is very important for initiating a valuable attraction for customers to an organisation. Therefore, branding is used to communicate with customers and create an image of an organisation in their minds. The use of branding at the University of Limpopo creates a solid relationship with prospective students and external stakeholders. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) state that the use of branding by universities allows for specifying the meaning, aim and image of the organisation.

However, the brand will never be effective without proper positioning. Keller (2011) suggest that brand positioning is the most important strategy for an organisation. A well-developed brand position is important and has long been regarded as valuable marketing activity that assists organisations to benefit more from customers. According to Keller (2006) the ineffectiveness of a brand is caused by poor brand position.

The use of brand position is what a company uses to distinguish themselves from competitors. The use of brand positioning is a process which is extremely complex and confusing.Lehmann,(1994), suggests that positioning of a brand needs adaptability on time to be a success. Keller (2002) argues that there is no book that can guide an organisation on how to position their brand. However, brand positioning provides consistent interaction of the same ideas between an organisation and the

customer. Yet, Kotler (2003a) argues that market positioning is the basis for all marketing strategies in an organisation.

2.2.4 Market positioning

Integrated marketing communication has many elements that dominate marketing strategies in many organisations. The use of branding in an organisation was introduced by Trout (2002), through IMC and market positioning changed when many organisations found it difficult to sell their products or services.

Clancy and Trout (2002) suggest that market positioning has become very popular in the marketing industry and many organisations have started to implement this strategy. Trout (1996) argues that market positioning is competitive warfare. Therefore, being part of the IMC, market position plays a very important role in the organisation and in an educational environment.

The definition of market positioning has been given in different forms, but the study will utilise those related to its objectives and IMC. Market positioning is defined as the act of designing the company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of the target market (Kotler, 2003a). It can be argued that market positioning can also be a success in creating a customer focus, value suggestion and a convincing reason why the customer should be part of the organisation. Van Raaij , at el, (1998:35) states that "market positioning refers to the consumer's perception of a brand amongst other brands and market positioning mainly results from marketing communication regarding brands, social communication and personal experience".

Trout, Chakraborty and Bell (1996) state that "market positioning is just a simple communication that involves manipulating customer's perceptions about the service of an organisation". The researcher supports Trout's,at el (1996) statement since market positioning is sometimes seen as an activity that takes place in the mind of the customer. Market positioning is intended to create the desired reminder in a consumer's mind. Organisations, including universities, view market positioning as a marketing tool.

Market positioning helps universities with the highest affinity for prospective students, most targeted or profitable population or being - different from other organisations (Hauser, 1988). In general, if market positioning is done effectively, it has the potential to build a powerful relationship with the customer.

Market positioning is focused on understanding the needs of the University with strategies based on understanding the target market's requirements. Kotler (2003a) state that universities were the first to recognise the shortage of market positioning strategies in the educational sector. This author further states that the market positioning strategies in the university, made by marketers, do not take into consideration how prospective students will react towards their services or products. Effective market positioning is premised on the basic principle of marketing that states that products and services are created to solve issues, satisfy needs and wants and to deliver on the promises made to them Kotler, (2003a).

It is necessary to position a university to be different from its competitors, who already offer the same services or products. It can be suggested that in market positioning, universities should consider the need to look for opportunities to change their working strategy. The market position, therefore, is a neutral conclusion to the sequences of activities that constitute a core part of marketing strategy (Xu, at el,2002). According to Madden, Hewett and Roth (2000: 90-107.), market positioning is the brand in the mind of a consumer in relation to the values which an organisation is given.

Kotler (2003a) states that market positioning refers to the connection between a company and its target market, hence it becomes the actual design of the company's image so that customers understand and appreciate what the company stands for in relation to its competitors. The main objective of market positioning is to achieve active loyalty of customers and which allows organisations to change their marketing strategies and obtain more effective marketing programmes. Keller (2008), states that prospective students become loyal to a brand or an organisation only if the relationship is well maintained. Biel (1993) stated that market positioning is necessary for universities since the competition is very strong and the perception of customers towards the organisation should be managed through loyalty and market positioning. According to Keller (2008) this requires a balance of ideal points of equality and points of different brand association within the given market and competitive environment.

Yet, the market position may have been managed over time and universities need to carefully create marketing strategies for their prospective students. The use of market positioning in Higher Institutions is a hectic topic and market positioning of an organisation reduces or increases the chances of competition in an organisation that is surrounded by other similar organisations and has this a higher chance of facing competition.

Gaeff (1999:3) states that "major factors identified in the literature, attracting students to undertake a part in higher education have been identified as the quality of institutions, quality of courses, reputation in a selected field of study, and the potential for improved job prospects". Market positioning is challenged by the fragmentation of advertising techniques such as media and other advertising platforms. Therefore, universities need to market their services over time, while remaining true to their customers. This however, suggests that organisations might create a deepening concern over the meaning of their services and may respond competitively to challenges threatening their existing position (Keller, 2001).

However, a continuation of market positioning should be considered, and it should not deviate too much from the ideal conception of the target group. Therefore, Van der Ven, Bernstein and Hoffmann (2017:1-20) suggest that universities practise market positioning through events, activities and decision making during the planning phase of internally positioning their products and services. The use of technological devices such as social networks has changed the way universities market their services (Carter, 2006).

Many universities use digital marketing to market their institutions and this is made possible by social networks and other technological devices. Digital communication is found to be fast and cheap for the marketing of universities, resulting in institutions of higher learning moving away from the traditional way of persuading or convincing consumers through traditional media (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008:30-40). The use of market positioning and digital communication work hand in hand to make an institution a success.

2.2.5 Digital communication and recruitment

Integrated marketing communication offers a vast approach for marketing and advertising planning in an organisation. It provides clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact for an organisational marketing campaign (Schultz,1997). However, digital communication has made a change in the effectiveness of integrated marketing communication and are employed by many organisations globally (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Integrated marketing communication can be seen a development of marketing and an implementation of marketing communication tools in an organisation. In this case, Hoffman and Novak (1996) argue that electronic media, including social media, changed marketing and communication technologies, specifically in the IMC arena.

The use of marketing communication is changing the way marketers promote their organisations to customers and IMC has a complex relationship with digital communication. The use of technology in marketing and communication was developed as isolated strategies for these two areas which were viewed as having similarities (Du Plessis, Van Heerden & Cook, (2010).

The use of new technologies offers access to new strategies and possibilities and provides unique ways of evaluating the effectiveness of chosen strategies. Digital communication tends to be used by universities to market themselves. Digital communication is referred to as e-communication, multimedia or cyber marketing. However, Williams (1991:50) defines digital communication as "any promotion that is sent through a medium that uses digital technology". This could be explained as an encompassing term for both electronic marketing. Research by Gross (2010) indicated that consumers are increasingly looking forward to multimedia networking solutions to compensate for time constraints that they experience in their lives. Williams (1991) argues that, the combination of digital communication elements, including social media that is often used in the development of marketing communication strategies can help organisations in marketing.

The initiative of new technologies has shifted the way organisations plan, function, recruit and conduct themselves. The use of communication, media and technology

has led to consumer empowerment and tougher competition among universities and other higher education institutions (Lewis, Pea & Rosen, 2010). However, to keep track of the ever-changing technological tools, organisations integrated their marketing elements and processes of production and marketing. Kaplan and Haelein, (2010:56) suggests that social media is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content".

Social media technology is a trending term in many organisations and communities. The introduction of the phenomenon brought about a differences in marketing departments and in the way people communicate. Social media, according to Bruce, Davis, Hughes, Partridge, and Stoodley, (2014:3), can be defined as:

> web-based and mobile applications that allow individuals and companies to create, engage, and share new user-generated or existing content in the digital environment through multiple ways of communication.

It can be argued that the definition outlines the fact that social media offers organisations and individuals an opportunity to create their own personal profiles and construct a connection with other users. Bruce, at el (2014) suggest that the use of social media allows individuals and organisations to share and communicate new information.

Traditionally, organisations have been interacting with their target market through marketing mix elements. The purpose behind this was to persuade, inform and influence customers to buy their service (Wind, 1978). Zeisser (2010) argues that a customer becomes more empowered and informed due to the increased use of the internet, particularly social media.

In the South African context, the use of the internet is growing fast in many organisations. According to Bruce,(2014:103)

> the use of social media is increasing every year and the country has not been left out. Yet some of South Africans find it hard to use social media, they try to operate their organisations.

Social media provides customers with an opportunity where customer they can create a community around product or services offered by companies. Therefore, companies are maintaining full control of customers through integrated marketing communication and social media (Mangold & Faulds,2009).

However, the use of social media marketing in an organisation creates participation from customers and marketers. The researcher believes that some practitioners push products and services on social media using traditional approaches because of a lack of knowledge of what social media is and how to utilise it. However, knowledge of social media helps organisations to market their services and products. When the university utilise the use of social media to recruit learners, social media serve as fast communication platform for both university and its customers. Universities use this media to recruit learners. The integration of marketing tools is thus important for the university when recruiting learners.

2.2.6. Digital communication, high school learners' choice and recruitment by universities

According to Gross, at el, (2010: 807), "84% of the students are influenced by online messages written by recruitment officers in terms of their career choices". Universities that are already using social media have inexperience on how to recruit learners and the information to use in recruiting thus results in a high number of student's enrolment. By using social media, universities should be strategic when recruiting. They should bear in mind that consumers may use any media tool or platform to communicate and search for information regarding the services offered by the university. Hjorth, and Hinton, (2019) suggest that the use of social media helps universities to reach their customers globally, comprehensiveness and integrity. I t helps the university to market globally through information posting and interactive social media platforms .The use of social media was adopted by institutions of higher learning and embraced use it to connect with prospective students (Gross,at el,2010).

Reuben (2008) suggests that higher learning institutions use social media as a new strategy and strive to effectively engage students in a conversation through social

media. Universities that are already using social media are experiencing a high number of enrolments Magold and Faulds (2009). Constantinides and Fountain (2008) claim that,

> organisations eager to integrate a social media program into their marketing strategy must realise that the social media is changing the decision-making process in the behaviour of student 's decision making processes.

Chapman (2010) argues that many students focus more frequently on the use of social media to search for information and make their decisions based on that information. Some universities find it hard to implement the use of social media platforms due to the lack of skills and fear to change that lead to the o=old way of marketing strategies. The use of social media has provided an opportunity for colleges and universities to integrate technology into their departments (Social Media Today, 2011). The argument is that some organisations especially universities and colleges cannot utilise IMC elements such as social media. A study conducted by a researcher at Tilburg university (2011), reported that colleges and university that respond to the use of social media technologies to recruit learners are few and it creates a big gap in their market share. Although some scholars support the idea that some institutions incorporate the use of social media in their offices, there is little evidence that shows the effectiveness of various types of technologies on prospective student recruitment (Strauss & Howe,2007).

However, the usage of social media at the university level has increased significantly. Social media in many organisations is rated the best marketing tool, especially in institutions of higher education. The initiative and understanding of social media marketing were seen as important and it made communication easy for customers and their organisation. However, the use of social media influences the decision-making of prospective students when used effectively (Gross, 2010). Researchers such as Falkow (2009) suggests that for universities to have proper social media marketing, customer engagement should be a priority.

It was found that many learning institutions use social media for recruiting students. Kaeser, at el (2001 :18) argues that

higher education institutions are a complex and loosely coupled system where decision making is distributed through the organisation and change is inherently difficult through the organisation.

Students are the role players at institutions of higher learning, and effective communication with students contributes to resource efficiency. Social media provides the student with a communication platform built on the honest opinion and experience of former students. According to Denis, Mergaert, Fostier, Cleemput, and Simoens (2010: 173-179), students' choice of university is based on the marketing effectiveness and the information which is provided to them. The use of social media determines the decision of the prospective student. Denis, at el (2010: 180) believe that social media for universities has activities which universities accomplish to find the target market. Yet, some universities find it hard to implement social media activities in an effective manner. Stephen and Galak (2009) agree with this notion and suggest that social media can be used to measure marketing performance of an organisation.

In most cases, universities post information based on their services on social media sites and this is regarded as a credible source of information, specifically regarding the university and student recruitment. Most of today's high school learners cannot spend time without the internet. They value the internet as their source of information and they are found to be active users of social media. Nayar (2010) states that learners are taking social media as a self-representation and display. High school learners can be recruited through social media (Levitz, 2012).

A study by Razani (2012) states that the success of marketing strategies of an organisation depends on customer relationships. In addition, universities, according to McAllister and West (2013), are effectively using social media as a tool to build the university's reputation. However, focusing on social media at universities, rapid change has been occurring in the marketing departments after the introduction of IMC and social media.

Constantinides and Fountain (2011) suggest that other universities can identify a preferred method of marketing, upon which students depend more to build a strong relationship with them. One of the important keys is that universities need student information that can help with targeting purposes. Students who interacts with the

university of their choice gets information and provides relevant information to the institution, and get satisfaction (Yu, Liu, Wu, Hu & Zhang L., 2010)

2.2.7. Digital communication, high school learners' choice and recruitment by universities in Africa

Institutions of higher learning are facing increasingly complex challenges, such as rapidly growing global competition (Maringe & Mourad, 2010) as well as changes in marketing strategies and techniques. Previous studies focused only on the decision - making of students and factors influencing the decisions on which institution to attend. This study covered a range of arguments from increased competition worldwide for well-known institutions and schools. The lack of marketing has also led to high competition for international students globally and the decision - making becomes a problem when institutions do not market their organisation in and outside the country.

Higher education institutions need to construct proper marketing strategies to attract both domestic and international students (Mouwen 2000:47-56). In most countries, it is difficult to influence students due to the lack of marketing strategies by universities, and which leads to a low enrolment numbers. Marketing efforts play a vital role in attracting both international and domestic students (Kotler & Armstrong,1993). Goff, Patino and Jackson, (2004: 795) stated that "the increasingly important role that marketing plays in student recruitment has been recognised by many scholars". The effective use of marketing strategies allows domestic and international students to know about the institutions and be able to decide about the services offered to them.

This implies that universities and other institutions of higher education must have a marketing and communication strategy in place that will not only convey and enhance the corporate brand or image of the university, but will also inform prospective students and other role-players of the unique characteristics of the institution that will make it the desired university at which to enrol (Kotler and Armstrong, 1993).

Ketler and Armstrong (1993) further states that an institution markets itself by designing the organisation's offerings in terms of the needs and desires of the target

market as well as by using effective pricing, communication and distribution to inform, motivate and service the market. Marketing strategies plays significant role in the selection of a university by international and domestic students. The majority of students choose a university based on various factors such as geographical location, beliefs, demographics and culture and also the fee structure. Most marketers believe that when the information or services are well sold to a student, they will get more students at their university. Scholars like Moogan and Baron (2003:271), argue along these lines that "student choice and decision-making is not rational or linear, but a complex process, influenced by numerous factors including tuition fee and other costs, information or presented or sold to them, access, academic achievement, admission method, job opportunities, life and school experience".

2.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study focused on IMC strategies used by organisations, specifically universities. Integrated marketing communication functions like a system in an organisation. It has many strategies that operate together. Integrated marketing communication strategies such as direct marketing and digital communication cannot function in isolation as they operate together. The study uses systems theory to explain IMC strategies. General Systems Theory studies the structure and properties of systems in terms of relationships, from which new strategies develop.

2.3.1 Historical development of General System Theory (GST)

The term GST was introduced by von Bertalanffy (1950). This author decided to make the theory distinct from traditional theories of science. The aim of the production of the theory was to integrate analytical and organism as well as descriptive and normative traditional systems thinking (Berrien,1986. It assists in focusing one's attention in important components that might otherwise go unnoticed.

The theory postulates that systems consist of many parts which operate together. GST, in this sense, considers numerous systems that interact with other systems. The theory could thus be applied by focusing on the relationships between various units in an organisation. It can be defined as, "elements which are in exchange and bounded". These components constitute a system, which functions or operates within a field or an environment Krueger (1940:152). Elements can be virtually anything one wishes to label as such, the exchange of relationships that exist between elements and the boundary is what one can see, hear, feel and sense (Berne, 1966).

2.3.2 Systems theory in organisational settings

The improvement of the GST is one expression of the important changes in the nature of scientific analysis. Rather than investigating the universe in a cause and reaction frame of mind, researchers realised that any cause and reaction relationship take place in a more complex system of relationships. Nothing is analysed in isolation, but in terms of its relationship with a larger system (Turner, 1991).

These systems of inter influential happenings distinguish that the whole is larger than the sum of its parts. Amongst the modern scientists, Ludwig von Bertalanffy was the first to support the General Systems Approach. Various other scientists joined in and the groundwork was established for the General Systems Theory (Turner, 1991). The systems theory regards the society as a big system, composed of a number of interdependent parts (Ritzer, 1993).

Most descriptions of communication openly or indirectly state that communication is a process. Process implies movement, change and the interaction between parts of the whole. These meanings cannot be related to the fixed description of communication as transmitter, message, medium and receiver. The systems approach can be said to be an attempt to clear the idea of communication as a process (Marais 1979: 155). Communication is not an independent variable, but rather the essential component of organisational functioning (Lubbe & Puth 1994).

Systems theory focuses on the relations between the parts. Rather than reducing an entity such as the human body into its parts or elements (e.g. organs or cells), systems

theory focuses on the arrangement of and relations between, the parts and how they work together as a whole (Miller and Rice, 1967).

Flood and Jackson (1991) define a system as a complex and highly interlinked network of parts exhibiting synergistic properties-the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. It is a collection of organised parts acting together to achieve some goal which exists in the environment. This refers to the use of IMC strategies as a system in which one part cannot work without the other. Also, a system is defined as a set of objects together with relationships between the objects and between their attributes related to each other and to the environment, to create or form a whole (Schoderbek, & Kefalas,1985). This can be identified as an entity, which may be applied to human activity. With respect to IMC, a system is simply referred to the elements working together to achieve one goal and an effective marketing strategy.

In the present day, organisations are faced with the challenge of adopting the IMC strategies for their marketing purposes. Over the years down through history, organisations have not adopted a pattern of marketing strategies for their departments (Schoedrbek & Kefalas,1985). Sometimes marketing strategies are not as easy to create as perceived. However, this study emphasised more on the use of effective marketing strategies through the application of general systems theory. In this study, the researcher applied system theory to assess the implementation of the marketing strategies in a systematic approach. System theory is seen as an open ended process and does not interact with external environment where holism is practised meaning it cannot exist independently of the whole.

Open system theory changed the way of thinking about marketing strategies. It looks at the IMC strategies as an open - ended process. Today, organisations are perceived of as an open ended process of individuals whose actions stem from applying marketing strategies in an effective way. For instance, in the current situation, an organisation that is not sensitive to its environment will hardly survive. Things such as technology and social and economic phenomena are not static but are always changing, hence organisations need to adapt in order to survive. It is also through interaction with its external environment that the organisation gets its inputs in term of raw material, labour and processes them, and lastly emits its output into its environment for selling or capital investment.

Organisational management systems consist of many internal subsystems that need to be continually aligned with each other. As companies grow, they develop more and more complex subsystems that must coordinate with each other in the process of transforming inputs to outputs (McShane and Von Glinow, 2003). The classical approach emphasises the technical requirements of the organisation and its needs – organisation without people while the human relations approaches emphasises the psychological and social aspects and the consideration of human needs – people without organisations (Mullin, 2005).

The systems approach encourages an organisation to be viewed as a whole and as part of its larger environment. This implies that any part of an organisation actively affects other parts. In this study, the use of IMC strategies cannot work without other parts. The systems approach views an organisation within its total environment and emphasises the importance of multiple interactions.

The organisation is seen as being made of interrelated parts known as a system. Organisations that performs effectively in a systems approach, use both direct and digital marketing strategies to help achieve organisational goals. The degree to which the organisation is actively, outward orientated depends largely on the extent to which the marketers and the stakeholders perceive their organisation to be a whole, comprised of parts which are hierarchically ordered and which work towards certain ends being relatively open to its environment and is adaptable (Lubbe & Puth 1994).

In this context, a systems approach implies an understanding of the glue that holds organisational system together, the marketing strategies and the underlying culture that exists within the organisation. According to, Morrison, Renfro and Boucher, (1984:49);

> given the accelerating pace of change, planners and the organisations they serve found that, increasingly, emerging marketing strategies in the outside world had a greater impact on the organisation's future than internal issues.

In conclusion, systems theory states that organisations are effective when they survive in their environment and successfully bring in resources necessary for their survival. The systems theory, therefore, adds the environment to the equation of organisational effectiveness and survival. The systems approach in the organisational structure plays

a major role for the organisation as a whole, not at departmental level but at organisational level.

2.3.3 Use of General Systems Theory in higher education

The study focuses on IMC strategies used by organisations, specifically universities. Integrated marketing communication functions like a system in an organisation. It has many strategies which operate together and IMC strategies such as direct marketing and digital communication cannot function in isolation but they must operate together. The study uses systems theory to explain IMC strategies.

Integrated Marketing communication is a system itself. There are elements of IMC which work together to create a system in an organisation. General systems theory supports education as it was stated that educational institutions deal with marketing strategies which need to be treated like a system (Buckey,1968). The way GST can be related to the university as an organisation is when the university is approached as an open system wherein the interests of prospective students, as important stakeholders, are considered in planning for the organisation in a systematic way. Angelopulo & Barker (2013:133) argue that systems theory considers focuses upon

> communication… as an important component in relating the parts of an organisation so as to clearly understand how they form a whole. People therefore use communication to establish role expectations and standard operating procedures.

The recruitment of prospective learners through activities such as direct marketing thus forms an important part of the university as a whole.

A study by Adler (1967:29) indicates that GST helps organisations when it comes to problem-solving as it forces organisations to use different methods of marketing strategies to solve marketing issues. The writer further indicates that,

> whether we like it or not, marketing strategies can function properly if they are perceived as a system, marketing strategies are an assemblage of objects united by some form of regular interaction or interdependence.

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The use of direct marketing and digital communication can be effective when used properly in a systematic way; one cannot work without the other. General systems theory is applicable to this study because it is goal - orientated and perceives marketing strategies as a system. The theory views systems holistically with marketing strategies as an example of GST. Educational organisations use GST to solve complex marketing strategies.

Institutions of higher learning are composed of many systems which should not be viewed as individual, separate units, but as contributing parts to the effective functioning of the whole (Popov, at el, 2004). According to the practical systems model (Yan,& Edwards, 2007) competitive universities' behaviour is strictly linked to the ability to identify and manage marketing strategies and relationships with stakeholders, thereby creating communication networks, establishing marketing strategies and justifying and coordinating marketing. Universities have had to address and direct the system towards a final goal by transforming static marketing strategies into dynamic interactions with other viable systems. The ability to organise IMC strategies outlines the efficiency of organisational action which is a central characteristic of a practical system.

In summary, the use of GST in the study shows applicability to IMC strategies. The strategies cannot function in isolation. A system is like a chain; direct marketing cannot function without digital communication. Direct marketing and digital communication should be systematically used. Organisations should become familiar with the concept of a system. All IMC strategies should be planned before implementation. The use of GST, whereby direct marketing and digital communication are adapted, enables organisations to have long lasting performance in the marketing industry.

According to Steller and Iwko (2001), GST was used in institutions of higher learning for problem solving. Wilson (1994) argues that general systems theory was used in the universities for it was a complex environment with subsections. A study conducted by Barker, at el (2008), proves that education is a system which need understanding and through the use the theory, managers can implement change. Barker further state that through GST, managers of universities can motivate, administrate and be regulators of change.

2.4 PREVIOUS STUDIES OF DIRECT MARKETING AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION BY UNIVERSITIES

In most cases, universities use traditional marketing communication strategies to market students. There are studies which have focused on the use of IMC in the university, and those scholars focused on the universities that had long been in the industry of marketing tertiary education Most universities in Australia had challenges of payments and marketing strategies were not properly implemented, and which led to a low number of enrolments (Green,1992). This affected universities in a negative way and most government sponsors had to pull out from sponsoring students. This affected the enrolment rate and led to the closing of other faculties in the University of Netherlands and Australia (Mazzarol ,1996).

The use of effective direct marketing and digital communication would have rescued some universities if implemented correctly. The use of IMC strategies such as direct marketing and digital communication also affected African countries such as Ghana. A study conducted by Nicolescu (2009 :33) stated that "marketing of higher education has become a strategic competitive tool in Ghana due to the emergence of private universities". These changes have affected the operations of higher education and they are seen as the driving forces for the marketing of higher education (Maringe, 2012). The use of effective marketing was then implemented by other government universities for competition purposes.

Studies conducted by Dirks (1998) and Bartlett and Mandelson (2002) indicated the reason why institutions had to face such problems. It is argued that

> Some literature has revealed that education should not use direct marketing and digital communication because marketers are profit-oriented and so cannot be applied to higher educations since many of the higher educational institutions are mostly not for profit ,Bartlett and Mandelson (2002:33)

Pasternak and Greenlee (2005) argues that in contemporary societies, higher education is being marketed by using direct marketing and digital communication just like any other product or service. A student's decision to acquire advanced knowledge, is therefore, the culmination of a process of weighing cost against benefits, and this is

similar to the process applied when a customer selects a product or service. A study conducted by Higher Education South Africa (2008) state the following:

> Currently in South Africa, nearly one in five school-leavers who pass Grade 12 enters a higher education institution, with over 700 000 students studying at 23 different higher education institutions across South Africa because of the marketing strategies that institutions use to promote their universities.

Universities then will have to become more market-oriented as they increasingly compete for international students and domestic students. The challenges of marketing strategies also affect the decision making of high school leaners from different areas and this leads to another problem in the recruitment and marketing management. Previous studies focused on the marketing communication mix for universities and findings showed that the introduction of IMC was a necessity for their organisations (Smit & Schonefield, 2000).

The use of IMC strategies made organisations change the way of marketing their products and services. Universities saw a rapid change after the implementation of IMC strategies through direct and digital marketing (Van der Wallt, Strydom, Marx &J ooste,1996). This indicates that the implementation of IMC can help marketers in the universities and colleges.

Many organisations believed in using all the IMC strategies while others focused on mass communication as a way of marketing their products. Shoemaker and Muston (1998) claims that higher educational institutions need to focus on IMC for better development and that means proper understanding of IMC. Shoemaker and Muston (1998) further state that universities should understand and implement IMC strategies in a way that their services can be understood.

Kotler (2009) argue that IMC is used as social and management process in which universities satisfy their needs and wants through creation, supply and exchange of valuable products with customers. Many research papers focus on the increase of competition among universities. A study conducted by Russell (2005) focused on universities and the high competition for prospective students. Students are the main target group for which services are offered by universities. Integrated marketing communication strategies such as direct marketing influence customers and assist

organisations in achieving their goals. In the marketing and communication sphere, Ramachandran (2010) discovered the way managements strategies in their marketing departments and the effectiveness of the IMC strategies. Direct marketing and digital communication are important for organisations...

Pelsmacker, Geuens and Bergh (2003) argue that the implementation of all IMC strategies in the universities are very important, and they help universities to make effective use of the strategies. An effective implementation of IMC strategies strengthens an organisational structure. The successful implementation of IMC strategies will require organisations such as universities to understand the strategies to attract the desired profile of students.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Looking at traditional marketing communication, methods of promoting organisations have switched to the complex system of IMC over the past few years. Although marketing tools might have changed with the development of society, technology and media have also been undergoing changes.

Branding plays a serious role in developing an organisation's image, identity and reputation. The use of branding an organisation builds a solid relationship with the university and its prospective students. Despite the high level of competition, product placement plays a crucial role for the marketer and the universities. Prospective students believe in a repetition of information and having regular interaction with the marketers.

Previous studies were discussed and it was revealed that many scholars focused more on the development of IMC at corporate level. In all departments, marketing communication is compulsory and many studies address the issue of traditional marketing which has been replaced by IMC strategies, and many universities have adapted some of these strategies.

The implementation of effective IMC strategies depends on the understanding of marketing strategies. Direct marketing is mostly used in the universities and colleges

for recruitment purposes. Universities started using IMC strategies and an improvement was seen in most marketing departments. The University of Limpopo is one of the institutions which utilises IMC strategies. This study focused on the effectiveness of the IMC strategies which are used by the University of Limpopo while other studies looked at how organisations can use IMC to replace the olds traditional marketing style.

This study has analysed the use of IMC tools at the University of Limpopo and the way they were implemented. A study by Russell (2005) argues that IMC is one of the latest advancements within the marketing departments in institutions of higher learning. Many scholars have dealt with traditional marketing and focused on IMC strategies such as direct and digital marketing.

There are different methods of dealing with IMC strategies. Some organisations deal with these strategies by outsourcing, while some have Marketing Departments within their own organisation. The marketing department should always proceed with the use of IMC for effective implementation and make sure that customers do understand their organisation.

The GST provides a theoretical framework whereby the environment, the organisation and its market (students and stakeholders) can be viewed in relation to IMC and digital communication. The concepts of input, throughput and output allows for the different processes associated with marketing in a digital environment through the use of IMC.

Integrated marketing communication is a marketing plan which some universities rely on and other universities focus more on the results of a strategies. Despite all the challenges which universities face, the effective implementation of direct marketing and digital marketing will help organisations to achieve their goals.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter describes the methodological approach of this study and the methods used to carry out the study. It engages with studies conducted by other researchers in the area of Marketing and Communication and provides an overview of other methodological approaches used to research Integrated Marketing Communication, specifically direct marketing and digital communication. According to Mayer (2009), research methodology is a method of enquiry which moves from the underlying assumptions to research design and data collection.

Based on IMC studies and the nature of the research problem, the discussion is situated within a qualitative approach using grounded theory. The chapter then discusses grounded theory as a method and motivates why was it chosen. The discussion then continues to, data capturing and sampling, as well as the data collection process. Data was collected using interviews. The chapter then describes the data analysis procedures that were followed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the quality criteria that were implemented to ensure scientific rigour in the study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswel, (2014) states that research design encompasses aspects of research problem, research questions, research data collection and data analysis. The qualitative research design was done using a grounded theory approach. Babbie and Mouton (2003) state that paradigms are models which are utilised in organising and reasoning.

Grounded theory was used as research orientation in order to understand the needs of the high school learners and how they believed direct marketing influenced their choice of university (Glaser & Strauss,1967). A sampling structure was constructed to include data from prospective students, both nationally, and neighbouring country. The study selected groups of learners from different schools, based in both South Africa

and Zimbabwe. Further follow up interviews were also held with members of staff from the Marketing and Communication Department. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, (questions attached as Appendix 3). The data was transcribed and thematically analysed. Themes were refined into categories and data from categories were discussed in the data chapter as conceptualisations from the interviews. The next section will discuss the research orientation.

3.3 RESEARCH ORIENTATION

The discussion and selection of research orientation is addressed in this section. The researcher started by examining the qualitative and quantitative debate. The discussion in this section also includes a discussion of the philosophical origins of grounded theory.

In the field of research, there are three research approaches, namely mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative research. Although there are other distinctions of these research modes, the most common classification of research methods is quantitative and qualitative. According to Andersson, Borglin and Willman (2013), a quantitative approach to research is built on the philosophical foundation that the world is real and truth about reality can be established through measuring properties of a phenomenon using quantitative measurements.

Mayer (2009) argues that quantitative research methods were originally developed in the natural sciences to study natural phenomenon. Quantitative research makes use of questionnaires, surveys and experiments to gather data that is reused and tabulated in numbers and which allows the data to be processed using statistical analysis (Hittleman & Simon1997). Quantitative research measures variables using statistics such as correlations and frequencies. According to Saunderson (2013), quantitative findings do not allow for adequate understanding of deep contextual factors related to theory formulation.

The quantitative approach is guided by the positivist paradigm which regards human behaviour as observable and measurable. In quantitative research the researcher is forced to be neutral with an objective view of reality. This approach was not suitable

for this study because IMC strategies are difficult to measure quantitatively. It is very important to understand how IMC strategies are used and effectively implemented in an organisation. This study chose to use the qualitative approach. A qualitative approach tends to be inductive and answers deep questions that cannot be addressed by quantitative methods.

A qualitative approach was used to reach the findings of the study. Qualitative research refers to "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:17). The research thus produced findings arrived at from real-world settings where the 'phenomenon of interest unfolded naturally" (Patton, 2001:39).

A qualitative orientation develops a comparative understanding of the phenomenon as experienced by different participants in different settings. A qualitative research approach provides insights into phenomenon from the research subjects' perspectives (du Plooy, 2009). Qualitative research is conducted in the natural setting of social actors and focuses on the process rather than outcome. The actor's perspective is emphasised and the primary aim is in-depth description and understanding of action and events rather than attempting to generalise to the population.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to propose an understanding of the IMC implementation and the effectiveness of the strategies used. The qualitative approach attempts to study everyday life of different groups of people and communities in their natural setting. It involves examining research participants in their natural settings relevant to the research topic. Mayer (2009) states that qualitative research is designed to help researchers understand people within the cultural context in which they live. Qualitative approaches employ different knowledge claims, enquiry, strategies and data collection methods and analyses (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative data sources include observation and participation, interviews and questionnaires and document text and the researcher's impression and reactions (Mayer, 2009). In a qualitative approach, the researcher is considered the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. She engages the situation and makes sense of multiple interpretations (Marriam,1998).

A qualitative approach was considered to be more appropriate and pertinent to the study. This approach contains elements that are valuable in studying people's

understandings. It records and analyses experiences, decisions, feelings and attitudes, thus covering the issues in a more detailed and in-depth manner. Research data was collected through interviews enabling the researcher to interact with the learners and management members on their own terms. This allowed the researcher to collect accurate data with first-hand responses.

Qualitative research helps to avoid preconceptions. It can explain why a response was given. Data collected by qualitative research is based on people's experiences. This provides insights into the motives behind people's actions and their feelings towards various marketing strategies used by organisations towards their target markets. It is also more informative and compelling and provides a more realistic feel of the world (Creswell, 2003). It creates openness during research by encouraging people to expand on their responses with an attempt to discuss new concepts. The objective of the research can change with the emergence of new data (Dahlberg and McCaig, 2010).

The researcher chose the qualitative approach based on the above advantages. The approach laid a foundation towards a comprehension of the difficulties and the different reasons and actions that led to the ineffectiveness of direct marketing and digital marketing. The qualitative approach was chosen since it helped the researcher to understand why organisations, specifically universities, deliberately choose to avoid certain marketing strategies (Corbin & Strauss, 2012). In this study, qualitative research aimed to understand customers' behaviour, experiences, perspectives and feelings in relation to the social world of an organisation function and marketing strategies.

According to Blumer (1969) grounded theory has its conceptual orientation in symbolic interactionism. According to Fischer and Otnes (2006), grounded theory researchers conduct research in the following manner:

> *Grounded theory researchers immerse themselves in the setting of interest to them, essentially ignoring prior research that might impede the development of an understanding of that particular setting. This is intended to ensure that an appropriately grounded theory of the setting might arise, or that, at a minimum,*

healthy is maintained toward pre-existing theories that on their face might seem salient to a particular research context.

The researcher is employed by the UL's Marketing and Communication's Division and thus is grounded within the research setting. The researcher has intimate knowledge of the environment and knows what to expect. A grounded theoretical orientation thus enabled the researcher to ignore preconceived ideas that he had about the data and reconstruct a theory of his understanding of the data surrounding the concepts that were identified in the data chapter.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODS

As mentioned above, the study employed a grounded theory research design. According to Fischer and Otnes (2006:19-30), "[grounded theory] marketing studies ground the questions they ask and the answers they provide by raising queries about the adequacy of prior conceptualisations of a relatively construct".

In the same vein, this study interrogated the notion of integrated marketing communication and its constituent elements as considered by the management of the university, as well as the elements that are important for Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). As a result, grounded theory in this study sought to understand the factors or elements that should be considered as important to IMC (including Direct Marketing) from the viewpoint of the high school learners. The origins of the grounded theory approach in symbolic interactionism qualify it for this type of an investigation because it assumes that "meaning arises from social interaction – communication between and among individuals and not from the object" (Locke, 2009).

In a further discussion of the relationship between grounded theory and symbolic interactionism, Locke (2001) explains that "from the perspective of the grounded theory framework, in order for collective action to take place, meaning must be shared". This implies that for high school learners to choose the University of Limpopo, "collective action", which implies the decision to enrol at the University will depend on

a common meaning being created between the University and the prospective students.

Locke (2001:171) described the essence of communication as follows:

> Communication and a common language provide the means for achieving shared meaning. Where there is consensus as to meaning, where individuals learn and share definitions of objects, events and situations, people can plan their behaviour with others.

In order for IMC to be effective, there has to be a shared meaning between the stakeholders of the University; thus, the learners have to understand, learn and share the messages communicated. From a systems theory perspective, if the high school learners fail to understand the messages sent to them, the University's marketing communication activities and approaches fail because one aspect of the system would not be functioning.

In the process of exploring a context that differs meaningfully from those previously employed, questions about the nature of well-recognised constructs often arise. The design is perceived by Bless, et al., (2013) as the planning of scientific research from the first to the last step. Bless, et al., (2013) further suggests that research design refers to research methods which involve procedures and steps that guide the researcher towards achieving the research objectives. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), the research design serves to "plan, structure and execute" the research to maximise the "validity of the findings". It gives directions from the underlying philosophical assumptions to research design and data collection.

Yin (2003) adds further that "colloquially, a research design is an action plan for getting from *here* to *there*, where 'here' may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered and 'there' is some set of (conclusions) answers". The case study research design is considered an appropriate instrument to understand a specific occurrence from the participants' perspective. It involves studying the behaviour of the individuals

in respect to their participation towards the product presented to them (Moustakas, 1994).

Grounded theory was used in this study because it allowed for the researcher to understand how the university is understood by the high school learners. Furthermore, the grounded theory research design was chosen because it allowed for the researcher to understand how high school learners choose a university where they would wish to pursue studies.

The approach allowed the researcher to understand the problems which affect the participants and the marketing strategies. The choice of a grounded theory research design helped evaluates the use of IMC and the implementation of direct marketing and digital communication by the university and the marketing practitioners who market the organisation from the perspective of the high school learners who participated in this study. Thus, the researcher drew inclusive narratives around the participants' experiences.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Population is a set of entities in which all measurements of interest to the researcher are presented (De Vos, 2002). Welman and Kruger (1999) define population as encompassing the entire collection of units about which conclusions are made. Target population is referred to as a set of fundamentals that the researcher focuses on and from which data are obtained.

The study consisted of a sample of nine high school learners from Southern Africa and Zimbabwe. The study had interviews with four learners from Zimbabwe and 5 leaners from South Africa. The reason behind the number in Zimbabwe was due to the restriction given by the authorities in the school. The interviews were conducted by the researcher after a career exhibition hosted in different areas in Limpopo and Harare (Zimbabwe), in order to understand the direct marketing efforts of the university from the viewpoint of the high school learners.

Purposive sampling guided the sampling procedures. After each interview, the researcher sought to understand how new themes could be created in order to understand all aspects that the direct marketing efforts of the University of Limpopo should include, taking into consideration the feedback obtained from the high school learners.

A sample is a subset of the population selected to participate in a research study. It defines the selected groups in the population such as individuals, groups or organisations. A sample is chosen from the study population that is commonly referred to as the target population or accessible population (De Vos, 2002). There are broadly speaking, two types of sampling in research, namely probability and non-probability sampling. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:60) probability sampling is a "general term for samples selected in accord with probability theory, typically involving some random-selection mechanism". In probability sampling the aim is to select a set of elements which accurately portray parameters of the total population by way of random selection (Babbie & Mouton 2011: 174). Rule and John (2011:64) explain that when using probability sampling a researcher can make generalizable claims from the sample to the total population represented by the chosen sample.

The reason behind this is to make sure that each element from the total population has an equal chance of being selected but, that is not the case with the non-probability types of sampling in that every unit in the target population does not have an equal chance of being selected (Du Plooy 2009). The study used the non-probability sampling method in collecting data for this research. Babbie and Mouton (2001) further add that "qualitative research often uses non-probability sampling and types of non-probability sampling include purposive, quota and snowball sampling". Berg (2009) also adds "convenient sampling to the list". In Chapter One of the research, the researcher mentioned that non-probability sampling was used.

The researcher used learners from different schools in South Africa as the sample for the interviews and as for international learners, interviews were done in their countries were the event took place.

For this study individuals were chosen for face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. This was done using a purposive sampling method. Serry and Liamputtong (2013:39) argues that the "purposive sample method is relied heavily upon in case studies more than other types of sample methods"Serry and Liamputtong (2013:38:40) defines a purposive sample as "the deliberate selection of specific individuals, events or settings because of crucial information they provide that cannot be obtained so well through other channels". A purposive sample affords the space to choose a sample which is appropriate for evolving the purpose of the study. Rule and John (2011) argue that "this is so because case studies are less concerned with representativeness of the sample but more concerned with samples that provides an in-depth and trustworthy account of the case".

The study used these sampling strategies because participants were accessible in different places visited by the researcher. The researcher conducted the interviews after the exhibition when the participants were freely and willing to take part. Due to the nature of the study, participants (or sampling) of the study were arranged in an order which helped the researcher to sort out the sample in a professional manner. The order followed by the researcher when the participants were done with the exhibition, focused more on the participants who had experienced the marketing strategies used by the University of Limpopo from previous years. The participants of the study were based in different areas in Venda, Tzaneen, Polokwane and Harare (Zimbabwe), which led to the researcher dividing participants up so that data collection could be easy and understandable.

In terms of the sample, Serry and Liamputtong (2013: 40:48) argues that "any sample size should provide enough data to allow the research questions to be addressed fully". Serry and Liamputtong (2013:50:55) further states that in "qualitative research there is no set formula to determine an appropriate sample size, however data saturation is used as a way of justifying the number of participants or documents to be analysed".. Questions posed are attached as Appendix 3.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION: INTERVIEWS

Data collection methods refer to research tools employed to investigate a problem and to discover the facts regarding the study at hand (Bazeley, 2013:8). Data collection is the methodical gathering of information relevant to the research problem using approaches such as interviews, focus groups, participant observation and many others (Bless, et al, 2013). Data for this study was collected through interviews. The use of interviews helped in getting accurate and proper data relating to the effectiveness of the IMC strategies.

As elucidated earlier in this chapter, interview sources were used for data collection. This study used semi-structured interviews to collect data. Field memos were also used in order to capture the non-verbal aspects of the data collection endeavour; the field memos were used to produce an interpretation of the interviews.

Interviews are method of gathering information through an oral quiz using a set of pre-planned core questions. Kvale 1996:480:500) defines interviews as:

> a conversation whose purpose is to gather description of "life-world" of interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. An interview is an extendable conversation between partners that aims at having an in-depth information about a certain topic or subject.

According to Shneiderman and Plaisant (2005), interviews can be very productive since the interviewer can pursue specific issues of concern that may lead to focused and constructive suggestions. Dornyei (2007:102) argues that it is a natural and socially acceptable way of collecting data as it can be used in various situations conveying a variety of issues.

In line with this study, interviews were adopted as a tool for social research as they facilitated the obtaining of direct answers and explanations for human actions through a comprehensive speech interaction. Qualitative research interviews are categorised in three ways. These are; structured interviews where questions are planned and created, unstructured interviews (interviews are not planned) and semi -structured

interviews (few questioned palnned). The study used semi-structured interviews. The main advantages of the interview method of data collection are noted by Genise and Edwards (2000) and they are as follows:

- Direct contact with users leads to specific constructive suggestions.
- They are good at obtaining detailed information.
- Few participants are needed to gather rich and detailed data.

Interviews provide the study with valid data that can be used in a study, all the tools used in an interview help produce good results.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS

An important aspect of data analysis is the search for meaning through direct interpretation of what is observed by the researcher. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) define qualitative data analysis as "working with the data, organising them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesising them, and searching for patterns". The aim of the analysis of qualitative data is to discover patterns, concepts, themes and meanings. In case study research, Yin (2003) discusses the need for searching the data for patterns which may explain or identify causal links in the data base. A process sometimes referred to as open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) is commonly employed whereby the researcher identifies and tentatively names the conceptual categories into which the phenomena observed can be grouped.

Qualitative data collected through interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was used in identifying analysing and reporting patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:201).

Data analysis considered the individuality of each participant and their experiences while leading to the understanding of the topic under examination. As the researcher engaged with the data, he managed to discover some interesting information which aligned with the objectives of the study. It is perilous to identify how statements or emerging themes connect if the analysed data is to be all-inclusive and complete (De Vos & Strydom, 2011).

The data was stored in a tape recorder which the researcher kept safe for later use. Some of the collected data was stored in the personal computer of the researcher. In this study, the researcher decided to use thematic analysis informed by the nature of the data collected. Thematic analysis is a process where themes emerge when the researcher analyse data collected. It is a process of recognising themes through vigilant reading of data. It is a method of outline discovery where emerging themes become groups for analysis. The emerging themes used were those which aligned to the objectives of the study. The researcher followed the 'bellow steps' when analysing data for better understanding and to clarify certain information which might be confusing to the readers.

a) Data analysis of interviews

In this study, a thematic analysis process as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used for data analysis of the interviews. Thematic analysis is defined as a "method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke 2006:79).

b) Familiarisation with the data

Before data can be analysed it is important that the data is prepared for analysis. In this study, the researcher made sure that preparation was in form of transcribing all recorded interviews. After the data preparation, as Braun and Clarke (2006:77-101) explain, here "the first step in the thematic analysis process is for the researcher to get familiarised with the data". Creswell (2013) adds that "familiarisation with the data involves reading and re-reading through all the data collected to get the sense of the entire data". However, Braun and Clarke (2006:105 -110) stated that "during this initial phase it is important to repeat reading the data in order to generate ideas about what is in the data". The idea behind the first phase of data collection was to understand the data collected by taking notes and ideas for cording.

c) Generating initial codes

Once a researcher is familiar with all the data the next natural step is to produce initial codes from the data. According to David and Sutton (2011), coding is the process of

"applying codes to portions of text so that those portions can be intertwined to highlight similarities and differences within and between texts". Codes are described by Walliman (2011) as labels or tags which are used to give meaning to collected data. Serry and Liamputtong (2013: 243) add that "codes are names which are given to sections of the data". These codes are generated by identifying interesting aspects in the data which show some repeated patterns across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

There are mainly two ways of generating codes as described by different authors. Codes can emerge from the data or they can be based on concepts in the theoretical framework (Babbie & Mouton, 2011; Creswell 2013; Rule & John 2011). When codes are generated from the data this is referred to as 'open coding' while codes based on identified theory are generated through the process of axial coding (Babbie & Mouton ,2011). Braun and Clarke (2006:89) explain that the "coding process involves writing notes on the text being analysed or using highlighters or coloured pens to indicate potential patterns".

d) Searching for themes

Creswell (2013:185) defines themes as "broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea". Codes are transformed into themes by way of identifying similar patterns among the various codes (Berg, 2009: 341). The various codes should reflect some form of relationship amongst themselves for them to be grouped into a single theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006:89). Once the preliminary themes were identified for this study, the next phase was to review such themes.

e) Reviewing themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2006:89) reviewing the themes is a process of refinement of the preliminary themes. Themes should be supported by enough data and the data within the themes should fit together in a meaningful way (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 91). During the reviewing of themes all the collated data extracts for each theme are read to ensure that the data extracts do form a coherent pattern which gives meaning to each respective theme (Braun & Clarke 2006: 91).

f) Refining and naming themes

This phase is an extension of the previous phase where themes are defined and further refined (Braun & Clarke 2006: 92). During this phase, the researcher can go back to the collated data extracts for each theme and "organise themes into a coherent and internally consistent account, with accompanying narrative" (Braun & Clarke 2006: 92) According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 93) titles of themes need to give any reader a sense of what the theme is about.

g) Producing the report

This last phase of thematic analysis involves doing the final analysis and writing the report (Braun & Clarke 2006). The final analysis "provides a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story of the story the data tell" (Braun & Clarke 2006 :100).

The researcher started by listening to the recordings and transferred them into the personal computer for accessibility. The recordings were categorised according to schools and country. The audio recordings were then named according to province, district and school. The researcher listened to the recordings one by one, writing down themes which would be suitable for the recordings and depending upon the questions asked by the researcher. The researcher listened carefully and made sure that the information was well understood. The researcher then summarised the interviews knowing that more than one theme might exist in the audio recordings. The researcher wrote down some of the information from the recordings for clarity since some of the information was not clearly structured. The researcher then identified themes which were relevant to the study and the data collected from different places. The identified themes were well - analysed and understood before they could be written down and captured in a safe place for later use. The researcher went deeper in the data collected to understand the data and the theme.

3.8 QUALITY CRITERIA

This section outlined the criteria a researcher undergone in data collection. Rights of participants were considered when data collection took place. Quality criteria of the study are outlined below.

3.8.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a demonstration of whether or not evidence for results reported is sound and whether or not the arguments made, based on the results, is strong. The researcher ensured that the identities of the participants were not known and the information provided was accurate and trustworthy. The researcher made sure that any information related to the study or to a participant was safe. According to Marriam (1998):

> Traditional criteria for ensuring the credibility of research data objectivity, reliability and validity are used in scientific and experimental studies because they are often based on standardized instruments and can be assessed in a relatively straightforward manner.

Creswell (1998) suggests that:

> The trustworthiness of qualitative research can be established by using four strategies: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, and are constructed parallel to the analogous quantitative criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and neutrality.

3.8.2 Credibility

The researcher ensured that the data or information accumulated from the participants were well demonstrated and understood, trustworthy and accurate. Bless, et al (2013) state that credibility seeks to ensure that the findings depict the truth of the reality under study. In other words, that they make sense. The effectiveness of the marketing strategy of the university will be determined by the participants' responses. Moody,

Smith and Ragan, (2005) state that "rationalists would propose that there is not a single reality to be discovered, but that each individual construct is a personal reality". However, Lincoln and Guba, (1985) consider member checking into the findings as the most critical technique for establishing credibility.

3.8.3 Transferability

This information will allow other researchers to compare and assess similarities between given situations and other contexts from which the findings emerged (Bless, at el, 2013:237). The study provides a detailed description of the context in which the data were collected. The data was interpreted fairly and understandably. Maxwell, at el (2002: 689-696) argues that "generalisability refers to the extent to which one can extend the account of a particular situation or population to other persons, times or setting than those directly studied".

Seale (1999: 465-578) believes that "transferability is achieved by providing a detailed, rich description of the settings studied to provide the reader with sufficient information to be able to judge the applicability of the findings to other settings that they know". Since this study adopted a case study approach, the process of generalisation that suitably matches it is inferential generalisation which is best explained as generalising from the context of the research study itself to other settings or contexts (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Ritchie and Lewis, (2003) state that "it is a matter of judgement of the context and phenomena found which allows others to assess the transferability of the findings to another setting".

3.8.4 Dependability

Data collected was also well analysed and presented in terms of the research design. All steps of data collection were followed and presented accurately. Bless, at el (2013:237) state that a clear and thoughtful research strategy should be followed and each step should be completed. The researcher ensured that the study is well presented and every step of the research design or method is well followed and presented. According to Merriam (1998), research design refers to the "extent to which research findings can be replicated with similar subjects in a similar context". Merriam

(1998) suggests that" reliability in this type of research should be determined by whether the results are consistent with the data collected". According to Seale (1999), "dependability can be achieved through auditing which consists of the researcher's documentation of data, methods and decisions made during a thesis as well as its end products". Reviewing for dependability requires that the data and descriptions of the research should be elaborate and rich. It may also be improved by changing the research design as new findings emerge during data collection.

3.8.5 Conformability

The researcher made sure that the findings of the study are accurate and clear. The information that was gathered was of quality and was helpful. According to Bless, at el (2013: 237), it is important to show that each step has been completed thoroughly and carefully. The data collected was fair and trustworthy. The findings will assist other organisations which specialise in marketing and communication. Seale (1999: 465) argues that "auditing could also be used to establish confirmability in which the researcher makes the provision of a methodological self-critical account of how the research was done".

3.9 CONCLUSION

This Section covered all the quality criteria, which covered rights of the participant. The criteria were important as it helped the researcher in collecting valid data that was accurate and relevant to the study. Findings of the study depict the truth of the reality under study. Data collected was well - explained and in a manner so that understanding would be reached by the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR: INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the data that was analysed. The data analysed included interviews and the participants involved were high school learners from South Africa and Zimbabwe. Nine (9) interviews were conducted in line with the objectives of the study. Permission to collect the data was obtained from the schools visited and ethical clearance was obtained prior to data collection. The demographics of the participants are included in Section 4.2.

According to Gambetti , Graffigna and Biraghi, (2012:659-687), analysis of interview data takes place in the following manner:

> *…All interviews [are] analysed according to the procedure of Grounded Theory analysis, which requires three sequential phases of coding: a first analysis step, named 'open coding', that implies a preliminary identification of concepts that fit with data; a second analysis step, named 'axial coding', that consists of the progressive aggregation and condensation of codes into broader categories; a final analysis step – 'selective coding' – consisting of the abstraction from data and the interpretive detection of connections among categories in order to find the 'core category' (i.e. the pivotal concept that articulates the whole process under investigation). This complex and systematic coding procedure [should be] aimed at describing the elements implied in the development of the engagement process and at defining its evolutionary phases.*

The data analysis presented in this chapter followed the aforementioned steps Direct quotations from respondents were used to present and reflect findings of the study.

Interview data from participants were saved as recordings of the interview on a tape recorder and were later saved on a computer with password protection to ensure confidentiality of the information. The transcribed recordings were thoroughly read at first, through an iterative process, to first obtain an overall and comprehensive impression of the context before the abstraction process of coding began where units of meaning are identified or labelled. Codes are names or labels assigned to specific units or segments of related meaning identified within the filed notes and transcripts

(Hennig, Gruissem, Grossniklaus & Köhler, 2004) The detailed steps taken are discussed in the earlier paragraphs of this section.

Non-verbal data was recorded in field notes that were gathered during data collection. The non-verbal data provided deeper insights into the responses provided by the learners.

The data was analysed in order to explore how the high school learners view the marketing communication efforts of the university and to understand the constructs, they consider as being important when the university communicates its recruitment messages. The aforementioned endeavour in data analysis was linked to the three objectives of the study. The first objective sought to assess the effectiveness of direct marketing strategies used by the University of Limpopo recruitment office. Questions about the effectiveness of the recruitment were included in the interview topic guide and responses from the interviews are presented in this chapter (Refer to Appendix 3). The second objective, which delved into the nature of the social network used by the university as part of digital marketing, was also considered in the analysis. The discussion of the experiences of the high school learners about the tools and platforms used by the university presents an interview of the second objective of this study. The third objective, which examined the role of digital marketing communication tools in the recruitment of high school learners, was dealt with in the interview topic guide and the accompanying analysis of the data is included in this chapter. The discussion of the high school learners' viewpoints about the role of digital communication in marketing the university is included to deal with the third objective. The analysis of the emergent themes and the concepts in the data addresses the fourth objective, which was to understand how high school learners make choices about universities.

4.2. DESCRIBING THE SETTINGS

The researcher conducted the study in Harare Zimbabwe, and in South Africa where high school leaners came to attend a career exhibition. The interviews took place outside a classroom where learners who were willing to take part in the study were interviewed by the researcher. The researcher selected those who were willing to take part and started recording them based on the questions asked.

The setting was relevant for the study since the main focus was on the high school learners who formed part of UL prospective student's cohort. The researcher selected a variety of male and female students from different schools in Zimbabwe as part of the study, in order to check the effectiveness of the marketing strategies that the University uses to recruit students.

The recruitment of student's method used was direct marketing for international students. Each university is given a slot to present their institution and to explain the requirements from different faculties. The use of word of mouth as a way of sharing information is the one that most institutions prefer when they are in other countries. The University of Limpopo was given a chance to present its services. The way most of the learners reacted towards the presentation was not pleasing due to time constraints. Many of them asked many questions about logistics and marketing strategies.

In South Africa, the exhibitions cover all the provinces and districts. The researcher was limited to a small place in Limpopo where the exhibition took place; thus interviews were conducted with participants from different schools around Limpopo. The exhibition took place in a hall where leaners could visit any stall that took their interest. The researcher used one of the classrooms to conduct the interviews with all the participants who agreed to take part.

The researcher conducted the study with the South African learners to check their perceptions towards their home university and the marketing strategies that are used to recruit. The low number of enrolments at the University of Limpopo was as a result of poor marketing implementation since many of participants did not know about their home university existence. The important aspect of using local or domestic students,

was to get their views and compare them with the ones from international schools, and the perception was made that their responses were same. The main goal was to check the effectiveness of the marketing strategies used by the university to recruit both international (Zimbabwe) and domestic students.

4.3 DEMOGRAPHICS OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

The study collected data from learners attending school different places in Limpopo province in South Africa and as well as from Zimbabwe. The below table indicates the demographic details of the participants.

TABLE 4.1: DEMOGRAPHICS OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

No	Residential Area	Citizenship	Home Language	Age	Gender
1.	Harare	Zimbabwe	Shona	18	Male
2.	Harare	Zimbabwe	Shona	17	Female
3.	Harare	Zimbabwe	Shona	18	Female
4.	Harare	Zimbabwe	Shona	18	Male
5.	Dendron	South Africa	Sepedi	18	Female
6.	Polokwane	South Africa	Sepedi	18	Female
7.	Tzaneen	South Africa	Xitsonga	17	Female
8.	Venda	South Africa	Tshivenda	17	Female

9.	Ga- Molepo	South Africa	Sepedi	18	Female

In this study, the raw data was collected using a tape recorder. A condensed version of the transcriptions is attached as Appendix 6.

Transcription of the collected data was done and the researcher compiled the data for analysis. Codes were categorised and evaluated according to the research aim. The extraction of thematic relationships of the data was also done and patterns of relevance to the research were identified. Thematic relationships and patterns identified during the transcription and coding process contributed towards the development of sub - themes.

It is very important that this section forms part of the study since it involves a number of learners from different schools and environments. The participants of this study were learners from schools in Zimbabwe and South Africa. It was a bit difficult for the researcher to compile data from learners who did not know, or relate to the marketing strategies and universities around them. The demographics of the study included age, name of schools and nationality. The number of participants was determined by those that were willing to take part, voluntarily and willingly.

The study encountered challenges when approaching male learners for interviews, some did not want to take part and were shy. The study wanted to include on equal number of males and females so that their experience towards the marketing strategies used by the university could be compared. It was a challenge when many of the male learners decided not to take part, and the researcher then decided to work with the group had that decided to participate. The number of female learners is higher, and they wanted to contribute to the study based on their interest in studying at the University of Limpopo.

The study also focused on the age of the participants whom are high school leaners. The table below indicates the ages of participants from different countries.

Table 4.2: AGE OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Ages	Frequency
16-17	0
18-19	09
20-21	0

The table above shows the ages of the participants in the study and the frequency. The study focused on the participants from the ages of 18 -19 since some who are 20-21 are still in the secondary level at school. The number of participants was then found through the use of interviews. The study intended focusing on a number between 10 and 12, and this number still fell within the focus group category. The study interviewed participants the ages between 18 -19 and 20 – 21.

The University of Limpopo's image was also tested through the age selection since secondary school learners are the ones preparing for tertiary level. The table above indicates the number of participants and their ages, and it shows that the ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 19 and which is the right age for learners in the secondary level from Grade 11 to Grade 12. The age range of other learners were not covered since some of them found it hard to participate.

Some schools have learners is the 16 years to 18 years' category and which indicates that some of those who are 18 years are doing grade 12 and preparing for tertiary level. The age grouping was determined by the number of participants the study aimed at and it showed that the majority of them were in Grade 12 and looking at career choices for the future. Data collected from participants was also categorised by schools in which each learner was enrolled.

TABLE 4.3: NAMES OF SCHOOL AND NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS.

NAME OF SCHOOL	FREQUENCY
Sizaraphi high school	01
Gateway high school	02
Dendron high school	01
Capricorn high school	01
Makgoka high school	02
Mbilwi high school	01
Nkowankowa high	01
Total number of learners from school	9

The study examined schools in Zimbabwe and other schools in South Africa. The researcher attempted to cover the countries in which the University marketed itself. Respondents were selected based on their availability and the permission from their teachers. The main aim was to interview three from each school but some of the learners were not comfortable with the interview. The first listed schools were part of the interviews but some of the learners did not want to participate since they felt that they did not know much about the university. The use of these learners came after realising that the university target most of their students from these schools. In other schools such as Dendron High, some of the learners were reluctant to take part in the study, so only one learner agreed to participant. The school's in different countries are quoted in the table below and indicate the nationality and the frequency of the learners who participated in the study.

The study also indicated the counties used for data collection. The table below indicate the name of the country and the number of participants.

TABLE 4.4:NAME OF COUNTRIES AND NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS.

Nationality	Frequency
South Africa	05
Zimbabwe	04

The number learners who participated in the study was directed by the willingness of the learners and their teachers. In Zimbabwe, 15 schools attended the exhibition, but some learners could not participate since they were not ready and did not know anything about the university. The study opted for learners in Zimbabwe in view of the current population of Zimbabweans on campus. It shows that many Zimbabwean learners have an interest in the institution. They know how the university operates and they know of the marketing strategies of the university.

The way some of the learners in South Africa reacted in the study, showed that more research is needed on the marketing strategies used by the university. South African schools did not want to have a say in the study since some of their learners preferred other institutions. The study chose South African schools which had learners whom some have interest in studying at the university.

The demographics of this study were directed by the objectives and the aim of the study. Few learners showed interest in the study and data collection was done properly following all the procedures. The use of age, gender and nationality indicates the quality and validity of the data collected from the participants. The objectives of the study showed direction in the findings and also the way in which the study aimed at reaching a conclusion on the marketing strategies used by the university.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF THEMES

This section discusses the themes that emerged from the data analysis. The themes were identified through an iterative process of coding and recoding to establish the categories of data that related to effective ways in which the university can communicate its services and brand to high school learners and recruit them to study at the University of Limpopo. The analysis developed, or generated, the emerging themes. These themes developed after a thorough analysis was done by the researcher.

The discussion below presents the themes that emerged and these emergent themes were considered as concepts that are important for the University in attempting to reach the high school learners. Furthermore, the grounded theory approach used in this study sought to identify the elements of marketing that were considered as being important for the university to reach the high school learners through its marketing communication messages.

4.4.1. Theme 1: Branding for the University

Harsha,andShah, (2011) describe branding in higher education institutions as the latest focus in education marketing to attract students. The use of branding is very important for organisations which compete against each other, be it in education or retail organisations. According to Coleman, (2010), the American Marketing Association (AMA) first produced a brand definition in the 1960s that described brand as a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of all these, and intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors.

The use of branding by universities is very important for recruitment and other events that promote the University. The use of posters, banners and other branding material does matter when it comes to branding for the university. During the interviews, one

informant said that the use of branding such as banners was very important for marketing and recruiting students.

Example 1(,18 years old, Gateway High School, Shona, from Zimbabwe):

> *R1: I only knew about Limpopo university today, I didn't even go to their table because it wasn't that attractive really, so I think they have to use more banners and branding materials so that people may be attracted to your table in this items and graphics and so yeah I only knew about it today coz my friend had their flyer and something so and yeah.*

This lack of branding by the university is very negative for the institution itself due to the way people perceive the organisation. The use of banners and other branding material helps promote the institution in the marketing sphere. For example, many of universities use branding for marketing their services and ensure that they use more banners that outline their services and contact details.

The use of branding is very important, and universities can invest more on branding to gain more recognition from students during career exhibitions. In most events, branding of the university plays a major role in getting the attention of students and also making it a point that they get more information about the institution and its services. Poor branding of an institution leads to a bad reputation for that organisation De Chernatony's (2001). De Chernatony's (2001:32-34) model of brand reputation management conceptualises the brand building process as revolving around the identification and narrowing of gaps between a brand's identity and its reputation. Communicating a brand successfully, both to prospective students and current ones, requires strategic planning and effective tools. This will be explained in the section below on brand positioning of the University of Limpopo.

In the discussion with learners at Gateway, Zimbabwe, one informant stated that the communication of branding also needs to be nurtured as some of the information communicated to them did not make sense, or was understandable.

Example 2 (Zimbabwe, Mtshabezi High School,Shona, 17 years,female)

> *Well I find your direct marketing strategies not effective just because I found out about this University today, if it wasn't for the function which was held here today by the school which i came to which is holding a function about career guidance, I wouldn't have known about this University. I probably think that you should think of visiting more schools and also considering those schools which are in places that are not in the city, considering that they don't get invited to functions like this one.*

In this excerpt, the informant linked the use of direct marketing (school visits) with the use of branding as very important and that they could not be separated. The informant indicated that most universities, especially UL, do not visit schools in the rural areas to promote their brand, or services and this leads to a low number of international students. In most cases many institutions do not promote their brands in the rural areas and other developing areas. Their main focus is on the high-class schools in the suburbs.

4.4.2. Theme 2: Brand personality of the University

Marketing used to be a one-way method of advertising and selling, company versus customers. In the current marketing environment this is seen as a way of building relationships with stakeholders through branding and brand positioning all over the world. A brand can be defined in different ways. Some scholars like Czinkota, Ronkainen, Ortiz, and Ronkainen, (2004) sate that "a brand is a name, symbol, sign that is used by the organisation to differentiate its offerings from those of its competitors". It can also be seen as a sum of culture, identity, positioning and soul of the organisation

Brand personality can be identified as an image of an organisation or its identity. Aaker (1997) states that brand personality can be seen as the use of personality, brand as metaphor, to communicate the brand and its relationship to customers. A brand with personality is more understandable and memorable. Direct marketing campaigns such

as career exhibitions are important and the information sharing also plays a vital role in the customer's life.

In this study, brand personality is presented through the information presented to stakeholders of the university. This includes information based on the services the university offers. The researcher saw brand personality as the same as a UL presenter sharing information or direct marketing through information sharing as a way of practising brand personality. The manner in which brand personality is addressed by the institution is a bit worrying and most of the responses focused more on the information presented to them versus the one on the website and social media platforms.

During the interviews, one of the informants stated that the information presented to them by the university is sometimes useless.

Example 3 (Tzaneen, Nkowankowa Secondary School, Xitsonga,18years, female)

The information that they gave us is useless because their presentation was short and even the question and answer session they didn't give us enough time as they selected the number of questions which they were going to answer and by so saying some of us we never really got time to ask what we needed to know.

The information presented to learners is not good in the sense that some learners do not get what they need or have aimed for. The use of brand personality is a challenge to the institution of higher learning when it comes to recruiting students. Some institutions use their information to recruit and give students some time for questioning and clarity of their service. To outline the importance of brand personality, Sung, Kim, and Jung (2004) stated that "content of advertising should be understandable and interesting with persuasive features that can easily stick to the memory of audiences".

Therefore, for higher education institutions to achieve the ultimate goals or objectives of their recruitment campaigns, they (the institutions) need to package the contents especially language, messages and symbols, among others, of such campaigns in ways that can easily attract attention, be understood and be remembered by students and constituents in order to persuade them. In the interview held with one student from

Makgoka Secondary School on the issue direct marketing, it was stated that the information is not well presented.

Example 4 (Tzaneen, Nkowankowa Secondary School, Xitsonga,18years, Female):

> *I know about the university of Limpopo but I don't think they represent it well because they don't give us enough information, you only get to know more about it when you apply.*

This information is very important when brand personality is misrepresented to students. Student need to be well - informed about the application process and other information related to the programmes they want to enrol in.

4.4.3. Theme 3: Brand positioning

The term 'brand' can be tracked back to product marketing where the role of branding and brand management has been primarily to create differentiation and preference for a product or service in the mind of the customer (Knox & Bickerton, 2000). The University of Limpopo's brand positioning or brand management could have been well defined by the customers if it was well presented or performed. The development of branding is system which the University of Limpopo could have developed and used to sustain an advantage over its competitors and this could have increased the number of international and local students. The only way to achieve the objective would have had to come through the positioning of the brand. Positioning is defined by Kotler, at el, (2013) as "the act of designing the company's offering and image or identity so that they occupy a meaningful and distinctive competitive positioning in the target customers mind". If the university had managed to create the brand positioning, it could have had a number of students from the time of brand positioning implementation. The university could have managed brand positioning only if it was correctly implemented through direct marketing which was effective.

In the responses of the effectiveness of direct marketing where the theme Brand Positioning emanated from the responses form the interview the following quotes serve to support the preceding view.

Example 5 (Zimbabwe Harare, Gateway Secondary School, Shona,18years, Male):

> *I only knew about Limpopo university today, I didn't even go to their table because it wasn't that attractive really, so I think they have to use more banners and branding materials so that people may be attracted to your table in this items and graphics and so yeah I only knew about it today coz my friend had their flyer and something so and yeah.*

The above statement was also mentioned under a theme 'Branding of the university'. This shows that the university did not place or position its brand in the areas which the informant is talking about. The institution needed to have its brand positioned in a strategic place where it would be able to attract many more students.

The recruitment strategies used of attending the career exhibition organised by an individual's organisation sometimes affects the brand positioning of the institution. If the university does not change the way of marketing or recruiting students, the relationship between the organisation and the students will be destroyed.

One of the informants did not know about the institution because of her geographical location in a rural area and the institution had never visited the area. Some student from Zimbabwe complained of the school visit campaigns as a positioning technique.

Example 6 (Zimbabwe Harare, Mtshabezi High School,Shona,18 years, female):

> *Well I find your direct marketing strategies not effective just because I found out about this University today, if it wasn't for the function which was held here today by the school which I came to which is holding a function about career guidance, I wouldn't have known about this University. I probably think that you should think of visiting more schools and also considering those schools which are in places that are not in the city, considering that they don't get invited to functions like this one.*

> *I also think that you should consider having a company, not a company as such, but a place where students can go to if they want to ask more information about your University course. If I like your University but don't get another chance to have a conversation with your presenters I will end up losing interest in your university, I also think that you use posters like placing them on roads considering that most of us don't have phones which others have. We don't have access to social media so if we have your information at our schools to refer to its easier for us to know of your University.*

The use of brand positioning was also indicated by some scholars who believed in brand positioning as a good tool to recruit international students. Studies of international marketing focusing on students who sought higher education outside their home country, has been a key topic for empirical research (Mazzarol, 1998). This is an indication of how important brand positioning is for universities in order to overpower the competition when it comes to recruiting students. Most international students believe in the branding and brand positioning and that University of Limpopo would have managed to get more international and domestic students if brand positioning had been implemented.

The mentioned statement shows that direct marketing is very important but only if its elements are correctly implemented. The use of brand positioning can build a strong relationship with the students. The informant indicated that the university needed to do visits and also invite schools to come and get informed about the programmes and services that the university is offering. It will help the university to have more students.

Example 7 Zimbabwe Harare, Gateway Secondary School,Shona,18 years, male)

> *When, I think that the number of students who come to university will be more and more because they will know about your university and if people don't know about something, they won't attend. Same as if you don't know that there's a wedding you won't attend.*

The use of brand positioning was stated in the interviews by a number of informants. It also shows that many institutions were not recruiting students using the correct marketing strategies hence the drop in the number of enrolments.

Technology has become a most important tool which organisations use in their marketing departments. In global marketing, where competition is very strong, technology becomes an escape for many organisation as they to plan and strategise on their marketing mechanism. In the recent years, with the introduction of digital communication, marketing communication has undergone a dramatic change. Timofeeva, at el (2012), state that the "world has become increasingly connected, the focus has shifted from one-way communication (monologue) to two-way communication (dialogue)".

4.4.4. Theme 4: Social media presence

One of themes that emerged during the analysis was the social media presence, i.e. the uses of social media to recruit learners. The university also use digital communication as a marketing strategy which is also not effective (Smith,2009). This use of digital communication, including social media, blogs and video sharing platforms, has empowered companies to provide a variety of new channels and platforms to reach their customers and interact with them. The variety of platforms existing seems overwhelming and the choice of what social media platforms to use becomes a problem. Nair and Subramaniam, (2012:13 -14) state that "social media presence is a growing part of marketing communication and it gives universities a voice and means to converse with their prospective students".

Interviews held with students on the use of digital communication by the university of Limpopo took place. A theme (social media presence) emerged after the repetition of social media usage in to recruiting and promoting the university. In highlighting the power of social media presence Smith (2009:448) states "Digital communication platforms used to recruit students include Facebook and other social media pages which facilitate an increasing of student's influence". He further states that:

online opinions generally influence offline opinion as they move into traditional media. The introduction of digital communication revolution is felt around, even for those who are not actively involved in social media, Smith, (2009*)*

The following excerpt, the informant links the use of digital communication with the social media pages of the university, both, Facebook, the website and Twitter. The main focal point was on their busy one, which is the Facebook site and the website. One of the informants indicated that they used social media, but the university is notas active as   other institutions.

Example 1(Zimbabwe Harare, Gateway Secondary School,Shona,18 years,male)

Uhm I do use social media to, for educational information and I really don't like to search their stuff like search university, I only go deeper into those that pop up on my page. So if your university doesn't pop up I won't look into it.

The use of social media to recruit students has gained more attention from many higher education institutions. It has come to their attention after realising that more students use social media for many purposes; education, information searching and learning purposes. This is very important for this study, looking at the use of digital communication to recruit students and to promote the university. Some of the students spend most their time using social media and rely more on social media as an information searching tool.

In the interviews, one informant mentioned the inactiveness of the special media content about the service the university offer. It focuses more on the events and announcements that should inform students about the services offered by the university.

Example 2(Female,17 years old, Makgoka High School, Sepedi, South Africa)

And I use social media for some education stuff but mostly I use WhatsApp. I once searched the UL page but I really didn't get what I was hoping to see or know, cause they only post out old information.

The use of information online is very important and it can either build or destroy an organisational image. The information posted by the university is old and students visiting the site might lose interest in joining the institution. Digital communication does not only focus on the information posting, but it is also interactive and an information giant for learners. The use of information pop-ups can help in recruiting students from different areas of the world.

Example 3 (Zimbabwe Harare, Gateway Secondary School, Shona18 years, male)

Lot of us this nowadays we are attracted to the WhatsApp's, the YouTube, the Instagram's but I haven't really been compelled to your university's sites or something course there's nothing popping up in my screen and there's nothing to lure me to come to you

The response of the participants shows that the information popups can make students aware of the university and develop interest in joining the institution. The information is not informative, but is just there and it confuses many students. The use of digital communication needs to be more interactive. One of the informants also indicated that the use of information on various social media can help the university to get recognition from different places.

Example 3 (Zimbabwe Harare, Gateway Secondary School, Shona,18 years, male)

If you post about your University on social medias and WhatsApp platforms and all that other stuff, people will know about you guys more and your advertising would actually go an extra mile.

The use of social media for information sharing can be very helpful to develop an effective way of using digital communication by universities. It is a powerful tool that can bring people together from different areas around the globe. The information posted needs to cover the targeted groups for enrolment purposes; not only for internal use but also for external users. One informant also mentioned the information posted as a threat to the organisation.

Example 5 (Tzaneen, Nkowankowa Secondary School, Xitsonga,18 years, female)

> *I love Facebook, Instagram, twitter and google so uhm I once searched the UL website and what I noticed is that they don't post all the necessary information, they only show us what they want us to see not what we need to see.*

Another informant also mentioned the way the social media is not helping with information that was supposed to help them.

Example 6 (Venda, Mbilwi Secondary School, Tshivenda,18years, female)

> *Yes I do use the social media for educational information. I recently visited the UL page and I didn't get much information. I think they should keep us updated about what's going on in their University by posting regularly on Social media.*

Social media platforms play a major role in marketing in both the public and the private sectors. The website of an organisation needs to be well - established and interactive, containing relevant information for students and other stakeholders. The information posted on the platforms should be interactive and relevant to the users. The comment made by the informant showed that most students focus more on social media, both Facebook pages and the website. The information posted is what determines the reputation of the organisation

Example 7 (Zimbabwe Harare, Gateway Secondary School, Shona,18years, female)

> *I have searched for UL in most platforms like on Facebook and I've noticed that they don't update or post often so I can say that its social media impact is very weak. I think they should post all the courses or degrees that they offer and their requirements and duration. The information they post on social media doesn't give me enough information about the degree I want to pursue, like such as job opportunities that are available and stuff like that. They should also improve their advertisement strategies like make use of pop up advertisement and so on.*

The use of the word 'information' posted on the social media of the institution can also help build a good relationship with the students. Some students believe that the use of the website, which is interactive with relevant information, will help them apply and also get more information about the university. In the interview, one informant complained about the website and the online application which wasn't working and that a fellow student had told him that the website was not functioning.

Example 7 (Zimbabwe Harare,Mtshabezi High School,Shona,17 years,female)

I heard that sorry that their application system online and Facebook account wasn't properly working and you need to fix that ,uhm, and also on the website we need to know how the university is like, we don't want to know about just the academics but then maybe videos of students telling us their lives on campus, what they do on their free times, are there any activities, are there sports, something like that so that you know we don't just come to learn academics but then everything else, so yeah.

Another statement was uttered by a student from Dendron High School about the website of the university:

Example 8 (Dendron,Dendron High School,Sepedi,18 years,female)

I use all kinds of social media but I only use them in the evening, I once visited the UL pages but there was really nothing that I found to be useful to be honest. For UL to upgrade I think they should let us know about every little change that they make such as if there is a change of APS or curriculum. The difficulties that I encounter with UL online application is that its takes a lot of time with hidden information so I think that their information should be well presented and also the admin of all the social medias should be active in all for always.

Scott (2004) states that the survival of the institutions (e.g. university) depends to a great extent on their marketing capacity to retain current students and to recruit new ones through brand placement and brand personality. One of the most notable trends in higher education branding and marketing is that institutions are dedicating more time to direct marketing to reach their objectives. The use of direct marketing can also

be seen through the effectiveness of brand placement and brand personality. Fox and Kotler (1985) also suggest that adapting effective direct marketing would be an effective tool to overcome the decline in student enrolment. Direct marketing plays an important role in the organisation and helps marketing department with an effective and productive marketing plan.

The researcher noted with disappointment that the participants mentioned that the website and social media pages are ineffective. In the above mentioned quotations, none of them raised any positive views on the social media pages and the website. The research participants alluded to the fact that the university website and social media pages are not updated and that the information posted is not helpful.

Most of the participants outlined their views based on the questions of the study. The use of direct marketing by the University of Limpopo needs more attention and the use of branding material must be taken into consideration. In the above responses, direct marketing was not effectively implemented and the use of branding as a marketing tool was not visible. The university official did not respond to the questions asked and which resulted in the study focusing on the high school participants.

Data collected from all the high school learners showed a lack of a proper implementation of direct marketing and the use of digital communication to market the institution. The use of digital communication is also a challenge to online visibility of the university. The data collected from the interviews also supports the lack of the proper use of direct marketing and digital communication by the university.

The study also addressed the content of the social media and the website of the University of Limpopo and what is said about the institution in the digital world. The image of the institution is also seen through the content of the digital media used to promote the university or communicate with prospective students.

The study managed to develop some themes throughout the interviews which relate to the objectives and the aim of the study. The literature discussed the objectives and themes also emerged from the data collected and which relate to the literature. The following sub theme emerged under the name. The use of digital communication for recruitment.

Example1:(Male ,18 years old, Gateway High School, Shona, from Zimbabwe):

R1:I only knew about Limpopo university today, I didn't even go to their table because it wasn't that attractive really, so I think they have to use more banners and branding materials so that people may be attracted to your table in this items and graphics and so yeah I only knew about it today coz my friend had their flyer and something so and yeah.

Example 2:(Female,17 years old, Gateway High School, Shona, Zimbabbwe)

R2: Today is actually the first day that I heard about the University of Limpopo and I think that your marketing strategies are not so good, because if you visited schools more often and put banners around the country, then people will know about your University and the public will, yah mmmm like what can I say, that's all.

Example 3:(Male,18 years,Gateway High School,Shona,Zimbabwe)

R3; Well I find your direct marketing strategies not effective just because I found out about this University today, if it wasn't for the function which was held here today by the school which I came to which is holding a function about career guidance, I wouldn't have known about this University. I probably think that you should think of visiting more schools and also considering those schools which are in places that are not in the city, considering that they don't get invited to functions like his one. I also think that you should consider having a company, not a company as such, but a place where students can go to if they want to ask more information about your University course if I like your University but don't get another chance to have a conversation with your presenters I will end up losing interest in your university, I also think that you use posters like placing them on roads considering that most of us don't have phones which others have. We don't have access to social media so if we have posters to refer to its easier for us to know of your University.

The mentioned quotes or responses clearly indicate that the practice of brand positioning by the university is poor and not well managed. The use of branding

materials such as banners and posters around different countries could work for the university in improving its direct marketing strategies. The use of career expos which was indicated earlier in the study, was also referred to in the quotes, and that learners would get to know the university through direct marketing.

Brand positioning is very important as all the respondents talked about knowing more about the university through direct marketing and branding all over their countries and schools. One respondent from Zimbabwe mentioned that the opening of offices and having branding in their locations can help the university in marketing.

Example 4 (Female18 years, Sizeraphi High School, Shona, Zimbabwe)

To add on that I think you should have agents in other countries so that it will be easy for us to get information and have contact with you. And maybe if you guys had a Zimbabwean to come and talk to us then we would see the possibility of us going there or the comfort of having another Zimbabwean their course right now if a South African comes we will just say it's a South African thing but if it's a Zimbabwean we can relate and we can be able to talk in Shona that will make us more comfortable to come to your University. All students in their country will be able to join the University because of branding and also the use of having a mini office which represent the university.

Some respondents indicated the importance of direct marketing strategies being used effectively. The use of direct marketing as a form of building a strong brand position in their minds, plays an important role for the customers and in making sure that they see the branding of the institution in their minds whenever they think of universities. In line with the literature, branding is very important for an organisation which really wants to make an impact in the community and on its target market. The following response echoed by respondents, agreed with the related theme from the literature overview.

Example 5 (Male,18 years, Gateway High School, Shona, Zimbabwe)

I also think that you use posters like placing them on roads considering that most of us don't have phones which others have. Looking at their stall it wasn't attractive enough to me to inspire me to go there. I think a lot of us like our age group, we

> *associate with Universities by how they are willing to market it and if we can't see like you're putting any effort for the flyers and banners we were going to feel like okay it's the second grade.*

The use of branding as a way of marketing is seen to be important and one respondent complained about the stall decorations. The university's use of branding on their stall was a challenge and learners found it hard to recognise the stall and the promotional material. This can also be seen as a lack of branding strategy which can harm the image of the institution. The manner in which information is presented is very important as a form of direct marketing. The respondents focused more on the information provided to them by the university official and compared it with their social media and it was different. The theme which evolved through the interviews is 'brand' personality.

Example 6 (Female,18 years,Makgoka High School,Sepedi,South Africa)

> *The information that they gave us is useless because their presentation was short and even the question and answer session they didn't give us enough time as they selected the number of questions which they were going to answer and by so saying some of us we never really got time to ask what we needed to know.*

A related response also indicated the misrepresentation of information that did not correspond with what is posted on the website. Responses related to brand personality or direct marketing, show the importance of information.

Example 6 (Female,18 years,Capricorn High School,Sepedi,South Africa)

> *I know about the university of Limpopo but I don't think they represent it well because they don't give us enough information, you only get to know more about it when you apply.*

The respondent indicated that the information was not presented, and this is the reason prospective students decided not to join the institution. It is believed that information or brand personality is very important for an organisation which deals with

young people and who are quite analytical. The University of Limpopo focused more on the old way of presenting information to learners and it resulted in misunderstanding of information by learners. Two respondents also reported on the information presentation and also on how it builds a relationship between the organisation and the stakeholders.

Example 7(Female,17 years, Mbilwi Secondary School, South Africa)

> *I know about the University of Limpopo because they always come to our school telling us about the career but haaah they don't tell us everything that's why the information is not well described.*

Example 8 (Female,18 years, Dendron Secondary School, Sepedi, South Africa)

> *I only heard of University of Limpopo today so yeah the institution is not well represented because we only get to know the information when they do the career exhibition and all that.*

The mentioned quotes indicate the importance of brand personality and how the information can influence the decision of customers. The way the respondents expressed their feelings about the university indicates that direct marketing is not properly implemented. It also indicates that the way the university is represented is not pleasing at all and it affects the operation of the institution in attracting learners. One of the respondents expressed ideas somewhat different from other respondents on the use of brand personality and how information is presented.

Example 9(Female,17 years, Nkowankowa Secondary, Xitsonga, South Africa)

> *I know nothing about University of Limpopo I just heard of it now the information was a bit helpful, but I just wish we had more time to ask more questions course they only gave us 10 minutes and it was not enough*

The issue of brand personality through presentation is an issue that the institution is encountering and also the time slot given to learners during presentations. This prevents the effectiveness of the direct marketing of the university and leads to the poor implementation of direct marketing strategies.

The variety of platforms existing seem overwhelming and the choice of which social media platforms to use when deciding to have social media presence is important. Nair and Subramaniam, (2012: 13-14) state that "social media presence is a growing part of marketing communication and it gives universities a voice and means to converse with their prospective students". The quotes below from the participants also show the importance of a social media presence. A male participant indicated the poor management of social media adverts which are posted by the institution.

Example10 (Male,18 years,Gateway High School,Shona,Zimbabwe)

> *uhm I do use social media to, for educational information and I really don't like to search their stuff like search university, I only go deeper into those that pop up on my page. So if your university doesn't pop up I won't look into it.*

The respondents from Zimbabwe indicated the absence of the university from social media and communicated massages on the social media do not indicate relevant information. The pop up messages attract his attention and as for UL there are no pop up messages. Social media is here to stay and companies that utilise it can succeed in their marketing strategies. The other interviewee or respondent stated that the use of social media and the website is not even effective for marketing purposes.

Example 11(Female,17 years, Mtshabezi High School, Shona, Zimbabwe)

> *I heard that sorry that their application system online and Facebook account wasn't properly working and you need to fix that ,uhm and also on the website we need to know how the university is like. We don't want to know about just the academics but then maybe videos of students telling us their lives on campus, what they do on their free times, are there any activities, are there sports, something like that so that you know we don't just come to learn academics but then everything else so yeah.*

The information on the website and social media pages is not well - presented and one of the respondent indicated that the website is not effective. The service doesn't pop- up on their social media pages when they search for information about the university and its services. The website has become ineffective since it does not show any information related to the university and that can be useful to the students.

Example:12(Male,18 years,Gtaeway high school,Shona,Zimbabwe) Gateway High School) gave his perception on the social media platforms that the university uses.

Lot of us this nowadays we are attracted to the WhatsApp's, the YouTube, the Instagram's but I haven't really been compelled to your university's sites or something course there's nothing popping up in my screen and there's nothing to lure me to come to you.

The use of digital communication has become a marketing tool and a place where to find students and to converse with them. Many students spend most of their time on social media platforms and they depend on the use of technology for information. Young generation, also depend on social media for adverts from different organisation which showcase their services, so social media plays an important role in their lives.

Example 11 (Male,18 years old,Gateway High School,Shona,Zimbabwe)

I feel like if you put out some more advertisement for example, YouTube you can do advertisement very easy, ehh WhatsApp the chain messages and all things you can kind of, can trick your market, can draw us into wondering what are you, what can you offer me.

In an interview a few of the students mentioned their views on how the university website and social media pages are so silent in the marketing sphere and which leads to it not being recognised. The use of social media as a marketing tool has been a success in some departments, especially the Marketing and Communication

Departments. Some stated their views on how the university uses social media. A female respondent stated that the university needs to post more about its services.

Example 12 (Female,17 years,Capricorn High School,Sepedi,South Africa)

If you post about your University on social medias and WhatsApp platforms and all that other stuff, people will know about you guys more and your advertising would actually go an extra mile.

The response indicated that the information posted is not even relevant to them and it does not address student issues. The institution seems to have all social media platforms, and yet they are not effective and the information posted is not academically related or does not promote the university. The statement is supported by one of the respondents who talked of the unnecessary information that is posted on social media.

Example 13 (Female,18 years, Nkowankowa Secondary School,Xitsonga,South Africa)

I love Facebook, Instagram, twitter and google so uhm I once searched the UL website and what I noticed is that they don't post all the necessary information, they only show us what they want us to see not what we need to see.

She further mentioned the difficulties that she came across when trying to get information based on the qualification that she wanted to enrol for.

Their website it's just complicated. They are not active on the social media, they don't show us how to calculate the APS and another thing I don't think their online facilities is user friendly.

The information posted on the website seems to confuse prospective students and the website is not user friendly. This appears to indicate the absence of the university on digital communication platforms. Another respondent gave her view on the social

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media and website of the university regarding continuous posting of relevant and helpful information.

Example 14(Female,18 years,Mbilwi High School,Tshivenda,South Africa)

Yes, I do use the social media for educational information. I recently visited the UL page and I didn't get much information. I think they should keep us updated about what's going on in their University by posting regularly on social media.

The use of digital communication has grown and some of the school learners spend much time seeking information on social media and other digital platforms. Some of the respondents also gave their own perception on the digital communication and it showed how the UL social media affects their decision - making in relation to university information.

Example 15 (Female,17 years old,Mkagkoka High School,Sepedi,South Africa)

And I use social media for some education stuff but mostly I use WhatsApp. I once searched the UL page but I really didn't get what I was hoping to see or know course they only post out old information.

Posting often on social media is very important and customers will be updated with any information related to their needs. Many people use the Website to search of information related to qualifications offered at UL and the requirements. A response from one of the respondents from Dendron High School gave the following view on the presence of UL social media.

Example 16 (Female,18 years,Dendron Secondar School,Sepedi,South Africa)

> *I use all kinds of social media but I only use them in the evening, I once visited the UL pages but there was really nothing that I found to be useful to be honest. For UL to upgrade I think they should let us know about every little change that they make such as if there is a change of APS or curriculum. The difficulties that I encounter when the UL online application is that its takes a lot of time with hidden information so I think that their information should be well presented and also the admin of all the social medias should be active in all for always.*

One learner from a school in Venda also gave her views which correspond with what the learner from Dendron High stated. She mentioned how she had tried accessing UL Facebook pages and did not find anything.

Example 17(Female,18 years,Mbilwi Secondary School,Tshivenda,South Africa)

> *I have searched for UL in most platforms like on Facebook and I've noticed that they don't update or post often so I can say that its social media impact is very weak. I think they should post all the courses or degrees that they offer and their requirements and duration. The information they post on social media doesn't give me enough information about the degree I want to pursue, like such as job opportunities that are available and stuff like that. They should also improve their advertisement strategies like make use of pop up advertisement and so on.*

The researcher notes with disappointment that many learners mentioned that they view website and social media pages to be ineffective. In the abovementioned responses, none of them noted any positive views on the social media pages and the website. The research participants alluded to their opinion that the university website and social media pages are not updated and that the information posted is not helpful.

4.5. CONCLUSION

Responses of the qualitative analysis from the interviews were related to the question in accordance with the interview schedule. Of importance, however, is the fact that even though all questions were discussed or answered per se, answers of these questions also provided valuable input. The results of the qualitative analysis from the interviews agree with the related themes from the literature overview and with the theoretical framework from the direct marketing and digital communication of the university and the aims of the study.

An implication of the responses was in connection with the competencies of the university to implement effective direct marketing and digital communication. Some of the competencies were derived from respondent's responses regarding their understanding of direct marketing and digital communication. The understanding of the effective use of direct marketing and digital communication is important because of the competition in the marketing sphere. The existing perception that marketing communication is taking a different shape in South Africa and neighbouring countries should be taken serious by the universities. Viewpoints and perceptions of the respondents related to, and in support of, direct marketing and digital communication, were also in line with the requirements from the literature overview about a clear conceptualisation of marketing strategies.

Responses on the use of marketing strategies also brought some perspective to the fore and enabled the researcher to deduce competencies required for the university Marketing and Communication Department. The needs identified for the implementation of marketing strategies by the university are clearly supported by the responses from the interviews and which revealed understanding of both direct and digital communication.

The researcher managed to get learners from different schools who wanted to enrol with the University of Limpopo. In this study, all the learners who took part and responded in a way that the University needed an aside on things to change from their marketing strategies and the way things are being done.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter synthesises the work presented in the previous chapters. The aspects covered in this chapter also cover the significant research findings, the recommendations, the implications of the study and a conclusion to the study.

The study was motivated by the researcher's quest to examine the effectiveness of Integrated Marketing Communication strategies, namely direct marketing and digital communication. The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of IMC strategies, specifically direct marketing and digital communication, in student recruitment at the University of Limpopo and its departments according to the viewpoint of high school learners.

The objectives of this study guided the investigation in all chapters. The first chapter introduced the study and outlined the introductory literature review as well as the objectives of the study and further highlighted the significance of the study in higher education marketing communication research. The second chapter outlined previous research on student recruitment and marketing communication research conducted to determine students' choices and preferences in higher education. The second chapter also outlined the theoretical framework used to understand student recruitment in relation to marketing communication. The third chapter outlined the grounded theory methodology of the study as well as the steps followed to analyse the data collected in this study. In the third chapter, the study outlined how grounded theory is useful and appropriate for the analysis of the interviews that were conducted during data collection. The fourth chapter discussed the data that was analysed. The data in the fourth chapter included the semi-structured interviews that were analysed through grounded theory methods.

As indicated in Chapter One, the study came about when the university had a low number of enrolments in some of their faculties, and this raised some questions about the marketing strategies used by the Marketing and Communication Department.

This study found that there are still some challenges with the implementation of IMC strategies such as direct marketing and digital communication. However, the data discovered some weaknesses in the marketing strategies used by the university. Furthermore, some institutions have already implemented the IMC strategies and their enrolment numbers increase every year.

The research objectives and other factors surrounding the issue guided the study and helped to discover reasons behind the low number of enrolments and the lack of IMC strategy implementation. The objectives of this study were explored using an interview guide which had a list of questions which were given to a sample of 9 school pupils from Zimbabwe (Gateway High and Mtshabezi High Schoo) and South African High schools namely, Dendron High, Capricorn and Nkowankowa High school.

5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

The research design was guided by the use of grounded theory which is part of a qualitative research method. The reason behind using grounded theory was to make the study more understandable through the use of semi-structured interviews. The nature of the study also favoured the respondents due to the use of grounded theory which help in developing theories, new ideas and interpreting human behaviour. It highlighted the power of marketing strategies in an organisation through the views of the informants, the interpretation of their perceptions about the organisation and its marketing strategies.

The power of using effective marketing communication strategies were also explained in the previous chapters. The study also indicated the way in which the data was collected and analysed, the interview process and what the setting of the interviews was like.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The first objective of the study was to assess the presentations used by the UL recruitment office as part of direct marketing. A lack of implementing the effectiveness of direct marketing has led to a low number of learners and weak stakeholder relationship management in many organisations Kotler & Armstrong ,2003) This was reflected in the case study of the University of Limpopo's Marketing and Communication Department, in the division of Student Recruitment and Marketing. The data pointed out a few loopholes in the direct marketing strategies used by the university. These were; branding of the university, brand personality and brand positioning. The study also found that the use of branding in the university is very important as it portrays the image and identity of the institution. Branding, as part of direct marketing, communicates a message to stakeholders and helps in maintaining the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders. The outcomes of the study validate the study conducted by Kotler and Armstrong (2003), that direct marketing through branding help maintain a good relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders.

Brand positioning emerged as theme in the findings of the study. The findings revealed that brand positioning is very important as it keeps customers aware of the university and its services. Respondents showed that the university is not well known in Zimbabwe due to unsuccessful brand positioning and this has caused the university to be unnoticed by students. The use of billboards on the road would create more impact in their lives as they would be able to think more about the university. The findings also indicated that brand positioning makes the institution to stand out in the competitive world. This study supports the statement made by Payne (1993:55), when he states that "the concept of brand positioning stems from the consideration of how the university is willing to deliver their services to customers, in order to receive good perception from the customer". In terms of the findings, few respondents outlined the issue of branding of the University in their country for relationship purposes. When comparing the findings from the, respondents, some from South African schools (Capricorn High) indicated that the institution was not well presented in terms of branding, it is only visible when one visits it and that there were no billboards or posters about the university. It was also discovered in the findings that many students miss

out on the University of Limpopo services due to a lack of brand positioning and visibility around the province.

It is well known now that marketing strategies such as direct marketing are hard to implement (Kapferer ,1997). This impacts negatively on the learners and the institution itself, when considering the number of enrolments. The way that direct marketing was used during presentations of the University was seen as infective by the respondents. The findings on the presentation of the University through direct marketing showed that all respondents, including those from Zimbabwe, complained about the issue of branding and information presentation which affects the University in the competitive world. These findings mirror what is said in a study conducted by Kapferer (1997) when he mentioned that a company's branding and how it is presented can harm the organisation in the competitive world and that the new age of brand identity is full of competition.

Most of the respondent complained about the presentations and branding. The presentations were not useful and how the information was presented also was not useful. Institutional branding would be appreciated if it was all over the city and other neighbouring countries, was a point made by one of the respondent. In some literature, branding and presentations are very important since they create an image in the customer's mind (Ries & Trout,1993). Findings of that the study supported this study in showing that the use of direct marketing through presentations by the institution and are very important. This lack of implementation of IMC strategies has led to a lower number of students at the institution.

Regardless of the marketing strategies used by the institution, the development of new strategies for direct marketing is required for the Marketing Department. This finding confirmed the results of the literature that was reviewed previously by Keller (2008:99) who noted that "when marketers create perceived differences between brands, they can create value for those brands which will in turn lead profitability." Throughout this study, it has been clear that little literature has been forthcoming in terms of marketing strategies focusing on educational organisations (Universities) and their marketing departments. Much literature focuses more on the corporate organisations and this study will add value to the theory on the marketing of universities. The findings

revealed that organisations such as universities should focus more on branding and proper presentations at schools, with regard to their services.

The General System Theory states that IMC strategies function like a system; one cannot operate without the other. In terms of direct marketing, presentations of the organisation and its elements such as branding and presentations work together and cannot be separated. The system theory supports the findings due to the relationship of all the marketing strategies mentioned by the respondents.

The second objective of the study was to focus on social media use as a part of digital communication used to recruit learners by the UL Recruitment Office. In recent years, with the introduction of social network marketing, communication has been changing dramatically and organisations have had to investigate new marketing strategies. The introduction of technology had made a radical change in the industry of marketing. This objective came about as the researcher sought to check if UL uses social networks in an effective way to recruit high school learners. As the world is in the 4th industrial Revolution, it was necessary for the researcher to investigate perceptions of social media pages held by research participants.

Smith (2011) agrees with the statement, stating that it has become popular to search for a product or service of an organisation over the user-created content. The information on an organisation's social network can impact upon an organisation positively or negatively and that the perception that customers have of the organisation is driven by what is presented in the online world.

The findings of the study showed that all the participants complained about the social network pages and the information presented by the university. Information presentation online was not relevant for prospective students and therefore, this leads to poor digital marketing implementation. The findings supported the literature reviewed by Smith (2011) who states that online opinions generally influence offline opinions as they move into traditional media. Some educational institutions in South Africa have seen an opportunity in the use of digital marketing through social networking sites. The findings showed that the lack of social network usage for marketing affects users' perceptions of the organisation. Some of respondents lost interest when going through the social network pages which did not meet their expectations.

The study revealed that the use of social networks can help the university to grow and attract many customers through interactive platforms. These findings are related and supported by other research studies. A study conducted by Mangold and Faulds (2009) states that social network platforms enable not only an organisation to communicate with the customer, but even allow customers to communicate directly with each other about the services of the organisation. In this study, it emerged that some learners from Zimbabwe and South Africa did not find any information regarding the University when they searched for application information. This indicated that social networks are visited daily by the youth, searching for information and organisations that offer what they need. One respondent mentioned that social networks are for advertising and marketing and which is why they search online for information.

The findings indicated that the social network of UL is not interactive. This leads to poor relationship management with the prospective students. The findings are supported by Josey, Kent and Taylor (1998:33) when they state that an "online relationship is very important, and a two-way communication could establish a long-lasting relationship with the customer". Most respondents use Facebook and the Website to search for information and also request for clarity in terms of services offered by the UL. It appears that both social networks are not responsive and users then shift their attention to other universities.

The findings also showed that relevant information related to academic information helps the organisation in achieving its goal. Social network pages are effective and very fast in sending information to customers. The study revealed that information posted should address student issues which educate and inform about service.

It emerged that most learners use social networks for information and educational purposes. The respondents complained about the information posted on the Website of the University. They said that sometimes it was difficult to access the online applications on the website of the University and that the information was outdated and it confused them. According to information from the University of Limpopo Website, *www.ul.ac.za*, the researcher found that the information was outdated and still contained Medunsa information, the current Sefako Makgato University. The study can now conclude that UL needs to invest more time on social networks for advertising

and for promoting of their services and they need to interact with students daily for better enrolment and relationship management.

It is believed that the use of social networks can simplify marketing for organisations in the competitive world. In terms of student recruitment, social networks can assist in communicating with prospective students regarding academic information. The study revealed that more young people can be traced or recruited on social networks because they spend much of their time on the social network platforms.

The findings revealed that Facebook, being the biggest social network site and which is effective for advertising, can help UL to recruit more learners from other countries and in South Africa by posting relevant, informative and educative information. The findings are supported by a study conducted by Boyed and Ellison (2008:230) that, "Facebook is the biggest social network site, created in 2004". More literature is needed on the use of digital marketing by universities for marketing and recruiting new students.

The study showed that many organisations in South Africa use digital marketing in their departments and the implement part is a problem. It is also revealed that the General System Theory can be used in the digital marketing literature because social network and marketing go hand in hand. Social network platforms operate like a system; they are all interactive and fast communication channels which can help organisations in getting attention from their customers. The relationship between UL and the prospective students can be maintained through social network platforms and through continuous engagement between students and marketers.

The observations of the interviews revealed negative perceptions and remarks which people are making about the University. Findings on the content of the UL Website were not convincing such as the Facebook content. Themes such as the comments of students emerged and the behaviour is not pleasing. Many students use Facebook for information and the information has to be useful. The statement is supported by a literature reviewed by Lombardi,at el (2012:137-149) stating that Facebook is one of the marketing tools where customers monitor the behaviour of an organisation and build perceptions based on the information posted.

The findings of the study revealed that most of the respondents complained about the information posted online and the manner in which they are misinformed. One theme that emerged related to comments which organisation could have use to strengthen its strategies. Some of the Facebook comments state that *"UL is useless and we will not bother to come and register".* The findings also revealed that there were comments from the students seeking for information and no one responded. This leads to the institution recovering poor remarks from prospective students.

The observation of the content of the UL Facebook page revealed that most students depend on the responses and posts posted by the University regarding academic information. Some comments stated that the institution was disorganised due to the difficulties of getting relevant information regarding application processes and admission requirements. The study also indicated that the content of the social media such as Facebook, is not addressing student issues but rather promoting internal university events. Some of the comments showed that the Facebook page need to be full of information that will assist students in knowing the services about the institution and how to apply. The results also showed that the website was not informative, educative and some of the information that was posted was totally incorrect regarding courses offered.

5.4 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The study outlined the importance of marketing strategies and how they should be implemented. It also showed an understanding of how poor implementation of marketing strategies can affect an organisation's reputation and productivity.

The literature review of this study introduced the use of branding and its positioning and how important it is when it comes to university marketing. It also showed the way in which IMC strategies are useful in the education sphere and other organisations. The literature also indicated the use of IMC strategies for recruitment of students for both international and domestic students and the impact it has on how people see the university. The theories, concepts and discussion about the IMC strategies, direct

marketing and digital communication and research setting, research design and well the research method served to be very useful in the study.

Some of the analysis in Chapter Five, indicated the way some of the presentations could harm the institution, the branding of the institution and information dissemination. In Chapter Two, some literature also outlined an effective way of using branding for recruiting purposes. The main focus was not on the use of branding, but the analysis touched on it. In the same Chapter Four, a theme of 'branding of the university' emerged and was discussed in line with the direct marketing communication for recruiting students. It indicated that most institutions are not aware of the impact of branding in the education sector. In the literature review, some researchers also indicated their concern about the lack of branding skills when there is an event of the university, as well as the use of branding materials such as banners and the prospectus.

In the discussion, some informants emphasised the importance of digital communication for recruitment purposes, and of the way students use social media for education. Some of the information posted on social networks was very old and got leaners worried about their future at the university. This is an indication that the institution should invest more in the use of digital communication for recruitment purposes.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Research tries to understand or simplify a concept by exploring it in detail and through examination of its essential components. It often becomes difficult to include all the reasons in the study because some of them are too deep to be controlled and that is where limitations come in.

5.5.1. Methodological limitations

The study conducted was qualitative. It was necessary for the researcher to use a research design that would help understand and achieve the objectives of the study. The study used an interview guide to collect data from respondents. This was an effective tool for the study and it helped to understand the research. The researcher did not get to interview some of the staff members due to departmental issues as some questions on the interview guide were not for them to answer, but for the director. The whole Section D of the interview guide was not answered by the officials of the institution. The researcher had to leave them out the interview due to time constraints.

The sample criteria were contrasted to focus on learners who attended the career exhibitions. Most of the participants in the study were female leaners who wanted to give their views about the university and its marketing communication activities.

Another limitation was that university staff members who were involved in the study were not willing to share all the information about their work practices. The researcher recommends that studies of this nature should not include staff members due to work policy and because they do not want to disclose their departmental problems.

5.5.2. Technical and resource limitations

The sample included 9 high school learners from different high schools in South Africa and Zimbabwe, as other countries did not want to participate. The researcher had to travel to different exhibitions as far as Zimbabwe collecting data. Some of the respondents did not want to take part, the researcher had to explain the ethical considerations to them, for further understanding. Some of the male students did not want to participate and only two volunteered to form part of this study.

The international trips were difficult to take with regards to financial problems. The researcher had to finance himself to Zimbabwe to collect data from a school in which the career exhibition took place.

The last part of the limitations is related to the issue of direct marketing and digital communication used for recruiting learners in other universities located in Southern Africa and which may require more investigation, owing to the lack generalisability of research findings in a small sample. This limitation was considered because the researcher had noticed that many learners depend on social media and also direct marketing for information related to the universities. They find it hard to locate universities which are not effectively participating in career exhibitions and on social media platforms. This can, therefore, be explored by other researchers on how universities can utilise digital marketing and direct marketing effectively in rural high schools. The study covered part of rural schools and it was a problem when answering the digital marketing question due to the reason that they were using small phones with low capacity for internet applications, and had network problems in accessing the internet to search for the University of Limpopo.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the most common findings from the responses was that many students spend much time on the internet searching for information on different universities. It was also mentioned that branding is very important for them not to forget about the university. It is recommended that the University of Limpopo should focus more on updating their website with new information that is relevant and valid for both students and prospective students. The information on the website should be informative and useful. The online application which was not working needs to be reworked and to be user friendly. The University is also recommended to use social media networks effectively by interacting with students daily regarding UL services. The respondents complained about the poor maintenance of the Facebook page and which many learners visit often for information. It should have information which allows high school learners to find out on how to enrol and what the admission requirements are, unlike posting only university events which are relevant for alumni, staff and current students.

In all the findings, most of the respondents complained about the information presented to them about the University. It was not convincing, and some information was not clear. The effectiveness of digital communication can be achieved by fixing

the social network pages to suit the needs of the target audience and by updating the Website by having new information that informs students about the university.

Direct marketing communication is still used in South Africa by universities, under the marketing departments. The University of Limpopo also practises direct marketing during career exhibitions and open days. It is recommended that the University should have offices internationally for easy consultation and relationship building. It was mentioned by one of the respondents from Zimbabwe that the University of Limpopo should have offices in their country for easy access of information.

A change in the marketing strategies can help the institution and grow their marketing skills. It is recommended that branding should be in all SADC countries in the form of support media, such as billboards, which will maintain a good relationship with the university and foreign students. The University should adopt schools for marketing communication purposes, in order to strengthen their relationship with learners from an early age. Their presence in all their schools would make a huge difference in their communities and neighbouring countries.

5.7 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

Although there have been studies on the use of Integrated Marketing Communication strategies, only few have focused on direct marketing and digital communication used by a university. This study presented an insight into the effectiveness of direct marketing and digital communication used by the University of Limpopo. The problem was investigated within the context of the previous challenge that the university had of a low number of enrolments in different faculties. The researcher discovered that most learners did not know about the university and that its online presence was very poor. The study further brought to light the use of branding as a marketing tool by universities in other countries through billboards indicating the services offered by the university.

The study made an in-depth investigation on the factors that contributed to the enrolment setbacks of the University of Limpopo, and it is believed that the recommendations about marketing communication strategies in this study could be implemented to improve enrolment figures.

The study added to previous studies which focused on trends in higher education marketing, recruitment and technology and which covered both direct and digital marketing. The results of this study affirmed the findings of the previous study. The theory used in this study also indicated the relevance of using the IMC strategies as a system. They all function in accord and one cannot function without the other.

The study confirmed that direct marketing and digital communication are important elements of the marketing communication mix and that if an organisation cannot implement the IMC strategies effectively, it will not be able to achieve its marketing communication objectives. The findings of this study showed that the university needs to focus more on fixing their branding and social network pages and on updating their website so that it can have the 'look and feel 'concept.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the effectiveness of Integrated Marketing Communication strategies namely: direct marketing and digital communication used for recruiting students. The study found that direct marketing was not effectively implemented and most of the learners, both local and internationally did not know about the University. As for the website and social media pages, these were problematic since a lot of criticism emerged on the digital part the marketing of the University.

The use of a qualitative research design and methods that were used to acquire data played an important role in helping the researcher about sufficient information regarding both direct marketing and digital communication used by the University of Limpopo. The use of the interview topic guide helped the researcher in conducting successful interviews and the data was analysed in line with the grounded theory method. Grounded theory analysis was applied, and themes emerged - which helped the researcher to categorise the data accordingly. The steps followed to analyse data are detailed in the methodology chapter. The use of General Systems Theory made it clear that the marketing strategies are like a system which cannot be separated and that they function in a sequence. The theory also allowed the researcher to understand

the importance of linking the strategies which can help future research in selecting relevant theories for their studies.

The study paved the way for future researchers to focus more on the technological part of marketing and branding for universities. The use of effective marketing strategies attracts many stakeholders (prospective students) in the organisation and its operations. In conclusion, this study reveals that direct marketing and digital marketing in terms of student recruitment, has a big role to play for the University of Limpopo, and that numerous activities linked to clearly outlined strategies need to be implemented and controlled in an effective manner.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE (TREC)

University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: Anastasia.Ngobe@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS
COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE
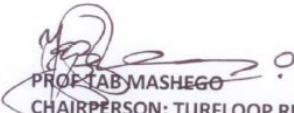
MEETING: 06 April 2018

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/60/2018: PG

PROJECT:

Title: Assessing the effectiveness of Direct Marketing and Digital
                Communication as Integrated Marketing Communication Strategies: A
                case study of the University of Limpopo Student Recruitment
                Programme.

Researcher: R Maeko
Supervisor: Dr IP Saunderson
Co-Supervisors: N/A
School: Languages and Communication Studies
Degree: Master of Arts Communication Studies

PROF AB MASHEGO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics
Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:
i)   Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the
        researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee.
ii)   The budget for the research will be considered separately from the protocol.
        PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

APPENDIX 2: TURNITIN REPORT FRONT PAGE

Digital Marketing

ORIGINALITY REPORT

20%	16%	4%	18%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	3%
2	www.tandfonline.com Internet Source	1%
3	www.scribd.com Internet Source	1%
4	Submitted to University of Johannsburg Student Paper	1%
5	Submitted to North West University Student Paper	1%
6	Submitted to University of Limpopo Student Paper	<1%
7	Submitted to University of Venda Student Paper	<1%
8	www.slideshare.net Internet Source	<1%
9	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper	<1%

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

<u>**Interview guide**</u>

Note: For most of the questions, follow - up questions will be determined by the response given by the interviewee.

Part A

Section A: Demographic information.

1. How old are you?
2. Where are from?

Section B: Educational information

3. What is the name of your school?
4. Where is your school situated?

Section C: The effectiveness of direct marketing

5. Do you know the University of Limpopo?
6. Where did hear about UL?
7. Was it is related to career fair?
8. How would you describe the information?
9. Was the institution well presented?
10. What do you think should be done?

Section D: The use of digital communication to recruit learners

11. Do you use social media for educational information?
12. What kind of social media pages do you normally use?
13. How and when do you use social media?
14. Do you visit UL social media pages?
15. Is the information posted on social media saying anything related to academic or career choice?
16. What kind of information should be posted?
17. Is the information posted useful?
18. Do you find UL social media pages active?
19. What should be done to upgrade ?
20. Do you find our online facilities user friendly?

21. What can you tell me about disappointments you've had with our online facilities?

Semi-structured interviews Questions Part B

The study conducted is focusing on assessing the effectiveness of direct marketing and digital marketing used by the University of Limpopo. The population of the study is Grade 12 leaners from different schools who attend career fairs or exhibitions.

Topic of the day

The topic is the Effectiveness of Direct marketing and digital marketing used by the University of Limpopo.

22. What do you think of the marketing strategies used by UL?
23. How do you find the presentation during career exhibition compared to the information posted online?
24. What difficulties do you encounter when using our social media pages?
25. How should the information be presented on our online facilities?
26. What influence does the University of Limpopo Online facilities have on your career
27. How do you think the marketing strategies should be improved?
28. Suppose you are given time to talk about the improvement of UL marketing strategies, what will you suggest?
29. Out of all the things we talked about, what do you think is important for UL to focus on in future?

APPENDIX 4: CONSENT FORM

Consent form

I …………………………………………………………(name), hereby give my consent to you to participate in the research project title "Assessing the Effectiveness of Direct, Marketing and Digital communication as Integrated Marketing Communication strategies: A case study of the University of Limpopo Student Recruitment Programme". As a study by Maeko, Reuben, a Masters student at the Department of Commutation, Media and information studies, University of Limpopo. I am participating out of my own free will. Anonymity will be kept and information will be treated with utmost confidentiality. The researcher will read to the respondents the importance of the study and its background. I also understand that I have the right t withdraw from the study at any time.

…………………..   ……………………….

Signature   **Date**

APPENDIX 5: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

APPENDIX 6: CONDENSED TRANSCRIPTIONS

RESPONDENT 1

I learn at Gateway High School that's in Zimbabwe, I'm 18 now and I am supposed to comment on digital communication to recruit learners so ,uhm, I do use social media to, for educational information and I really don't like to search their stuff like search university. I only go deeper into those that pop up on my page. So if your university doesn't pop up I won't look into it and I only knew about Limpopo university today. I didn't even go to their table because it wasn't that attractive really, so I think they have to use more banners and stuff so that people may be attracted to your table in this items and graphics and so ,yeah, I only knew about it today coz my friend had their flyer and something so ,and yeah, I heard that, sorry that their application system online wasn't properly working and you need to fix that uhm and also on the website we need to know how the university is like, we don't want to know about just the academics but then maybe videos of students telling us their lives on campus, what they do on their free times, are there any activities, are there sports, something g like that so that you know we don't just come to learn academics but then everything else so yeah.

Hi I'm RESPONDENT 2 from Gateway High School in Harare, uhm yeah, I feel like the UL hasn't been communicating effectively on social media, uhm as someone who uses majority of his life for free time and stuff throughout usage I haven't actually come across it. t's only today that I've even   heard of it and I feel is because you not advertising the right market for your customers, for example a lot of us this nowadays we are attracted to the whatsapps, the youtubes, the instagrams but I haven't really been compelled to your university's sites or something course there's nothing popping up in my screen and there's nothing to lure me to come to you. I feel like if you put out some more advertisement, for example, youtube, you can do advertisement very easy, erh whatsapp the chain messages and all things you can kind of can, trick your market, can draw us into wondering what are you, what can you offer me. I feel that's what needs to be done.

I AM RESPONDENT 3, I'm Zimbabwean and I'm 18years old I go to ZRP High School. Today is actually the first day that I heard about the University of Limpopo and I think that your marketing strategies are not so good, because if you visited schools more often than people will know about your University and if you pupil if you like what can I say, if youuuu ,eish. If you post about your University on varies social medias and whatsapp platforms and all that other stuff, people will know about you guys more and your advertising would actually go an extra mile. That's when, I think that the number of students who come to university will be more and more because if people don't know about something, they won't attend. Some as if you don't know that there's a wedding you won't attend. So I believe that your marketing is not so effective and you guys should follow up on that. You should also follow up when you reach out to students, follow up to see that what she told them, what effect is it having on them. I believe with that you will make a difference.

I am RESPONDENT 4 18 years of age from Polokwane, I go to Capricorn High School which is situated in Polokwane. I know about the University of Limpopo because they always come to our school telling us about the career but, haaah, they don't tell us everything that's why the information is not well described. Tabana, Use of digital communication to recruit learners, yes I do use social media for educational information, I love facebook, Instagram, twitter and google so, uhm, I once searched the UL website and what I noticed is that they don't post all the necessary information, they only show us what they want us to see not what we need to see. Their website it's just complicated. They are not active on the social media, they don't show us how to calculate the APS and another thing I don't think their online facilities is user friendly.

I am RESPONDENT 5, 18 years old, I school at Nkuwankuwa, I only heard of University of Limpopo today so ,yeah, the institution is not well represented because we only get to know the information when they do the career exhibition and all that. Yes I do use the social media for educational information. I recently visited the UL page and I didn't get much information. I think they should keep us updated about what's going on in their University by posting regularly on Social media

I am RESPONDENT 6, 18 years of age, I attend at Makgoka High School. I know about University of Limpopo because they always come to our school. The information that they gave us is useless because their presentation was short and even the question and answer session they didn't give us enough time as they selected the number of questions which they were going to answer and by so saying some of us we never really got time to ask what we needed to know. And I use social media for some education stuff but mostly I use whatsapp. I once searched the UL page but I really didn't get what I was hoping to see or know cause they only post out little information. And when they are posting information they should post every little detail that we must know. The UL team should visit schools more often and if they are coming to our school they should just dedicate the whole day to us, so that we can be able to ask questions and get clarity where necessary.

I am RESPONDENT 7 from Dendron High Hchool being 18 years old. I know about the university of Limpopo but I don't think they represent it well because they don't give us enough information, you only get to know more about it when you apply. I use all kinds of social media but I only use them in the evening, I once visited the UL pages but there was really nothing that I found to be useful to be honest. For UL to upgrade I think they should let us know about every little change that they make such as if there is a change of APS or curriculum. The difficulties that I encounter when when the UL online application is that its takes a lot of time with hidden information so I think that their information should be well presented and also the admin of all the social medias should be active in all for always

I am RESPONDENT 8, 18 years old. I know nothing about University of Limpopo I just heard of it now. The information was a bit helpful, but I just wish we had more time to ask more questions course they only gave us 10 minutes and it was not enough. I have searched for UL in most platforms like on Facebook and I've noticed that they don't update or post often so I can say that its social media impact is very very weak. I think they should post all the courses or degrees that they offer and their requirements and duration. The information they post on social media doesn't give me enough information about the degree I want to pursue, like such as job opportunities that are available and stuff like that. They should also improve their advertisement strategies like make use of pop - up advertisement and so on. They should also visit more schools around the country so that many people can know about it

I AM RESPONDENT 9 I am currently learning at ZRP High School, I'm a Zimbabwean. Well I find your direct marketing strategies not effective just because I found out about this University today. It wasn't for the function which was held here today by the school which I came to which is holding a function about career guidance, I wouldn't have known about this University. I probably think that you should think of visiting more schools and also considering those schools which are in places that are not in the city, considering that they don't get invited to functions like this one. I also like that you should consider having a company, not a company as such but a place where students can go to if they want to ask more information about your University course if I like your University but don't get another chance to have a conversation with your presenters I will end up losing interest in your university. I also think that you use posters like placing them on roads considering that most of us don't have phones which others have. We don't have access to social media so if we have posters to refer to, its easier for us to know of your University.

I'm talking on the digital communication, so on this platforms of your whatever social media platforms, you were supposed to be able to have a discussion somewhere, we were supposed to communicate with someone who can speak back whenever we ask questions so that. It's not a one-way communication thing. Where you can ask and get the relevant information that you want so yeah.

So I feel like with my brief experience with UL, for if it weren't for this kind of interview I wouldn't have actually given them a second thought today. Looking at their stall it wasn't attractive enough to me to inspire me to go there. I think a lot of us like our age group, we associate with Universities by how they are willing to market it and if we can't see like you're putting any effort for the flyers and banners we going to feel like okay it's the second grade. It's not the best so I will go somewhere else, which is unfair to your university and I also feel like the people at the table are not aggressive enough in fighting for you to come talk to them. I also feel like your University is not showing itself as much as we would like, like here in Gateway we have universities that come time and time again saying "come here, we will give you this", I feel like if you do regular check-up and visiting I feel like UL will be more of option for us than what it is currently. To add on that I think you should have agents in other countries so that it

will be easy for us to get information and have contact with you. And maybe if you guys had a Zimbabwean to come and talk to us then we would see the possibility of us going there or the comfort of having another Zimbabwean there cause right now if a South African comes we will just say it's a South African thing but if it's a Zimbabwean we can relate and we can be able to talk in Shona that will make us more comfortable to come to your University.