Edited by
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Higher Education Marketing in Africa
Explorations into
Student Choice

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Contents

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He participated in many local and international Conferences and have published over 37 articles in accredited journals both locally and internationally. A postdoctoral research fellow for two years at UNISA and won (CEMS) research output award in 2016.

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Stella Aririguzoh obtained her Ph.D. in Mass Communication from Covenant University, Canaanland, Ota, Nigeria. She has a B.A. (Mass Communication) and M.B.A. (Management) degrees from the famous University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She also has the M.A. (Broadcasting) and an M.Sc. (Industrial Relations/Personnel Management) from the Abia State University, Uturu and the University of Lagos, Akoka respectively. She has been teaching mass communication since 2000 with emphasis on broadcast courses. She has deep interest in political communication. At present, she teaches in the Department of Mass Communication in Covenant University.

Genevieve Bosah is an academic, a strategic communicator and a writer with more than 12 years of professional experience in Africa and Europe. She has worked with media institutions, governments and NGOs and is proficient in qualitative research, capacity development, strategy development and implementation as well as programme management, journalism and strategic communications. Genevieve has a BA

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Otilia Chiramba is a doctoral candidate at Witwatersrand University. She is an emerging academic who has impeccable interest in researching underprivileged groups such as refugee students in higher education and young scientists. She has co-authored and published an article in the *European Education* journal. She has also written four chapters which are in press. Otilia has worked for a global research project, the Global State of Young Scientists (GloSYS) collected and analysed qualitative data and has co-authored in writing the narratives yet to be published. She has also been involved with tutoring undergraduates and postgraduate students at the university.

Margaret D. M. Cullen is a Professor, She lectures to MBA and DBA students at Nelson Mandela University Business School in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. She heads up the Strategic Focus Area of Entrepreneurship, Design Thinking and Innovation. She has authored and co-authored several research articles, book chapters and attended and presented at numerous international academic conferences. She consults in the areas of happiness, experiential marketing, strategy, family business and entrepreneurship. She is passionate about making a difference through the correct delivery of entrepreneurial teaching and thinking. Professor Cullen is currently focussing on research in Happiness.

Robert Ebo Hinson is a Professor and a past Head of the Department of Marketing & Entrepreneurship at the University of Ghana Business School. Professor Hinson has been a consultant to several local and international institutions in Ghana. Professor Hinson started his professional career in advertising and has since become an academic taught a diversity of undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Apart from his experience in teaching, Prof. Hinson has a keen interest in research and in recognition of his research productivity, was awarded the 2008 Emerati Highly Commended paper Award for a co-authored paper published in Corporate Governance, the 2009 *Journal of African Business Best Paper Award*, the 2010 Emerati Outstanding Paper Award for a co-authored paper published in the *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*. Professor Hinson is published in or has had papers accepted for publication in rated journals like the *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, *Internet Research*, *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*, *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, and the *Thunderbird International Business Review*.

Charles Enyindah holds a Ph.D. in Management (Industrial Relations option), MBA (Management) and B.Sc. Business admin. (Management). He is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Business Administration and Management at Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic in Nigeria. He has taught at the institution for about ten years (10 years). He has published about forty (40) scholarly articles both in local and international journals and most of which are online. He has presented a whole gamut of papers in academic conferences and attended several conferences. He published a book titled: *Elements of Production Management*. He has taught a plethora of courses in management.

Temitope Farinloye has a first degree from the University of Bedfordshire, Luton and presently working towards her master's degree at Kings College, London. She presently works at Questbury Research Services as a Research Associate. Her research interests are in the marketing of higher education, social media and qualitative analyses of user-generated contents. She has published her works in reputable journal articles, book chapters and presented her work at conferences.

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Carlien Jooste is completing her Doctorate in Business Administration at the Nelson Mandela University Business School. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Media, Communication and Culture and a Master's degree in Applied Media from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. During her tertiary education, she was president of the Golden Key International Honour Society, NMU Chapter and formed part of a select group of students invited to participate in the Trend Lott Leadership Program co-hosted by the University of Mississippi and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. Presently she is the manager of the Nelson Mandela Graduate School's Relationship and Application Office.

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Felix Maringe is a Professor, Head of Wits School of Education Research and Assistant Dean Internationalisation and Partnerships at the University of the Witwatersrand. He is also a Visiting Fellow within Southampton Education School at the University of Southampton. His research concentration is in the area of Globalisation and Internationalisation of HE within the broad remit of leadership and management. He teaches on PGCE, MA Ed and Doctoral programmes. Felix is the EdD Lead tutor at the University of Southampton with specific responsibility for the Leadership stratum of the Doctorate programme. He is currently leading research into the impact of

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Emmanuel Mogaji holds a Ph.D. in Marketing, and he is a Lecturer in Advertising and Marketing Communications at the University of Greenwich, and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and a Certified Management & Business Educator (CMBE). Emmanuel's primary area of interest is ABCDE of Marketing Communications—Advertising, Branding, Communications, Digital and Ethics, with a strong focus on higher education and financial services marketing. He recently authored a book on Emotional Appeals in Advertising Banking Services published by Emerald. He has published several peer-reviewed journals articles and book chapters and presented his work in many national and international conferences. In recognition of his research productivity, was awarded the 2019 Emerald Literati Highly Commended Paper Award for a co-authored paper published in *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*. He has co-edited books on marketing higher education in Africa published by Routledge and Springers Nature.

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Johnson A. Olusola is a Lecturer at the Federal College of Agriculture, Akure, Nigeria. He holds a Ph.D. in Silviculture and Forest Biology from Federal University of Technology, Akure. He is a member of the Forestry Association of Nigeria, Forests and Forest Product Society of Nigeria (FFPS), The African Forest Forum (AFF); among others. He won research grant under the 2009–2010 MyCOE / SERVIR Biodiversity Initiative in Africa as well as published over 27 research articles in peer reviewed journals and conference proceedings.

Muhammed A. Oyinlola finished his Ph.D. at the University of British Columbia (UBC) with the Changing Ocean Research Unit and the Nereus Program of the Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries. His studies focus on the implications of climate change and ocean acidification on global seafood production from aquaculture.

Nevensha Sing holds her Ph.D. in Higher Education and M.Ed. in Leadership, Management and Policy Studies. Dr. Sing completed her Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education. Her research experience is located in Narrative Research, Student Experience and Vulnerability/being at risk and Support. Dr. Sing's research interests are on the Internationalisation of Higher Education. She is passionate about Teacher Professionalism and the preparation of new teachers for understanding policy and practice. Dr. Sing serves as a Lecturer in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria.

Thomas Wayne is a Research Associate at Questbury Research Services. He has over ten years of industry experience in advertising and marketing communications. He has worked on various brand development and integration projects. His academic research interests are in marketing with specific focus on higher education, financial services and sports. He has published her works in reputable journal articles, book chapters and presented his work at conferences.

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Part I

Introduction

1

Exploring Factors Influencing Student Choice in Africa: Introduction to Edited Collection

Emmanuel Mogaji⊕**, Felix Maringe**⊕**, and Robert Ebo Hinson**⊕

Introduction

Universities in Africa are witnessing unprecedented growth; there has been a rapid increase in the number of universities in Africa over the last 20 years (Olaleye, Ukpabi, & Mogaji, 2020). The government is establishing more universities, and private institutions are also coming on board to meet the growing demands for university places (Farinloye,

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3

Adeola, & Mogaji, 2020). As well as the increasing numbers of universities in Africa, there are also international partnerships with universities in Europe and America, while some other universities are opening campuses in Africa (Ndofirepi, Farinloye, & Mogaji, 2020). Due to this increase, prospective university students have an increasingly wide range of choices (Dao & Thorpe, 2015). Prospective students in Africa need to decide which university to attend, perhaps to attend a home university, travel to another country or attend a brand campus.

Understanding this student choice is essential for the marketing strategies of the universities. Importantly, from the students' point of view, deciding on a university is a high-risk, complex process (Le, Dobele, & Robinson, 2019). This process has been extensively researched in literature with findings revealing that the decision of which university to apply to is influenced by a wide range of factors, such as the personality of the student, characteristics of institutions, or influential information sources (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). This plethora of knowledge, however, has focused on developed countries, leaving a gap in our knowledge about student choices in Africa.

The challenges for African universities are multifaceted. They face unique developmental challenges based in narratives of poverty, post-colonialism, coloniality, and more recently, decolonisation (Maringe, 2020). While acknowledging the limited theoretical insight into marketing higher education in Africa (Ivy, 2008; Maringe & Foskett, 2002), this book aims to fill this gap in knowledge by examining some of the theoretical and empirical issues surrounding student's choices in Africa's context, recognising sources of information and factors of choice as critical dimensions when addressing information-seeking behaviour (Simões & Soares, 2010).

The challenges for the administration of the universities, funding structure, curriculum, and quality of education (Maringe, 2005a) are recognised; this book, however, focuses on the student decision-making process. It offers empirical insight into who and what influences the choice of university (Johnston, 2010). In addition, it recognises that understanding student choices is a crucial task for higher education marketers (Le et al., 2019), therefore managerial implications are presented for higher education administrators, and practitioners on how

best to reach out to prospective students in the competitive higher education market using digital media and updated websites, highlighting values and engaging with stakeholders and other family members and siblings who can influence the prospective students. We hope that this book meaningfully advances our comprehension of marketing higher education in Africa and that it will stimulate further research.

Coverage and Content of the Book

Following a process of double-blind refereeing, thirteen articles were selected that reflect some of the main challenges and themes of higher education marketing in Africa, which represents a relevant area of research, both for scholars and practitioners. The chapters are grouped into three different themes. Theme one has four chapters with a focus on *Choice and Decision Making*. There are five chapters in theme two that explore *Factors Influencing Choice*. Theme three is *Attracting Prospective Students* explored over four chapters. In addition to these chapters, there is an introductory chapter and a concluding chapter written by the editors. This first chapter provides a background for the study and introduced the coverage and contents of the book, highlighting the different themes and chapters.

Robert Ebo Hinson and Emmanuel Mogaji open with the second chapter titled *Co-Creation of Value by Universities and Prospective Students: Towards an Informed Decision-Making Process*. The authors offer a theoretical insight into the value delivery systems of the universities and the factors influencing students' choice. The chapter is theoretically positioned to recognise the co-creation of value between the university and prospective students. The chapter posits that while students need information to decide which university to attend, there is a sense of responsibility on the part of the universities to showcase their inherent values that may appeal to the student. The chapter extends our theoretical knowledge on value creation, student choice and marketing of higher education. Implications for managers with regards to the value audit, communication and engagement are also presented.

Chapter 3, titled *Understanding High School Students' University Choice—Implications for Marketing and Management of Higher Education in Ghana*, was written by Clement Adamba. The chapter focuses on higher education in Ghana, recognising the competition in the sector from the new government policy to upgrade all polytechnics into technical universities. The chapter draws findings from questionnaires administered to final year senior high school students in Ghana. The results show that the choice of a higher education institution is influenced more by institutional reputation, infrastructure, economic and family or relationship factors. The results further show that the best allies for marketers of higher education institutions to attract prospective undergraduates are the teachers and counsellors in senior high schools. The chapter offers areas of attention for management, which include establishing a stronger connection with industry and showing evidence of that connection to prospective students. University representatives should target students directly with this information during visits to senior high schools.

The fourth chapter focuses on another African country. It offers theoretical insights into student choices in Uganda. This chapter, written by Godwin Muhangi and titled *Delving into Undergraduate Students' Choice of Higher Education in Uganda*, examines the process of choosing a higher education institution by undergraduate students in Uganda. The chapter starts by presenting the Ugandan higher education context and brings in the concept of higher education marketing. Factors such as reference groups, family background and sponsorship were found to influence students' choice of a higher education institution in Uganda. The chapter recommends that higher education institutions in Uganda must consider marketing in order to survive in the competitive higher education market.

Chapter 5, titled *International and Southern African Perspectives on Choice and Decision-Making of Young People in Higher Education*, written by Felix Maringe and Otilia Chiramba, recognises that these have become significant areas of endeavour internationally. The rise of neoliberalism and the market in higher education seem to have fuelled this growth. The chapter offers a discussion on the theoretical underpinnings behind choice and student decision-making in higher education

based on purposefully selected articles from Southern Africa, and the discussion describes the research emphasis and omissions in the growing literature on the subject in Southern Africa. The review identifies ten descriptors of the nature of emerging research on this subject.

Chapter 6 is the first chapter under theme two of the book, which focuses on factors influencing students' choices. The chapter titled *Factors Influencing Students' Choice of a Federal University: A Case Study of a Nigerian Federal University* was written by Samuel Adeyanju, Emmanuel Mogaji, Johnson A. Olusola, Muhammed A. Oyinlola and Babajide Macaulay. The study is contextualised in Nigeria and focuses on a federal university, which is different from state and private universities. The federal university is one of the best public universities in the country, and it is not surprising that many students want to attend the university. The study adopts quantitative research through a structured questionnaire completed by undergraduate students at the university. The study found that personal interest greatly influenced students' decisions, followed by parental influence, university reputation, university ranking, and fees.

Evaluative Criteria for Selection of Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria is the seventh chapter of the book and is also contextualised in Nigeria but did not focus on a single university. This chapter, written by Yirakpoa Ikaba and Charles Enyindah, acknowledges that there is a dearth of empirical studies reporting factors that influence students' choice of tertiary education institutions in Nigeria. To fill this gap, the chapter adopts a quantitative methodology to survey students in order to understand the factors that influenced their choices. The empirical analysis indicates that the choice of higher education institution (HEI) was significantly impacted by location, teaching quality, opinion of parents, facilities, reputation and proximity. However, the cost of programme and security do not have a significant effect on the choice of HEI.

Chapter 8 is another study from Nigeria, but unlike the previous studies from Nigeria, this study, titled *Factors Influencing Post Graduate Students' University Choice in Nigeria*, adopts a qualitative methodology, focused on postgraduate students in a private university. The chapter, written by Adesoga Adefulu, Temitope Farinloye and Emmanuel

Mogaji, noted that while previous studies have focused on developed countries and undergraduate students, their chapter explores factors influencing postgraduate students' decision-making. The study recognises that the rapid expansion of the enrolment of undergraduates has also stimulated students' enthusiasm for postgraduate studies and importantly, postgraduate students have prior experience in a university service environment (compared to undergraduate students). The semi-structured interview was conducted with first-year postgraduate students at a private university in South-West Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed four key factors, which are the desire to study for a postgraduate degree, the facilities of the university including its geographical location, the courses on offer and the influence of other stakeholders such as parents, siblings and friends. This influence of stakeholders aligns with the fundamental values of a collectivist culture like Nigeria.

The next chapter is a move away from Nigeria to South Africa. Chapter 9, written by Margaret Cullen, André Calitz and Carlien Jooste and titled *Factors and Sources of Information that Influence a Student's University of Choice*, presents an empirical study that was conducted amongst national and international students at a South African university. The study found that international students considered university brochures and websites, recommendations of former students and information from the International Office as factors influencing their choice to study in South Africa. Home students, on the other hand, indicated that a recommendation from a former student or friend, the university website and visits by university representatives were the critical factors they considered. The university's use of social media was ranked more critical by international students than national students. The chapter concludes that the main factors in terms of marketing and recruitment tools students accessed were adverts in media, university websites, university fairs and word of mouth.

Chapter 11 argues that in order to attract prospective students to universities, relevant information about the programme should be provided, at least on the universities' websites. The chapter titled *Minding the Gap: An assessment of the quality of course information available on the websites of African Universities* was written by Emmanuel Mogaji,

Amarachukwu Anyogu and Thomas Wayne. The study adopts the Availability, Location, Accessibility, Relatability and Actionability (ALARA) Model of Information Search on websites, a novel methodology, which brings together case study research, stakeholder roleplay and netnography to explore the quality and quantity of information about undergraduate programmes provided on university websites. The study found that prospective students are short-changed as the universities are not providing enough information for them to decide. The study extends our knowledge about marketing higher education, understanding student's information searches. The study also highlights implications for university managers, academic staff, marketing communication teams, information and communications teams and other teams responsible for developing and updating the universities' websites with current and relevant information about the programmes offered by the university.

Margaret Cullen, André Calitz and Watiri Kanyutu wrote Chapter 12 of the book, which highlights the values prospective students place on university ranking when deciding on which university to attend. The chapter is titled *The Importance of University Rankings for Students' University of Choice: A South African Perspective.* The chapter recognises higher education practitioners, especially marketers, are turning to university rankings and league tables as a cue when comparing themselves with other universities to attract students. The chapter investigates whether or not students in South Africa consider university rankings as a significant factor when deciding on a university. A survey was conducted amongst students at a South African university that specifically considered the importance of the factors relating to university rankings. The study concludes that the majority of students indicated they considered university ranking to be an essential factor in their decision and university of choice.

Chapter 13, titled *Experiences of Doctoral Students' Vulnerability in South Africa*, is another study from South Africa but explicitly focuses on the experience of doctoral students. The chapter, written by Nevensha Sing, lays bare some of the challenges faced by doctoral students. Based on a theory of vulnerability, an analysis of narratives provides a summary of who is susceptible to risks and why, and the ways

they coped or did not cope with their experience of vulnerability. The chapter profiles an interpretation of the results of the study concerning the theoretical base adopted and reports on the implications for further research. Therefore, the chapter argues that the conceptualisation of being at risk is a multidimensional concept that is not adequately dealt with in higher education institutional ethics policy and practice.

Chapter 14 explores how a private university is making itself appealing to prospective students in Nigeria. Stella Aririguzoh wrote the chapter titled *Making a Christian Private University Appealing to Prospective Students: The Case of Covenant University.* The chapter adopts the marketing mix to examine how Covenant University, a Christian faith-based university and the acclaimed leader in the private university industry in Nigeria, has marketed itself. It found that it uses its product, people, work processes and serene physical location to attract new students. Importantly, it uses its relatively high tuition fees to position itself as the school for the children of the elites.

The last chapter is titled *Student University Choice Making in Africa: Emerging Challenges, Opportunities and Agenda for Research, Practice and Policy* and is written by the editors. The chapter summarises key findings from the book and identifies research agendas. The chapter presents practical implications and critical insights into student's university choice-making in Africa. Agendas for future research are also provided. It is anticipated that this will shape further discussion and theoretical advancement, which will be relevant for scholars, students, managers, practitioners, and policymakers in the field of higher education marketing.

Conclusion

This book has been conceptualised to offer empirical insights into the higher education market across Africa. It builds on previous empirical research that provides an understanding of the higher education market in Africa (Mogaji, Maringe, & Hinson, 2019a) and their strategic marketing (Mogaji, Maringe, & Hinson, 2019b). The book provides

significant theoretical and marketing practice implications for academics, higher education administrators, and practitioners on how best to market higher education in Africa and reach out to prospective students.

The selected chapters provide a wide variety of stimulating insights into knowledge advancements in marketing higher education in Africa. We believe this book represents a significant milestone in the study of marketing higher education in Africa, which has been under-researched. Finally, we thank all the authors who submitted articles for consideration in this edited book; over 27 papers were initially received.

We are grateful to the reviewers who contributed their valuable time and talent to develop this edited book and ensured the quality of the chapters with their constructive comments and suggestions. We believe this book contains significant work that is profoundly meaningful for the higher education marketing field, not just for Africa.

This book on **Higher Education Marketing in Africa—Explorations on Student Choice** focuses on different factors that influence the choice of prospective students in Africa to study at a particular university. The authors have covered different geographies on the continent and employed different methodological approaches to reach their study conclusions. The authors' affiliations are also international in scope. The collection reflects the diversity and breadth of current research within this stimulating and evolving research area.

While the research covered in this book adequately represents the conceptual field of student university choice-making in Africa, this book calls for more context-specific student choice-making in Africa, recognising the heterogeneous nature of the market (Ndofirepi et al., 2020) and factors that are typical to Africa such as location (due to security, safety and travelling on bad roads) and religious affiliations (especially in private religious institutions). We hope readers will find the chapters in this book both enriching and thought-provoking and that the insights provided in this collection of research materials will enhance the understanding of this topic, inspire further interest in marketing higher education in Africa, and provide a basis for sound management decisions and stimulate new ideas for future research.

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Part II

Choice and Decision Making

2

Co-creation of Value by Universities and Prospective Students: Towards an Informed Decision-Making Process

Robert Ebo Hinson and Emmanuel Mogaji

Introduction

Africa is a continent with different countries and different education market (Ndofirepi, Farinloye, & Mogaji, 2020). The Continent represents the environment in which education as a service is being produced and consumed. Since the education service is a sophisticated service jointly produced with a broad group of services, the physical environment constitutes an essential element in the decision-making process of students (Mogaji & Yoon, 2019). The reconstruction of Africa during the period following independence in the 1950s and

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1960s saw the need for development of university education (UE) in Africa. It is worthy of note that in order to meet the immediate human resource needs of Africa, many African countries sent their citizens to be educated abroad to acquire knowledge and skills required for the nation-building agenda. During this post-independence era, African countries fully funded UE and, as a result, took monopoly of the tertiary education in Africa. State-funded public UE, therefore, became the most common characteristic of UE development in Africa between the period 1950s and 1970s. This era was described as *golden era for higher education in Africa* (Fonn et al., 2018).

The introduction of the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s, following economic development challenges African countries faced, which sought to assist African countries in reducing their fiscal deficits, questioned the role of the state in UE development. This led to a shift in attention of African states from UE to primary and secondary education. The fortunes of UE in Africa subsequently declined, resulting from significant cuts in funding public sector institutions (universities inclusive) by the state.

The diversion of UE funding to the funding of primary and secondary education did not only stall infrastructural development and expansion in African universities but also deteriorated the working conditions in the universities. Consequently, top faculty in African universities migrated, leaving research and innovation abandoned. According to Fonn et al. (2018), although Africa accounts for 13.5% of the global population, it spends less than 1% of global expenditure on research and development and contributes less than 1% of global research output. African countries, therefore, depends significantly on international collaborations and visiting academics for her research output.

Nevertheless, there was a growing number of young people seeking access to UE, with its resultant rapid growth in university enrolment. The reduction in funding amidst growing numbers of students created tension between the political elite and academia, which precluded working together in searching for a standard solution for African development challenges. Quality of training and research in African universities were being compromised on account of limited funding of universities by African governments, inadequate teaching and learning

infrastructure, inadequate materials and equipment for research, heavy teaching loads for career researchers, to mention but a few.

In the 1990s, however, African universities sought to regain their role as agents of transformation in Africa, following the emergence of globalisation, which depended heavily on knowledge economy and information technology and required availability of highly educated professionals. This need, coupled with increasing population of secondary education graduates, called for expansion in UE in Africa. However, the ability of African governments to fund and expand UE to absorb the rapidly growing population and high demand for UE in Africa remained a mirage.

The World Bank, realising the significance of universities in political and socio-economic transformation in Africa, changed its policy in favour of UE in Africa. In this regard, the application of market-oriented higher educational reforms was proposed [by the World Bank] and embraced [by the African countries]. Resultantly, new higher education reforms such as cost-reduction, cost-recovery, cost-sharing, and income-generating approaches of funding UE were introduced. The aim was to reduce reliance on the state for the success of UE in Africa. It could be said, therefore, that the financial incapacity of Africa states to adequately fund and resource UE in Africa, compelled most African countries to promote and encourage not only private sector participation in UE but also to fully and/or partially privatise UE in Africa.

African Universities are making an effort to offer values, to enhance the human resources of the continent (Vasudeva & Mogaji, 2020). Likewise, there are growing demands for higher education places on the continent. This paper offers a theoretical insight into the value delivery systems of the Universities and the factors influencing choice. The chapter is positioned theoretically to recognise the values presented by the University, manners in which they are positioned and the information processing by the students. This offers theoretical insight into the relationship between Universities as providers of information and students as processors of information, adding knowledge to the marketing dynamics between the stakeholders (Olaleye, Ukpabi, & Mogaji, 2020).

The subsequent section of the chapter explores Universities as a value delivery mechanism, exploring the various value delivery channel. This is followed by various factors known to influence student choice.

A theoretical positioning is after that presented, highlighting a common ground for informed decision making which is anchored on information provided by the Universities and information processing by the students. The chapter ends with a concluding section.

University as Value Delivery Mechanisms

Universities train professionals needed in the expansion of public service, in the extension of the frontiers of knowledge, and the service of the national economies. They equip graduates with a holistic university experience, needed for the development of African countries. The significance of universities, therefore, in political and socio-economic transformation, cannot be overemphasised. The 'university', according to Council (2016), refers to an institution of higher learning involved in three essential value delivery functions: teaching, research and community engagement. The BC emphasises that what defines an institution like a university is its substantial focus on theory. By this, university graduates develop familiarity with theoretical underpinnings of professional practices and ability not only to challenge received ideas but also to generate new theories that are fundamental to innovation and value-addition. Universities are thus valued delivery mechanisms through the functions of teaching, research and community engagement. In this era of sustainable development goals (SDGs), universities, with their broad remit around the creation and dissemination of knowledge and their unique position within society, have a critical role to play in the achievement of the SDGs through value delivery systems (SDSN, 2017). The mechanisms through which universities deliver value can be categorised into classroom value delivery mechanism, campus value delivery mechanism and community value delivery mechanism (Council, 2016).

Value Delivery Through Classroom

"'Classroom' here refers not only to the literal room in which classes are taught but to all of the formal learning that takes place in accredited

courses" (Council, 2016, p. 98). In a broader sense, classroom embraces the provision of the disciplinary and technical knowledge that students need in their diverse areas of work. It also extends to the quality of degree courses designed to develop a range of transferable skills, including those of analysis and critical thinking, in students. Universities, therefore, deliver specific values through the classroom mechanism, and such values include:

Pedagogy

The method adopted by a university to impact knowledge to its students explains its value delivery primarily. Many universities across Africa are dominated by transmission-based teaching approaches. These approaches are usually based on lecturing, with few opportunities for students to engage in discussion, to critique the ideas received and to apply the ideas conveyed. New strategies, such as the adoption of problem-based learning in a range of degree courses, are considered valuable and are needed to enable students to participate in learning actively.

Forms of Assessment

In most universities in Africa, examinations are dominant forms of assessment. Usually, these modes of assessment are based on inert forms of knowledge. This has encouraged memorisation and cramming (chew-poor-pass- forget) among students. It is essential therefore, that, as teaching methods and strategies changed, the methods of assessment are also transformed to reflect the changes in pedagogy. As noted by Council (2016), it is extremely hard to transform pedagogy without transforming assessment. New forms of assessment (presentations and group projects) are needed to support the development of analytical skills, creativity and teamwork.

Adequacy of Learning Resources

The availability and adequacy of resources for teaching and learning in the university determines the value delivery of the university. Council (2016)

has identified a severe lack of essential equipment in many African countries, particularly for teaching and learning natural science and agriculture programmes. Quality of teaching, research and community engagement are therefore severely compromised by inadequate facilities. Provision of a productive learning environment for all students through well-stocked libraries, virtual learning platforms, internet connectivity and space for independent and group study should be taken seriously by universities.

Curricular Relevance

A vital area of a university's value proposition and delivery is the relevance of its curriculum and programmes. Most universities in African countries are accused of running outdated curricula and not keeping abreast of new developments in industry and the workplace. Nevertheless, there have been attempts in various contexts to reform the content of university courses, where in some cases; employers make input in the design of new courses, particularly to strengthen the quality and relevance of science and technology education. Curricular relevance is a process that requires that taught programmes are kept abreast of new developments in research, the latest technologies and professional practices. Besides, regular reviews of programme and curriculum content and close interaction with industry and professional organisations are critical components of curricular relevance.

Disciplinary Spread

How specialised and integrative the programmes offered by a university is a significant definition of how the university delivers its values. Concerns are raised across African countries concerning the disciplinary offerings of universities. While some universities focus on offering specialised specific courses (which are seen to be too narrow to be of much use to students in their working lives) as a means of maximizing income through capturing new markets, other universities, which previously focused on technical, vocational or scientific areas, are moving towards more generic academic programmes. The former reduces the diversity of

the university offers, and the later churn out vast numbers of students from generic applied social science areas, with fewer students specialising in technical and vocational areas. While it is positive for universities to have disciplinary specialisms, the full range of courses should be represented across the UE system, from natural sciences to arts and humanities, and from academic to more applied professional subjects. All of these areas are important for the achievement of development goals and employability. At the micro-level, individual students have the opportunity to be exposed to a broad-based curriculum that includes both technical and liberal arts elements. That is, all students, in addition to their primary discipline, are exposed to a range of courses including humanities, technology and African studies.

Theory-practice Fit

African universities are under the attack of theory-practice misalignment. Council (2016) reports that African universities do not teach students how to fit into the industry and deliver courses divorced from practice. Universities are sites of higher learning and theory has an essential place on academic courses of all types. Nevertheless, rebalancing is needed in response to students' and employers' concerns about a lack of practical applicability. There is a need to rethink how UE and training prepare the next generation of graduates for the world of work and in particular, how it can enhance graduates' employability and encourage them to be innovative and entrepreneurial. Students should, therefore, be supported in developing the ability to engage with theory critically and to apply it effectively in their working lives. This addresses the alleged mismatch between employer requirements and graduate employability and enhances the attributes of graduates, which by extension explains the value delivery of the university.

Targeted Skills Development Courses

The critical role of UE is the development of critical skills relevant to the economy, including the ability to innovate. While many transferable

skills can be gained through regular degree courses, a range of skills development opportunities and courses, such as entrepreneurial courses, CV writing and updating, voluntary work, internships, and leadership training through school unions, need to be provided to enhance value delivery of the universities. Attention must be paid to delivering such courses in a participatory manner, allowing students to experiment and gain hands-on experience.

Value Delivery Through Campus

'Campus', as defined by Council (2016), refers to the broader learning experience of the university, outside the classroom experience, usually packaged in extra-curricular activities. Extra-curricular activities have a significant positive impact on student development and are highly valued by prospective employers. However, the increasing numbers of students working full-time and studying at evenings and weekends has challenged traditional conceptions of the campus university. Nevertheless, universities work to maintain broader spaces for learning outside of formal teaching, given their significance for the personal, intellectual and professional development of students. These learning opportunities can be particularly crucial for those students going on to develop social enterprises and other forms of entrepreneurship but are also critical for conventional forms of employment. Value delivery by universities through campus, According to Council (2016), is seen in the following:

Careers Service

One way universities deliver value to students is through careers service. Significant gaps in career support at universities across African countries have been identified. In some cases, this is a question of the absence or limitation of a dedicated careers adviser and support activities. In other cases, provision of career supports is available, but students do not take up the opportunities sufficiently. Nevertheless, some African universities, especially well-endowed private universities, succeeded in providing

extensive support to students for making choices and developing skills for careers and linking in with employers, for the whole of the student body. However, rolling out such provision in large public universities is a significant challenge.

Extra-curricular Activities

Universities deliver value to students through a range of activities outside of their formal programmes, including artistic pursuits, sports, drama and debating. These activities serve recreational purposes but also are a source of learning and development of social relations. Some African universities, for example, have campus/community radio programmes, in which students act as producers and presenters, serving an essential function in providing local language services as well as raising critical issues in the public interest, such as health campaigns.

Student Voice and Representation

Opportunities offered to students by universities to be engaged in some administrative matters are valued delivery mechanisms. Through these, students have the opportunity to engage in student unions or representative councils. This form of participation is critical in developing civic capacities and engagement on the part of individual students. It also serves an essential function in feeding in student views on the university and enhancing the quality of university service delivery to students.

Employer engagement

The ultimate aim of UE for many students is the enhancement of their employability. It is, therefore, a value worth considering if universities consciously design activities to link students up to employers. Beyond the involvement of employers in the development of curricula, other events and activities, such as careers fairs, in which employers can provide information to students on prospective employment opportunities, as well as develop direct contact with them, can be run on campus as value delivery mechanisms.

Innovation Incubators

Universities can deliver value to students through innovation incubators. Some universities provide students with opportunities for the development of start-up companies and creation of innovative products on their campuses. Students can benefit from space and facilities, support of experienced entrepreneurs and in some cases financial support to develop their entrepreneurial ideas.

Value Delivery Through Community

Students, through extramural learning opportunities facilitated by their universities, gain many benefits in the course of their degree studies beyond the gates of the university. Council (2016) defined 'community' as the learning experiences taking place outside the university gates, not only in the local community but also in work placements and internships. The value of such activities in developing employability attributes of students is well established and documented in extant literature. Such experiences have not only positive impacts on the communities involved (whether a local neighbourhood or a workplace) but also have significant benefits for the students themselves. Specifically, value delivery through extramural learning focuses on:

Work Placements

Professional learning through work placements or internships is one surest way universities deliver value to their students. Work placement opportunity for real experience in the workplace is, perhaps, one of the most commonly discussed and longest practised interventions relating to employability and student experience in terms of value delivery. Much professional learning (experience) occur in the workplace. These experiences are generally essential for students before looking for employment. In addition to facilitating links with employers for students, universities need to ensure that students are supported throughout the process. Employers also need to provide a conducive

environment for students to engage and develop in order to make the work placement experience valuable.

Volunteering and Service-learning

Value delivery of university can also be seen in volunteering service learning. Through the facilitation of the universities, students commonly engage in activities voluntarily to support local communities, participate in environmental projects, work with children or the elderly, and involve themselves in diverse forms of work with NGOs, social movements, and religious and other civil society organisations. In addition to having a positive impact on the communities concerned, such activities represent an essential source of learning for the students themselves. Specifically, community-volunteering services help develop generic, transferable skills. Community services are particularly relevant for students looking to develop social enterprises in the future.

For a holistic student learning experience, universities develop and deliver value propositions across the classroom, campus and community (3Cs). Focus on the 3Cs is, therefore, crucial to develop the kind of 'all-rounder' graduate that employers seek (Council, 2016). The 3Cs value delivers mechanisms produce graduates who will succeed in a rapidly changing labour market. Besides, it is suitable for carving out new opportunities and generating positive benefits for society. Universities, in their quest to deliver delightful learning experience to their students, should pay attention to all of these three spheres simultaneously, and ensure that they are providing students with a rich array of learning experiences in each.

Factors That Influence Students' Choice of University in Africa

Privatisation of and private sector participation in UE has made UE in Africa highly competitive. That is, as the competition between traditional public and private universities is increasing, a wider variety

of universities from which to choose is also created. Consequently, the need for universities to differentiate themselves from their competitors through marketisation is self-evident. The role of marketing in student recruitment in African universities, therefore, is increasing in importance. Marketing in the higher education sector is not new (Gibbs, Pashiardis, & Ivy, 2008). When universities offer qualifications that satisfy student needs, distribute tuition using methods that match student expectations, provide data on which students can rely to make informed decisions about qualification choices and price programmes at a level that students see as providing value, marketing is being deployed. This set of controllable variables (tools) the universities use to elicit response they want from their various target markets constitute the universities' marketing mix, described as everything that a university does to influence the demand for the services that it offers. The design of the universities' marketing mix is usually anchored on what the universities perceive students to consider in their choice of a university and their selection of programmes. The students' consideration for choosing universities to attend and selecting courses to offer include programmes, premiums, price, prominence, and place (Gibbs et al., 2008).

Programmes

Every student, contemplating a UE, has in mind a programme to offer and begins to search for universities that offer such a programme. As a determinant of students' choice of a university, programme represents a bundle of benefits that satisfy the knowledge needs and expectations of students. Programme is comparable to *product* in the traditional service marketing mix. Traditionally, universities run different levels of programmes. These include certificate programmes, diploma programmes, undergraduate degree programmes, masters' degree programmes and terminal degree programmes.

Certificate Programmes

A certificate programme usually equips students with a specific skill-set or prepares students to succeed on a qualification exam. They are usually academic and/or practical programmes that generally take up to one year or two years to complete. Some students require certificate programmes to demonstrate their understanding of a topic in order to move forward in their careers. Therefore, students who wish to confirm that they have received specialised training in a field would opt for a certificate programme.

Diploma Programmes

Diploma certificate programmes are usually designed for professionals with experience in their practice fields, or graduates who have already completed a certificate programme in related subjects. Diploma certificate programmes, thus, provide practical training in a specific area that is designed for useful application in the workplace. Therefore, students desirous of practical application of knowledge at workplace may consider enrolling in universities offering diploma programmes.

Undergraduate Degree Programmes

Undergraduate programmes are the most common programmes unto which several students enrol when they gain admission into university for the first time. Undergraduate degree programmes are designed to provide basic careers knowledge and skills needed for success in an entry-level position in the related professional field. In this regard, students whose interest is in charting a professional career path may consider which undergraduate programmes will be relevant for them, and which university is offering such programmes in a manner that is desired. Undergraduate degree programmes come in different forms—major, minor, combined major and minor and double

major—depending on the number of credit hours required. While minor bachelor's degrees require an average of a 15-credit (90 credit hours), major bachelor's degrees require between 18–36 credits (120 credit hours). Students who wish to move quickly into the workplace, or students wishing to pursue a professional programme that requires some prior university work, usually consider the minor undergraduate degree programmes. The major undergraduate degree programmes provide a general education in a particular field of study and are required for admission to further educational pursuits. As part of their packaging strategies, some universities entice students by allowing them to pursue different programmes—double major or combined major and minor—at the same time. These combinations are becoming significant determinants of the choice of programme and university for students' enrolment decisions.

Postgraduate and Masters' Degree Programmes

Higher education is becoming increasingly competitive among young adults. After their undergraduate degree programmes, they further their education by enrolling unto various postgraduate and masters' degree programmes. Postgraduate programmes are designed usually for students who have graduated from undergraduate degree programmes to further develop their knowledge in a specific area. Working professionals and graduates with more experience who find it valuable to develop in their career may also decide to obtain postgraduate certificates by enrolling on postgraduate programmes. Masters' degree programmes are offered to students who have already earned undergraduate degrees. Sometimes, working professionals may return to university for masters' programmes to help secure a promotion, increase their salary potential or stay up-to-date in a changing industry. Many masters' degree programmes culminate with a qualifying exam (with or without research) that students must pass to earn the masters' degree.

Terminal Degree Programmes

To some students, even the sky is not the limit as far as their academic and professional educations are concerned. They want to obtain the highest (terminal) degrees that are awarded in their areas of specialisation. Such students critically evaluate doctoral opportunities that exist in universities. Terminal degree is the highest degrees awarded in a given field of study and requires a rigorous study and a great deal of dedication and intellectual interest in a particular field. In most fields, the terminal-level degree is the doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.). While most degrees that are considered terminal are PhDs or doctorates, some master's degrees are considered terminal if the field does not offer a degree beyond a master's degree. Terminal degrees are needed to conduct research and/or teach at the university. These top-level degrees are usually called research degrees, and they typically come with the title of Doctor, such as Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), Doctor of Education (EdD) and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP). Doctorate or terminal degree programmes require students to complete several phases of coursework and study, including an oral examination and a lengthy written dissertation (thesis) of several pages.

It is important to note therefore that the programmes on offer in the various universities range from certificate programmes to terminal degree programmes. Each programme is a package of several courses, some of which are core (compulsory) others are elective (to be selected by students to make up for the required number of credit hours). However, students are keenly concerned about the relevance of the programmes to their future aspirations and present needs for self-employment, public-sector employment, private-sector employment, further study or portfolio of careers. Therefore, how specialised and integrative the programmes are designed is a significant concern for students in the choice of university to enrol in. The duration of the programme (how long it will take students to complete the programme) is also critical for students in deciding which university to attend. It is essential therefore that a curriculum should be appropriately developed and adapted to the needs of students and the broader society.

Premiums

Another factor that is gaining ground in students' consideration for making enrolment decisions is premium. Gibbs et al. (2008) defined premiums as those incentives that add exceptional value to students' university experience, and enumerated availability of on-campus accommodation or residential status, total number of credit hours required for a degree, international student exchange opportunities, class sizes and cultural diversity of students enrolled on a programme as examples of premiums.

Residential Status Requirements and/or Availability of on-campus Accommodation

It is impracticable to have university campuses established in all communities. Students leave their places of residence to attend universities elsewhere. Therefore, when making enrolment decisions, students pay particular attention to residential status requirements and availability of on-campus accommodation. Generally, students prefer either a residential status or on-campus private accommodation to off-campus accommodation. This is based on convenience, easy access to academic and social amenities and relatively better security arrangements associated with residential status and on-campus private accommodation. Unfortunately, on-campus accommodation in several public and private universities in African countries are woefully inadequate to accommodate all students on enrolment. This results in unmeasured demand on traditional halls of residence and private on-campus accommodation. The spill-off of students who could not get accommodation on campus are left with no choice than to seek accommodation outside campus, with all its attendant implications of exorbitant rents being charged and rubbery attacks. Universities must appreciate that residential status and on-campus accommodation is a major consideration for students in making enrolment decisions.

Total Number of Credit Hours Required for a Degree

The total number of credit hours required in a particular degree programme is becoming a source of decision for some prospective students. A credit hour is a unit used to measure educational achievement in a particular field. Some courses require and deliver more credit hours than others. Typically, credit hour requirement for a course is determined by the advanced nature of the course. The more advanced the course is, the more credit hours are awarded for its completion. For example, minor undergraduate degree programmes take an average of 3 years to complete, and major bachelor's degree courses take between 3–5 years to complete. Most Master's degree programmes require 40 hours of credit. Despite these averages of credit hours for different programmes, some universities strategically vary the credit-hour requirements for selected programmes, based on the needs and requirements of students. The number of credit hours, therefore, needed to complete a university programme depends on the university and the programme. It is on this score that students make a credit-hour requirement an essential determinant of their decision to choose a programme and a university for enrolment.

International Student Exchange Opportunities

An opportunity to participate in an international student exchange programme is increasingly becoming a determinant of students' consideration for enrolling on a particular programme in a particular university. The desire to travel abroad is very high among the youth and young adults of many African countries. However, obtaining VISAs individually to travel abroad is a difficult task for them. Through international exchange programmes, students easily acquire visas. Therefore, the ease of VISA and passport acquisition, coupled with the rich experience associated with such international exchange programmes, students of African universities thoughtfully assess the availability of such opportunities before affirming their decision whether or not to enrol in a particular university.

Class Sizes

Infrastructure deficiency of higher education with its resultant congestion of students in academic facilities of learning (Abugre, 2018) is one of the significant challenges African universities are faced with. The phenomenon affects teaching and learning in several ways, including but not limited to poor quality of teaching, difficulty in assessing students' performance and difficulty in timely identification and remediation of academically weak students (Yelkpieri, Namale, Esia-Donkoh, & Ofosu-Dwamena, 2012). Students are thus mindful of the average class sizes of the various programmes in African universities before making their enrolment choices.

Price

Another factor that determines students' choice of a university is the costs associated with a particular programme or university. Price, in a narrower sense, is described as fees charged for programmes and other services rendered by a university (Gibbs et al., 2008). From a broader perspective, however, price, in addition to the fees charged for the programme, connotes all the sacrifices a student has to make to be able to offer a particular programme. It includes the cost of all foregone benefits and all expenses that are incurred in order to pursue a university programme.

Tuition Fees

Tuition fees are fees charged by education institutions for instruction or other services. Different universities charge different tuition fees and for different programmes. Fees charged have an impact on the revenue of the university and influence the students' perception of the quality of programmes and image of the university. As a result, universities are tempted to charge as high fees as possible. On the contrary, affordability of the price is a significant consideration of students in choosing universities to attend.

Other Expenses

Several cost elements, aside from the tuition fees, are associated with UE. Some of these expenses include; accommodation charges, cost of books and other materials needed for studying the programme, cost of travel to and from lectures, cost of feeding on campus, cost of research and print outs associated to the study of the programme, cost of international exchange programmes abroad, to mention but a few. These expenses differ from university to university. Whiles these expenses are relatively higher in private universities and universities located in urban areas, they are relatively lower in public universities, especially those that are not located in urban areas. In the analysis of their decisions, students take into consideration all these other expenses before settling on which university to attend.

Opportunity Costs

The thought of pursuing UE, in most cases, create a dilemmatic situation for many students, especially those students who are employed. It is a trade-off situation. Choosing to go to school means forfeiting the job (work), and choosing to work also means deciding to forgo education. The dilemmatic situation gets intensified, and creates cognitive dissonance within the individual, particularly in a situation where the outcome and benefits of EU are not guaranteed. There is therefore always an opportunity cost to incur if a student enrols on a programme at a university. Opportunity cost refers to the loss of potential gain from choosing one option from several alternate options. That is, for every choice a potential student makes, there are potential benefits the students lost out on by choosing that option. While some opportunity costs (income from the best alternative foregone) can be easily monetised, others can not be expressed in monetary terms, and are difficult to calculate. Therefore, through cost-benefit analysis, students consider and critically examine the opportunity costs of enrolling onto a programme in a university. The price is a crucial consideration for both the university and the students.

Place

The importance of place (modes of knowledge transmission) in influencing students' choice of university is noticeable, particularly in recent times. Modes of knowledge transmission explain the distribution methods that a university adopts to provide the tuition to its students in a manner that meets, if not exceed, the students' expectations. Increasingly, universities are varying their methods of delivering tuitions. No longer are tuitions restricted to and students confined to lecture halls on university campuses. The rising cost of UE is making it difficult for many prospective students, particularly those working on quitting their jobs for regular programmes. In response, African universities are distributing tuition using methods that match students' expectations. Gribbs et al. (2008) affirmed that the development of alternative modes of tuition have grown significantly. That is, access to lectures and other support materials are increasingly becoming available not only through regular on-campus lectures but also through part-time arrangements, evening sessions, weekend options, sandwich modes, distance learning, virtual media learning, block release options and pod-casts. These modes of distributing knowledge by African universities are greatly influencing students in choosing their universities and programmes. For instance, Widiputera, De Witte, Groot, and van den Brink (2017) investigated the roles that the distance of study programmes plays in student decisions to attend a university and demonstrated that the closest distance between similar programmes offered and competition between programmes have significant effects on the enrolment of students in higher education.

Prominence

Students are gradually becoming sensitive to what Gibbs et al. (2008) describe as prominence in determining their universities of choice. Prominence refers to the excellent reputation of a university. The prominence of a university is seen in terms of teaching, research, standards and recognised qualifications. It describes the image of the university

and positively or negatively positions the university in the minds of students and the world at large. Students' evaluation of prominence focuses on reputation of the university through its people (faculty, administrative and support staff) and league tables (rankings) or press reviews.

The Reputation of University Through Its People

Students hold in high esteem the reputation of all the staff of the university in making their enrolment decisions. Different categories of university staff interact with prospective students and indeed when they enrolled as students of the university. The reputation of both academic, administrative and support staff is thus a crucial point of reference for students in making enrolment decisions. The role of the status of academic staff in recruitment of students and the choice making processes should be significantly valued by African universities (Cubillo, Sanchez, & Cervino, 2006). Some students, for example, are continually cross-checking profiles of academics to be sure that academic staff who are Ph.D. holders or have a Professorial title will teach the courses they wish to enrol on before affirming the enrolment status. In this case, the perceived quality of the programme is tied to the calibre of the academic staff who teach them. Students are also focusing on the administrative and academic support staff to access the quality of the service they receive. Gibbs et al. (2008) claim that "the simple process of how a front line administrative staff handles a telephone enquiry may have a more significant impact on whether or not a prospective student is going to keep that university in their range of options than an eminent Professor's publications or research record" (p. 290). According to them, the quality of UE to prospective students embraces all the administrative and bureaucratic functions of the university: from the handling of enquiries to registration, from course evaluation to examinations, and from result dissemination to graduation. Unlike tangible products that a customer purchases, take ownership of and then takes the product home to consume, a UE is an intangible service, the consumption of which cannot be separated from its production. That is, the quality of students' university experience depends, to a considerable extent, on the

professionalism and the friendliness of the staff the students meet along the process. It is essential, therefore, that significant input to the provision of higher education services both at the front line and at what might be considered behind the scenes is provided in order to influence students' perceptions of service quality.

The Reputation of the University Through League Tables and Press Reviews

Considerable competition for students exists in the marketplace as a university in African countries, particularly the private once, compete for students. Most universities are utilising branding activity such as reputational capital through university league tables to deal with such competitive threats (Rutter, Roper, & Lettice, 2016). University league tables are the rankings of universities based on a set of criteria such as entry requirements, student satisfaction, graduation prospects, research quality or any other relevant metrics. The university rankings are organised into lists, which can be used for checking and validating the quality of a university. Students rely predominantly on university league tables to ascertain the quality universities, which influences their choice of universities for enrolment decisions. University rankings are quality assessment tools used to examine the quality university programmes and are used to influence behaviour and shape institutional and student decision-making (Berbegal-Mirabent & Ribeiro-Soriano, 2015; Kiraka, Maringe, Kanyutu, & Mogaji, 2020).

Theoretical Positioning

The University has a unique position within the society. Universities deliver values in the classroom, on campus and in the community. It is however essential for Universities to highlight their values as they engage with stakeholders, especially the prospective students that are considering various universities for their higher education. Prospective students are influenced by different factors which include the programs
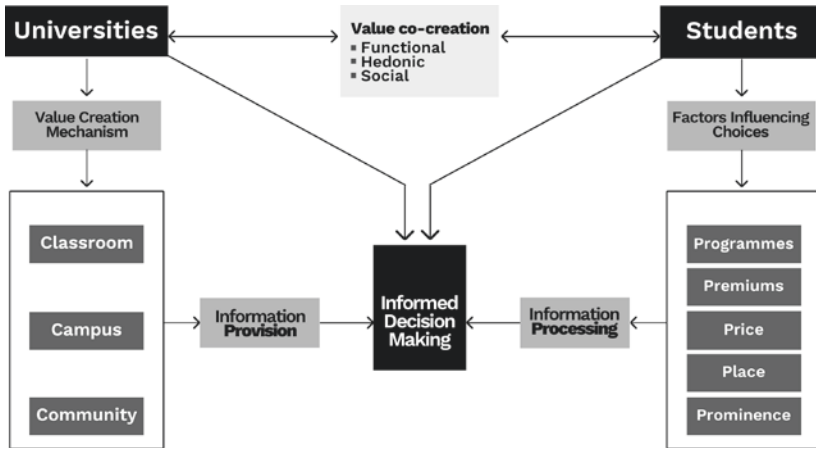
Fig. 2.1 Theoretical positioning of information provision and processing for informed decision making

offered by the University, the location of the University and even the ranking.

Figure 2.1 illustrates a conceptual relationship between the offers of the University and the students' expectation. Universities provide value through the classroom, campus and community. This highlight what the University has to offer. It presents the pedagogy approach, facilities and extra curriculum activities within the University. As Farinloye, Adeola, and Mogaji (2019) identified typology of universities, there will be variations in the values provided by the Universities. The type of University, the funding structure and the year of establishment, among many other factors will affect the value provided by the University. However, irrespective of the value being provided, there it is essential that Universities communicate this to stakeholder, including prospective students.

This recognize the role of universities as Information providers. This is important, as Mogaji, Anyogu, and Wayne (2020) found that most African Universities are no providing enough information about their programs and courses to prospective students. It is essential for University to provide a whole range of information for their student, not only about the curse but also about the extra curriculum activities

to enhance the student experience. Universities are expected to provide this information through their websites, prospectuses, social media, public relations and other marketing communications channels.

Research has identified various factors influencing student choice of University, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level (Adefulu, Farinloye, & Mogaji, 2019; d'Aiglepierre & Bauer, 2018; Maringe & Carter, 2007). These factors vary according to individuals, and they include the programs on offer, premium and prestige, price, place and location. The need for student to search and process information cannot, however, be ignored as Mangan, Hughes, and Slack (2010) found that many students appear to lack enthusiasm and determination to search for information about their University choices as many students search for information about local universities and may not search further if they feel their needs have been met.

Theoretically, it is positioned that Universities should provide relevant information about their value for their prospective students. Likewise, the students are expected to process the information. This is further integrated with the consumer value theory. Holbrook (2005, p. 46) defines customer value as an "interactive, relativistic preference and experience". Xu, Peak, and Prybutok (2015) posited that consumer value involves a trade-off process where customers evaluate the benefits received and the sacrifices given from using a product/service. Zhang, Guo, Hu, and Liu (2017) further defined consumer value as the process by which producers and consumers, as peer subjects, co-create value for themselves and each other.

This highlights the working relationship between the University and the students to co-create value and have a common ground where students can make an informed decision. Zhang et al. (2017) presented customer value creation as a three-dimensional construct, having functional, hedonic, and social values. Functional value assumes that the Students are rational problem solvers, searching for information to enhance their decision-making process. Therefore they need Universities to make that information available. Hedonic values conceptualised the feelings and emotive aspects of vales created on campus, classroom and the community (Wang, 2016), representing the extent to which the creates appropriate experiences, feelings, and emotions for the prospective

students (Smith & Colgate, 2007). Social value is considered an independent dimension in total customer value that is used to enhance user status and self-esteem (Rintamäki, Kanto, Kuusela, & Spence, 2006). This is posited as the anticipated engagement with the University necessitating the students' decision on which University to attend.

With the need to co-create value, there is a need for a common ground which ensures that the student is making an informed decision. This decision guarantees that the student has processed the information provided by the University. The student acknowledged the value provided by the university and agrees to enrol. This informed decision is made on a common ground anchored on information provided by the Universities and information processing by the students.

Conclusion

Understanding choice criteria for prospective students have received much academic attention in recent time. This understanding is vital for marketing higher education, securing the long-term success of the universities, as well as its marketing strategy (Adefulu et al., 2019). These understanding can shape engagement and marketing relationship between the students and the university, providing relevant information and engaging to enhance the students' experience. Likewise, the Universities must ensure their success by making progress in recruiting many students annually and to enhance recruitment efforts, the values they offer must be presented for prospective students.

This study offers theoretical insight into the information-based relationship between the University and the prospective students. The chapter is theoretically framed to recognise the University as a value delivery mechanism. University is delivering value through their teaching, curriculum relevance and development courses (Vasudeva & Mogaji, 2020). They offer values with regards to education for enhancing human resources of a country. Also, University delivers values through extra curriculum activities on campus, student voice and presentation, given the students the opportunity to develop and improve their lifestyles. Lastly the University offers values thorough their

community, recognising the impact of their research, offering placements and volunteering. These values, however, are excepted to be communicated to the stakeholders (Mogaji, 2019a).

While the communication of these values is essential, there is a responsible on the part of the student to engage with the information and process what has been offered based different factors that have been known to influence choices. The student has got to understand how to make an informed decision based on the information that is made available. It has been acknowledged however that the information search can be tedious and not surprising to find that there is a limited active information search on the part of the students (Menon, Saiti, & Socratous, 2007), necessitating the need for Universities to provide information for their students.

The study offers both theoretical and practical implications. First, this study extends knowledge of the student choice-making process. The theoretical position and framework acknowledge the students' responsibility to process information and also on the Universities' responsibilities to make the information readily available. While Mogaji et al. (2020) have focused on course information on University website, this study explores the Universities' holistic responsibility in information provision. Besides, it extends literature on value delivery and service marketing by focusing on African universities. Recognising the value, they deliver and how they are positioning themselves to reach prospective students. Thirdly, it contributes to knowledge of marketing higher education in Africa. While recognising the role of the Universities, there is an expectation for them to take pride in the values they provide and effectively marketing it to reach prospective students and stakeholders. While Ndofirepi et al. (2020) provided a holistic understanding of higher education market in Africa from a marketing perspective using the 7Ps of marketing, this study presents a 5P approach exploring the factors influencing student choice and the value delivery mechanism of the Universities. Lastly, it extends the consumer value theory (Zhang et al., 2017) and the ALARA Model of Information Search (Mogaji, 2019b) with focus on higher education. This study recognises the co-creation of value between University and the prospective students and the provision of information to enhance the decision-making process for students.

There are managerial implications from this study which will be relevant for University Managers as they reach out to prospective students and improve their marketing strategies. Firstly, Universities must recognise the values to deliver and how they will deliver it. As Farinloye et al. (2019) identified typology of universities, there are different University with different value deliverables. Universities must recognise what they stand for. This could involve carrying out an audit to understand the inherent values within the University. This audit will reveal what the University is doing well and areas in which they can improve. Understanding these values will inform the marketing communication strategy. Secondly, Managers needs to ensure that their values are well communicated to the stakeholders. This involves updating the website to highlight what the university offers (Mogaji, 2016), social media profile with content creation strategies providing relevant contents regularly, well designed and informative prospectuses, user-friendly and engaging mobile applications and public relations. The stakeholders must know what the University has to offer. Lastly, relevant information for students should be made available to them. This could be in easily accessible format, recognising the challenges with data and internet connections in Africa, Universities will be expecting the students to make an informed choice as this is important in avoid students dropping out or not completing their studies because they were not satisfied with their experience at the university. There is a common ground for informed decision making with is anchored on information provided by the Universities and information processing by the students.

This study has provided a conceptual paper that highlights the relationship between values being provided by the university and factors shaping students' choice. While the absence of empirical data could be considered a limitation, efforts have been made to extend knowledge and offer an understanding of student choice, especially from an Africa perspective. There is still a shortage of research on higher education market in Africa which suggest the need for more empirical insight into this emerging market. Future studies can empirically evaluate the values provided by the universities, to understand is this varies across Universities in the continent. Besides, future studies can explore students' understanding of the values and manners in which they have

been communicated. It is anticipated that this chapter will meaningfully advance the comprehension, and understanding and stimulation of further research on student choice and marketing higher education in Africa.

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3

Understanding High School Students' University Choice: Implications for Marketing and Management of Higher Education in Ghana

Clement Adamba ⓘ

Introduction

The higher education institutions' (HEIs) landscape in Ghana has experienced some drastic transformation over the years. There is a massive response to policy reforms in higher education delivery. The number of private universities is growing and spreading across the country, with national and international orientations that are continuously challenging the dominance of the traditional 'elite' public universities. Recent government policy to upgrade all polytechnics into technical universities has further heightened the competitive environment. Local HEIs are also in stern competition with international universities which continue to attract best brains from the local market. Between 2010 and 2018, outbound internationally mobile students from Ghana grew by nearly 60%, from 7891 students to 12,559 students respectively (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019). Inbound student mobility

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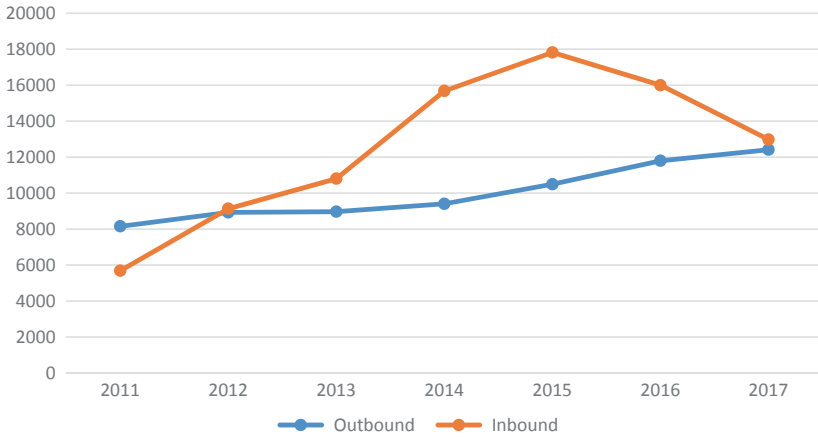
Fig. 3.1 Trend of internationally outbound and inbound student mobility in Ghana (*Source* UNESCO Institute for Statistics [2019])

started a decline in 2015, decreasing by more than 10% between 2015 and 2016, and by 19% between 2016 and 2017 (Fig. 3.1). This suggests that Ghana is beginning to lose more students to international HEIs and this portends several consequences for local HEI. Considering that revenues of HEIs in Ghana are hugely enrolment-driven, the loss of students to international mobility implies loss of significant amounts of revenue. Marketers of tertiary institutions are therefore confronted with the challenge of marketing institutions to appeal to prospective applicants.

A crucial piece of information that will help administrators and marketers of higher education institutions (HEIs) is one that provides an understanding of the factors that influence prospective students' preference for a tertiary institution. Chapman (1981) suggests that a student's college choice is influenced by inherent characteristics such as performance, aptitude, and aspirations as well as external factors such as family, teachers or friends. Others argue that available courses and potential benefits are the most relevant factors students consider when selecting tertiary institutions (Erdmann, 1983; Sevier, 1987). In Ghana, there is very little research that addresses the pre-purchase stage of potential university students. In this study, the aim is to expand knowledge in the

area by providing an analysis of the factors that influence prospective students' choice of a tertiary institution. The study draws findings from questionnaires administered to final year senior high school students since they are the potential new entrants to universities in Ghana.

The study adopts the stated preference approach (intent to choose) to analyse the attributes that drive student preferences for a particular category of HEI and a specific institution. The study focuses on senior high schoolers choice of higher education and the key factors or considerations that drive that choice. Specifically, the analysis follows the generally accepted three-stage process for student decision-making regarding higher education (Brooks, 2002; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; McManus, Haddock-Fraser, & Rands, 2017). It starts with the students' decision to continue with higher education after senior high school. The second step evaluates the factors that determine where or which higher education institution a student selects to enrol. Finally, the study evaluates the factors that influence a student's selection of a particular HEI in Ghana. For marketing purposes, the study also examines the usefulness of various information sources on HEIs.

Literature Review

The market for higher education in Ghana is diverse but classified broadly as public and private. It includes universities, professional institutions, polytechnics, colleges of education, and nurses training colleges. Statistics from the National Accreditation Board (2019) show that the number of tertiary institutions stood at 165 at the end of December 2017. There are presently ten public universities and 65 private universities in Ghana. The top public universities are amongst the oldest institutions in the country and are often the most sought-after institutions by senior high school leavers. They account for about 60% of the entire tertiary student population in the country (NAB, 2015). Some of the largest public universities in the country are University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Cape Coast, University of Education, and University for Development Studies.

Technical universities/polytechnics train high-level skills in technical and vocational education with emphasis on practical experience and entrepreneurial development. Ten out of 11 of the technical universities/polytechnics are publicly owned. There are about 13% of the tertiary student population enrolled in technical universities/polytechnics. Colleges of education are HEI that specialise in the training of teachers. There are presently 41 public and five private colleges of education in Ghana. These colleges run diploma programs in Basic Education. They have about 10% of tertiary institutions' student population in the country (NAB, 2015). Nurses training colleges specialise in the training of nurses and midwives. Fifteen out of the 26 in Ghana are publicly owned. They have about 2% of the enrolled tertiary student population (NAB, 2015). There are seven professional institutions in Ghana offering specialised and career-focused education and training in specific disciplines including languages, and journalism.

In order to gain admission into a tertiary institution in Ghana, final year senior high school students have to write and pass the West African Senior School Certification Examination (WASSCE) conducted by the West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC). WASSCE is for selection to higher education and certification. The examination is conducted twice a year—May and June for candidates in school only; and September and October for candidates who are not currently enrolled in any senior high school (usually referred to as Private candidates).

Admissions are not centralized, and announcement and closure of admission dates vary from one institution to another. Prospective students are free to purchase application forms and apply directly to any tertiary institution of their choice. Applicants are at liberty to apply to an unlimited number of institutions provided they can afford the cost of application. For most tertiary institutions, however, prospective students are required to apply two or three months before taking the WASSCE examination, and about five months before possible entry. Without any knowledge of what their final examination grades will be, these students make a choice purely based on expected performance. This makes understanding the factors that influence these decisions exciting and essential, especially for administrators of HEIs.

Fosu and Poku (2014) identified four models commonly used to explain students' choice of higher education. They identified econometric models, where prospective students perceive the returns of education per their investments in deciding on an HEI; socialization or status attainment models, which looks at the influence of various individuals in a student's social sphere and how these interactions affect the student's choice; information processing models, which posits that the decision to select a specific HEI is as a result of the amount of information gathered and analysed by an individual student; and combined models, which combines the three former models in making a decision about choice of HEIs. The combined model argues that students, in choosing an HEI, are influenced by the perception of returns to their investment, the influence of various individuals in the student's social sphere, and finally how the student gathers and processes information about a particular HEI.

In the actual process of making a decision, Maniu and Maniu (2014) posit a three-step model of choosing HEI by prospective students. The first step is to recognise the need to follow an HEI, then doing an information search to satisfy that need and lastly, deciding to enrol in the HEI. The process from the need (first step) to decision (last step) is then influenced by factors such as aspirations, parents, job advancement and the atmosphere of HEI, among others (Maniu & Maniu, 2014). Similarly, Moogan, Baron, and Harris (1999) assert that students go through the stages of problem recognition, which involves ascertaining the need for pursuing higher education, information search, and evaluation of alternatives, in selecting an HEI.

Purchasing higher education services poses many risks for consumers, specifically high school students, since they are unable to, in a way, sample the services before they fully acquire them. Hence, several markers have to be employed to identify the right choices for students who want to engage the services of specific institutions. According to Moogan et al. (1999), there are uncontrollable factors such as location and proximity of institution and controllable factors such as institutional reputation that student's employ in making decisions. There are also internal factors such as students' perception of their capabilities and future aspirations and external factors such as influence from family, friends,

teachers and sometimes activities by an institution itself (Moogan, Baron, & Harris, 1999). Kee (2013) and Soutar and Turner (2002) add availability of courses in HEIs, cost or financial aid, good teaching quality, HEI being technologically savvy, and campus visits, as other factors that determine students' choice of HEIs.

Studies carried out in other countries such as Indonesia and Scotland find the reputation of the HEI, proximity, job prospects of available courses, cost and influence of parents as major factors prospective students considered before applying to an HEI (Briggs, 2006; Kusumawati, 2013). Students in Indonesia also mentioned academic quality of the institution, friends, facilities available in the institution and campus environment (Kusumawati, 2013). In Scotland, students' perception of an HEI, the social life of the nearby environment of the institution, entry requirements, teaching reputation, quality of faculty, information supplied by an HEI, and student placements were stated as the factors that influenced the decision-making process of prospective students (Briggs, 2006).

In gaining information about HEIs to finalise decision-making on prospective institutions to enrol, students gather information from career programs, teachers, prospectus and other programs organised by universities, universities' websites, league tables-(which show rankings of HEI), peer influence and 'word-of-mouth' from other individuals (Briggs, 2006). Due to the plethora of factors that inform the decision of senior high school leavers to select HEIs, Souter and Turner (2002), assert that institutions should focus on using general forms of marketing. In other words, HEIs are to cast their nets wider rather than resort to targeted marketing, so they can reach more students to increase admissions.

Methodology and Data

The study adopts the stated preference (choice modelling) approach to examine factors that influence students' choice of HEI. This approach has been adopted in several studies including McManus et al. (2017), Drayson, Bone, Agombar, and Kemp (2013), Lawton and Moore

(2011), and Whitehead, Rafan, and Deaney (2006). In this study, this approach was achieved by offering prospective HEI students a choice to make among the set of HEIs in Ghana. The survey method was used to collect primary data from students in the final year of senior high school (Form 3). These are potential candidates for university recruitment since they would be completing secondary education and would be at the crossroads in deciding the future of their education. Survey questionnaires were administered to students in the last term of the academic year 2018/2019. The data collection period was vital as it was at a very crucial time of the students' educational life when they were preparing for the WASSCE.

The sample included nine public senior high schools in 4 regions. The schools were randomly selected from Greater Accra, Eastern, Western and the Brong—Ahafo regions. These regions are all in the southern part of Ghana. Two of the schools are single-sex type schools (boys-only and girls-only). The target was to survey 45 students in each school with an expected total of 405 students. In the end, a total of 375 students were surveyed, giving a response rate of 93%. Nonresponse was mainly due to students' absence from school on the day of the visit of the survey team to selected schools. All students available in school voluntarily participated in the study.

The first empirical question in the questionnaire was, whether students intended to continue to an HEI after completing senior high school. If a student indicated yes, they were asked whether their intended choice will be a public university, private university, technical/polytechnic, college of education, or nurses training college. Students were also asked to rate on a scale of 1–5 how factors such as; encouragement from family/friends/teachers, desire to gain independence, career interest, meeting new friends, and having a parent who has higher education qualification, influenced their decision to continue with higher education after senior high school. They were also asked to rate the relevance of information sources such as university websites, university brochures and leaflets, and visits of university representatives to high schools, in their decision to choose a particular HEI. The list also included social media, opinion of high school teachers, former/current university students, and high school career advisors/counsellors. The questionnaire

provided options for students to specify other factors that were not provided in the list.

Students were also provided with a 23—item statements and were required to rate on a scale of 1–5 (1—'not important' and 5—'very important'), how a given attribute influences their decision to select a particular HEI over others. The statements covered several sources of influence on HEI choice, including social/family, individual, financial, occupational, and institutional. Finally, students were given the list of all higher education institutions in Ghana and were asked to specify in order of priority, three HEI they would prefer to enter if they were to apply at that moment.

For ethical reasons, the survey was conducted at times that did not interfere with students' academic or leisure time. Interviews were scheduled at times convenient for the students. The questionnaire was also reviewed by the Headmasters' of the selected schools and accepted to be non-intrusive. The Headmasters consented for the students to be interviewed, and the students signed assent form to participate in the study voluntarily. The assent form was used because the more significant number of the students were 18 years or below. The survey lasted approximately two months; between March and April 2019.

Results

Decision to Progress to Higher Education After Senior High School

A vast majority of the students' surveyed (97%) have intention to pursue higher education after completing senior high school. Almost all females in the sample (99.5%) and 95% of males indicated they would continue higher education schooling after senior high school. The few that indicated they would not continue schooling after senior high school cited financial difficulty as the main reason. One student indicated that he wants to start work immediately after senior high school. Usually, students who have positive attitudes towards direct entry into the labour market are, less likely to pursue higher education.

Table 3.1 Factors that motivate students to want to continue with HEI after completing senior high school

Factors	Response	Not important		Important		Highly important	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Potential career interest	328	30	9.15	14	4.27	284	86.59
Encouragement of Family	357	34	9.52	20	5.60	303	84.87
Encouragement of Teachers	348	34	9.77	34	9.77	280	80.46
Encouragement of Friends	338	57	16.86	57	16.86	224	66.27
Gaining independence	331	92	27.79	51	15.41%	188	56.8
Parents have tertiary educ.	333	122	36.64	32	9.61%	179	53.75
Meeting new friends	336	121	36.01	37	11.01%	178	52.98

Note Response from the survey was on a 1–5 Likert scale (1—not necessary and 5—very important). "Not important" represents responses at 1 and 2. "Important" represent responses at 3. "Highly" important represent responses at 4 and 5

In terms of factors motivating students to decide to continue with higher education; Table 3.1 shows that *potential career interest* is the most prominent factor, selected by 86.6% of students surveyed. *Encouragement of family and encouragement of teachers were factors* selected by 84.9 and 80.5% of the students respectively as highly important in motivating their decision to continue schooling after completing senior high school. About 54% indicated they are motivated by their parents' educational status, while 53% also selected the idea of meeting new friends as highly relevant in influencing their decision to continue with higher education after completing senior high school.

A probit model was used to estimate the determinants of the probability of choosing to continue higher education after senior high school. The results presented in Table 3.5 in Appendix show that gender of the student, presence of father in the household, and father's education was significantly associated with the probability of choosing to continue

with higher education after completing senior high school. Female students were strongly and significantly more likely to indicate that they wish to continue school beyond senior high school compared to males. Age on the other hand negatively correlated with intention to continue with higher education after senior high school. Students who have a father present in the household regardless of the presence of mother have a positively strong probability of choosing to continue their education after senior high school. Educational status of parents does not make any significantly different effect on probability of choosing to continue with education after senior high school.

The next question was where students intend to go to pursue higher education. Slightly more than half of the students surveyed (52%) intend to continue their higher education schooling in a public institution (Fig. 3.2). About 22% indicated nurses training college as the place they would prefer to continue with higher education. Private universities were the least selected, while about 12% indicated a preference for technical universities and the same proportion opted for colleges of education.
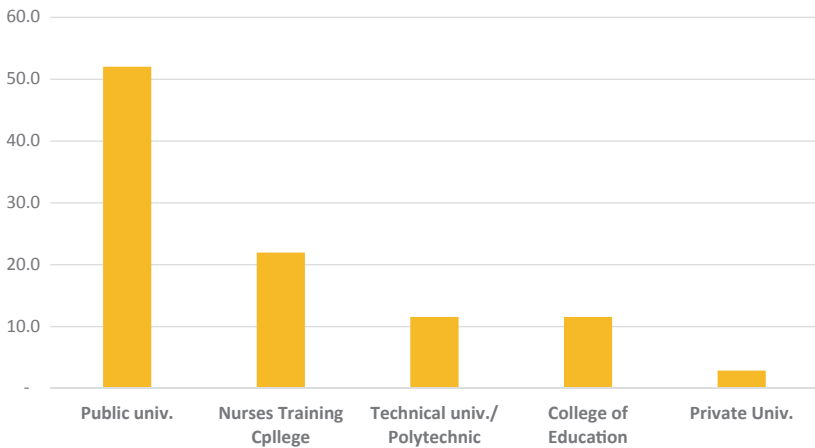
Fig. 3.2   Category of HEI students intend to choose (%)

Information Sources that Guide Students' Decision-Making

Table 3.2 shows the various sources of information potential tertiary students rely on and how vital each source is in influencing their decision-making process. The results show that 76.6% of the students

Table 3.2   Sources of tertiary education information for high school students

Information sources	Responses	Not important		Important		Highly important	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Opinions of Teachers	333	49	14.7	29	8.7	255	76.6
Former/ Current tertiary students	336	53	15.8	37	11.0	246	73.2
Career counsellors in high school	336	68	20.2	32	9.5	236	70.2
Univ. representatives' visit schools	326	71	21.8	38	11.7	217	66.6
University official guides	331	78	23.6	44	13.3	209	63.1
University brochures and leaflets	321	72	22.4	48	15.0	201	62.6
University website	302	86	28.5	37	12.3	179	59.3
Social media/ publicity	322	94	29.2	40	12.4	188	58.4
Organized campus visits	323	93	28.8	52	16.1	178	55.1

Note Response from survey was on a 1–5 Likert scale (1—not important and 5—very important). "Not important" represents responses at 1 and 2. "Important" represent responses at 3. "Highly important" represent responses at 4 and 5

surveyed selected "*opinions of teachers*" as highly relevant source of information that influences their tertiary education choice. Over 73% also indicated f*ormer/current tertiary students* as highly significant source of information for their choice of an HEI. *Career counsellors/advisors in high schools* were identified by 70% of the students as highly important source of information for their HEI choice.

Direct university sources such as visit to senior high schools by representatives of universities, university program guides, university brochures and leaflets, were regarded by about 66.6, 63.1, and 62.6% as highly important sources of information. University websites were not regarded very important as compared to opinions of teachers, career counsellors and former/current students of universities. On average, about 59% of students indicated university websites as highly important source of information. *Social media sources and organised campus visits by senior high schools* were indicated by the least number of students as important sources of information for university choice decision making. Conversely, nearly 30% of respondents suggested university websites, social media publicity were not important sources of information.

Factors Students Consider in the Choice of a Higher Education Institution

The factors or attributes that students consider in the choice of a HEI can be categorised broadly into *supply-side* and *demand-side* factors. The *supply side* factors are those that pertain to institutions, also called institutional attributes. They are factors that a HEI has influence over. As presented in Table 3.3, these attributes include academic reputation of the HEI, availability of teaching and learning facilities, courses and programs offered, ranking of the institution, quality of tuition, and cost of tuition. Others include cost of application, availability of scholarship/bursaries for students, availability of campus accommodation, cost of accommodation, and social life on campus. Over 77% of respondents selected academic reputation as a highly important attribute that will influence their decision to choose a HEI. Academic reputation is reflected in academic performance of the institution; vis-à-vis

Table 3.3 Importance of various institutional factors in students' choice of a HEI for learning

Important considerations in the choice of HEI[a]	Highly important (%)	Important (%)	Less important (%)
Academic reputation	77.8	18.7	11.3
Availability of T/L facilities	71.9	26.0	9.8
Courses/Program offered	68.2	22.9	15.2
Availability of scholarship/ bursaries	66.8	26.7	16.8
Availability of university accommodation	65.6	31.7	11.7
University ranking	56.8	21.0	18.4
Quality of tuition	52.8	30.9	25.0
Cost of application form	51.4	36.3	23.8
Social life on campus	50.3	31.7	26.2
Cost of university accommodation	47.4	44.3	22.7
Cost of tuition	46.9	39.7	27.3
Entry requirement	44.9	43.1	25.4

[a]Items are sorted by 'highly important' column in order of largest to smallest

availability of qualified lecturers, their teaching experience, and research output. Teaching and learning facilities include libraries, laboratories, sports facilities, among others, that support teaching and learning. About 71% of students selected availability of teaching and learning facilities as a highly important consideration in their choice of HEI.

Availability of courses (programs) preferred and offered students and the availability of scholarships or bursaries are equally important in students' choice of a HEI. Scholarships and bursaries are crucial in compensating students for payment of tuition fees. Bursaries are also important for supporting students' research work, purchasing learning materials and financing other recurrent expenditures. Availability of scholarships and bursaries is an important consideration for about

67% of the students surveyed. Students are also sometimes worried that the courses they want to do are not available or certain combination of courses are not allowed by some HEI. This is highly important consideration for about 68% of students surveyed.

Availability of accommodation in HEI was selected by about 66% of the surveyed prospective students as highly important in their consideration of a HEI. Among several other benefits including ease of access to libraries, and lecturers, students' desire to be more involved in campus life can be achieved only by being in campus accommodation. About half of the respondents consider campus social life as a highly important consideration in the choice of HEI. Campus social life refers to the social environment—quality of daily campus life, social/cultural and friendship opportunities. Cost of accommodation is highly important to about 47% of the respondents. This suggest that the majority are worried more about the availability of accommodation and not so much about the cost.

Ranked position of HEI is another important consideration that prospective post-secondary students look at in making a choice of a place for higher education. Generally, the criteria for ranking institutions may include the quality of faculty, research output (in terms of publications and citations), and student graduation. University ranking matters to about 58% of the prospective students surveyed. Quality of tuition, a constituent of an institution's measure of performance is highly important to about 52% of prospective students. HEI application form is also a major consideration to about 51% of the students.

On the other hand, factors considered as *demand-side* factors are those that relate largely to individual student expectations, relations (family, friends and teachers) and economy-related factors. As presented in Table 3.4, these include encouragement from parents, encouragement from teachers, family influence, influence of religious/community leader, 'feeling like you will fit in', and if family member ever attended HEI. Others also include consideration of future employment prospects, availability of local student employment opportunities, distance of HEI, and cost of living in vicinity of HEI. Four of these demand-side factors were considered by more than half of the respondents as highly important in choosing a HEI. These include encouragement from

Table 3.4 Importance of other factors in students' choice of a HEI for learning

Important considerations in the choice of HEI[a]	Highly important (%)	Important (%)	Less important (%)
Encouragement from parents	65.9	24.1	15.6
Employment prospects	60.5	30.5	16.0
Availability of local student employment	57.7	36.3	18.4
Encouragement from teachers	56.5	34.7	18.8
Distance from home	46.9	33.6	31.6
Family influence	44.3	32.8	32.4
Influence of religious/community leader	43.5	29.4	38.3
Feeling like you will fit in	41.5	34.0	36.3
Family member attended	40.6	30.9	41.8
Cost of living in area of university	39.8	38.9	34.4

[a]Items are sorted by 'highly important' column in order of largest to smallest

parents (65.9%), employment prospects (60.5%), availability of student employment in HEI (57.7%), and encouragement from teachers (56.5%) About 42% consider family member ever attending a particular HEI as being less important in their decision to choose a HEI. Also about 32.4 and 38.3% consider family influence in general, and influence of religious or community leader respectively as less important.

Determinants of Intent to Choose a Category of HEI

The factors students consider in the choice of a higher education institution were subjected to further analysis to examine the extent to which they are statistically associated with a student's intention to choose a particular category of HEI. The analysis was done for five categorical

groups of HEIs; public universities (traditional universities), technical universities/polytechnics, private universities, colleges of education, and nurses training colleges. The results are presented in Table 3.6 in Appendix. Estimated coefficients are interpreted in respect of a hypothetical category of HEI preferred by a hypothetical final year senior high school student. All analyses control for children and parental background.

The intention to choose a public university is driven by two main factors; quality of tuition, and employment prospects on completion of school. The likelihood of choosing public university is negatively correlated with availability of local employment while studying and availability of teaching and learning facilities. Cost of application forms, and cost of living in the area where public universities are located is also negatively associated with the likelihood of students choosing a public university.

Students are likely to choose nurses training college due to the cost of accommodation, expected performance, and cost of living in areas where the colleges are located. The prospect of getting employment after completing nurses training colleges is negatively associated with the likelihood of choosing nurses training college, a reflection of recent frustrations of newly graduated nurses from public nurses training colleges who have stayed unemployed for more than three years.

Intention to choose a college of education over others is positively associated with cost of tuition, availability of campus accommodation, and availability of employment whilst studying. Even though students in colleges of education pay some fees, that is compensated for by the receiving of allowance to support recurrent expenditures in school. Students are also likely to choose colleges of education due to family influence, encouragement from teachers and a feeling of "will fit it".

The likelihood of choosing technical universities is positively associated with factors such as cost of application, availability of teaching and learning materials, and availability of bursaries. Similar to nurses training colleges, technical universities tend to be located in areas where the general cost of living is low, thus attracting students to choose those places for higher education. If technical universities have scholarships and bursaries for students, they will stand a higher chance of increasing recruitment.

Students who have the intention to choose a private HEI has the likelihood of being influenced by a religious leader. This may be because most of the private HEI in Ghana are religious-denominated institutions. In other words, the emerging proprietors of higher education in Ghana are religious leaders. Intention to choose a private HEI is however negatively influenced by entry requirements and discouragement from parents. Due to high cost of tuition and doctrinal inclinations, parents are also likely to be in disfavour of their children considering private HEIs.

Determinants of Intent to Choose a Specific Institution

Students were required to prioritise the institution of higher learning they intend to choose after completing senior high school. Four of the ten public universities appeared the most preferred institutions among the students surveyed[1]; University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Cape Coast, and University of Education, Winneba. Few students selected nurses training colleges, colleges of education, and technical universities. These are, however grouped accordingly as nurses training colleges, colleges of education, and technical university for the analysis. Marginal effects of a Multinomial logistic model are reported in Table 3.7 in Appendix.

University of Ghana

Academic reputation, social life on campus, and encouragement from parents are factors that have a positive and significant effect on students stating a preference for University of Ghana as a preferred HEI. Preference for University of Ghana is however, negatively affected by unavailability of campus accommodation, likelihood of students getting

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[1]Sample did not include regions or schools from the norther part of the country. That may explain why the University for Development Studies, which is in the northern part of the country, was not selected.

preferred courses/academic program, and general cost of living in Accra. Other factors that also have a negative association with the likelihood of selecting University of Ghana as preferred HEI is distance.

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

Preference for Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) is influenced positively by academic reputation, and cost of campus accommodation. Similar to University of Ghana, unavailability of accommodation may negatively affect selection of KNUST as a preferred HEI.

University of Cape Coast

Preference for University of Cape Coast is positively influenced by quality of tuition, and availability of campus accommodation. The general cost of living in Cape Coast vicinity on the other hand has a negative influence on students' likelihood of choosing University of Cape Coast as a place for higher education. Availability of teaching and learning facilities, and courses offered also have a negative influence on students' choice of the university as a HEI of learning.

University of Education, Winneba

Students preference for UEW is more likely to be associated with encouragement from teachers, availability of campus accommodation, the chance of being offered preferred courses/academic program, and the higher employment prospects on completion of school. Because UEW is oriented towards the training of education professionals, students are aware of what they are applying for and authorities have less chance of varying programmes that students applied for. However, preference for University of Education, Winneba is negatively affected by the quality of tuition, social life on campus, the cost of university application, cost of accommodation, and academic reputation.

Colleges of Education and Nurses Training Colleges

Availability and cost of accommodation are attractive factors for choosing a college of education or nurses training college. Cost of living in the places where these institutions are located is another very important consideration for choice of college of education or nurses training college. Students intention to choose a college of education or a nurses training college is also likely to be influenced negatively by cost of tuition.

Discussions and Implications for Higher Education Marketing and Management

The study sample and geographical delimitation places a limitation on the generalisability of the findings of this research. Nonetheless, the study makes important findings worthy of consideration by administrators of HEI. The results show that, given the chance, all senior high school graduates have the intention to continue with higher education when they complete senior high school. More than half prefer public HEI, and about one out of five prefer nurses training college or college of education. Privately provided HEI are least preferred. Among the different sources of information that prospective students rely on to gather information and to guide their choice of a HEI, the top three (3) identified as most influential are (1) *teachers of senior high school students*, (2) *former/current students of HEIs*, and (3) *school career advisors/counsellors*. The role of school teachers and counsellors in particular in providing information and support towards high school seniors higher education plans have been established (Ivy, 2002; James, Baldwin, & McInnis, 1999; King, 1996; Price, Matzdorf, Smith, & Agahi, 2003). King (1996) noted that high school seniors who constantly consulted with a high school counsellor regarding postsecondary plans were more disposed to plan attending college. Jafari and Aliesmaili (2013) found when students were asked to list the references through which they prefer to get information about universities, that the number one favourite resource are school's counsellors.

Institution-related sources, such as visits to schools by university representatives, university official guides, and brochures and leaflets were

ranked above university website, and social media. The lack of significant role of websites have also been noted earlier by Fosu and Poku (2014), Maringe (2006), Bennet (2006), and Ivy (2002). Perhaps, university websites seem less useful in Ghana, because poor internet access do not enable students to visit websites. Social media publicity is the least important, for the same reason of poor internet access. Even if internet access was good, a policy ban on the use of mobile phones by students in senior high schools means that students can only get internet to visit websites or use social media when they are home. This suggest that, institutional websites may be crucial in attracting international patronage, but for the local student market, websites are less accessible and less useful.

Considering the challenges with internet access, the best way to market HEIs in a developing country context such as Ghana is to have (1) university representatives make physical visits to schools; and (2) printing of brochures and leaflets. The best avenue to attract students will be to (1) target students' teachers, and (2) counsellors. For marketing purposes, this suggests that universities may need to consider a mix of these four strategies. In other words, HEI should make use of experienced administrators to visit senior high schools and engage teachers and counsellors whose opinions are highly important in students' choice of HEI. Accompanying with printed brochures and leaflets provide additional information and reference material and as a guide as teachers and counsellors engage students later during counselling and guidance sessions.

Another group that can be tapped for marketing purposes is former and current students of an institution. These are the most authentic agents of an institution's reputation. They can be relied upon as "brand agents" or "brand ambassadors" to market the reputation of the institution. Institutions could leverage existing alumni networks, while mobilizing other current student groups including senior high school old students' associations. Management has a significant role to play in engaging these network of former and current student groups, creating a sense of belonging, developing relationships, and prioritising their experiences and academic satisfaction. This can be achieved through a number of angles including conducting satisfaction surveys.

There are eight (8) top institutional factors also classified as supply-side attributes that are considered highly important by students in the choice of a HEI. These are academic reputation, availability of

teaching and learning facilities, courses or programs offered, availability of scholarship/bursaries in the institution, availability of campus accommodation, university ranking, quality of tuition, and cost of application form. In general, these established attributes are consistent with other the studies in the literature (Fosu and Poku, 2014; Jafari & Aliesmaili, 2013; Lawton & Moore, 2011; McManus, Haddock-Fraser, & Rands, 2017). Of the 8 institutional factors, academic reputation, courses or programs offered, quality of tuition, university ranking, can be considered identical and categorised as reputational factors. Two of the factors, availability of teaching and learning facilities and availability of campus accommodation, are also identical and can be categorised as infrastructural factors. The last two, availability of scholarship/bursaries in the institutions and cost of application form, can also be classified as financial aid. This broad categorisation does not necessarily make the domains mutually exclusive. For example, infrastructure contributes to the reputation of an institution.

The categorisation is however significant to show that there is a tripod of institutional attributes that are important in attracting students; *reputation, infrastructure and financial aid*. Senior high school students perceive academic reputation to include three main things; how industry (employers) perceive graduates of a HEI, teaching faculty, and availability of learning facilities. The implication for management is that, while enhancing the reputation of institutions through research publications and citations, attention must also be paid to connecting with industry, and adding and improving infrastructure of the institution to accommodate increasing number of students for learning.

On the demand side, there are also four (4) factors considered highly important in determining intent to choose a HEI. These are parental encouragement, encouragement from teachers, employment prospects after completing a particular HEI, and availability of local employment while studying. These factors can be grouped into two. Influence of parents and teachers can be put together as familial factors or personal relations. As noted earlier, a number of studies have suggested that secondary school teachers could be universities' greatest ally in helping students make decision about higher education (Ivy, 2002; Jame et al., 1999; Price et al., 2003). Marketing agents need to target teachers with content on reputation of the institution, programs, and employment prospects.

Employment prospects and the availability of local employment while studying can be grouped as economic factors. As a marketing strategy, this requires that HEIs show their relationship with the labour market and demonstrating that with opportunities for students getting a part-time job while studying. While in many developed countries, universities have a close relationship with labour markets and entrepreneurs, this relationship is weak in developing countries (Bawakyillenuo, Osei Akoto, Ahiadeke, Aryeetey, & Agbe, 2013; Pillay, 2010; World Bank, 2007). Where a HEI has achieved some success in that domain, it has to be strongly marketed to attract students. Maringe (2006) believes that the university's relationship with the labour market and the prospects of future jobs is a more effective factor influencing choice of university than personal interest in a field of study. This suggest that for a HEI to be a preferred place of choice, management needs to make concrete efforts to link graduates to industry.

The significant factors that separate the choice of public universities over other HEIs are employment prospects on completion of school, and quality of tuition. Indeed, ability to gain employment after school is the preferred and only measurable indicator of tangible return to education. Individuals and families therefore typically make a choice from the alternatives by comparing and choosing the HEI that upon completion they have a higher prospect of gaining employment. This is where public HEI have leverage in Ghana over private universities. Prof. Stephen Adei (Chairperson of the National Development Planning Commission of Ghana) made this suggestion when he decried that there is an apparent "discrimination" against private university graduates in Ghana over employment opportunities compared to (https://www.ghanaianews.com/2019/07/29). But that may explain the large preference for public HEI over private HEI.

Conclusions

Revenues of HEIs in Ghana are hugely enrolment-dependent. This makes every HEI have a financial interest in the share of the senior high school graduates' market and, therefore, in how those students choose among the available institutions. However, the topic of understanding

the factors that influence the selection of a particular HEI in Ghana has not been deeply researched, and therefore insufficiently understood by HEI administrators. This study sought to increase the literature on the topic and to contribute to the understanding of what influences a student's choice of a HEI. With massive increase in private participation in the local higher education market, growing 'transnationalisation' of offshore HEI, and increasing direct competition from these offshore institutions for best brains in the local market, managers of publicly provided HEIs in Ghana have a task to innovate and strive to attract potential university applicants to their fold.

Whilst interest should include prospective international students, the local market is still the best bet, considering that international inbound student mobility for Ghana is declining. This means that foreign universities are out-competing local institutions on the market, denying local institutions of potential sources of revenue, and more seriously cream-skimming best brains. This has long term manpower implications, as most of these students fail to return after education abroad. There is the need to do more to balance the trend, by way of attracting foreign students, retaining local students for undergraduate studies, and more especially keeping best brains.

The results of this study show that the best allies for HEI administrators and marketers of any HEI to attract prospective undergraduates are the teachers and counsellors in the senior high school. The opinions of teachers and counsellors are highly valued by students in making decisions. Teachers and counsellors should be targeted with reputation-related information. Information that relates to academic reputation, courses or programs offered, quality of tuition, and university ranking. The second area of attention for administrators is establishing a strong connection with the labour market and showing evidence of that connection to prospective students. This information should target students directly during marketing of HEIs.

It is important to restate that this study has made important findings and recommendations for administrators of Ghanaian HEIs., notwithstanding the limitations of the sample. Nonetheless, there is vast room for further research, and this study provides insights for research from another angle. The analysis in this paper is based on the adoption of stated preference approach. This is because the study relied on

students making decisions over hypothetical scenarios. Actual preference (revealed preference) is not known. The results presented by this study therefore provide opportunity for further studies to explore, exposte, the determinants of choice and acceptance (enrolment) of offer of a place in a HEI.

Appendix

See Tables 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7.

Table 3.5 Determinants of decision to continue higher education beyond senior high school

Determinants	Model 1	Model 2
Age	−0.296**	−0.099
	(−0.147)	(−0.179)
Female	1.042**	1.244**
	(−0.517)	(−0.562)
Father present	0.702*	0.826*
	(−0.400)	(−0.485)
Mother present	−0.303	−0.516
	(−0.416)	(−0.478)
Father's education<=secondary	−0.919	−1.511*
	(−0.687)	(−0.862)
Father's education>secondary	−0.513	−1.825
	(−1.015)	(−1.256)
Mother's education<=secondary	−0.0276	0.016
	(−0.583)	(−0.649)
Mother's education>secondary	−0.456	−0.514
	(−0.966)	(−1.083)
Eastern region		1.412**
		(−0.677)
Western region		2.123**
		(−0.860)
Gr. Accra		0.237**
		(−0.105)
Constant	6.833**	3.209
	−3.15	(−3.819)
Observations	218	131
Standard errors in parentheses		

Significance at ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$

Table 3.6 Determinants of choice of type of higher education institution (compared to public universities)

Variable	Pub. University	NTC	COE	Priv. Univ.	Tech. Univ.
Academic reputation of the institution	0.015	−0.030	−0.018	0.057	−0.024***
	0.042	0.021	0.022	0.041	0.008
Avail. of local employment whilst studying	−0.067**	0.027	0.056**	−0.001	−0.015**
	0.032	0.025	0.026	0.023	0.006
Availability of scholarship/ bursaries	0.030	−0.009	−0.049***	−0.003	0.032**
	0.035	0.017	0.015	0.029	0.013
Availability of T/L facilities (e.g. libraries)	−0.103**	0.010	0.035	0.038	0.022*
	0.045	0.027	0.033	0.029	0.012
Availability of campus accommodation	−0.016	0.004	0.078*	−0.018	−0.048***
	0.040	0.030	0.041	0.019	0.016
Cost of accommodation	−0.008	0.063**	−0.024	−0.009	−0.022***
	0.032	0.031	0.021	0.028	0.007
Cost of tuition	0.004	−0.057**	0.050**	0.002	0.003
	0.034	0.025	0.02	0.024	0.007
Cost of university application	−0.056*	0.020	−0.03	0.018	0.047***
	0.033	0.024	0.026	0.015	0.014
Courses offered/ academic program	0.018	−0.023	−0.023	0.006	0.022
	0.026	0.016	0.02	0.012	0.014
Distance from home	0.004	0.029	−0.034	−0.001	0.001
	0.032	0.026	0.027	0.013	0.006
Employment prospects on completion of school	0.071**	−0.056**	−0.015	0.002	−0.003
	0.035	0.024	0.029	0.013	0.008

(continued)

Table 3.6 (continued)

Variable	Pub. University	NTC	COE	Priv. Univ.	Tech. Univ.
Encouragement from parents and family	0.061	0.057	−0.069**	−0.057***	0.008
	0.048	0.045	0.029	0.021	0.010
Encouragement from school teachers	−0.163***	−0.104**	0.230***	0.015	0.021**
	0.059	0.043	0.069	0.023	0.010
Entry requirement	−0.005	0.036	−0.021	−0.024**	0.014
	0.034	0.032	0.017	0.013	0.018
Expected performance	−0.038	0.077*	−0.014	−0.021	−0.003
	0.037	0.043	0.022	0.016	0.006
Family influence	−0.030	−0.031	0.047**	−0.001	0.016*
	0.030	0.025	0.023	0.013	0.009
Family member attended institution	0.020	−0.003	−0.023	−0.009	0.014*
	0.031	0.028	0.022	0.02	0.009
Feeling like you will fit in	−0.032	−0.008	0.049***	0.013	−0.023***
	0.035	0.023	0.019	0.033	0.008
Cost of living in the area t	−0.067***	0.045***	−0.004	0.014	0.011**
	0.022	0.016	0.018	0.013	0.005
Influence of religious/community leader	−0.041	−0.004	0.002	0.045**	−0.002
	0.027	0.024	0.017	0.018	0.004
Quality of tuition	0.065**	−0.028	−0.047***	0.015	−0.006
	0.035	0.035	0.017	0.021	0.005
Observations	178	178	178	178	178
Prob > chi2	0.0000				
Pseudo R2	0.3823				
Observations	178				
Standard errors in parentheses					

Significance at 1%***, 5%**, and 10%*

Table 3.7 Determinants of choice of specific tertiary institution for higher education (*Marginal Effects*)

Variables	UG	KNUST	UCC	UEW	NTC	COE	TU
Academic reputation	0.211**	0.128*	−0.019	−0.376**	0.021	0.046	−0.012
	−0.092	−0.066	−0.019	−0.175	−0.043	−0.029	−0.013
Availability of local employment	−0.165	−0.209***	0.006	0.475**	−0.035	−0.033	−0.040*
	−0.109	−0.074	−0.039	−0.226	−0.048	−0.022	−0.023
Availability of scholarship/bursaries	0.051	−0.028	−0.013	−0.023	0.026	−0.041***	0.028*
	−0.057	−0.029	−0.015	−0.028	−0.036	−0.014	−0.016
Availability of teaching and learning facilities	0.056	0.020	−0.047**	0.025	−0.007	−0.023	−0.024
	−0.057	−0.041	−0.02	−0.031	−0.03	−0.023	−0.018
Availability of campus accommodation	−0.140*	−0.188***	0.029*	0.268**	−0.019	0.072**	−0.022
	−0.075	−0.061	−0.016	−0.117	−0.034	−0.031	−0.024
Cost of campus accommodation	0.095	0.185***	−0.0244	−0.311**	0.071*	0.030	−0.046***
	−0.077	−0.054	−0.026	−0.146	−0.041	−0.021	−0.018
Cost of tuition	−0.123	−0.056	−0.021	0.457**	−0.156***	−0.085***	−0.016
	−0.102	−0.07	−0.027	−0.209	−0.057	−0.029	−0.019
Cost of university application	0.005	−0.007	0.016	−0.154**	0.062**	0.014	0.063**
	−0.048	−0.04	−0.021	−0.065	−0.026	−0.014	−0.026
Courses offered/academic program	−0.656**	−0.226	−0.159***	1.538***	−0.275**	−0.155*	−0.067
	−0.265	−0.185	−0.053	−0.589	−0.114	−0.082	−0.041
Distance from home	−0.085***	0.005	0.017	0.010	0.039	−0.001	0.015
	−0.032	−0.029	−0.027	−0.016	−0.03	−0.010	−0.015

(continued)

Table 3.7 (continued)

Variables	UG	KNUST	UCC	UEW	NTC	COE	TU
Empl. prospects on completion of school	-0.014	0.014	-0.026	0.234**	-0.125***	-0.036	-0.048**
	-0.068	-0.047	-0.031	-0.12	-0.041	-0.024	-0.02
Encouragement from parents and family	0.241*	0.119	0.055*	-0.623**	0.142*	-0.009	0.074**
	-0.133	-0.092	-0.031	-0.292	-0.079	-0.034	-0.033
Encouragement from school teachers	-0.484***	-0.223*	-0.087**	0.990**	-0.197**	0.012	-0.011
	-0.189	-0.129	-0.043	-0.431	-0.083	-0.052	-0.027
Entry requirement	0.060	-0.088***	-0.001	-0.031	0.042	-0.004	0.022*
	-0.039	-0.030	-0.009	-0.021	-0.043	-0.012	-0.013
Expected performance	0.210	0.084	0.093**	-0.703**	0.204***	0.064	0.048*
	-0.138	-0.097	-0.045	-0.303	-0.068	-0.041	-0.026
Family influence	-0.229**	-0.148*	-0.050*	0.551**	-0.100**	-0.030	0.006
	-0.111	-0.077	-0.026	-0.251	-0.051	-0.034	-0.018
Family member attended institution	0.101**	-0.010	0.027	-0.175**	0.013	-0.004	0.049***
	-0.048	-0.034	-0.018	-0.088	-0.03	-0.015	-0.016
Feeling like you will fit in	-0.233***	-0.059	0.006	0.366**	-0.050	-0.017	-0.014
	-0.08	-0.056	-0.019	-0.163	-0.040	-0.020	-0.016
Cost of living in the area the institution is situated	-0.053*	0.001	-0.046**	0.023	0.059**	0.041*	-0.025*
	-0.032	-0.026	-0.018	-0.025	-0.024	-0.022	-0.015
Influence of religious/community leader	-0.022	0.001	0.034**	0.006	-0.003	0.004	-0.019
	-0.026	-0.019	-0.015	-0.01	-0.023	-0.011	-0.012

(continued)

Table 3.7 (continued)

Variables	UG	KNUST	UCC	UEW	NTC	COE	TU
Quality of tuition	0.038	0.009	0.046***	−0.059*	−0.024	−0.012	0.003
	−0.043	−0.032	−0.018	−0.031	−0.031	−0.014	−0.009
Social life on campus	0.168***	0.054	−0.003	−0.234**	0.008	0.001	0.007
	−0.06	−0.042	−0.013	0.107	−0.024	−0.016	−0.01
Prob.>chi2	0.000						
Pseudo-R2	0.382						
Log-likelihood	−190.793						
Observations	189						

Significance at 1%***, 5%**, and 10%*

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4

Delving into Undergraduate Students' Choice of Higher Education in Uganda

Godwin Tindyebwa Muhangi

Introduction

The history of higher education (HE) in Uganda dates back to 1922 when Makerere Technical College was established. Makerere Technical College later developed to become a Makerere University that served students from the British colonies of East Africa, including Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania (then called Tanganyika) (Musisi, 2003). Makerere University later became a national university for Uganda after Kenya and Tanzania had established their national institutions. During this time, there was no inter-institutional competition thus marketing was not a serious consideration for the HE sector.

Being a sole higher education institution (HEI), Makerere could not serve all Ugandan students. This led to the establishment of other higher education institutions (HEIs). Furthermore, Uganda experienced a high demand for HE amidst declining budget allocations to public institutions during the 1980s. The country also implemented liberal

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policy that allowed the private sector to drive general economic growth including education. All these were ideal conditions for establishment of private HEIs (Ugandainvest, 2010). Presently, private HE in Uganda is very vibrant, and this is attributed to the high demand for HE amidst insufficient supply by public universities (Tumwesigye, 2006). Private HEIs have grown to significant numbers and transformed the HE sector from being an entirely public provision to a public-private mix. It is for this reason that the number of private HEIs outnumbers that of public institutions (National Council for Higher Education, 2018). The private HEIs also enrol a significant proportion of students, especially those that cannot enrol at public universities (ibid.).

The above shows that HE in Uganda is characterised by privatisation and competition for students. Therefore, the onus is upon each HEI to devise strategies that will enable it to attract students to survive the real competition. This underscores the role of marketing in HE- something not evident when only public HE was available. Both public and private HEIs in Uganda must now identify students' needs and wants concerning the motivation factors that influence their choice of an HEI. Without this, both institutions and students may miss out on the possible benefits of providing/attending HE. This, however, jeopardises national development by lowering people's aspirations, lowering values and immiserating lives (World Bank, 2018).

Notwithstanding the above, growth in student enrolment in the Ugandan HE sector has been on a decrease for the past few years. For the period 2014/2015 to 2015/2016, for example, the sector experienced an average decline in student enrolment growth from 14% to about 13% (National Council for Higher Education, 2018). This is likely to continue unless mitigation measures are sought. Reports have also indicated a drop in enrolment of international students in Ugandan universities. Could this be explained in terms of inadequate if not poor marketing strategies of the Ugandan HE sector? Such a non-progressive trend deserves to be addressed immediately.

For a country aspiring to attain middle-income status by 2020, efforts must be put in place to address challenges that impede human capital development. The Uganda Vision 2040 identifies human capital development as one of the key fundamentals that need to be

strengthened to accelerate the country's transformation and to harness of the demographic dividend (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017). This shows the significant importance of HE for Uganda and should thus be given special attention. All aspects of HE ranging from its policies to its operations must be addressed concurrently so as enable the country attain the desired status.

This Chapter, therefore, identifies explicitly the factors that influence students' choice of an HEI in Uganda. It provides relevant information for making HEIs responsive to students' needs and wants. Students liken alternatives of HEIs and gauge the returns on investing in education. They care about the brand of the institution and prefer those alternatives that raise their aspirations or those that meet their expectations. It is envisaged that understanding how to respond to students' needs allows, institutions and their managers to devise appropriate marketing strategies to attract and retain students in a better manner. The Chapter also provides relevant information in formulating, implementing and modifying higher education marketing strategies in the present competitive times.

The Chapter is descriptive in that it seeks to identify the factors that influence students' choice of higher education in Uganda and relies on the review of secondary data sources. It entailed extensive searches of relevant business management and education data sources. The intention was to ensure that, as far as possible, literature in the field of HE most especially higher education marketing was reviewed—while ensuring that literature pertinent to HE marketing and student HE choice process in Uganda was reviewed. The data resources reviewed included but not limited to National Council for Higher Education Reports, reports from the National Bureau of Statistics, Journals that focus on HE research (e.g. *International Journal for Educational Management*) and journals relevant to HE education marketing (e.g. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*). Hand searches and internet searches were involved in the identification of these secondary data sources. For this Chapter, authors summarized interpreted and aggregated the information depicted in the documents reviewed. This was done in such a way that what is already known and established was evaluated to draw reflections and recommendations.

Marketing Mix for Higher Education

The theoretical assertions depicted in Booms and Bitner (1981) Service Marketing Mix (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2012) were adopted for this Chapter. The framework uses seven variables (the 7Ps) to analyse the concept of marketing in HE. The variables are the product, price, placement, promotion, people, process, physical presence. This framework has been adopted by Ndofirepi, Farinloye, and Mogaji (2020) to explore the heterogenous higher education market in Africa. Using this framework, it is suggested that HEIs can use a complete marketing strategy to address the market situation and achieve its objectives (Enache, 2011). All the variables (7 Ps) significantly contribute towards marketing and each of them affects the students' choice of the institution. None of each of these variables should be looked at in isolation, but the synergy between them should be considered if an institution intends to attract and retain students. This is because each of the variables affects the others. The seven variables are explained as follows.

Product

The HEI product here referred to as service is described as being perishable, heterogenic, inseparable and intangible (Starck & Zadeh, 2013). The service provided by HEIs is perishable because it can spoil away since it cannot be stored or preserved for future use. It is also heterogenic in a sense that there is no generally agreed standard of its quality. An HEI service is inseparable since both an institution and the student must be available for successful provision of the said service. Besides, like with other services, an educational service is intangible hence cannot be preserved or stored (Van Vliet, 2011).

The purpose of HEIs is to educate students (Liang, 2004). Institutions should, therefore, look at students as their customers. HEIs must consider the students' educational needs (such as high-quality education and training, rewarding social life and improving career prospects) and how best they can be achieved. Institutions need to recruit the best faculty, provide the necessary scholastic and co-curricular

facilities that can enrich students' learning experiences. In such a way, the graduates from such universities will be equipped with knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary in the world of work. Such goes a long way in marketing the education institution.

Related to the above, for a successful marketing strategy in education, institutions should also look at the knowledge, skills and experiences relevant for the nation and incorporate them in the curriculum. This calls for the establishment of strong links between the university and the work industry to In effect, the academic programmes provided by institutions will meet both students' expectations and demands of the labour market. If this is well handled, satisfaction for both students and employers increase, and it is one of the effective strategies in educational marketing (Enache, 2011), which can be used in HE.

Price

In HE, price refers to all the fees associated with a particular course of study. Fees determine the income of educational institutions especially private ones, and they depend on the costs, demand and competitors price. In Uganda, public HEIs are funded by the government (Liang, 2004) and hence offer their programmes at a relatively cheaper price compared to private ones. This shows that there is significant relationship between 'price' and funding source structure of a given institution. Besides, if an educational program is popular (on high demand) the charges associated with it are usually high (for example medical courses). Enache (2011) argues that the price variable is a vital brand statement which institutions can use to market themselves. Thus HEIs should objectively consider costs associated with their programmes to attract more students. This is because in one way a higher cost of an educational program can signal a better institution, faculty or that the program is new or rare on the market but may also discourage students with weaker financial backgrounds. It is the view of this researcher that higher education institutions, especially public universities, should reconsider how they determine costs associated with their educational courses to attract more students who would otherwise be forced into private universities.

Placement

This refers to the location of the services and products in HEI. Different scholars have explained placement as having two perspectives (Starck & Zadeh, 2013). The first perspective considers the HE service as a product such that while marketing, the placement strategy considers the most efficient methods to deliver knowledge to students. The second perspective suggests that the product of HE is the graduate student, and thus the placement variable considers ways of efficiently placing the graduates in the labour market. Either way, placement variable can provide an effective mechanism through which institutions can market themselves.

In the first case, new modes of providing education are in place being facilitated by the Internet and other Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). With these avenues, access to information has become cheaper and faster; knowledge is easily distributed through and beyond institutions hence providing a means for effective marketing and education. Institutions can use the Internet in different creative ways to enhance their marketing efforts; for example, creation of Internet portals helps in providing on-line information. Additionally; the same portals can be used as learning facilities if lectures and other information are available to the students. In the second case, linkages with industries and other elements in the world of work can help in graduate placement and institutional marketing.

Promotion

Hayes (2009) define promotion in education as all the activities that communicate benefits of educational service and that are intended to inform, remind, or persuade relevant markets about the advantages of 'purchasing' the institution's educational offerings. This shows that promotion focuses on how an HEI can efficiently reach potential students. This has presented many challenges for institutions; for example, the need to adequately present and explain the educational product to potential students (Fosu & Poku, 2014). Thus, institutions should endeavour to find creative means of achieving this purpose.

People

People, especially the stakeholders including founders, teachers, former and current students are essential facets in the marketing of an institution (Hinson, 2006). There is thus a strong connection between an educational service and people involved in delivering it. The quality of the service offered by an institution heavily depends on the quality of the staff for example yet this is an essential component of the marketing strategy. Therefore, institutions must always recruit the most qualified and experienced individuals and assign them rightful service positions to effectively perform their services and attract more students in effect.

Process

Process on the other hand is referred to like the way an institution does business, and this relates to the whole administrative system (Kotler & Keller, 2009). According to Enache (2011), the process variable is responsible for smooth service delivery within an institution. It is by this variable that HEIs can improve quality of education. The way things happen in an institution; such as the process of management, enrolment, teaching, learning, registration process, and examination process, social and sports activities all constitute the process variable. Therefore, HEIs should always endeavour to manage processes involved in performance of their services carefully. Consider for example an effective enrolment process allows institutions to enrol prepared students who benefit from the knowledge acquired. This, in turn, improves the quality of the graduates and how they market their institution.

Place

This relates to the environment in which the service is delivered (Hinson, 2006). Since the educational product is intangible, it is often interpreted in terms of physical evidence which thus becomes influential in educational marketing. It is often interpreted as proof of the product that is going to be delivered and as a proof of the knowledge acquired by the

graduate. Physical facilities play a significant role in HE marketing because they increase institutional tangibility (Gibbs & Knapp, 2002).

Given that all the other strategies have a minimum impact on any of the five senses, physical evidence strategy is the only one responsible for providing tangible meaning for education services offered. Facilities such as buildings, interior and exterior decorations, offices, colour schemes for indoors and outdoors in institutions help in marketing HEIs. It is the view of this author that if HEIs in Uganda intends to attract and retain students, the physical evidence of the institutions should be considered as potential marketing avenues.

Higher Education Context in Uganda

According to the Uganda Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, HE refers to both public and private universities and other tertiary institutions that provide post-secondary (post-A-level) education, offer courses of study leading to the award of certificates, diplomas and degrees, conduct and publish research (The Republic of Uganda, 2001). This shows that HE (which is used interchangeably with tertiary education) is the advanced level of education beyond a full course of secondary education (Kajubi, 1989).

Three categories of institutions offer HE in Uganda.

The University Sub-sector

According to the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), the university subsector constitutes 23% of the available HEIs including nine public universities and 42 private institutions i.e., 51 universities in total (NCHE, 2018). This subsector enrols the majority of the HE students (70%) though there has been a decline in enrolment compared to the previous years.

Other Degree Awarding Institutions (ODAIs)

In addition to universities in Uganda, there are institutions classified as other degree-awarding institutions (ODAIs) which account for 3% of the total enrolment in HEIs in Uganda. Only ten (10) institutions are

categorized as such, and they constitute nine (9) privately owned institutions and only one (1) public institution. Two of ODAIs specialise in medical programmes; six offer business and management related programmes while two of them are theological institutions.

Other Tertiary Institutions (OTIs)

There are 160 institutions categorised as OTIs. Such institutions are Agricultural, Health, Theological/Business, Social Development, Teachers, Hotel and Tourism, Technical, Meteorological, Survey, Cooperative or Military Training Colleges. On the overall, the OTI category accounts for about 27% (26.5%) of enrolment. Table 4.1 summarises institution by category in Uganda.

Table 4.1 Institutions by category, 2015/2016

Category	Private	Public	Total
University	42	9	51
University college/campus	6	1	7
Other degree-awarding institutions	9	1	10
Technical colleges	3	5	8
National Teachers' Colleges	1	5	6
Commerce/Business	61	5	66
Management/Social development	9	2	11
Health (ODAI exclusive)	11	14	25
Agriculture/Fisheries/Forestry	1	5	6
Theology(ODAI exclusive)	11	0	11
Art and design	3	0	3
Media	3	1	4
Hotel and Tourism	2	2	4
Survey and land management	0	1	1
Law development	0	1	1
Aviation	0	1	1
Metrology	0	1	1
Petroleum	1	1	2
Cooperatives	0	2	2
Military colleges	0	4	4
Total	163	61	224

Adapted from NCHE (2018)

Different admission paths to HEIs exist, but prospective student must meet the minimum entry requirements. The following are the entry requirements for admission into HE in Uganda:

- **Direct entry from schools**: Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) with at least five passes and two principal passes at Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) or its equivalent.
- **Mature age**: The candidate must be 25 years of age and above and must have passed the mature age entry examinations with at least a 50% mark.
- **Diploma** obtained at a credit or distinction level in a relevant field from recognised institutions; or
- **Bridging course** for students who attended secondary education outside Uganda.

The minimum requirements for admission to a diploma programme include Direct entry from schools: Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) with at least five passes and Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) with one principal pass and two subsidiaries passes obtained at the same sitting or its equivalent.

The above admission criteria have been put in place for over a long period and should be revised to help in improving quality of university students. With internationalisation and globalisation, higher education students need to be prepared to live and operate as global citizens. Thus, higher education students in Uganda should revise their admission criteria to suit global standards. General Admission Test Scores (GATS) and language proficiency tests could now be incorporated to ensure that students admitted in higher education institutions are of the desired quality. An essential strength of these criteria is that it offers alternative pathways to prospective students. Otherwise, many deserving students would be left out.

Marketing Higher Education in Uganda

Before the establishment of Islamic University in Uganda in 1988, HE was only provided by public universities (Mamdani, 2007). Structural Adjustment Programmes of 1980s created a supportive policy

environment that led to emergence of private HE (including those that are owned and managed by religious bodies) in Uganda. Thus, before 1988, HEIs had minimum attempts towards marketing their services. That tendency persisted to the present such that minimum strategies are put in place to market public HEIs through some marketing strategies are witnessed in private HEIs. This inadequate marketing has encouraged a decrease in enrollment levels for both foreign and domestic students for HEIs in Ugandan (NCHE, 2018).

On institutional level, few marketing strategies exist for example some institutions use Public Relations and Marketing offices, International Students offices etc. However, HE institutional survival and performance largely thrives on the Uganda's competitive advantage. According to Opuda-Asibo (2017), Uganda's educational competitive advantage (which has been instrumental in marketing her HE) is characterised by:

- A highly trainable labour force that speaks English.
- A consistently improving stable political and economic environment since 1986 that provides a secure environment for businesses.
- A unique location of Uganda at the heart of Sub-Saharan Africa within the East African region bordering with Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda. The neighbouring countries provide ready market for Ugandan Education.
- Development in ICT has encouraged online education through which international HEIs bring HE services to Uganda.
- Liberalized economy in which the private sector can set up HEIs under NCHE guidelines.
- Tuition fees lower than those charged by HEIs in neighboring countries.
- Lower student maintenance costs since Uganda has a good climate for agriculture hence feeding and other costs are relatively cheaper.

In addition, Uganda's HE is historically reputable and is regulated by the NCHE ensuring adherence to minimum standards (Opuda-Asibo, 2017). The Uganda NCHE is mandated by the University and other Tertiary Institution's Act of 2001 to license and regulate operations of HEIs in Uganda (The Republic of Uganda, 2001). As it performs it duties, this body markets HE though some shortcomings have hindered performance of this role. According to Kasozi (2013), NCHE has no

designed quality assurance framework for non-university HEIs. This has limited the monitoring of quality of such institutions hence portraying a questionable image to the public.

Also, the HE system in Uganda is an inverted pyramid (Kasozi, 2013) characterised by very many students in universities and only a few in other tertiary institutions (National Council for Higher Education, 2018). This is a result of unsatisfactory marketing strategies of HE in Uganda. As Kasozi (2013) holds, both institutions and regulatory bodies are responsible for the observed state. The NCHE for example has no tool for accrediting programmes for non-university institutions implying that many programmes offered in such institutions are not accredited. In addition, the lists of tertiary institutions are not assembled in one catalogue (Kasozi, 2013). Such issues should be addressed to improve the state of higher education in Uganda and support its marketing.

Higher Education Choice Process

HE is no longer a luxury that it used to be in the past; it is now a necessity (Tansel & Bircan, 2006). With a variety of alternatives, HEI choice process becomes challenging. That notwithstanding, increase in alternatives has resulted in inter institutional competition (Sabir, Ahmad, Ashraf, and Ahmad, 2013). It is therefore inevitable that HEIs develop effective strategies to enable students make informed HEI choices. This calls for an understanding of HE choice process and an evaluation of the factors that influence the process (Fosu & Poku, 2014). Understanding students' HE choice process, institutional managers can design or even improve their existing student recruitment strategies. Below are different models that explain students' HE choice.

Students' Choice Models

The models considered are the economic models (e.g. Kotler & Fox; 1995), sociological models (e.g. Jackson 1982), combined models (e.g. Hossler & Gallager, 1987), and marketing approach models (e.g. Ho & Hung, 2008) as discussed in the sections below.

Economic Models

These are models that focus on students' rationality as the only influence behind students' HE choice (Ayadin, 2015). As suggested by DesJardins and Toutkoushian (2005), these models assume that students are rational beings who evaluate available information basing on their preferences at the time of choosing a HEI. This is further qualified by Fernandez (2010) who suggests that students act rationally in ways that maximize their utility, given their personal preferences. Thus, according to these models, students choose a HEI if the benefits of attending it outweigh the benefits of attending other HEIs. From this point, a student will consider possible alternatives, evaluate them and then make a choice (Paulsen, 2001).

Essentially, the economic models follow a cost-benefit framework that assumes that HE students are rational and are informed about the potential costs and benefits of attending given institutions (Fosu & Poku, 2014). It is therefore important that institutions provide necessary information for students choosing HEIs for their education and training. The more relevant such information is, the higher the chances that students will choose the respective institution. The focus on students' rationality by these models however limits their applicability. The models are prone to abuse since institutions may provide deceptive information and hence end up duping students. Besides, students may not always be rational and informed as assumed.

Sociological Models

These are also known as also known as status-attainment models. Perna (2006) explains that sociological models of HE choice are those models that focus on the influence of the cultural and social capital, such as the socioeconomic background, prospects, and the academic achievements of students, when choosing an institution. According to these models, students' background characteristics and socioeconomic status as factors that influence students' HE choice. The models for instance suggest that students from poor backgrounds are less likely to attend their first choice HE compared to those from

rich backgrounds (Douglass & Thomson, 2008). While these models have a wide application, they have a limitation in that they only focus on social factors as the main determinants of students' choice of HE yet many others factor are always at play when students choose an institution.

Among sociological models, most prominent is Jackson's model of (1982) which claims that a student undergoes three stages while choosing a HEI: The first one is the preference stage where the academic achievement has the strongest effect. The second is the exclusion stage where students are involved in the elimination process. The last one is the evaluation stage where students make their final decision. Another research states that sociological models of college choice have focused on three variables: the identification and interrelationship of factors including parental encouragement influence of significant others and academic performance (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989). Thus, according to these models, choosing a HEI is a process that focuses on socialization, academic conditions, the role of the family, and social networks (Fosu & Pok, 2014).

Combined Models

According to Hamrick and Hossler (1996), the combined models offer more depth and perspective to HE choice making process. The combined models include Chapman's Model, Hanson and Litten's Model & Hossler and Gallagher's Model (Hossler et al. 1989). Authors of these models suggest that choosing a HEI is a process rather than one step decision. Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) for example describe HE choice as a process that involves three stages i.e. the predisposition, search, and choice stages. During the predisposition phase, students decide whether to continue their education; in the search stage students obtain information about the possible institutions; and in the choice stage, students select the institution to join. Proponents of these models suggest that students use both economic and social models in these steps hence the combined models.

Perna (2006) suggests that students carry out calculations relating to costs and earnings which are nested within several layers of context as follows: the individual habits such as demographic characteristics,

cultural effects; the organizational habits such as the support of college teachers; the HE context; the comprehensive social, economic, and policy context such as demographic changes and unemployment rates. In general, the combined models explain HE choice process, basing on both sociological aspects and rational decisions.

Marketing Approach

This discussion would be incomplete without mentioning the marketing approach to the choice of HE. The concept of marketing approach for education, such as considering prospective students as consumers not easily accepted Students are regarded as customers because they join the institution with an expectation of receiving a service in form a study course that will lead to a recognized qualification and the associated benefits of attaining education. However, over the course of time, it has gained acceptance (Obermeit, 2012). This approach does not directly refer to sociological and econometric concepts. Nonetheless, it is incorporated into the consumer choice models in terms of internal (cultural, social, personal, psychological characteristics) as well as external (social, cultural, product and price stimuli) influences, supplemented by communication efforts of the provider. Therefore, consumer behavior models can be included in marketing approach of HEI choice process. Communication technologies, web page properties, using catalogues can be considered, as effective tools for students. Yamamoto (2006) suggests that brochures, posters, meetings, sponsorships, billboards, web pages, and TV and newspaper advertisements are mostly used as communication tools for HE selection.

Factors Influencing Students' Choice of Higher Education in Uganda

HEIs need to study the issues that influence students' choice of HE so as to reverse the decreasing enrollment trend. Some studies (e.g. Bunoti, 2011) identified factors that influence students' choice of undergraduate education in Uganda. The same factors are corroborated by other

researchers in different contexts for example Webb (1993) who reports that undergraduate students' choice of HE is influenced by academic reputations, accreditations; proximity, costs, and potential marketability of the degree. Not contradicting the previous scholars, Chapman (1993) also claims that quality of faculty and degrees and overall academic reputation are significant, as well. Other factors that may be considered include residency, academic environment, reputation and institution quality, course diversity, size of the institution, and financial-aid (Kallio, 1995). Close proximity to home, the quality and variety of education, cost of living and tuition, family recommendation, and safety also greatly affect HE choice process (Shanka, Quintal, & Taylor 2005); quality and flexibility degree/course combinations, availability of accommodation (Holdsworth & Nind, 2006) are also important factors. Similarly; Alves and Raposo (2007), Strayhorn, Blakewood, and DeVita (2008) investigated the factors that influence undergraduate students' choices and also reported cost of leaving at an institution together with the quality of education are influencers of higher education students' choices. These factors are discussed with reference to the Ugandan context as follows.

Reference Groups

Family members, friends, teachers and relatives all constitute a reference group (ayadin, 2015) and they influence students' HE choices. As Bunoti (2011) notes, students in Uganda are influenced by their peers when making a choice regarding undergraduate HE. In the same way, Kim and Gasman (2011) assert that counselors and teachers have a major effect on students' HE choices in that they assist and support candidates in the HE selection process.

Family Background

Students usually consult their parents before making HE choices. Families influence students' HE choices through financing, information, expectation, persuasion, and competition. According to Bunoti

(2011), students in Uganda usually choose courses and HEIs whose charges are affordable to their parents. The cost of HE in Uganda has been on a rise amidst weakening economic times. It is thus reasonable for students to choose the programme and institutions which are affordable. In effect, the financial muscle of students' families influence students' HEI choice (Pimpa & Suwannapirom, 2008).

Reputation and Attributes of the Institution

Institutional attributes and reputation such as staff quality, type of institution, availability of desired programs, curriculum, and international reputation, quality of facilities such as library, computing facilities and social facilities, campus and class size and availability of financial aid are all important considerations when students are choosing HEIs. Many students prefer public universities since they have financial stability and many of them have had tested reputation. In some situations, students have accepted to pay high tuition fees just because the institution has a good reputation and is of high quality. The perceived quality of an institution relates to the services offered or the quality of teaching and research programs. If a HEI offers high quality services, they are preferred by applicants. As Soo and Elliot (2010) said, the quality service of education is related positively to number of applicants.

Personal Factors

Every student is unique with personal attributes, challenges, preferences and surrounded with unexplainable circumstances. Age, gender, disability are among such personal factors. Thus, before choosing a HEI, students go through a decision making process that may involve students' awareness set, consideration set, and choice set. In all situations, all other factors being kept constant, students are more likely to enroll if they feel accepted, safe, and happy at their HEI. In addition, personal preference influences students' choice of HE.

Location

This looks at to the geographical location of a HEI; whether it is in an urban or a rural area; far from home or near etc. Many undergraduate students who have not been away from home may feel uncomfortable enrolling in HEI far from their homes. This agrees with the claims of Kim and Gasman (2011) that distance from home is important for students. In the same way, many students prefer socially active and big towns such as Kampala, as well as locations where they have family and friends. Thus, an urban location with many social amenities, close proximity to home and easy transportation are considered important factors when students select HEIs.

Job Prospects for a Good Career

Choice of one institution over other alternatives may be related to career choice. Students look beyond their students days; they consider life after graduation and the world of work. Students attend HEI to become productive in future; get employment and earn a living from their work. There are some institutions whose graduates are more preferred compared to those from other institutions. This stems from the skills attained from such institutions. Therefore, an institution that imparts marketable skills will always be preferred by students in relation to other institutions.

Cost of University Education

Students base their decision on institutional cost of education. Before making any choice, students estimate how much money (in terms of tuition, accommodation, and transport) they will have to spend. In Uganda, the cost of training a medical doctor in a private university is higher than that in a public university. It is therefore likely that if all other factors are kept constant, students will enroll in a public university for the same course. Related to the above, Foskett, Roberts, and Maringe (2006) state that flexibility of fee payment and reasonable accommodation costs exert a significant influence on students' choice of a HEI.

Financial Aid-Scholarship

In Uganda, some students are sponsored by the government depending on their A level scores. In such a case, the government dictates that students be enrolled in public universities and not in private institution. Thus, if a student wants to be sponsored by the government, he must apply in a public institution. Financial aid reduces the costs borne by students. Therefore, the impact of financial aid is another significant factor affecting students' HEI choice. Financial aid-scholarship, loans or grants are very important for students (Hoyt & Brown, 2003) and exert a significant influence on students' choice of a HEI.

Information Sources for Undergraduate Students in Uganda

Some scholars have identified information sources to be among the factors that influence students' HE choices. Some of the information choices are identified as shown below.

Internet and Institutional Websites

The Internet has proved itself to be the main source of information in the present times and most HEI have put in place provisions to market themselves using this avenue. Use Internet based social media such as Face book and Twitter have proved to be effective means of reaching out to students and this influences their HEI choices (Kim and Gasman, 2011; Yamamoto, 2006).

Publications

According to Hoyt and Brown (2003), Moogan and Baron (2003), and Veloutsou, Paton, and Lewis (2004), even in presence of the Internet, publications still remain an effective information source for students

and equally influence students choice of HE. This includes prospectuses which contains information about the programs and courses at the University (Mogaji & Yoon, 2019).

The Media

Mass communication through television, newspapers and magazines also provides an important source of information that seriously affects students' choice of HE. Institutions can use this avenue to relay information on education, social facilities, contact information or job prospects (Palmer et al., 2004).

Reflections and Recommendations

The process of choosing a HE has long-term implications related to both financial as well as psychological costs to students. What and where to study for HE has always been important, but increasing competition together with a difficult employment market makes students' HEI choice process more crucial and complex. The transformation of HE from dependency on government funding to the competitive environment meant that institutions have to compete for students. That is why, for every HEI, understanding HE choice process is now an instrument for developing a recruitment strategy to establish a strong position against competitors.

As already shown, students' choices for HEI are influenced by several factors. It is incumbent upon HEIs to evaluate students' choice process and devise means of attracting more students (Kotler & Fox, 1995). Moreover, as Plank and Chiagouris (1997) posited, understanding the choice process of a HEI is an instrument that facilitates the development of institutional strategies. If institutional managers understand the key issues involved in the choice process of a HEI by clarifying what is important for students, the declining student numbers in Ugandan HEIs will be reversed.

Some institutions especially private institutions are currently devising means of making themselves attractive so as to grab the attention of

potential students. HEIs have to attract more students and increase student engagement if they have to succeed in their business. It is because of this that marketing has emerged as a vital must-do in order to attract prospective students and build a brand. All HEIs in Uganda must wake up so as to compete favourably. This is because marketing is improves enrollment numbers and is also important for brand creation and making sure a brand is visible, engaging, and credible.

In the preceding review, the author has highlighted the aspects of higher education marketing. Considering the practice of HE marketing in the Ugandan context, it is suggested that HE managers devise marketing strategies that incorporate the 7Ps. This is essential for efficient recruitment of students and survival of institution. It is also important for institutions to consider the contextual factors surrounding the HE choice process for Ugandan students. Without this, the marketing strategies devised will be irrelevant and will not attract substantial numbers of Ugandan students.

Considering the revelations in the literature review, students' HE choice especially with regard to programmes by students is not guided by the socio-economic needs of the country but rather by a desire to complete the education ladder and get a degree (Bunoti, 2011). Kasozi (2006) for example, claims that only 26% of students enroll in agriculture-related courses both at the degree and diploma level yet agriculture is the principal source of livelihood of 80% of the Ugandan population. This could be explained in terms of the gaps that exist in the marketing strategies in HEI in Uganda. Also, the numbers of students being enrolled in science and technology related courses are continuously increasing because of the government's affirmative action to fund subjects key to economic development. Science and technology are believed to catalyze economic development. This shows the important role of the government in HE marketing.

HE managers whether in public or private institutions should strive to increase visibility and brand recognition of their institutions to all Ugandans and beyond. For long, Uganda has been a leader in providing quality education for Ugandans but to the rest of East and Central Africa. Makerere University for example has over the years been ranked

as the best University in East Africa and the recent webometrics University rankings 2019 pushed the University in the 11th position in Africa (Campus Times, 2019) and 771 worldwide (Center for World University Rankings, 2019). Uganda Christian University and Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) are ranked second and third best universities in Uganda after Makerere.

It is therefore necessary for these HEIs to maintain their positions and be known to the rest of the world. This will allow students as they make choices of where to attain HE. HEIs in Uganda should reposition themselves both as leaders in HE throughout the region and as institutions dedicated to excellence in terms of teaching, research and community service.

Secondly; institutions must communicate effectively and regularly about what they do well with the institutions' major stakeholders, including alumni, current and prospective students, parents, employers, faculty and staff, HE audiences, friends of the institutions, local, state and regional representatives, media and the community. These provide exorbitant avenues that strengthen marketing of higher education institutions.

The above shows that institutions need to promote themselves across a wide range of both local and international media. They need to step up marketing and public relations services and support various institutional marketing and communication programmes through advertising, publications, websites management, photography etc. In addition, there should be corporate marketing activities at unit levels such as Departments and Schools and institutional level. This can be complemented by supervisory bodies like the NCHE and the ministry of education. The activities must however be well coordinated and carried out in a professional manner to achieve better results.

Institutions must establish Marketing and Public Relations Department or strengthen the existing ones. These have a role of providing a professional advisory function to inform institutions on student market segmentation and market penetration strategies. The departments should continuously gather and evaluate their services for improved performance to meet. Through institutional wide public relations efforts focused on honest, open and consistent communication, marketing communications and public relations can provide the leadership needed to help institutions create and maintain mutually

beneficial relationships with individuals and organizations vital for their growth and development. The marketing and public relations departments should always bring perspectives and strategies into institutional decision-making and planning. They should provide leadership, expertise and services that enhance the quality and effectiveness of institutions. They should endeavor to protect, reinforce and elevate institutions' reputation and build public understanding of their distinctive qualities, value, importance and impact of their work. These are important elements that help in student attraction and retention.

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5

International and Southern African Perspectives on Choice and Decision-Making of Young People in Higher Education

Felix Maringe and Otilia Chiramba

Introduction

Choice in higher education has become a significant area of study in the past three decades, especially in the context of the marketisation of education (Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 2001). A primary assumption behind the significant investment in this area of research has been that if institutions understand the factors that drive educational choices, they become better placed and prepared to target specific market segments. This would increase enrolments and hence boost institutional revenues in progressively competitive higher education markets. The chapter seeks to make a contribution to this emerging field by identifying both the areas and degree of growth. It further suggests methodological approaches that need to be developed to advance this area of research.

In this chapter, the research on choice in higher education in Southern Africa is mapped out against a backdrop of theories and models of choice

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and decision-making that have been developed in the west. The chapter is developed around four major objectives:

- To map out the nature of research on choice and decision-making in higher education in Southern Africa.
- To accumulate the strong evidence developed in the region regarding the processes of choice of students in the higher education sector.
- To identify areas of research where there is inadequate evidence.
- To provide some recommendations and identify the implications of the findings.

The chapter begins with a review of four broad theories of educational choice and a discussion of a comprehensive model of choice developed at the University of Southampton by Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001). Using research conducted in African universities as evidence, the status of evidence regarding the four pillars of research on choice in higher education is critically reviewed. The four pillars are the context of choice, the influencers of choice, the choosers and the pathways to choice in higher education.

Theories and models of choice in higher education.

Four theories exist which broadly attempt to explain how young people make choices in education.

Structural Theories of Choice

The research of Gambetta (1996), Roberts (1984), and Ryrie (1981) are central to an understanding of structural theories. The assumption behind structural theories is that of predictability. Repeatedly, research shows that there is a greater propensity for middle-class children to enrol in universities while young people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds show poor records of a similar propensity. Structural theory explains this difference in likelihood to go to university in terms of prevailing social and economic values characterising different societal groups.

The primary point of debate in structural theories is the extent to which they link to arguments used in social Darwinism. The fact that young middle-class children end up at university is sometimes

misinterpreted to mean they are more intelligent or have higher IQs than children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds. This leads to the deepening of social stratification and the widening of inequalities as universities target middle-class children while those from low socio-economic backgrounds are generally left to their own devices.

Economic Theories of Choice

Economic theories of choice suggest that choice in education is a rational phenomenon based on calculations of perceived and actual benefits associated with decisions young people make in higher education (Becker, 1975). There is an assumption that young people calculate the benefits of going to university, or to specific universities. For example, given the option of going to The University of Cape Town (UCT) or The University of Fort Hare, (contrasting universities in the global rankings in South Africa), a young person driven by prospects of a highly paying job would decide in favour of UCT while another youth drawn to careers in politics would probably choose The University of Fort Hare because of its history of educating many of the first generation presidents in post-colonial Africa. Some young people would choose to attend a poly-technical university as these create opportunities in well-paying jobs in engineering, ICT and other skills-driven professions. However, to those young people whose horizons of possibilities include being company executives and directors, a liberal arts or business degree in a traditional university would be a better choice.

Two criticisms are often levelled against economic theories of choice. Both relate to the rationality of choice. Rarely do we get accurate figures that predict the rewards associated with different educational pathways and subject choices. The second is that benefits from education are often intangible and hard to quantify, as are the opportunity costs forfeited through engaging with higher education, for example. Ultimately, students cannot be expected to base their decisions on precise calculations but rather on approximate comparisons, which themselves are often highly influenced by perception and values held by not only the student but those significant others who constitute a network of life influencers on choosers.

Social Network Theories of Choice

These theories explain choice as a product of subjective and objective influences that young people are exposed to in their circles of intimacy and because of their own personal characteristics and dispositions. They explain the influence of friends, family, the church, employers, teachers and parents in the choices young people make in higher education.

This emphasis on a network of influences has led Hodkinson, Sparkes, and Hodkinson (1996) and Hemsley-Brown and Foskett (2001) to consider the importance of personality and subjective judgement in choice and decision-making. Hemsley-Brown and Foskett (2001) for example, argue that while decisions and choices that young people make could be influenced by economic, cultural and structural forces, all the same, they are filtered through layers of preconceptions emanating from family influence, culture, life history and personality (Briggs, 2006).

Integrated Model of Choice and Decision-Making in Higher Education

The most current theory, developed by Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001), argues that choice is not rational, irrational or random, but that it involves three broad elements for any chooser. The first element, shaping choices made by young people, is the context in which the choices are made and include societal, cultural, and economic and policy issues. For example, in a country working under the policy framework of education for all, it would be expected that young people would have no choice about participation in certain levels of schooling.

The second element brings together the range of choice influencers, including schools, teachers the media and the home impact. The third element comprises the choosers themselves in terms of their self-image, perceptions held about available pathways and the estimation of personal gain associated with specific choices.

Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) argue that these three elements exist in a complex dynamic in which decision-making becomes a reflexive process, and where the chooser consciously, or unconsciously

falls under the relative influence of these elements to emerge with a decision or no decision at the end of the process (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2004).

Comprehensive Model of Choice and Decision-Making in Higher Education

The comprehensive model of choice and decision-making was developed by Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) and has been aptly named the Four Cs of Choice. It is comprehensive because it brings the two associated concepts of choice and decision-making into a dynamic relationship involving issues of Context, Choice, Choosers and Choice Influencers. The model is reproduced below, with permission, to illustrate this dynamic relationship between the four Cs (Fig. 5.1).
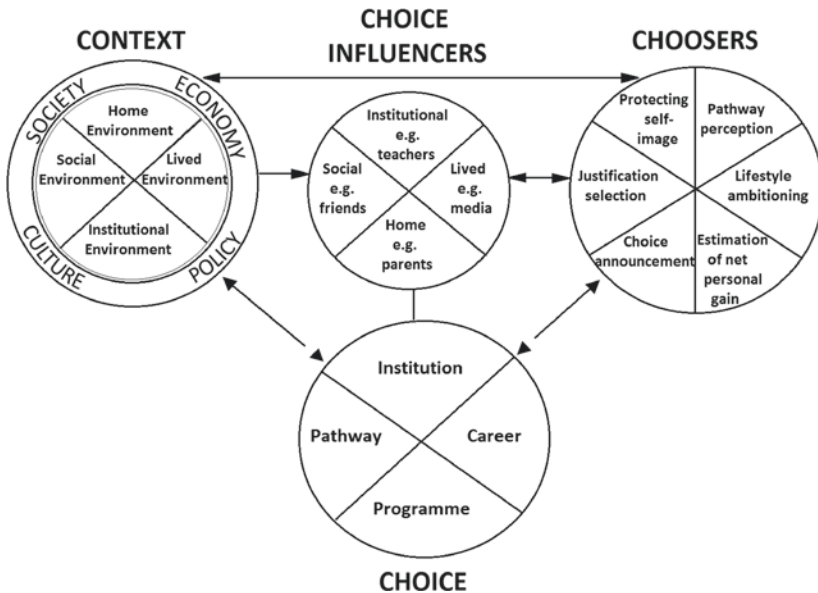

Fig. 5.1 An integrated model of choice in higher education (Reproduced with permission from Foskett and Hemsley-Brown [2001])

Context

The Context draws our attention to considerations of broad issues of choice at the levels of society, culture, the economy and policy. At a societal level, issues such as family influences and social influences, such as friends and peers, exert enormous influence on the choice and decision-making of students in higher education. The broad economic level provides a context for rational investment choices made by students who know the benefit of acquiring a Harvard degree as opposed to a nondescript institution in the lower levels of the value chain. In South Africa, for example, almost 80% of company CEOs have either a UCT or University of the Witwatersrand degree (Beneke, 2011). Universities that charge lower fees in competitive markets of the global north do not necessarily attract more or better students (Marginson, 2006).

Broad cultural factors refer to influences such as estimated cultural inclusiveness of nations. Students, especially those making study abroad decisions, tend to prefer countries that are receptive and open rather than those that are hostile and closed. Countries with very stringent religious laws are not attractive destinations for students who want to study abroad, for example.

The policy context of educational choice refers, for example, to national and institutional policy levels. Politics and the political environments of nations have been known to exert strong pull or push effects on students' decisions about where they will pursue their higher education study. In Africa, countries such as South Africa tend to be destinations of choice for higher education study because of a host of factors but importantly because of the relative political stability the country enjoys. Similarly, countries such as Zimbabwe with relative political instability and seen as politically intolerant and repressive by others, tend to be less attractive to study-abroad students. Equally, the same factors have driven thousands of young and older people who end up as refugees in neighbouring countries, mainly in South Africa. Approximately 70% of all non-South African students in South African universities are of Zimbabwean origin (Chiramba, 2020). Context thus plays a significant role in choice and decision-making in higher education everywhere, including on the African continent.

Choice Influencers

The next cluster of choice drivers is what Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) refer to as Choice influencers. This cluster includes teachers in universities and schools. A study of the influence of the school in the choices of post-16 young people (Foskett, Dyke, & Maringe, 2008) found that schools in the south of England set high aspirations for learners and influenced choice in very specific ways, such as by having names of all learners who attended the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge in the last ten years on billboards at the entrance foyer of the school. In the study we spoke to teachers and learners in these schools, the influence of teachers in choices that learners made post-16 was very clear (ibid.). In another study on marketing in Zimbabwe's university sector (Maringe, 2003), teachers were the second most significant influence on learner's choice of university after friends, who are seen as more trusted influencers in the hierarchies of choice (Foskett et al., 2008).

The media is another influencer of choice in the higher education decision-making of students. Newspapers, television and, more recently in Africa as elsewhere across the world, the internet ranked high in the hierarchies of choice influencers. Advertising comes at a cost, and some people argue that universities with bigger budgets tend to fare better in terms of reaching out to aspiring students in the recruitment markets. Another issue with media influences is related to people's perceptions about the trustworthiness of the media forms. Independent newspapers tend to be more trusted as authentic sources of information than government-controlled ones. In Zimbabwe, for example, despite enjoying wider circulation due to higher production and distribution capacity, the state-controlled *Herald* is less trusted as an authentic source of information than the *Zimbabwe Independent*. The internet has brought numerous possibilities for influencing choice and decision-making in higher education markets across the world including on the African continent. Despite prevailing poverty, it is estimated that almost 70% of young people aged 16–24 on the African continent either have personal mobile devices or have easy access to these. This opens opportunities for universities to create websites and even to allow prospective students to enquire and apply online (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006).

Parents and friends are also included as significant influencers in the choices young people make in the higher fixation markets. For some young people, especially those from middle-class backgrounds, going to university was a taken-for-granted parental expectation (Foskett et al., 2008). The advice of friends is equally, if not more valued by young people, as these belong to the group of trusted and authentic influencers of choice.

Choosers

The third C in the integrated choice and decision-making model is a cluster that describes the psychosocial characteristics and dispositions of the choosers, which have been found to exert significant influence on the choices and decisions young people make in the higher education markets. At primary school, children have almost no role in school choice as this tends to be done exclusively by the parents. Young people tend to have more say in the choice of the secondary schools that they attend and their role in the post-school choice is significantly more important. Understanding the choosers' dispositions contributes considerably to our understanding of choice and decision-making in higher education. For example, understanding young peoples' perceptions of pathways to higher education constitutes a crucial dimension for estimating students' flows to different forms of higher education such as technical and vocational colleges, universities, further education colleges and professional training colleges (Ana-Andreea, Liviu, & Alina, 2013). Some research has found that socio-economic background, rational perception of one's own ability, and the influence of teachers, employers and labour market characteristics exert significant influence on young choosers' choices and decision-making in the higher education markets (Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 2001).

Other choosers' dispositions found to exert significant influence on young people's choices include their construction of lifestyle ambitions, their estimation of net personal benefit from investing in higher education, their self-image in specific social and cultural contexts, and

their post hoc justification of the choices they made (Lee & Morrish, 2012). For example, in a project on non-participation in higher education to find out why some students who met requisite university admission criteria chose to delay their enrolment in universities, the authors found that amongst the many reasons young people who qualify yet do not proceed to university was the rational choice these young people made to disrupt the 'standard pathway of life'. This standard pathway, which we are generally socialised to accept, involves a largely uninterrupted journey from primary to secondary school, then straight to university, followed by joining the labour markets, and finally starting a family. Significant numbers of young people, because of a variety of reasons and circumstances, choose to disrupt this predictable and taken-for-granted pathway of life (Fuller et al. 2008).

Choice

The final C represents the choice or decision young people make regarding their participation in higher education. The model has four categories of decisions that young people make. These include decisions about which institution to attend, what pathway into higher education to take, what career to follow or prepare for and what programme to undertake. A vast amount of research across the world is now available, which has grown from these final choice destinations in higher education (for example Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Maringe, 2006; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Research on Choice in Higher Education in Southern Africa: A Methodological Approach

A scoping review of the literature on choice in higher education in Africa was conducted. The following criteria were used to circumscribe the search:

- Only articles published in accredited journals and unpublished theses were selected because of their theoretical richness; the articles must have been published between 2000 and 2019 to capture the criteria of recency; only articles that had a well-argued theoretical discussion that informed the research questions were selected;
- Articles specifying African American or African-Caribbean were deselected to remain with articles written about students' choices in higher education in Africa;
- Higher education was used broadly to mean any post-school sector including universities, Further Education and Training or Technical, vocational institutions, and professional training colleges; both qualitative and quantitative articles were included;
- The search was conducted via the following search engines: Web of Science; Scopus; ScienceDirect; PubMed and Google Search;
- Articles were also selected if they had a decent citation rate of not less than ten citations at the time of writing; citations were used as a crude but fairly reliable indicator of the value readers attached to the publication.

Ten articles, including five theses and five journal publications, were selected as workable for the purposes of this paper (Table 5.1).

Discussion of Findings

Several themes emerge from the terrain of choice research in Southern Africa. We raise a couple of caveats ahead of a discussion of these themes.

Due to the stringent nature of the exclusion and inclusion criteria used to identify and include research evidence in this paper, we ended up drawing from a rather small sample of papers and unpublished dissertations. As such, the evidence base could be seen as small, and the claims made in this paper need to be considered and evaluated in this light. Secondly, the use of citations as a proxy for quality can be a controversial issue. However, we strongly feel that, though difficult to establish, new authors tend to cite from good research as this is advantageous

Table 5.1 A synopsis of the ten research outputs that were selected to form the basis for the discussion

Title	Author/s and year	Source	Purpose of paper	Methodological approach	Major findings
The choice of Arab-Islamic education in sub-Saharan Africa: Findings from a comparative study	d'Aiglepierre, R. and Bauer, A. (2018)	*International Journal of Educational Development,* 62, 47–61	To determine the factors that influence young people's choice of Arab-Islamic education in sub-Saharan Africa	Mixed-methods approach	Parental pressure based on religious affiliation; Perceived quality of Islamic education; The low cost of Arab-Islamic education
Higher education institutional image: A correspondence analysis approach	Ivy, J. (2001)	*International Journal of Educational Management,* 15(6), 276–282	To determine how universities and technikons in South Africa are using marketing to differentiate their images in the higher education market	Mixed-methods but predominantly quantitative (correspondence analysis)	Factors which contribute most strongly to the image of a university are: perceived quality of programmes; lower fees in technikons; sports facilities and availability of funding
International students' motivations for studying in UK HE: Insights into the choice and decision-making of African students	Maringe, F. & Carter, S. (2007)	*International Journal of Education Management,* 21(6), 459–475	To determine the decision-making processes of African students when they are choosing UK higher education	Qualitative methods based on in-depth interviews	Overseas study decisions of African students are influenced by: push factors; pull factors; institutional reputation and image factors; subject rankings; employment opportunities

(continued)

Table 5.1 (continued)

Title	Author/s and year	Source	Purpose of paper	Methodological approach	Major findings
A higher education marketing perspective on choice factors and information sources considered by South African first-year university students	Wiese, M. (2008)	Unpublished doctoral dissertation	To determine the factors which influence students' choice of a study institution	Quantitative survey instrument answered by 1241 students in six higher education institutions in South Africa	Factors included: quality of teaching; employment prospects (possible job opportunities); campus safety and security; academic facilities (libraries and laboratories); international links (study and job opportunities); language policy; image of higher education institution; flexible study mode (evening classes and use of computers); academic reputation (prestige); and a wide choice of subjects/courses
The role of social media as an information source in the decision-making of students when selecting a university	Fourie, L. E. (2015)	Unpublished doctoral dissertation	To determine the role of social media in the choice and decision-making of students selecting a study destination	Mixed-methods research	Social media were largely found to be important sources of information for choice decisions in the higher education sector but were not considered to be wholly trusted

(continued)

Table 5.1 (continued)

Title	Author/s and year	Source	Purpose of paper	Methodological approach	Major findings
From school to higher education? Factors affecting the choices of grade 12 learners	Cosser, M.C. & Du Toit, J. L. (2002)	Publisher: Human Sciences Research Council	To explore the factors influencing choices of university and course of study among grade 12 learners in South Africa	Qualitative methods	12 drivers of choice identified to participate in higher education: Employability; intrinsic interest; anticipated income; family pressure; offer of a bursary; ability to fund study through NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme); ability to fund study through bank loans; teacher influence; classmates influence; life uncertainties; boyfriend/girlfriend influence
The choice of public universities in a restructured and transforming higher education landscape: A student perspective	Penceliah, S., Konyana, S. V. M., & Maharaj, M. (2016)	*Problems and Perspectives in Management, 14*(3), 276–282	To investigate the factors that influence the decision-making process of students when choosing an institution for enrolment	A quantitative survey approach	The following factors were identified in terms of mean scores (1–5): the quality of teaching was rated (1), availability of financial assistance was rated at number (2), ease of finding employment during and after the study was rated at (3), qualifications recognised worldwide (4), sport and recreation programmes (5)

Table 5.1 (continued)

Title	Author/s and year	Source	Methodological approach	Purpose of paper	Major findings
Promotional tools at selected universities in the Tshwane Metropolitan Region	Konyana, S. V. M. (2013)	Unpublished masters dissertation	Mixed-methods including surveys, interviews mainly using instruments developed by Wiese (2008)	To determine factors which influence students in selecting universities for study and to identify the most important promotional tools universities can use to effectively recruit students	The results of this study showed that students preferred higher education institutions to use personal communication tools for student recruitment. Interestingly, students rated social media as one of the most important communication methods. Furthermore, emphasis on the core product and specific aspects of the tangible product and augmented product was found. It was also noted that students from diverse backgrounds and provinces used different sources of information during their search for enrolment at a higher education institution

Table 5.1 (continued)

Title	Author/s and year	Source	Purpose of paper	Methodological approach	Major findings
Information needs and source preference of prospective learners at tertiary institutions: An integrated marketing communication approach	Bonnema, J. (2006)	Unpublished doctoral dissertation	To determine what the information needs and preferred sources are of high school learners in the Cape Metropole and what definitive sub-groups exist within this target market, to develop a tailor-made IMC plan to effectively reach this market	Quantitative empirical research, using questionnaires to determine the information sources high school learners use, the factors they consider important when selecting a tertiary institution and their specific characteristics. Grade 11 learners, 920 surveys were administered	The study shows that for an institution to access the potential student-target market as a whole within the Cape Metropole it has to take cognisance of the different sub-groups that exist, and tailor-make the content, presentation and media used according to the preferences of each. The study shows that treating the target market as a single homogeneous market with one message to 'fit all sizes' will not successfully reach the market or meet their individual needs
Factors influencing choice of a university by students in Zimbabwe	Mupemhi, S. (2013)	African Journal of Business Management, 7(36), 3723–3729	To explore the factors associated with a good university brand that students look for when choosing a university to study with, and, to further debate and inform on issues surrounding university branding	A qualitative methodology involving a single case study; the Midlands State University, was used in this research. A qualitative approach was used	The results show that brand attributes that influence the choice and consumption of consumer goods are the same for higher education. The implication of this on university brand management is that if it is possible to manage powerful consumer brands to gain and maintain a competitive advantage, then the same can be done with universities

(continued)

Table 5.1 (continued)

Title	Author/s and year	Source	Purpose of paper	Methodological approach	Major findings
Determinants of school choice: Understanding how parents choose secondary schools in Lusaka district	Kaoma, G. K. (2016)	Unpublished doctoral dissertation	The study explored the determinants of school choice by parents in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district. This was done by investigating whether school choice was determined by the school's academic performance, parents' socio-economic status, location of parents, and moral and religious values. The theories that guided this study were rational choice and free-market theories	A convergent parallel mixed-methods design; an approach to inquiry that combines both qualitative and quantitative methods concurrently, prioritising both methods almost equally	The findings of this study suggested that parents had the freedom to exercise school choice in Lusaka. However, this choice was hampered by some factors. The research conducted found that school academic performance was the significant variable; hence, it was the biggest determining factor in parents' school choice for their children as it told a lot about the quality of education offered at a particular school. This was followed by moral and religious values. Respondents revealed that they appreciated schools where discipline was enforced. Parents' socio-economic status was also shown to have an influence on school choice though this was not significant when multiple regression was run. The location of parents was found to be insignificant as a determinant of school choice. The study recommended that the government needed to work on these issues

to their own research too. In any case, we used a fairly low threshold of citations.

Ten significant themes emerged from the evidence in this paper, and a brief discussion of each follows.

The Nature of the Choice of Research in Southern Africa

We begin with the nature of the choice of research, in which five important themes have emerged.

Unevenness in the Terrain of Choice of Research

The bulk of the sources used were conducted and published in South Africa with very little coming from other countries in the Southern African region. This could reflect several things. Firstly, the growth and expansion of university sectors in most of the region's nations are a recent phenomena. For example, in Zimbabwe, the university sector has grown from one institution in 1980 to about 20 universities over the last few decades. Secondly, many of the countries in the region do not have globally competitive higher education sectors. South Africa is the only country in the region with globally competitive universities. Seven universities in South Africa, including The University of Cape Town, The University of the Witwatersrand, The University of KwaZulu-Natal, The University of Pretoria, The University of the Western Cape, Stellenbosch University and more recently, The University of Johannesburg are the only firm contenders in the top 500 globally competitive universities. Consequently, and coupled with the relative economic and political stability of the country, many of the countries in the Southern African region are 'sending countries' while South Africa is a 'receiving country' (James, Baldwin, & McInnis, 1999).

The Predominance of University Choice Research

Very little research has been conducted around subject or course choice, marketing responses and strategies in the field of educational choice, and choice among different socio-economic groups, such as refugee students and students from previously marginalised communities. The bulk of research on choice in higher education seems to be about university choice, especially in the context of rapidly expanding university sectors in the countries of the region. Unfortunately, this feeds into a common narrative about universities whose social responsibility appears to be defined by how many students they can attract and recruit and not about the universities' responsibility to cultivate epistemological access amongst the new inhabitants (albeit very temporary) in the sector (Morrow, 2009).

The Predominance of a Theoretical Case Study Research

There are instances of research that we were not able to include in this study because it was either poorly theorised or not theorised at all. Much of this research is corporate research posted on institutional websites and designed specifically with institutional goals in mind. Research that has no theoretical basis or does not contribute to the growth of theory is limited to the extent to which it can have a broad application (Sarter, 2006). This is why many outputs were excluded from this study, although other researchers might have included them for good reasons including increasing sample size.

The Predominance of Mixed-Method Research on Choice in Higher Education

The research on choice in higher education appears to be growing on an assumption of the synergistic relationship existing between quantitative and qualitative studies. While the knowledge generated through each

of these paradigms has value in its own right, prospects of more holistic knowledge and the understanding of issues are enhanced through mixed-methods research (Bazeley, 2004).

Tendency to Publish in Predatory Journals

The pressure to 'publish or perish' and the limited access that scholars in the global south have to recognised journals seems to be driving some scholars to publish in dubious or predatory journals. Predatory journals exploit the open-access model in which the author pays to have their paper published. Very little or no peer review takes place (Beall, 2012). Although it is unfair to conclude that all research published in predatory journals is worthless, it is probably reasonable to assume that predatory journals cannot be the first port of call for good research.

Factors of Choice in Higher Education Based on Strong Evidence

Factors Influencing Choice in Competitive Local Markets

Four important factors have emerged as very strong in the power of their influence on young people's decisions regarding which university they select. These are:

- Reputation: This is a time-bound concept that is related to the record of the university regarding factors such as academic excellence, quality of academic staff, and what society seems to think of the institution. Students tend to choose universities with the highest indices of reputation in these three areas. This agrees with Ivy's (2001) notion of Prominence as the number one factor of choice for business students in South Africa.
- Course availability: Students choose universities where courses they want to follow are offered. Related to this factor is the question of

career prospects. Again, Ivy's (2001) research describes this group of factors as Programme factors, which exert the second most powerful influence on young peoples' choice of university.

- Cost aspect: In marketing terms, this group of factors relate to Price factors. While it sounds logical for students to choose to study at universities charging lower fees, often low-priced programmes are associated with low prominence (reputation) and with limited capacity to prepare students for the labour market (Maringe, 2006).
- Access to accommodation: Many parents prefer that their children select universities with accommodation facilities. Described as Place factors, this group of factors extends to an assessment of other facilities such as laboratories and classrooms, as exerting the fourth-strongest influence on young people's choices.

Glimpses of Evidence into Course Choice

There is not a strong tradition of research in university course choice in Southern Africa. But the little evidence we have appears to be quite strong, especially if it is measured against international research. In Maringe's (2006) research on university and course choice among high school students in their final year before university, the evidence produced resonates quite strongly with evidence in the international literature. In order of strength of influence, Southern African students choose courses at universities because of:

- Their interest in the subjects
- Their self-assessment of ability in the subject
- The reputation of the university
- Employment prospects associated with the course
- The influence of friends
- The influence of parents.

The findings are generally supported in research conducted in the international context. For example, Sabir, Ahmad, and Noor (2013)

found a similar set of factors for engineering and business students in Pakistan, as did Soutar and Turner (2002) and James et al. (1999) in the Australian context.

Glimpses of Evidence into Overseas Study Decision-Making

Overseas study decision-making research is still in its infancy in Southern Africa. Maringe and Carter's (2007) research on the decision-making of African students in the UK higher education context is probably the most cited in the Southern African region (Google citation score of 305). The article identifies the key elements of the decision-making processes of African students intending to study in UK universities. Their choices are driven largely by push and pull factors operating within their countries of origin and the destination country respectively (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). The strongest push factors include economic meltdown, political instability and conflict, while the strongest pull factors tend to be economic and political stability, employment opportunities and financial opportunities to fund studies.

Conclusions and Implications

Based on the evidence of the review, four conclusions and recommendations are outlined.

Research on Choice in Higher Education in Southern Africa Is Still Young and Tentative

The research on choice in higher education in the Southern African region is still in its infancy, given the relative recency in the expansion of the sector, the growth of widening participation agendas and the desire to transform higher education to a socially just and inclusive

undertaking. Strong research based on existing theories of choice tends to be rare except when it is done as part of postgraduate qualifications at universities. A significant amount of research is reported in predatory journals. There is greater emphasis on university choice, and very little is reported on course choice in the region. Equally, research from a marketing perspective, in terms of how universities are responding to the evidence on student choice, is still in its infancy.

The Research Has Strong Predictive Strength in University Choice Factors

Strong evidence, which resonates with international trends, is now available showing the factors which mitigate students' choice of universities in the region. The four most prominent drivers of choice for students are Prominence (reputation), Programme (course availability), Price (especially cost of study and availability of funding to sustain study) and Place factors (especially in terms of availability of accommodation). Universities that score highly in these four areas tend to attract larger shares of students in the recruitment market.

Slow Growth in Course Choice and Marketing Led Choice Research

There is little research on choice in higher education, which aims to provide evidence for what universities can do to survive in the competitive field of higher education markets. However, the research that exists bears a strong resemblance to trends in the international context of higher education markets.

Absence of Longitudinal Studies to Evaluate the Efficacy of Choice Amongst Young People

The article search could not find any evidence of research seeking to establish how young choosers survive their university journeys. Choice

research could thus be seen as navigating the terrains of physical access while doing nothing about epistemological access as the students embark on their higher education journeys.

Recommendations and Implications

1. Universities, where much of the best research on choice is undertaken through postgraduate qualifications, need to expand the portfolios of their programmes to include research on course choice and especially on marketing implications and responses to the growing and reliable evidence on university choice research.
2. Young researchers who are publishing in predatory journals need support to channel their efforts in the right direction. Established publishing journals need to do more to support young publishers, especially from the global south, to overcome the barriers which prevent them from publishing in these spaces.
3. Choice research needs to be expanded to involve longitudinal studies, which track young choosers from different stations in life through their journeys in the higher education sectors. Commitment to access needs to be expanded to the terrain of the journeys that these young people take once they enrol at universities.
4. The focus on mixed-methods in research on choice in the Southern African context is a welcome one, which needs to be encouraged, especially in postgraduate research.

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Part III

Factors Influencing Choice

6

Factors Influencing Students' Choice of a Federal University: A Case Study of a Nigerian Federal University

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Introduction

The factors affecting students' choice of higher education is essential for any university's management admission policies and marketing strategies. Globally, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) are making tremendous contributions in imparting the knowledge and skills that will help its students to succeed in life. In the same manner, these institutions must

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ensure their success by making progress in recruiting a large number of students annually and to enhance recruitment efforts. They must understand what influences students' decisions to pursue post-secondary education in a specific institution of higher learning. The process of deciding on which higher institution to attend is considered very complex (Chapman, 1981; Moogan & Baron, 2003), as there are several factors to consider.

Various research across the world has been carried out to understand how student chooses; however, there is a shortage of insight from an African perspective. This study explicitly focuses on the Nigerian education system. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, with over 180 million has considerable challenges in educating her growing population. Olaleye, Ukpabi, and Mogaji (2020) highlight the market dynamics that influence the supply of universities, as Nigeria needs more university spaces to meet the need of prospective students. The government universities are not enough; even the available ones are not well funded and equipped to meet the growing needs. Usually, most public universities in Nigeria have more student applicants than they can admit in any given academic year. Hence, marketing for the sole purpose of recruiting students is not on the agenda of most public universities because it is almost natural for students to apply to them (Aluede, Idogho, & Imonikhe, 2012; Iruonagbe, Imhonopi, & Egharevba, 2015; Otoja & Obodumu, 2017).

Recognising the fact that there is more demand for university spaces than is supplied, a structured questionnaire was administered to undergraduate students of a top-ranking federal university of technology in South-West Nigeria. By examining the factors influencing the choice-making process of the students, the study makes both theoretical and managerial implication. It provides a holistic understanding

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of factors that influences student' choices of university, albeit a federal university. No doubt, this may be different from other universities in the country or other countries on the African continent, but it offers a crucial point to start in adding to knowledge about student choice-making process on the continent. In this study, the choice factors across five categories by Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2015), were adopted to understand factors that influence decisions regarding the choice of a university and the sources of information regarding tertiary institutions.

The Nigerian University Education System

Nigeria runs the 9-3-4 system of education under the Universal Basic Education (UBE). Students pass through 6 years of primary education, three years of junior secondary school, and three years of senior secondary school. A minimum of 4 years is spent on tertiary education, depending on the institution and duration of the course of study (Iruonagbe et al., 2015). In Nigeria, the university education system includes both public and private universities. Both federal and state governments run public universities. There are currently 174 approved universities in Nigeria comprising 43 federal universities, 52 state universities and 79 private universities (Farinloye, Adeola, & Mogaji, 2020). Up until 1999, the establishment, ownership, management and funding of universities and all tertiary educational institutions remained the exclusive reserve of federal, regional and state governments (Akpotu & Akpochafo, 2009).

Although tertiary education could be obtained in the colleges of education, polytechnics and universities in Nigeria, many students graduating from the secondary schools prefer to seek admission into universities rather than in the colleges of education and polytechnics (Akinwumi & Oladosu, 2015; Stephen, 2015). This is evidenced by the large proportion of students applying to study in the universities every academic year (Aluede et al., 2012). Studies revealed that most prospective candidates would only seek admission into Nigerian colleges of education as a last resort, if they are unable to secure admissions into the universities (Akinwumi & Oladosu, 2015). Furthermore, the majority of college of education students would continue to seek admissions into the universities, even while still on their college of education programs (Akinwumi

& Oladosu, 2015). For polytechnics, Stephen (2015) claimed that young secondary school leavers prefer to seek admission into the universities due to the discrimination against the polytechnic graduates and certificates by the government, employers of labour, and the general public in Nigeria. Likewise, polytechnic graduates also face limitation in proceeding directly on a Master's degree programme as they have to enrol for a minimum one-year postgraduate diploma program in a university before proceeding for a Master's degree program.

The National Universities Commission (NUC) of Nigeria is a government agency saddled with the responsibility of promoting quality higher education in Nigeria. Created in 1962 and reconstituted as a statutory body in 1974, the NUC is also responsible for approving all academic programs run in Nigerian universities and granting approval for the establishment of all higher educational institutions offering degree programs (Saint, Hartnett, & Strassner, 2003). The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) is the Nigerian central admissions agency established in 1978, tasked to streamline admissions and expand access to universities across the nation. The board is popularly known to conduct entrance examination—Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) for prospective undergraduates applying to any Nigerian tertiary institution (Adeyemi, 2001; Otoja & Obodumu, 2017).

According to reports, only 12.2–26.9% of university applicants got admitted into Nigerian universities between 2011–2015, while 73.1–87.5% (over 1 million) of the applicants could not be admitted into the universities (Otoja & Obodumu, 2017) Based on JAMB's annual report, the entire universities in Nigeria can only comfortably accommodate about 20% of those seeking admissions. To bring this to perspective, only 1,519,449, representing 24.1% of the 6,229,535 candidates who sought university admission between 2011–2015, were given admission (Otoja & Obodumu, 2017). The problem of carrying capacity has worsened these situations, increase in population growth and demand for higher education, poor budgetary allocation, inadequate infrastructural facilities, inadequate academic staff in number, and quality (Aluede et al., 2012; Otoja & Obodumu, 2017).

The challenges facing public higher education in Nigeria led to the emergence of private higher education under President Olusegun Obasanjo, the then newly inaugurated democratic government in 1999,

as a result of deregulation of the education sector (Iruonagbe et al., 2015; NUC, 2019). Starting with three private universities in 1999, this number has grown to 79 and still counting (Iruonagbe et al., 2015). Although, private universities are quite expensive compared to government owned universities, the introduction of private universities have contributed to the Nigerian educational landscape in the area of human resources development, job provision for academics, building healthy academic and industry-based international partnerships, and reduce pressure on public universities (Iruonagbe et al., 2015). On the other hand, Federal government universities are less expensive, which has made them among other reasons the choice of thousands of students who want affordable education in Nigeria (Badau, 2013). It is therefore important to understand the factors that influence the choice making progress of students.

The Factors Influencing the Choice of Higher Education Institution

Many studies have made an effort to identify decision-making profiles of students who choose a Higher Education Institution (HEI). Rika, Roze, and Sennikova's (2016) research on final year students of Latvian secondary schools identified cultural factors, social factors, psychological factors, and organisational factors as important and relevant with regards to student choice. Mbawuni and Nimako (2015) identified seven factors that have a vital role during students' selection—attachment to university, school location benefits, cost of programme, failure to gain alternative admissions, schools' student support, lectures and staff recommendations, and personal intention to pursue the programme. However, building on the longitudinal model on students' decision-making by Chapman (1981), these factors affecting student choices are classified into two areas: institutional and personal (Henriques et al., 2018).

The institutional factors highlight the features of the university, which influences the students' choice. Tuition fees were considered an essential factor as reported by Broekemier and Seshadri (2000) and Galotti and Mark (1994). The price or affordability of the school is a significant point of attraction to some institutions, as prospective students are aware of the cost of higher education and in many cases considers these financial

variables during their HEI selection process (Stephenson, Heckert, & Yerger, 2016). Also, financial support in the form of scholarship was found to expressively influence the students' choice (Drewes & Michael, 2006). Equally, the size and location of the university were also considered to influence the student choices, as they may have to leave home and live on and around the university campus (Drewes & Michael, 2006; Kallio, 1995). A study revealed that students have acknowledged how the beautiful campus environment influenced their choices; suggesting that the institution gave off a welcoming, friendly, and laid-back ambience. Many participants spoke of their experiences with the warm and welcoming nature of the campus, appreciating the overall communal feeling they observed and later experienced (Stephenson et al., 2016). This aligns with earlier findings that campus visits emerged as having a profound effect on the draw to the university (Anctil, 2008). Open Days, which allows the students to explore the university before enrolling, has enormous benefit to prospective students, and it can be hugely influential in their decision making (Beneke, 2011; Maniu & Maniu, 2014).

In addition, the reputation of an institution which contributes to its ranking on league table is considered one of the most essential decision factors for students (Angulo-Ruiz, Pergelova, & Cheben, 2016; Briggs, 2006; Briggs & Wilson, 2007; Judson, Aurand, & Karlovsky, 2007; Sarkane & Sloka, 2015). Likewise, the courses offered by universities is another factor that deeply affects students' decision-making process (Broekemier & Seshadri, 2000; Sojkin, Bartkowiak, & Skuza, 2015). The marketing activities of HEI to reach out to prospective students also shape the students' way of thinking (Angulo-Ruiz et al., 2016). For instance, positive word-of-mouth and marketing campaigns that prospective students often engage with also affect the choice of HEI (Demetriou, Thrassou, & Papasolomou, 2018). Similarly, the branding and positioning of the university are vital factors in shaping a student's decision. Bastedo, Samuels, and Kleinman (2014) identified a definite link between the HEI's brand image and the charismatic leadership which impacts applications for enrolment and financial donations.

The personal factors highlight the students' thought process and factors that influence the choice as an individual. Student's socioeconomic status, the levels of their educational aspiration, and the influence

of essential persons (e.g., family, friends, and high school personnel) (Henriques et al., 2018), household budget aligning with the university's tuition fees, and financial support are considered the main factors in the students' choice of HEI (Sarkane & Sloka, 2015). A study by Rocca, Washburn and Sprling (2003) reported that influential people in a student's college decision-making process might include friends, parents, guardians, other relatives, alumni, teachers, as well as counsellors. These categories of people may influence a student's college and university choice by helping shape a student's expectations of a particular university by providing direct advice about the institution as they previously attended the institution (Chapman, 1981). In fact, in homes where the parents are educated, some children can be influenced to study the same degree as their parents and/or attend their alma mater (Denzler, 2011).

In the same way, family backgrounds play an important role as students from more privileged family backgrounds tend to prefer high ranking universities (Henriques et al., 2018). Goodman, Hurwitz, Smith, and Fox (2015) found that younger and older siblings' choices are very closely related. Similarly, the gender of siblings can influence the decision they make on the choice of HEI, especially with regards to the choice of the degree to pursue (Anelli & Peri, 2015).

The Students' Effort in Choice Making

Despite these factors, university choices are often evaluated based on several attributes that can be perceived positively or negatively (Sipilä, Herold, Tarkiainen, & Sundqvist, 2017). The reputation of a university, the course they offer, and the facilities available, may be considered positive attributes that are likely to influence the student's choice. However, the university location may be far from home, or the university's tuition fees may be costly and not affordable because there is no scholarship. These are the negative attributes that can affect the student's choice. Here the prospective student holds both positive and negative beliefs about the choice to be made. The student is aware of the value of being educated in the university and also aware of the financial pressure.

Sipilä et al. (2017) suggested that these conflicting beliefs constitute an ambivalent summary evaluation of the HEI institution and information search helps to reduce attitudinal ambivalence early in the decision-making process. This aligns with previous findings that students behave as rational consumers in their decisions making the process (Tavares & Cardoso, 2013). The students' effort in making an informed choice cannot be overlooked or overemphasised. They make an effort to engage with the universities' marketing communication, visit the universities on Open Days, and make their research on websites and social media. Higher education marketers perceive that the traditional means of communication, such as brochures and college fairs, are giving way to newer social media methods—including websites, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc. (Farinloye et al., 2020). In terms of student innovative information gathering, it is a complex and challenging decision-making process. As with any vital and essential decision to be made, information is searched and continually evaluated (Frey, Schulz-Hardt, & Stahlberg, 2013; Mogaji, 2018). Students are spending time gathering information systematically and rationally (Menon, Saiti, & Socratous, 2007) as they have many options to consider. A study in the United States found that on average, students had 3.03 institutions in their consideration set (Stephenson et al., 2016), while in the UK, the average consideration HEI set size was 6.01 (Dawes & Brown, 2002), which highlights students' effort in gathering information about these HEI before making their choice. In a study conducted in the UK (El Nemar, Vrontis, & Thrassou, 2018) it was found that information is a continuous innovative process and not a stage, and so students are continually searching for information through innovative methods (Mogaji, 2016). This information flow and information gathering are critical to both students and HEI (El Nemar et al., 2018). Notwithstanding the student's search for information, the decision-making process of HEI is subject to change over time and might be influenced by economic, social, and demographic changes related to students (El Nemar et al., 2018).

Many studies have been carried out in specific countries to understand student choice process. In Greece, Menon et al. (2007) studied the information search and choice in Greek higher education.

Stephenson et al. (2016) researched first-time first-year students in the USA while other studies include first-semester tertiary-level students in Lebanon (El Nemar et al., 2018), Portuguese secondary or vocational education students in their final year who intend to apply to a public HEI (Henriques et al., 2018), and factors influencing undergraduate students' choice of a university in Botswana (Rudhumbu, Tirumalai, & Kumari 2017) and Ghana (Afful-Broni & Noi-Okwei, 2010).

With these varieties of studies, there are few studies on how students in Nigeria choose their universities. Instead, most of the available literature has focused on factors influencing students' choice of specific courses or major namely Agricultural Science (Onu & Ikehi, 2013), Business (Obijole, 2009), and Vocational studies (Igbinedion, 2011). Other authors have centred on extensive choice of programs in universities (Ajibola, Emeghe, Oluwumi, & Oni, 2017; Pitan & Adedeji, 2014) and willingness to complete courses of study (Akinwumi & Oladosu, 2015). While recognising the effort in understanding student choices at a course level, it is paramount to have an understating at the tertiary institutional level, how students in Nigeria are making their choices. Only few kinds of literature exist on the factors influencing the choice of tertiary education institutions in Nigeria (Badau, 2013; Ifeyinwa et al. 2019), which utilised survey methods to elicit information from respondents. For instance, Ifeyinwa et al. (2019) studied factors influencing students university choice by surveying 50 undergraduate and postgraduate students of a Nigerian university. Results revealed that 54% of respondents indicated the university's characteristics including staff quality, the quality of available university programs, university image and reputation, institutional location, and graduating employability are the major factors which influenced their university choice. Badau (2013) sampled 2200 prospective students and parents of prospective students and first-year tertiary education students in four tertiary education institutions in Nigeria to understand students decision-making basis for choosing tertiary institutions. Results showed that factors including finance, location, physical infrastructure and industrial expectations were significant factors influencing student choice of tertiary institution except for the promotion factor which was not significant.

Methodology

Site Study and Survey Description

The Federal University of Technology Akure (FUTA)[1] in Nigeria was selected for this study. The University was established in 1981 by the Acts of Parliament of the federal government alongside six other Federal Universities of Technology located in Minna, Yola, Owerri, Abeokuta and Bauchi. This was aimed at creating universities with specialised capacities and programmes to produce graduates with practical as well as theoretical knowledge of technologies. Presently, FUTA has eight different academic schools (Sciences, Computing, Agricultural Technology, Engineering Technology, Environmental Technology, Earth and Mining Sciences, Health Technology and Management Technology) that run both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, with over fifty (50) academic departments combined. With the support of and reference from the faculty heads and students' societies at the University, the 300 structured survey questionnaires were administered and retrieved immediately after completion by the respondents who were undergraduate students of the university. A participant information sheet was attached as the first page of the questionnaire to explain the objective of the research, the rights of the participants, and how to give informed consent to participate.

As used by Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2015), the 31 choice factors across five categories were adopted in the study. Three Nigerian academics who were experienced in the higher education sector were invited to review the initial list of factors. The reviewers removed the factors that were duplicated or inapplicable to the Nigerian context. For example, Open Day and Prospectus were excluded. A final list of 21 choice factors was selected for the survey. Of the 21 choice factors, 13 were adopted from the previous authors while the expert reviewers

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[1]https://www.futa.edu.ng/.

introduced eight as they are said to be relevant within the Nigerian context. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to select the choice factors that influenced their decision to choose FUTA and also choose from a list of information sources which supported their choice factors.

Data Analysis

The retrieved questionnaires were transcribed and analysed quantitatively. All analysis, including descriptive statistics, multiple factor analysis, and factor analysis were conducted using the R statistical package (version 1.0.153, http://rstudio.org/). Firstly, using the FactoMineR package (Lê, Josse, & Husson, 2008) implemented in R statistics for multiple factor analysis (MFA), we analysed the "choice data". We grouped all 12 decisions influencing student choice of university into five main thematic groups based on the similarity of the characteristics of the factors influencing choice as follows:

1. **The accommodation** which had two variables—on-campus housing and off-campus housing;
2. **Human-based factors** had three variables—personal interest, parental influence and opinion;
3. **University characteristics** had three variables—university reputation, university ranking, and specialised programme offered;
4. **Economic considerations** had two variables—lower fees and scholarship opportunity while;
5. **The location** had two variables—proximity to home and geographical location.

We then divided the groups into variable groups; the active group and supplementary group. This grouping enabled us to identify variables that contribute similarly in each dimension of the factor analysis.

Secondly, we analysed the "source of information data" (i.e. through what channels did students obtain information about their choice

university). We applied factor analysis using the psych package (Revelle, 2018) implemented in R statistic and chose the components with the most significant three eigenvalues. We used a minimum loading of 0.4 to select the source of information for students.

Data Description

A total number of 282 questionnaires were completed and used for the analysis in this study (Table 6.1). There were more males than females (64.2/33.7%) with most of the participants studying Engineering and Engineering Technology (19.1%), Agriculture and Agricultural Technology (17%) and Science (15.2%). The Questionnaire participant profile is presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Questionnaire participant profile

	Frequency	%
Gender	**282**	**100.0**
Male	181	64.2
Female	95	33.7
No answer	6	2.1
Age	**282**	**100.0**
2–25	148	52.5
15–20	117	41.5
26–30	15	5.3
31 and Above	2	0.7
Field of study	**282**	**100**
Engineering and Engineering Technology	54	19.1
Agriculture and Agricultural Technology	48	17.0
Science	43	15.2
Earth and Marine Science	37	13.1
Environmental Technology	37	13.1
Management Technology	32	11.3
Health and Health Technologies	22	7.8
Computing	9	3.2
Sponsor	282	100
Parents and guardian	110	39
Self	3	1.1
Friends	2	0.7
Scholarship	1	0.4

Results

Factors that Influenced the Choice of a University

The descriptive statistics suggest that personal interest, parental influence, university reputation, university ranking, and fees are the major five factors that influenced student's choice of the university (FUTA) as presented in Table 6.2.

Personal interest to study at FUTA was the highest-ranked factor influencing the students' choice. This was reported by 75.5% ($n=213$) of the respondents. This aligns with the idea of student perception as a determining factor (Briggs, 2006) and this choice decision linked to perceptions are formed at a young age (Foskett, Dyke, & Maringe, 2008). This suggests that student have a personal interest in the university as they perceive it to be the best to meet their needs. Briggs (2006) noted that the personal interest and perception about a university was more important than the actual league table placings of individual institutions. In the case of FUTA, the student's interest in the university was considered more important than parental influence (36.9%, $n=104$) and the university reputation (34.8%, $n=98$).

Table 6.2 Choice factors

Factor	Respondent ($n=282$)	Percentage of respondent
Personal interest	213	75.5
Parental influence	104	36.9
University reputation	98	34.8
University ranking	88	31.2
Fees	80	28.4
Opinions	42	14.9
Programme	35	12.4
Scholarship and financial aid	34	12.1
Distance from home	32	11.3
University geographical location	31	11.0
On campus student accommodation	27	9.6
Off-campus student accommodation	25	8.9

Irrespective of the context of this study, fees were found to be a significant factor influencing student choices, albeit not the most significant as other studies have found (Dao & Thorpe, 2015). FUTA, being a Federal owned university with cheaper fees, 28.4% ($n=80$) of the respondents noted that the low school fees influenced their choice of FUTA. The availability of scholarship and financial aid was considered different from the low school fees influence. Scholarships are limited in Nigeria and available for selected few. Notwithstanding its shortage, 12.1% ($n=34$) of participants reported the availability of scholarship and financial aid in FUTA influenced their decision to choose the university.

14.9% ($n=42$) of the respondents noted that opinions influenced their choice of FUTA. This includes the opinion of friends and especially older friends that have attended FUTA, opinions of siblings, other family members, teachers and even religious leaders. However, parental influence is excluded from the choice factor 'opinion' as it is grouped as a separate choice factor 'parental influence', with 36.9% ($n=104$) of respondents choosing it. Although, parents have more influence over the choice of university of many students since the parents fund the education of most students.

Consistent with the findings in other contexts (Dao & Thorpe, 2015; Ivy, 2008), the programme offered by FUTA was considered as an essential factor influencing the choice of students. Taking into consideration that FUTA offers specialised programs in technology which often are not available in other universities, 12.4% ($n=35$) of respondents noted that the choice of courses offered at the university influenced their choice. This also tied in with the personal interest which was the most significant influence. Students have an interest in a course, and they are more likely to select Universities offering what interests them.

The location of the University in the South West of Nigeria was also considered an influence in the student choice. 11% ($n=31$) of participants acknowledged that the university's geographical location was a determining factor when considering a university to attend. This aligns with earlier findings considering university location is a highly pragmatic decision (Briggs, 2006). Even though some students would not mind travelling and incur costs to access reputation, FUTA is
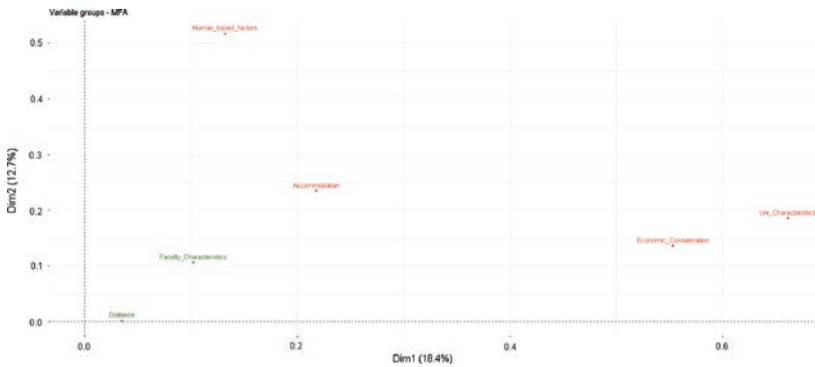
Fig. 6.1 The groups of variable for the factors influencing the choice of university (multiple factor analysis)

considered a reputable university in Nigeria, offering specialised programs which may not be available in other countries. With the understanding of the specific context of Nigeria, transportation and security may have also make FUTA more appealing to prospective students. Not surprising that some participants considered the distance from home (11.3%, $n=32$) as a determining factor.

The result shows two identical coordinates in the active groups in the first dimension. The coordinates of economic consideration and university characteristics are the highest, while human factors and accommodation contribute lowest. This indicates similar contribution in the two identical coordinates. Concerning the second dimension, human factor has the highest coordinates and contribution (Fig. 6.1).

The plot illustrates the correlation between groups and dimensions. The active groups of variables are in red and supplementary groups of variables in green colour.

We further examined the correlation between the quantitative variable and dimensions (Fig. 6.2) and the major elements are presented in Table 6.3. The first dimension represents the significant positive variables that influence the choice of university—university ranking and the lower fees. However, in the second dimension, peer influence and housing on campus were represented. This dimension represents the interaction between human-induced factors and interest in comfortability.
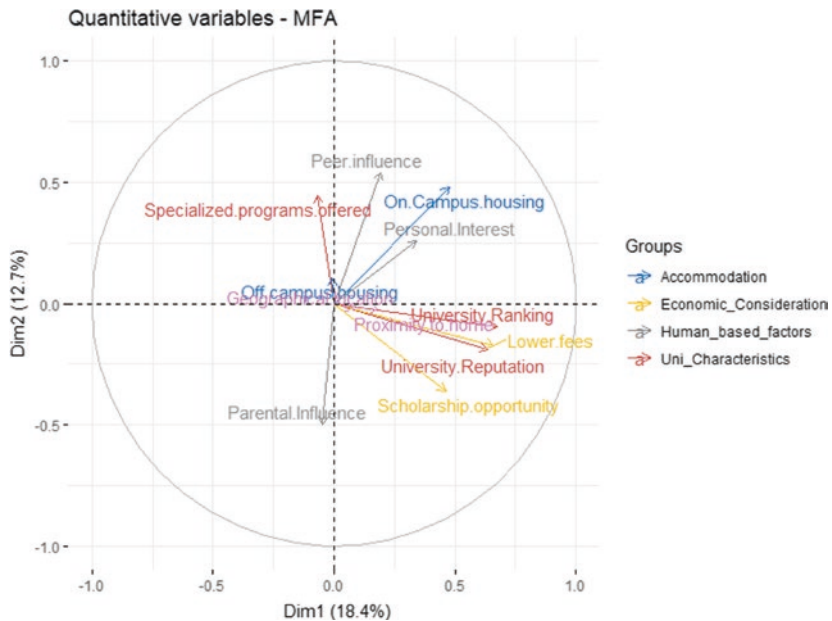
Fig. 6.2 The correlation between the quantitative variable and dimensions for the factors influencing the choice of university (multiple factor analysis)

Table 6.3 The significant elements within each factor group that described the student choice of university

Human-based factor	Accommodation	Economic consideration	University characteristics	Location
Personal interest	On-campus housing	Low fees	Ranking	Proximity to home
Peer influence		Scholarship opportunity	Reputation	Geographical location

Information Sources Influencing Student's Choice of University

Having identified the factors influencing student's choice of university, we examined the channels through which the students obtained information about the university to attend. The information sources are presented in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Information Sources through which the students obtained information about the university to attend

Information Sources	Respondent ($n=282$)	Percentage of respondent
Parent and guardian	121	42.9
Media	108	38.3
Friends	100	35.5
Family relatives	62	22.0
Lecturer and school counsellor	52	18.4
Alumni	39	13.8
Religious advisor	24	8.5
University representatives	24	8.5

In terms of information search, student predominantly relied on information from three significant channels namely: parent and guardian, media and friends, while other channels such as university representatives, lecturer/school counsellor and religious advisor were not significant or important. Parents and guidance were the most significant source of information for students attending FUTA. 42.9% ($n=121$) of participants acknowledge that they got information about the university to attend from their parent(s). This is not surprising, taking into consideration that the parents are the ones funding the university education, as there are no government funds, Parents are aware of their financial capabilities and are aware of various universities reputation and location.

While some other studies found that advertisements, Open Day, and prospectuses were key determinants, this was not so in the case of FUTA. Media was the second most significant sources of information. 38.3% ($n=108$) got information from the media to enhance their decision-making process. This media includes information provided by JAMB, University social media, and websites.

Friends, including classmates and older friends attending universities, were also a source of information for students attending federal universities. 35.5% ($n=100$) of participants identified their friends as a source of information. This aligns with previous studies that noted that prospective students want to engage with other students in order to make decisions about choosing a programme (Dao & Thorpe, 2015).

Table 6.5 Factor analysis identifying the main information source about university

Loading	MR 1	MR 2	MR 3
University representatives			
Lecturer/school councillor			
Parent/guardian		0.585	
Friends/schoolmates			
Family/relatives		0.415	
Religious advisor			
Former students	0.998		
Social media			0.440

In addition to these three significant sources of information for students, family relatives, lecturer and school councillor, and alumni were also a source of information. While campus visits and Open Days have been found to have a profound effect on the draw to universities (Stephenson et al., 2016), this was not the case in Nigeria, as this was not recognised as a source of information. Instead, they rely on friends, especially older friends that attended the university, to provide information about the university.

Based on the results from the factor analysis, four information source were identified under the three-factor component with the eigenvalues that accounted for 65% of the variance. These sources include former students, social media, parent and guardian, family and relatives (Table 6.4).

For Table 6.5, the factor analysis identifying the primary information source about the university. Note, MR 1–3 represent the factor names as identified using the Minres method. Factors are arranged in order of variance amount.

Discussions

This study presents an analysis of the choice factors and information sources utilised by Nigerian undergraduate students, using a sample of students attending a Federal University of Technology in Nigeria. This study extends existing research on students' choice factors by specifically

investigating what influences Nigerian undergraduate students to select a federal university. The chapter makes both theoretical and managerial contribution to higher education marketing and understanding student choice-making in Nigeria and Africa, as this is an under-researched area.

As federal universities have more options of undergraduate degree, some which are not being offered in state and private universities because of the facilities needed to deliver those courses (Mogaji, 2019a), this attract prospective students to federal schools; even though they are aware of challenges of government universities, like the depreciating facilities, overpopulation and interruption to academic calendars due to strike. Besides, physical location of the university was also a factor influencing student choice. This is more likely linked to the transportation and security challenges within the country. This aligns with findings from a study by Adefulu, Farinloye, and Mogaji (2019) on factors influencing students attending private universities in Nigeria. Students do not want to travel away from home, and likewise they recognise their parent's fear of travelling away from home.

The reputation of the university is also important. The federal universities are created in batches to meet specific needs, this federal university (of technology) was created to meet the technology needs of the country, it has been established since 1983 (Farinloye et al., 2020), and it has built reputation which attracts prospective students. Though there are other state universities of technology (like Ladoke Akintola University of Technology) and private (Bells University of Technology), the reputation of the university is still crucial. This is consistent with the result of Briggs (2006) and Ifeyinwa et al. (2019) who highlight the university reputation as a significant factor influencing students' university choice. Generally, universities with ranking and reputation would have higher funding potentials (Saint et al., 2003) compared to others. Hence, they are better positioned to provide excellent accommodation facilities for students which are often offered at a little cost. In addition, some parents prefer their children to attend universities close to home and some children also prefer a university close to home (Briggs, 2006). This is to allow the children to visit them (parents) more regularly and to get foodstuffs and money for upkeep (Badau, 2013).

This reputation is also reiterated by facilities (Mogaji & Yoon, 2019), especially parents who may have attended federal universities (as there were no private universities in their time), and they want their children to attend same university. As parents make financial commitment, they also influence where their children can study. This is consistent with previous studies that recognised the influence of parents. Iacopini and Hayden (2017) found that parents feel responsible for making sure their children are better qualified than them. Le, Dobele, and Robinson (2019) also found that Vietnamese parents play an essential role in student choice making. As Adefulu et al. (2019) noted, even though Nigerian parents cannot afford to send their kids to universities in Europe or private school, they make an effort to send their children to one of the best federal universities in the country.

While marketers need to understand the groups of information sources that prospective students rely on during their decision-making process (Dao & Thorpe, 2015; Le et al., 2019), this does not necessarily apply in the context of FUTA. Though our findings provide insights for university managers to understand the choice factors and information sources utilised by their prospective students, the value of this information may, however, be irrelevant taking into consideration that marketing activities in this university may not be focused on student recruitment. Instead, the implications of findings are directed towards how federal universities can be more selective in their recruitment process and global outreach.

Perhaps, instead of advertising to attract prospective local students, they need to focus on building their brands to attract international partnership for research and mobility of students and staff, international recognition in terms of ranking and research output, and talented international students who will contribute their perspectives and diverse experiences to the university. The universities will need to invest in facilities and services, diversifying programmes to meet the student's expectation in the technology-driven world, and provision of scholarships for both local and international talents. Federal university fees will always be considerably lower than the private universities since they receive the most significant chunk of their funding from the federal government;

so, there is no basis to compete on fees. Federal universities should look towards being self-sustaining, generate revenue through collaborative programmes with foreign universities (Dao & Thorpe, 2015), and building their reputation to compete with other universities around the world.

Conclusion

The study aimed to identify factors that influence student choice of a federal university in Nigeria. Although federal universities in Nigeria are overwhelmed with admission requests which often renders marketing/advertising efforts unnecessary, there is a general need to understand why students in Nigeria are particularly interested in federal universities, as it would help the general planning and management of admissions. The study found that personal interest of the student is a significant determining factor for the students. Likewise, the reputation of the university and influence of parents were recognised. This aligns with Farinloye et al. (2019) study that there seems to be a sense of attachment and accomplishment for attending these federal universities because they have more varieties of courses, are strategically located across the country, and student experience is more enhanced, unlike Private Universities which take pride in a regular academic calendar or state universities which are less funded.

The study makes both theoretical and managerial implication. It provides a holistic understanding of factors that influences student' choices of university, albeit a federal university. Factors affecting students' choice of higher education is essential for any university's management admission policies and marketing strategies. The marketing communication should be strategic to build the brand for international standards, maybe not for student recruitment, but positioning the university for anticipated partnership with international research organisations and funders, and philanthropic donations. Relevant information for different stakeholders in the education sector should be easily accessible on the website and presented in a visually-appealing manner. Prospective international students and researchers should know what

is going on in the university and how to reach out. Likewise, a robust social media strategy is needful to help execute the overall marketing plan which is to build the brand equity and reputation of the university (Mogaji, 2019b). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, should be used to curate relevant and engaging contents to build the brand of the university and to improve public access.

Efforts should be made towards improving the university on league tables since World Rankings are a quantitative measure of university achievements. To improve continental and global positions, investments in facilities, research output, teaching quality, and overall student experience are much required. Building international collaboration and encouraging research partnerships collectively improves the reputation of any university and consequently attracts prospective sponsors. Provision of grants or funds for talented students, perhaps those from other African countries as well as domestic students, could also encourage scholarship amongst the students in the university, provided the university can get additional funds to support the initiative. Taking into consideration that FUTA is a public university receiving funds from the Government and with the expectation of providing education for Nigerians at affordable costs, the administrative bureaucracy and financial constraints in implementing these strategies for improved global reputation are acknowledged. However, university managers must take ownership and must be creative and strategic in their approach. The prospective student market in Nigeria is saturated, federal universities will always be attractive to Nigerian students, but for these universities to reach full potential, they need to look beyond the overwhelming requests from domestic students and their reputation within Nigeria.

This study offered more in-depth insight into factors which influence Nigerian students when they choose which university to attend can be considered its strengths. Although the sample for this study was collected from a federal university in Nigeria, the findings of this study are relevant and may be applicable to other African universities with similar structures and challenges. The respondents in this study were undergraduate students presently studying at FUTA, and this may have affected the outcome of the studies. By recruiting current undergraduate students, their reflections come after they have chosen the university (Dao

& Thorpe, 2015); though our studies shed light on what influenced their decision, future research can survey prospective student, perhaps final-year high school students who were considering writing the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) to apply for higher education studies. This allows for the examination of university choice factors from the view of prospective students, rather than interviewing students who have already been admitted into the university (Le et al., 2019).

In addition, future research should endeavour to identify differences and similarities in the decision-making process of students in different levels of study (undergraduate or postgraduate), different university (technology vs non-technology), different fields of study (arts, humanities or science subjects) and types of universities (federal, state and private University). Also, future studies should consider the qualitative analysis of the questionnaires. In our study, students identified parental/peer influences as one of the choice factors; it would be worthwhile to understand these influences and how they shaped the students' decision.

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7

Evaluative Criteria for Selection of Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria

Yirakpoa Ikaba and **Charles Enyindah**

Introduction

The higher education sector is undergoing tremendous transformation globally, as well as in Nigeria, since the market and environment in which the higher education institutions (HEIs) operate seems to be turbulent and unstable. HEIs not only face competition from other public education providers but also competition from private education providers, of which there has been a noticeable increase over the last few years.

The process of transformation of HEIs in Nigeria requires institutions to develop a good understanding of their central customer group and then focus on every level of that group in order to provide services that meet customer expectations and requirements.

The prime way for HEIs to achieve this is to consider the student as a customer and to understand the needs better and wants of this target market in terms of the criteria they consider when deciding on enrolling

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with a higher institution in order to deliver the desired satisfaction (Helms & Keys, 1994; Turner, 1995).

The HEIs' management should also evaluate Parents' needs and want since parental educational expectations and encouragement are the best predictors of not only if the student attends higher institution but also where and why he/she attends such (Bouse & Hossler, 1991). Therefore, parents of higher institutions students should be considered as customer base since their evaluation of various higher institutions characteristics is essential and does impact their children institutions' choice (Warmick & Mansfield, 2003).

The literature reviewed shows that there is still a dearth of related literature on the criteria that underline students and parents' choice of HEIs in Nigeria as most of the studies were mainly based on western and other foreign contexts and cultures and one cannot assume that the findings in another cultural context would work well in Nigeria. General empirical studies reported factors which influence students' choice of HEIs in other countries (Adelina & Soedarsono, 2015; Bogdan, Pawel, & Agneszka, 2012; Joseph, 2010; Mbawuni & Nimako, 2015). However, Ademola, Ogundipe, and Babatunde (2014) in their study on "Founder's Reputation and Students' Enrolment into Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria", reported that personality of the proprietor significantly impacts on the enrolment pattern of prospective candidates. Similarly, Oyetunji and Abidoye (2016), in their study on the assessment of factors influencing students' choice of residence in Nigerian tertiary institutions reported that proximity to campus, rental value of property influences students' choice of residence. This research is one of the first consumer studies undertaken in the context of student evaluative criteria for selecting HEIs in Nigeria and therefore, makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in this critical area of research.

Therefore, this study intends to achieve the following:

1. Ascertain the relationship between the evaluative criteria and the choice of HEIs in Nigeria.
2. Establish the specific impact of each of the evaluative criteria on the choice of HEIs.

The remainder of the chapter will be structured as follows: Firstly, a brief discussion of the theoretical models for explaining the choice of HEIs will be made after which some empirical studies of factors affecting students' choice of HEIs will be provided. Next the research methodology will be described and the research results reported. This will be followed by a discussion of the implications of the findings as well as a brief conclusion highlighting the limitations of the study with suggestions for further research.

Literature Review

Theoretical Models for Explaining Choice of HEIs

Proposed models of choice of HEIs can be classified into four categories: (1) econometric models, (2) status-attainment models, (3) information-processing models, and (4) combined models (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999).

The econometric models focus on the econometric assumptions that prospective college students rationalise about and make careful cost-benefit analysis when choosing a college (Hossler et al., 1999). The students consider the pros and cons of each, associate as utility or a value with the attributes of each, make reasonable assumptions about the outcomes of one decision over another, and then choose more or less rationally in order to maximise benefits and reduce costs (Hossler et al., 1999).

Status-Attainment (or sociological) models assume a utilitarian decision-making process that students go through in choosing a college, specifying a variety of social and individual factors leading to occupational and educational aspirations (Jackson, 1982). While econometric models assume that students make rational decisions, the status-attainment models emphasise how socialisation processes, family conditions, interaction between variables that measure the traits of individual students and variables that assess broad social constructs interact (Hossler et al., 1999).

The combined models incorporate the rational assumptions in the econometric models and components of the sociological models. Most combined models divide the students' decision-making process into three phases: aspirations development and alternative evaluation; options consideration; and evaluation of the remaining options and final decision (Jackson, 1982; Vrontis, Thrassou, & Melanthiou, 2007). Combined models have a distinct advantage in that the researcher can choose variables from either domain and concentrate on the sociological aspect of college choice as a process while maintaining the decision-making perspective of economics. Therefore, combined models provide more explanatory power than any single perspective (Vrontis et al., 2007).

The Information-Processing Models of College Choice consider aspects of decision-making theory and sociology, especially social capital and socialisation. Information processing, social capital and cultural capital together allow us to introduce into the choice process dynamic roles for parents, peers and schools (Briggs, 2006; Vrontis et al., 2007). Many studies on HEI student decision-making use economic and sociological theoretical frameworks to examine factors of Higher institution choice (Somers, Cofer, & Putten, 1999). This study will focus on the combined models because they include the essential indicators from economic and sociological models thereby allowing a considerable amount of analytical power in the choice of HEIs decision-making process (Fernandez, 2010).

Factors Affecting Students' Choice of HEIs

The purpose of this study is to investigate the evaluative criteria used by students/parents in the choice of HEIs in Nigeria. In order to have a better understanding of these criteria, a thorough review of related empirical studies was conducted. Melanie (2008) identified ten factors (quality of teaching, employment prospects, campus safety and security, academic facilities, international links, language policy, image, flexible study mode, academic reputation and a wide choice of courses) students consider in the selection of HEIs.

Joseph (2010), studied institutional factors influencing students' college choice decision in Malaysia and identified the location, academic programme, college reputation, educational facilities, cost, availability of financial aid, employment opportunities, advertising, HEIs representative and campus visit as factors influencing students' college choice. Joseph (2013), reported that cost, location, high school personnel, peers, friends and campus visit were essential criteria considered by prospective students in their college choice decision. The targeted sample of this study are students who will be completing their secondary education and at the crossroads in choosing the place to further their studies. The statistical package for social science (SPSS) version was used to analyse the collected data.

Abdullah, Moniruzzaman, and Abdullah (2012), studied students' choice criteria to select a private university for their higher education in Bangladesh. Factor analysis and multiple regression analysis were used to evaluate the responses from 100 students of 10 private universities in Bangladesh. To process and analyse the data, SPSS 14.0 and Microsoft Excel were used. Study reveals that education quality of the university, cost of study and student politics were choice criteria to select a private university.

Mbawuni and Nimako (2015) explored critical factors underlying students' choice of institution for graduate programmes: empirical evidence from Ghana. The study was a cross-sectional survey of 183 students offering different Master's programmes in a public university in Ghana. Seven latent factors that play a critical role in students' choice of Master's programme were utilised using exploratory factor analysis. The factors identified are cost, student support quality, attachment to institution, recommendation from lecturers and other staff, failure to gain alternative admissions, location benefits, amongst others.

Ruswahida, Ku, Aminul, and Noor (2014) studied determinants of students' selection of HEIs in Malaysia. Findings revealed that campus characteristics, academic quality, financial consideration and external factors determine students' selection of higher learning institution. Adelina and Soedarsono (2015) surveyed 426 high school students in Surabaya to identify the factors most influential/significant in their

college application decision-making process. The result revealed that students' interest, ability to follow the courses, parents' advice, reputation and values of the institution as well as the success of the alumni influences their decisions.

Kusumawati (2010) used semi-structured and focused group discussions to conduct a study on first-year undergraduate students from Indonesian public university. The result indicated that the total expenses (cost), reputation, proximity, job prospects, parents' academic quality, friends, psychological pre-selected motives, facilities and campus environment affect students' decisions choice of university.

Chia (2011) conducted a study on factors influencing students' selection of private education institutions in Singapore. A self-administered questionnaire was used to target a sample of 245 students. Factor analysis shows that seven factors including academic reputation and recognition, campus enrolment, reference group, influence programmed, relevancy, promotional information, financial cost, accessibility and location influenced selection.

Mana and Claudia (2012) sampled 1641 respondents to identify students' perceptions about choice factors through a questionnaire. Findings show that geographical proximity is the most crucial choice factor for an HEI. Other additional relevant factors are academic reputation and guidance from vocational advisors, guidance from teachers, current students influence and family influence.

Alfred (2012) conducted a study on factors which influence students to select TEIs in Kumasi Polytechnic, Ghana. The findings of the study include that good reputation and availability of quality lecturers and facilities are the primary reasons why applicants choose Kumasi Polytechnic. The study recommended that extension of the existing lecture rooms, laboratories and retention of quality staff should be the focus of management of the polytechnic to retain the good reputation.

Som (2016) survey 560 first year students of four HEIs in Botswana on factors influencing students' choice to enroll at private HEIs in Botswana. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, principal component analysis, multiple regression analysis and analysis of variance.

Seven factors were found to be significant predictors of students' intention to enroll at private HEIs. These seven factors were characteristics of programs and course offered, campus life, procedure and policies for admission, quality of teaching and learning resources, physical characteristics of campus, person based outreach and, electronic-based outreach.

Thus, based on extant literature, factors most commonly associated with comprehensive college choice model include location, college reputation, educational facilities, cost, employment opportunities, educational quality, parents' advice, proximity, campus safety and security, students' interest, job prospect. These factors may differ from one research context to another. In order to develop practical strategies for management in particular HEIs, each empirical study needs to contextualize the critical factors underlying the students' choices.

Therefore, to contribute to our theoretical understanding of the critical groups of latent factors that underpin students' choices of HEIs, the findings of this study will be compared to those reviewed in the literature.

Conceptual Clarifications of Variables

The review of existing literature provided the starting point in developing a conceptual framework to understand the factors that are likely to influence students' choice of HEIs in this research context. From the existing extant literature, eight factors were obtained. These factors, presented in Table 7.1 are cost of programme, teaching quality, environmental safety, institution image/reputation, academic facilities, location of institution, and parents opinion. Below are the conceptual clarifications of these variables.

Figure 7.1 shows the proposed conceptual framework showing the relationship between the evaluative criteria (cost of programme, teaching quality, environmental safety, institution image/reputation, academic facilities, location, proximity, parents' opinion) which are the independent variables and the dependent variable (HEIs choice decision).

Table 7.1 Conceptual clarifications of factors influencing student choice

| S/N	Factors	Description
1	Cost of programme	It was reviewed by Joseph and Joseph (2000) that cost-related issues seem to have more importance as the years go by. Jackson (1986) concluded that price is a negative influence on college choice while financial aid to reduce costs is a positive influence
2	Institution image/ reputation	Institutional image and reputation have a tremendous effect on college choice. Keling (2006) stated that the most influential factor students would evaluate in selecting their choice of institution was reputation of the institution
3	Academic facilities	Absher and Crawford (1996) stated that academic facilities such as classrooms, laboratories and libraries are essential in a student's selection of a college or university
4	Location	Winter and Thompson-Whiteside (2017) noted that university location affects college attendance rate and is a significant factor for potential student's decision to apply and enrol. Some students may be looking for a school close to their hometown or place of work for convenience and accessibility (Adeyanju et al., 2019)
5	Parents' opinion	Parents play essential roles in the decision-making process. This is because parental encouragement and support is a factor that influences the predisposition, search, and choice stages of the college choice process (Adefulu et al., 2019; Cabrera and Nasa, 2000). Paulsen (1990) concluded that a person is more likely to attend college "when the parents' educational attainment is greater", "when the father's occupational status is higher", and "when parental encouragement is greater"
6	Teaching quality	For one in five students, the qualifications of university lecturers would affect their decision about where to study. HEIs need to assure a standard quality of service to sustain in the market they operate in. Ginns, Prosser, and Barrie (2007) in their study identified students' evaluation of individual teachers as a measure of the quality of teaching
7	Proximity	The proximity of HEI to home is another factor that has a bearing on students' college choice. A study by Adefulu et al., 2019) revealed that an essential factor in student predisposition to attend a University the proximity of higher education to home
8	Campus safety	Crime is a reality on the college campus which students will have to deal with. Crime on campus includes, but are not limited to, burglary, theft, vandalism, battery, harassment, possession of a weapon and disorderly conduct. Therefore, safety and security must be front of mind for university and college administrators
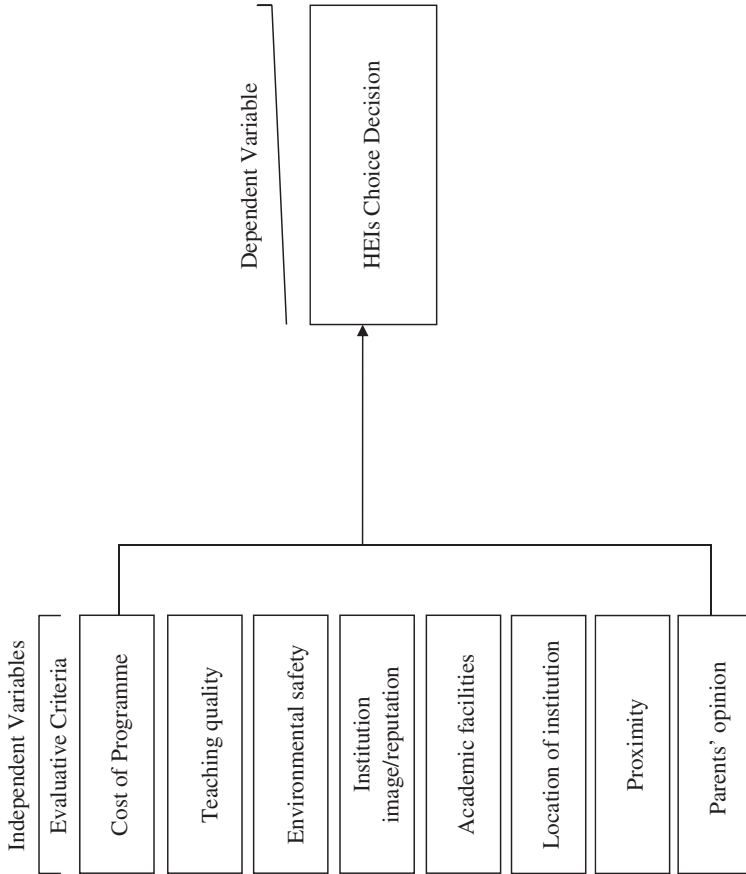
Fig. 7.1 Conceptual model of the hypothesised relationship (*Source* Researchers' proposed model)

Methodology

Convenience sampling method with survey design approach was used. The study employed first-year students of six HEIs selected from the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. These institutions include: Kenule Beeson Saro Wiwa Polytechnic, Bori, Rivers State (South-South zone), Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State (South East zone), National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos (South West Zone), Kwara State University, Ilorin (North Central Zone), Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi (North-East zone), and Air Force Institute of Technology, Kaduna (North-West zone). A population of 600 (six hundred) respondents was chosen from the six institutions (one hundred respondents from each selected institution) in the six geographical zones. Using the Krejcie and Morgan table of sample size determination, a sample size of 234 was arrived at. The convenience sampling was used in this study as the sample members (first-year students) were chosen based on being available or accessible during regular class periods. Identified lecturers in each institution acted as field workers. Two hundred thirty-four questionnaires were administered and retrieved from the field. However, after extricating the defective questionnaires of 13, the analysis was based on 221 responses. The study adopted and adapted existing scales from literature (Mbawuni & Nimako, 2015; Melanie, 2008). A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree = 5 to strongly disagree = 1 was used to measure each of the variables. Data analysis was done using SPSS 22. Tools used include descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression analysis.

Results

In this section of the study, the results of the analysis of the data are presented. Questionnaire copies were retrieved through distribution sources, collated and coded into SPSS (22) software for analysis. A total

Table 7.2 Reliability result for constructs

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach alpha
Cost of programme	4	.896
Teaching quality	3	.779
Academic facilities	4	.908
Location of institution	4	.934
Reputation of institution	4	.914
Environmental security/security	3	.779
Proximity	3	.832
Opinion of parents	3	.891
Choice (HEI)	3	.870

Source Fieldwork, 2019

of 221 questionnaire copies were successfully retrieved from the field. All retrieved copies were clean and treated for errors and after that considered as admissible in the analysis of the study. The reliability results for the instruments utilised in the measurement of each variable using Cronbach's Alpha is presented in Table 7.2. Based on the evidence, all instruments utilised were considered as reliable and with substantial clarity because all variables passed the minimum score of .70 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011), see Table 7.2.

Figure 7.2 describes the distribution for the demographic data on the variables of the study. The distribution reveals a dominant distribution in favour of the female gender (63%) with a high frequency on the category of 25–30 years (49%). Result also shows that majority of them live or have a distance of between 51 and 100 km from the Institution of choice (67%), followed by the distribution for residency within the community where the Institution is located, with those who affirm (yes) having the highest frequency (76%). The distribution also reveals that majority of the respondents are undergoing Diploma programs (62%), while the majority of the respondents also affirm to having permanent home addresses within the community of the location of the Institution.
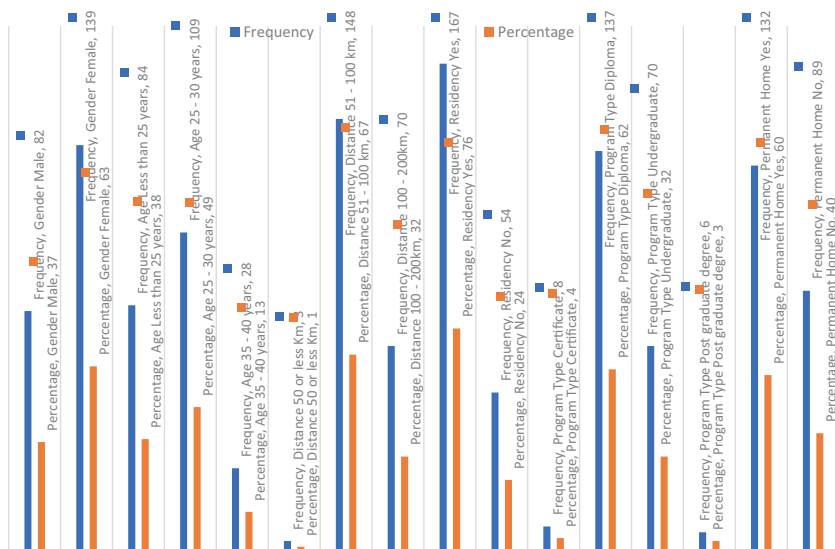
Fig. 7.2   Demographic distribution

Univariate Analysis

The analysis of criteria that determines students' choice of HEIs shows there are eight criteria (Table 7.3). The most influential factor is "facilities" with a mean score of 4.0667. This indicates that the principal motivation that drives students to study in HEIs in the study area is the availability of academic facilities. Thus, HEIs must offer a wide range of academic facilities to enhance learning. While acknowledging that the availability of facilities is most important, the students are very mindful of their parents' opinion as their sponsors. This is evident from the second most influential factor (parents' opinion) with a mean score of 4.0633. The third is institutions' reputation with a mean score of 4.0256. Others are location, cost of programme, proximity, teaching quality and security with mean scores of 4.0185, 3.9977, 3.9970, 3.9925 and 3.9925 respectively.

Table 7.3 Univariate distribution

	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. error	Statistic	Std. error
Cost	221	3.9977	.88002	−1.916	.164	3.362	.326
Quality	221	3.9925	.82538	−1.582	.164	2.207	.326
Facilities	221	4.0667	.88985	−2.013	.164	3.851	.326
Location	221	4.0185	.79049	−2.111	.164	3.949	.326
Reputation	221	4.0256	.87597	−1.990	.164	3.798	.326
Security	221	3.9925	.82538	−1.582	.164	2.207	.326
Proximity	221	3.9970	.86514	−1.847	.164	3.340	.326
Parents opinion	221	4.0633	.85871	−1.452	.164	2.007	.326
Choice	221	4.0226	.91010	−1.805	.164	3.251	.326
Valid N (listwise)	221						

Source Fieldwork, 2019

Bivariate Analysis

i. Ascertain the relationship between the evaluative criteria and the choice of HEIs in Nigeria

The first objective of the study was to assess the relationship between the stated criteria and the choice of HEIs in Nigeria. The Pearson product moment was utilised in analysing the extent to which each observed evaluative factor (cost of programme. Teaching quality, environmental safety, institution reputation, academic facilities, location of institution, proximity, opinion of parents) was related or linked to the choice of HEIs. The result of this assessment is presented in Table 7.4.

The results on the test for association reveal significant levels of correlation between the stated evaluative criteria and the choice of HEIs. This is as the evidence reveals that at a $P < .05$, evident in all instances, all identified criteria (cost of the programme. Teaching quality, environmental safety, institution reputation, academic facilities, location of

Table 7.4 Test for correlation

		Programme	Quality	Facilities	Location	Reputation	Security	Proximity	Opinion	Choice
Programme	Pearson correlation	1	.895*	.878*	.960*	.984*	.895*	.960*	.926*	.984*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221
Quality	Pearson correlation	.895*	1	.854*	.949*	.901*	1.000*	.876*	.921*	.883*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221
Facilities	Pearson correlation	.878*	.854*	1	.919*	.920*	.854*	.911*	.875*	.883*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221
Location	Pearson correlation	.960*	.949*	.919*	1	.965*	.949*	.949*	.930*	.946*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221
Reputation	Pearson Correlation	.984*	.901*	.920*	.965*	1	.901*	.970*	.934*	.993*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221
Security	Pearson correlation	.895*	1.000*	.854*	.949*	.901*	1	.876*	.921*	.883*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221
Proximity	Pearson correlation	.960*	.876*	.911*	.949*	.970*	.876*	1	.885*	.969*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221
Opinion	Pearson correlation	.926*	.921*	.875*	.930*	.934*	.921*	.885*	1	.929*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221
Choice	Pearson correlation	.984*	.883*	.883*	.946*	.993*	.883*	.969*	.929*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221	221

*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

institution, proximity, opinion of parents) significantly correlated with the choice of HEIs.

ii. Establish the specific impact of each of the evaluative criteria on the choice of HEIs.

The second objective was to identify the specific impact (Regressing) of the evaluative criteria on the choice of HEIs. This function was carried out using the multiple regression analysis in order to assess the extent to which each evaluative criterion could be considered as a predictor of the choice of HEIs. The result is presented in Table 7.5.

The test on the second objective of the study is presented in Table 7.4. The regression model was utilized in the assessment of the effect of each criterion for the selection of higher institution on the criterion—HEI choice. It was revealed that while factors such as teaching quality, academic facilities, location of institution, institutions reputation, proximity and opinion of parents had significant impacts and could be described as significantly predicting outcomes of the choice of HEIs (based on a $P < .05$ regression outcome), other factors such as cost of programme and environmental safety had insignificant effects on the choice of HEIs.

Table 7.5 Regression Analysis for Variables

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardised coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	−.042	.021		−1.973	.050
	Cost	.036	.031	.035	1.166	.245
	Quality	1.043	.020	.322	14.233	.000
	Facilities	−.200	.014	−.196	−13.959	.000
	Location	−.187	.031	−.162	−6.096	.000
	Reputation	1.024	.036	.985	28.267	.000
	Security	−.020	.018	−.018	−1.117	.265
	Proximity	.238	.021	.226	11.306	.000
	Opinion	.121	.016	.114	7.501	.000

a. Dependent variable: choice

Discussions and Implications

The cost of the student's selected programme was revealed to have an insignificant effect on the HEI choice ($P>.05$). This negates the findings of Mbawuni and Nimako (2015), Abdullah et al., (2012), and Chia (2011). The evidence reveals that factors such as scholarship, accommodation and tuition fees do not significantly impact on the choice of HEI. Teaching quality was revealed to have a significant effect on the HEI choice ($P<.05$). The evidence reveals that factors such as lecturer's competence, excellence in teaching and qualification of teachers significantly impact on the choice of HEI.

The academic facilities were observed to have a significant effect on the HEI choice ($P<.05$). The result echoes the findings of Joseph (2010), Kusumawati (2010) and Alfred (2012). This shows that the availability of infrastructure and resources within the institution impacts on the choice of the HEI and so institutions must, therefore, ensure the availability of well-equipped computer labs, comprehensive libraries, state of the art lecture rooms as well as maintaining the physical appearance of these buildings. These facilities management will further serve as a possible way of differentiating and enhancing the image of the institutions.

The location of the institution was also revealed to significantly impact on the HEI choice ($P<.05$). Evidence supports the findings of Chia (2011), and Mbawuni and Nimako (2015). From marketing positioning standpoint, marketing efforts should be channelled to promote the convenience and attractiveness of the campus location. The reputation of the institution was revealed to contribute significantly towards the choice of HEI ($P<.05$). This demonstrates that reputation can be considered a significant antecedent of the choice of HEI and supports the findings of Alfred (2012), Chia (2011), Adelina and Soedarsono (2015). This evidence shows that increased efforts need to be made by HEIs to position their institution concerning competitors in the minds of prospective students and parents. Universities should make conscious effort towards marketing, highlighting features that will interest prospective students (Mogaji, 2016).

Environmental security and safety were observed to have an insignificant effect on HEI choice ($P > .05$). The fact that campus safety was not a significant factor in HEIs choice in this study implies that this factor may be more critical for some institutions than others. However, institutions must ensure a safe learning environment. This finding contradicts that of Al-fattal (2012). The proximity of the institution was also revealed to have a significant effect on the HEI choice ($P < .05$). Evidence from the analysis reveals that the proximity to the institution significantly impacts on the choice of HEI. This finding echoes the findings of Kusumawati (2010), and Mana and Claudia (2012).

The opinion of parents was observed to contribute significantly towards the HEI choice ($P < .05$). The results indicate that the opinion and view of parents plays a significant role in the choice of HEI, which supports the findings of Adelina and Soedarsono (2015). This also aligns with previous study that explored the Nigerian choice of private Universities (Adefulu, Farinloye, & Mogaji, 2019). Therefore, institutions need to build relationships with parents as they are an essential source of information for prospective students, perhaps through social media, as suggested by Mogaji (2019), taking into consideration parents are also active on social media, and they can see information about these Universities.

Based on the evidence presented, it is apparent that the choice of HEIs is significantly impacted on by the location, opinion of parents, facilities, reputation and proximity. However, the cost of the program and the security do not have a significant effect on the decision or choice of HEI. In this vein they are considered as having weak contributions towards decisions of which institution to attend. Nonetheless, it is essential also to note that while these may not appear to influence the choice of HEI, they are imperative in understanding the parent's decisions and choices as well and may in several ways influence the opinion of parents. It is therefore recommended that HEIs in Nigeria strategise their marketing strategies in order to attract and retain students.

Conclusion

This study attempted to make a significant contribution to the body of knowledge on evaluative criteria on the selection of HEIs in Nigeria. Students across different Universities in Nigeria were surveyed to establish factors that influenced their choices to study at an HEI. Among many factors, the location of the institution was revealed to impact significantly, likewise environmental security and safety were observed to have an insignificant effect on their choice. The role of parents was also recognised.

The study makes both theoretical and managerial contributions relevant to academic researchers with interest in higher education marketing. The study adds to literature on marketing higher education in Africa which is still under-researched. Likewise, University managers to increase enrollment and effectively position themselves in the competitive higher education market will find the findings of this chapter relevant.

While effort has been made to design the research, some limitations need to be acknowledged. Due to lack of literature on higher education selection and student decision-making process in Nigeria, the theory relied strongly on literature from other countries. The study was limited to students from six HEIs in Nigeria, thereby excluding students from other HEIs. It is suggested that future studies attempt to draw a representative sample of all HEIs in Nigeria. Despite these limitations, the findings from this study provide knowledge of the crucial factors that educational managers should base their decisions on.

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8

Factors Influencing Postgraduate Students' University Choice in Nigeria

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Introduction

An understanding of postgraduate students' choice criteria for universities selection is essential for marketing higher education, securing the long-term success of the universities, as well as its marketing strategy. A strategy that is focused on the needs of the students per se implies that the students are offered value. This can only be achieved when the universities have a clear understanding of the needs of the students they serve and

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respond to such needs. The choice-making process has been a subject of different consideration among scholars in different contexts. It has been considered very complex (Chapman, 1981; Moogan & Baron, 2003) as there are several factors to consider.

In recent times, the determination of the selection criteria for higher institutions by students, especially amongst universities, became noticeable as necessary research that will assist the universities in knowing how to position themselves. Previous studies on choice-making process among the students of universities focused on undergraduate students of private and public universities (Maringe, 2006; Paik & Shim, 2013; Poo, Ismail, Sulaiman, & Othman, 2012), as well as the selection criteria for international students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Nachatar Singh, Schapper, & Jack, 2014) and branch campuses (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011).

Most of these studies were done in developed countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, America, and other developing countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, to mention a few. There is a gap in geographical location of the study of universities' selection criteria. There is also a level gap in the study of selection criteria among universities, as previous studies focused on undergraduate students in private and public universities. The selection criteria among postgraduate students have not received any significant attention.

Using an African setting, this study aims to determine the postgraduate students' choice criteria for selecting universities. As there is a lack of research which investigates the issue from a country perspective, Nigeria was selected as the context for this study. With a population of over 200 million, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with the median age of 17.9 years. The country the largest higher education market in sub-Saharan Africa and there is a growing demand for higher education (Olaleye, Ukpadi, & Mogaji, 2020).

Besides, focus on postgraduate marketing and decision making, provides an essential contribution towards marketing higher education. Firstly, the rapid expansion of the enrolment of undergraduates has also stimulated students' enthusiasm for postgraduate (PG) studies (Liu & Morgan, 2015). Secondly, postgraduate students have prior experience in a university service environment (compared to undergraduate students). They have a different expectation and can be more demanding and selective in their choices (Arambewela & Hall, 2007). They are also expected

to evaluate universities differently, resulting in the formation of different attitudes towards a university they may wish to attend. Thirdly, postgraduate students expect a wide variety of information which is both educational and professional, but also involves lifestyles, as they are already more experienced and familiar with educational choices and decisions (Galan, Lawley, & Clements, 2015). Lastly, as universities seek to become more research-intensive, expanding their postgraduate portfolios has become a critical strategic objective (Vasudeva & Mogaji, 2020). This sector is growing fast, and universities are conscious of the challenges they face in coping with this dynamic environment (Olaleye et al., 2020).

This chapter contributes to the literature on marketing of higher education, especially with regards to Africa and postgraduate students. It provides insights into the factors influencing the decision-making process of postgraduate students and provides a basis for developing further research initiatives. Managerially, the current study offers implications that highlight the need for university managers and administrators to be more strategic with the marketing communication, building relationship with stakeholders and enhancing students' experience. A better understanding of student choice, especially at postgraduate level, can help to inform marketing practices and customise marketing strategies.

Following this introduction, section two of the paper considered the review of literature, section three reflected on the research question, section four captured the methodology used to carry out the study, section five revealed the results, section six presented the discussion of the findings of the study, while section seven captured the conclusion arising from the findings revealed by the study.

Literature Review

Higher Education in Nigeria

The National Policy on Education in Nigeria (NERDC, 2013) defines higher education as post-secondary education comprising universities, polytechnics and colleges of education, including such institutions as

may be allied to them. In Nigeria, higher education is involved in the traditional functions of teaching, research and community service to develop human resources and disseminate necessary knowledge needed in industry and other sectors. Although tertiary education is offered by majorly the colleges of education, polytechnics and universities in Nigeria. Many students graduating from secondary schools prefer to seek admission into universities rather than in the colleges of education or polytechnics (Akinwumi & Oladosu, 2015), evidenced by the large proportion of students that apply to study in universities every academic year (Aluede, Idogho, & Imonikhe, 2012).

The roots of higher education in Nigeria dated to the colonial period when Nigerian leaders demanded a university as a means to their emancipation. The agitation of Nigerians for a more comprehensive higher education provision led to the constitution of the Asquith and Elliot Commission on Higher Education. Their reports in 1943 favoured the establishment of universities in Nigeria. Consequently, in 1948, the University College Ibadan was founded as an affiliate of the University of London. University College continued as the only university institution in Nigeria until 1960 (Jubril, 2003).

Even though Nigeria gained its independence in 1960, it opened its first university years before that. At first, there was Yaba College, which opened its doors to students in 1932. It was the oldest tertiary institution in the country. In 1948, it moved to Ibadan, where it became University College of Ibadan and later the University of Ibadan. In April 1959, the Nigerian government commissioned an inquiry (Ashby Commission) to advise it on the higher education needs of the new nation. On the strength of the recommendations, six-generation universities were established. These were University of Nigeria, Nsukka was founded in 1960, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (formerly, the University of Ife) was established in 1961. Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and University of Lagos were both established in 1962, while the University College transformed into a substantive university also in 1962 and University of Benin in 1970.

Consequently, the six universities established during this period 1960–1970 became known as first-generation federal universities. Between 1975 and 1977, seven new universities were established which

was to reflect the then 19 state structure. These second-generation universities as they were referred to include the University of Calabar (1975), the University of Ilorin (1976), the University of Jos (1975), the University of Sokoto (1977), the University of Port Harcourt (1977), and Bayero University, Kano (1977).

With the growing population, there is also the growing demands for higher education, especially at the undergraduate level. Admission into universities in Nigeria is critical as there is an ever-increasing demand for university space (Adeyemi, 2001). Over 2 million prospective students registered for UTME in an academic year; all are competing for 750,000 places, potentially leaving over a million qualified college-age Nigerians without a post-secondary place (Parr, 2018).

Despite its vast population, Nigeria is making effort to improve its educational system, albeit a challenge (Olaleye et al., 2020). There is an unprecedented increase in number, as new universities are established by the federal government across geo-political zones, while private license was issued to private operators by the government. Nigeria's University education system includes both public and private universities. Both Federal and State Governments run public universities. There are currently 170 approved universities in Nigeria comprising 43 federal universities, 48 state universities, and 79 private universities (Farinloye, Adeola, & Mogaji, 2020). Up until 1999, the establishment, ownership, management and funding of universities and all tertiary educational institutions remained the exclusive reserve of federal, regional and state Governments (Akpotu & Akpochafo, 2009).

The demand for higher education is very high, yet the supply is little. The public universities are not meeting these demands, and this has led to high numbers of private universities aspiring to meet this market demands. The policy of privatisation in Nigeria has allowed the private initiative to participate in the provision and management of education. This supply of universities and demand for higher education presents a market dynamic in the higher education system of Nigeria. It is not surprising to see some parents prefer to send their children to universities in neighbouring African countries, or even to Europe and America. There has been report of Nigerian students going to Ghana to study,

and Nigeria loses revenue annually because of the choice of Nigerian students to gain an education in other countries (Hope, 2018).

The Nigerian university system offers more than 144 courses across different universities. The courses range from Law, Medicine, Medical Sciences, Engineering & Technology, English & literary studies, Political Sciences, Theatre & Media Arts, Mass Communication, Business & Management based courses (Business Administration, Marketing, Accounting, Finance and Insurance etc.) It is noteworthy that available statistics show that the approved capacity for the NUC for each of the federal universities is between 7000 and 15,000 as of May 3rd, 2018.

Challenges in higher education in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. There is the marketing dynamics of supply of university place by the universities and the demand for those spaces from prospective students (Olaleye et al., 2020). There are the underfunded public universities which have a heritage and quite affordable. Likewise, private universities are meeting the needs of prospective students seeking higher education. Besides, there are opportunities to travel outside the country to study. Prospective students are faced with options, and they must decide; therefore this study aims to explore this decision-making process of these students, especially for their postgraduate studies, and to understand different factors that influence their choice.

Student Choice

Understanding student choice making has received much academic attention in recent time. It is becoming essential for university managers to understand how prospective students decide on which university to study and where they get their information, as this can influence universities' marketing strategies (Simões & Soares, 2010). Taking into consideration the marketisation and globalisation of higher education, which allows universities to attract more home and prospective international students, strategic marketing is becoming more important for universities to survive in the competitive higher education market. These market dynamics have necessitated the need to understand prospective

students as customers whose choice behaviour, factors influencing the choices, and source of information, are changing (Le, Robinson, & Dobele, 2019).

Higher education choice is a high-risk decision (Le et al., 2019), and the decision of which university to study can have further long-term effects on the student's career (Walsh, Moorhouse, Dunnett, & Barry, 2015). This decision, however, can be influenced by many factors which include external influences in combination with the characteristics of students (Chapman, 1981). In developing a contemporary higher education student-choice model for developed countries, Vrontis, Thrassou, and Melanthiou (2007) recognised that students' characteristics, influencers, high school and college characteristics, environments and college actions, influences student choice of university.

This suggests that a wide range of factors influence the decision of which university to apply. Though generally classified into two form—characteristics (and related factors) of universities and the information sources from which they seek advice and information (Le et al., 2019), many studies have made an effort to identify decision-making profiles of students who choose a Higher Education Institution (HEI) (Adeyanju, Mogaji, Olusola, Oyinlola, & Macaulay, 2019). Nevertheless, the lists of choice factors are diversified across studies.

In understanding students' preferences for selecting universities in Western Australia, Soutar & Turner (2002) identified 'course suitability', 'academic reputation', 'job prospects', and 'teaching quality' as the top four determinants. Le et al. (2019) reported that 'future job prospects', 'teaching quality', 'staff expertise', and 'course content' were important choice factors for Vietnamese students. In Scotland, undergraduate students across the six universities indicated that 'academic reputation', 'distance from home' and 'location' were the top three factors that influenced their choice of which university to study (Briggs, 2006). When Dao and Thorpe (2015) asked for factors influencing Vietnamese students' choice of university, they found that 'facilities and service', 'programme', and 'price' were most important, while Veloutsou, Lewis, and Paton (2004) also found that 'content of specific courses', 'university's reputation' and department's reputation were essential factors influencing choices.

The variation in factors that affects student choices is dependent on the research context (Le et al., 2019) which includes the destination of the prospective students (home or international), the country of study and also the level of education (undergraduate or postgraduate). This further highlights a gap in understanding from two contexts—firstly, considering the dynamics and challenges of higher education in Africa, how prospective students are making their choices; and secondly, how are postgraduate students deciding.

Research Question

Recognising the value in understanding factors influencing student choices, its implication on higher education marketing strategies and the dearth of empirical understanding within an African context, this study is developed to specify a research question which is:

> What are the factors influencing postgraduate students' university choice in Nigeria?

Methodology

Semi-structured Interview

To address the research objective, qualitative research was conducted. While the topic of student choice and decision making has received increased attention of late, mainly due to the marketisation of higher education, the choice-making process and influence on postgraduate decision remain unclear. It was, therefore, deemed appropriate to employ qualitative research using semi-structured interview to understand better and explain the decision-making process of postgraduate students (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Interpretivist, qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015) with first-year postgraduate students at a private university in South–West Nigeria was undertaken to develop an understanding of how and to

what extent different factors influence their decision to study at the university for their postgraduate studies. The qualitative methodology can independently provide more in-depth insight into the research, thereby encouraging participants to reveal the causalities behind their decision (Farinloye, Mogaji, Aririguzoh, & Kieum, 2019). It is ideally suited to exploratory research (Clifton & Handy, 2003) that identifies the extent, empirical details, and the narrative of the subject matter (Cass & Faulconbridge, 2016). Qualitative research draws out explanations in context by probing participants about their decision-making processes and factors that influenced their choices. It enables the researcher to have a conversation with the participants and gain a better understanding of their experiences regarding the subject matter (Willig, 2013).

Though constrained by time, finance, and personnel, this methodology can enhance the trustworthiness of the research by guiding the participants (Farinloye et al., 2019) and improve the response rate to enhance control over the sample.

Sample Recruitment and Representativeness

In this study, following the rationale outlined above regarding the qualitative methods, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with incoming first-year postgraduate students at a private university in South–West, Nigeria. Some of the participants were new to the university while some did their undergraduate studies there. Criterion sampling was used in this study. Criterion sampling is a type of purposive sampling that involves the selection of cases that meet a predefined criterion of importance (Patton, 2002; Stephenson, Heckert, & Yerger, 2016). In the case of this study, we focused on the critical period where students have just entered the University for their postgraduate studies. The participants' ages ranged from 22 to 35, Female (56.5%, $n = 13$) and male (43.6%, $n = 10$). A profile of the 23 participants who participated in the investigation is presented in Table 8.1. Participants were assured of their anonymity and that no personal details would be shared.

Data Collection

Data for the investigation were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. We conducted interviews, which permit in-depth inquiry into the experiences of participants (Patton, 2002), to elicit an understanding of the various considerations that might have impacted on the choice of a university at the postgraduate level. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by an experienced research assistant from Nigeria, who also played a significant role in the interview process to answer the research questions and to achieve the research objectives. In total, twenty-three (23) interviews were conducted during the first four weeks of the first semester in 2018, by which time it became apparent that no new information of relevance was being collected. The semi-structured interview guide acted as a reference point and provided

Table 8.1 Participant's demography

S/N	Gender	Age	First degree
P1	Female	22	First degree (BSc) from the same University
P2	Female	23	First degree (BSc) from the same University
P3	Female	23	First degree (BSc) from the same University
P4	Female	23	First degree (BSc) from another Private University
P5	Female	23	First degree (BSc) from another Private University
P6	Female	23	First degree (BSc) from another Private University
P7	Female	23	First degree (BSc) from another Private University
P8	Female	24	First degree (BSc) from Public University
P9	Female	26	First degree (BSc) from Public University
P10	Female	28	First degree (BSc) from Public University
P11	Female	28	First degree (HND) from Polytechnic
P12	Female	30	First degree (BSc) from Public University
P13	Female	35	First degree (BSc) from Public University
P14	Male	22	First degree (BSc) from the same University
P15	Male	23	First degree (BSc) from the same University
P16	Male	23	First degree (BSc) from another Private University
P17	Male	23	First degree (BSc) from another Private University
P18	Male	24	First degree (BSc) from Public University
P19	Male	25	First degree (BSc) from another Private University
P20	Male	25	First degree (HND) from Polytechnic
P21	Male	27	First degree (BSc) from Public University
P22	Male	29	First degree (BSc) from Public University
P23	Male	32	First degree (HND) from Polytechnic

an outline to encourage the participants to answer the same open-ended questions (Stephenson et al., 2016). Also, the interview guide was paramount in managing the limited time that was available for the interviews (Patton, 2002). The interviews lasted on average between 30 and 52 min depending on the level of interaction from the participants, location, and time constraints.

Data Analysis

Once saturation was achieved, transcripts were translated and exported into NVivo software for analysis and coding of the data. Subsequent analysis was informed by analytical procedures recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). An inductive thematic analysis was carried out using the six phases of analysis established by Braun and Clarke (2006). Firstly, by reading the transcripts over and over again, the researchers became familiar with and immersed in the data to better understand the residents' travel behaviour. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) noted that 'immersion usually involves repeated reading of the data and actively reading the data; searching for meanings, patterns, and so on'. Secondly, the transcripts were imported into NVIVO, a qualitative analysis software tool (Farinloye et al., 2019), and initial codes were generated. The themes are data-driven, and they are strongly linked to the data themselves (Patton, 2002). The coding of the data was carried out without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thirdly, there was a search for reoccurring themes around the factors that influenced the student' choices. These were considered child nodes. Fourthly, the themes (child nodes) were reviewed and refined as it became more evident that some of these themes were closely related and some were dormant. Dormant themes were subsequently removed. For example, uninterrupted calendar was merged with the reputation. Likewise, accommodation was grouped with facilities. Fifthly, the refined child nodes were considered satisfactory and grouped under the parent nodes. After the detailed analysis, four parent nodes emerged that illustrate factors that influence postgraduate students' choice of

university. Lastly, the themes are presented in the following sections with a descriptive summary for each category (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

Credibility and Authenticity

To assure trustworthiness, several procedures recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were implemented. There was a 'member check' to ensure the credibility and authenticity of this study. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) describe the member check as a respondent validation where the transcribed interviews are sent back to the participants for verification. It is considered the most critical provision that can be made to bolster a study's credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants were allowed to check the interview transcripts, to comment on themes emerging from the interview data, and to discuss with the researcher the main conclusions emerging from the investigation (Iacopini & Hayden, 2017). As suggested by Shenton (2004), the emphasis is on whether the participants consider that their words match what they intended to state. A detailed description of quotes from the interviews was used to bolster each point. As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 125), a 'thick description of the sending context so that someone in a potential receiving context may assess the similarity between them and the study.' Another was peer debriefing, which occurred routinely during the investigation (Iacopini & Hayden, 2017) because the research was carried out across two different countries. There were regular meetings on Skype and WhatsApp to hear reports of the findings. Besides, a detailed account of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out this study was documented in the form of an 'audit trail', as advised by Shenton (2004). The assurance of analytic rigour is to ensure that data was not selectively used and that the researcher's position did not overpower the participants' voices, which can be evidenced from the audit trails.

Findings

The study qualitatively explores the factors influencing postgraduate students' decision-making process. Students are taking personal responsibility for making a choice and being influenced by what the university has to offer and the opinions of other stakeholders such as families and friends. As an inductive thematic analysis was carried out, the themes are data-driven, and they are strongly linked to the data. The coding of the data was carried out without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The following section presents four key factors that influence the student's choice of university for postgraduate studies.

The Desire

Unfulfilled Desire to Study Abroad

There is a desire to study further for a postgraduate degree. Students wish they can travel outside Nigeria to pursue a postgraduate degree (often Masters) because they believe it is more affordable. Masters is for one year, instead of 3 or 4 years for the undergraduate degree. Students have the opportunity of improving their career progression, and however, when this desire becomes unfulfilled either though visa denial, application denial or cost, they, therefore, consider options available in Nigeria.

> I had wanted to travel to the UK for my Master's, but my Visa was denied. It was a painful experience. I had raised my hope, and I just did not want to go back and sit at home or look for job, so I enrolled for a Master's degree here. (P9: Female 26)

> I had the desire to study in America for my Master's degree, but unfortunately, my parent's business went down, the money was not coming in, they could not afford my fees, so they compensated me by stating I should do my Master's in Nigeria. I had to look around, sending emails to the universities and checking their websites. (P19: Male 25)

Motivation to Study

This unfulfilled desire does not take away the motivation to study further. The desire to acquire more knowledge influences the students to seek out for universities in Nigeria that they like and meet their needs. While some graduates may decide to look for jobs after their undergraduate degree, some individuals make a conscious decision for further studies. Often this is because they have enjoyed their undergraduate studies. They believe age is still on their side and they have parental financial support.

> I did enjoy my undergraduate studies, I engaged well with my lecturers, and I thought it would be nice to do my Masters here. (P3: Female 23)

> I am still young, and I am eager to learn. I had an excellent time at the university. I missed my lectures, and I had to come back. (P15 Male 23)

In addition, participants with the Higher National Diploma (from the Polytechnic) believes that their Diploma will not be considered at the same level as a bachelor's degree. Based on this, they are motivated to study for and acquire a postgraduate degree from a university as they want to make effort to improve their employability with an additional qualification.

> HND is often looked down as inferior, but I had to motivate myself to go beyond the limits of my HND. My motivation became a factor that influenced me to study further. (P11: Female 28)

> Likewise, those with lower classification of their undergraduate degree are also motivated to explore postgraduate degree opportunities. They believe that having a postgraduate degree can complement their lower classified bachelor's degree.

> I had a 2:2, and I know that I may not get the job I need in the competitive labour market, so I had to take responsibility and enrol for a postgraduate degree. I must work harder this time. (P2: Female 23)

The Desire to Be Different

This further leads to the desire to be different and stand out among prospective job seekers. With most job seekers having a bachelor's degree, participants consider a Master's degree a required qualification to put themselves on a higher pedestal. Likewise, those with HND believes their postgraduate degree makes them different from others and can improve their chances of getting a job.

> Everyone I know has 2:1 bachelor's degree, we all finished from private universities, and we will all be looking for job. After the National Service, I thought I had to improve myself and set myself apart. That desire influenced my decision to enrol for the Master's degree. (P17: Male 23)

> Those with BSc are not even getting the job, and you can imagine me with HND. I thought I could not continue to struggle without taking any action. I had to apply for a Master's degree as my experience became very relevant. (P20: Male 25)

The University

Reputation

Having decided to study for a postgraduate degree, the search begins to determine which university to attend. The reputation of the university plays an essential role in making this decision. The idea of reputation is, however, relative, as some consider this based on their undergraduate university, based on word of mouth and the positive things people have said about the university, while others consider it based on the uninterrupted academic calendar. Prospective students want to attend a reputable university and their perception of reputation influences their decision. There was, however, little indication of interest in ranking or research output as a measure of reputation.

I did my bachelor's degree here, and it was a good experience. The lecturer, the facilities, and location are beautiful. I feel close here, and our reputation is growing. So pleased to be a part of it. (P14: Male 22)

I was with a friend during NYSC who kept saying a lot about this University. I had my reservations about private universities, but this was a different case. On discussing with others, its seen as a reputable university. (P18: Male 24)

Coming from a public university where there is numerous ASUU strike, you give credit to private universities with uninterrupted academic calendar, and this makes them more reputable compared to others. You know your degree is four years and you will finish in four years. (P8: Female 24)

Location

The physical location of the University was also a considering factor as students make their choice. Students do not want to travel away from home, and likewise, they recognise their parent's fear of travelling away from home. This is more likely linked to the transportation and security challenges within the country. Participants reported that they compiled a list of universities in their region and from that list they decide. With the participants studying in a university in the South West of the country, they reported that the security and transport link had influenced their choice as they can travel back home at the weekend, and family members can come to visit as well.

The travel is very conducive, which makes me wants to continue my Master's here. The location is close to home, and I like it. (P1: Female 22)

My family lives around here, and the location of the university has influenced my choice. I want to stay where it is close to my family. (P22: Male 29)

I know there are other universities around here, but the access to transportation and the road made this unique. I can quickly go home and come back. (P16: Male 23)

Availability of Course

The availability of a course of interest at the university is considered a factor that influences the student choice-making process. Some students changed university after their undergraduate degree because they were looking for a different course that was not offered in the university they previously attended. One of the students interested in Project Management at a postgraduate level considered a particular university because it was not offered in the university where she did her undergraduate studies. For those with HND willing to attend a university, they also had to check to see which university is offering their course of interest.

> I wanted to do a different course form my first degree. I wanted to change my career, and I had to look for a university that offers Project Management and can accept my first degree as I consider that it is very important. (P21: Male 27)

> Coming from a polyethnic with the different course structure, I had to make sure I choose a university that offers a course that interests me. (P23: Male 32)

While some students changed their University after their undergraduate degree, some decided to continue in the university because their course of interest was available. They did their undergraduate there and felt obliged to continue here for their Master's because of their experience.

> I decided to continue with my Master's here because I enjoyed my undergraduate studies. I enjoyed the courses, and I believe I can do much better at advance level. I know the lecturers. They are outstanding, and I look forward to enjoying the course'. (P1: Female 22)

> We all enjoy our time here. Two of my other friends are also doing their Master's here. We enjoyed our courses. We learnt a lot, and that has influenced our choice to come for Masters. (P14: Male 22)

Besides, the students are also mindful of accreditation of the course. They are making sure that the courses are accredited and there is link with the industry as they believe this will enhance their job prospect.

> I noticed that the university has the courses I wanted, and importantly, I knew it was accredited. That is information I consider when I was looking for a university. I do not want to do a course that will be deemed invalid by the professional body. (P7: Female 23)

> For private universities, accreditation is essential, and the fact that the course I have selected is accredited made me feel reassured. (P6: Female 23)

Facilities

Students are mindful of the facilities that are available in the university. Even though not everyone goes to visit or tours the campus, they believe facilities to enhance their experiences are essential. Those who studied for their undergraduate degree at the university and decided to continue for their Master's already have a first-hand experience about the facilities. Nevertheless, some others rely on word of mouth and ask the universities about the facilities. Accommodation, lecture hall and the library are the essential facilities students were interested in. They want to make sure that inadequate facilities do not hinder their student experience. They believe they are more matured and can make an informed decision about where they want to study since they will be paying their fees.

> As a former student here, I am aware of the existing facilities and the investment they are making in upgrading the facilities. I feel coming back will be much better as I can make use of these facilities to improve my learning. (P3: Female 23)

> My Sister studies here and she was a testimony to their accommodation, and that was one of the reasons why I considered the school. (P4: Female 23)

> I remembered asking one of the lecturers about the facilities at the university, and he told me about the books in the library, the reading spaces and

the subscriptions to journals. I have not been disappointed since I came here. (P5: Female 23)

I do not want to be in another large classroom where I can't see what is on the board, and I was very mindful about the facilities in any university I wanted to study for my Master's. I knew I had to make an informed decision, so I made my enquires to be confident of what I was going to meet. (P10: Female 28)

Fees

Prospective students know the school fees of private universities are higher than the public university. They know the financial commitments they are getting into while considering to study for a postgraduate degree. However, this still influences their choices as they compare the fees among the various universities on their list. Those who studied at the university for their undergraduate degree acknowledge that the discount they received, as a kind gesture for continuing at the university, influenced their choice. Likewise, the availability of scholarship was another factor that influenced their choice. Students believe that such offers were enticing, and it made the decision making easier.

You know it is not cheap here. Every private university is expensive. It's more of the lesser of two and many evils, but you need to make a choice. I had to look around for the fees and decide. (P17: Male 23)

I remembered (another) university charging N600,000 for Master's, and I thought isn't that too cheap. But again, I looked at the reputation and the facilities that we have here. Though more expensive, I think I made the right choice. (P12: Female 30)

Being assured of a discount for continuing with my Master's here was a significant determining factor. I know it will save me some money and I will still enjoy my time here. It was an easy decision to make. If not for the discount, I might not have stayed back here. (P2: Female 23)

The Course

The Entry Requirement

Apart from the whole search about what the university has to offer, it is known that prospective students make a specific decision based on the courses they want. The entry requirement of these is, however, a crucial factor in determining if they will apply. The fact that the university is right is not enough if the student does not have the requirement to study. This primarily affects those with the HND trying to get a university degree. Likewise, as the student is expected to pass a qualifying examination before admission and because the admission requirements into the undergraduate programmes also apply, prospective student needs to consider if they have those requirements and this inadvertently influences their decision.

> My HND course is not offered at the university, and I wanted to select a course that I like, and that can accept my HND and experiences. I did not want to do [a] Postgraduate Diploma. (P23: Male 32)

> I think the entry requirement for the course I wanted to do was a determining factor that influenced my choice. I came from a science background, but I wanted to do marketing since I have enjoyed it during my NYSC, and I had gained some experiences with digital marketing. I was very mindful of the university that will not reject me based on my prior qualification. (P21: Male 27)

Teaching Methods

Teaching methods also influence the choice of the students, especially in terms of flexibility—if they have to come to the university every day, the lecturer teaching the course, the content and relevance of the course as well. Some prefer to do part-time, so they can have time for their family and other commitment, while some prefer to study during the weekend. But, the decision is based on what the university offers and how it suits the students. Students who previously did their

undergraduate studies are aware of the teaching facilities, and that influenced their choices.

> I have a busy schedule with my family, and I needed to know that the teaching method will fit my family. I was eager to know how often I need to be in class and all form[s] of assessment. (P13: Female 35)

> Being familiar with the teaching method in the undergraduate degree made me assured that I can cope at this level, but I was still keen, and I discussed with my lecturers, and they told me it's a different teaching method. I was given the impression that I am responsible for my learning and I found that challenging. I liked it. (P15: Male 23)

Career Advancement

The assurance of getting a job after studying a course in a university which is considered reputable is an essential motivating factor influencing the students' choices. Participants believe that they are making an investment that can enhance their employability based on the content of the course, the employability strategies embedded in the course, the industry connection, opportunities to do internship, alumni connection and accreditation, and such influenced student choices. Students believe that universities that offer these opportunities to enhance career advancement are favourably considered, as they believe there should be a reward for making the choice to study at the university.

> Why come to a private university and pay this considerable amount without the assurance of a job? I had to see what they have in place to help my career, and that made me look around and asked questions. I had to know about their accreditation, exemptions from professional exams, connection with industry and opportunities to do internship. (P18: Male 24)

> This is an investment in my career. I have been held back with my BSc, and I wanted to improve. So, I looked for universities that have the content and connection to impact knowledge and propel my career. (P13: Female 35)

Other Stakeholders

Family

The influence of the family on student choice cannot be ignored even at postgraduate levels. Often those who rely on their parent for the school fees and maintenance, are inclined to follow the suggestion of their parents, even though the participants acknowledged that they have more control compared to when choosing for their undergraduate course. In addition, because the parents are the ones paying for the fees, the student often respects their choices.

> My parent pays the piper, and they dictate the tune. They have a significant influence on which university I attend. I am still their child. I just gave them three options, we discussed them, and I decided to come here. (P14: Male 22)

> It was more of an automatic choice for me as I did my BSc here. My parents were happy with the university, so I just had to come back here after my NYSC for my Master's. (P3: Female 23)

Matured students, however, do have a different experience. They recognised the influence of their partner and children with regards to their choice of university for a postgraduate degree. They believe they need to stay close to the house in order to get the support and have time for the children. Other universities elsewhere may offer a better course, but for the sake of the family, they reach a compromise to attend a different university.

> I know the enormous financial commitment this is bringing on my family. I had to discuss it with my partner. We need to decide together. The one that will not cost us much money is still closer to home and offers the course I am interested in. My family had a significant influence. (P12: Female 30)

In addition, siblings, especially older siblings, can also influence the choices as they can advise their younger siblings to choose their alma mater. This influence is often strong because of the word of mouth as

shared by the siblings. They believe they have seen the university, they have experienced the facilities, and can testify to its reputation and can advise their siblings about their choice.

> I went to a different university from my brother. He attended this university because they had the course he wanted there, and he has been disturbing me that I need to do my Master's here. He says a lot about the social life, the experience, and facilities. I must say he influenced me to be here. (P7: Female 23)

> Influencers are meant to be paid, but my sister did a free job here. She influenced me with her pictures, sweet words, and her satisfaction about the University. I think I made the right choice. (P17: Male 23)

Family and friends (like aunties and uncles in the Nigerian context) whose children attended private school, can also influence the choice-making process. They share word of mouth about the university of their Children.

> One of my big aunties has a son here doing BSc, and she regularly comes around our houses. And often in conversation, plans for Master's pops up and she will tell me to consider it. I trusted her and I did consider the university. (P19: Male 25)

Likewise, peers and friends who have attended the university can encourage prospective students to consider their alma mater.

> My secondary school friends attended this university. They always have beautiful pictures on their Instagram story and WhatsApp status. That always starts a conversation about their university and compared to mine. My friends experience here was an influence on my decision. (P5: Female 23)

Religious Affiliation

This is often considered a subtle factor, but there are pieces of evidence that it influences the choice to attend a university. While recognising

that high number of private universities in Nigeria are founded by churches, parents want their children to attend the university established by their church. They feel a sense of loyalty, and they are proud that their children are attending a university they have contributed to build. Prospective students acknowledge that there are always announcements about new programmes and discount for church members and this makes then wants to consider the university.

> My parent feels they contributed to the church (to build the University), so therefore, I must attend. I feel their sentiments, and it is not bad, after all. (P1: Female 22)

> There are often announcements and broadcast in WhatsApp group about a new program in the university. You keep getting these reminders and often nudged to consider the university. (P10: Female 28)

Societal Influence

The pressure from society to be different and be exceptional for a job is recognised as a factor influencing student choices. Prospective students believe that there is a norm within the society to do a Master's degree after the bachelor's degree because there is no job yet. To beat the competition, prospective job seekers need to have something different. There is a sense of peer pressure as students travel abroad for their Master's and those in Nigeria feel they also need to decide. Students, however, feel they have the ability to control this pressure and more so if there are no financial capabilities, they may not go further for the degree in a private university, but consider a public university which is cheaper (Table 8.2).

> I think it's more of a societal pressure that you need to go do a Master's quickly to beat the competition in the job market, and that really influence you. But, I guess it also depends on your financial capabilities. (P11: Female 28)

> You see on job vacancies asking for a Master's degree and people are going abroad to study for masters. As I can't afford to go aboard now, I had to do my Master's in a good private university. (P12: Female 30)

Table 8.2   Presents a summary of the key findings

Main theme	Sub themes	Description
The desire	Unfulfilled desire to study abroad	For participants who cannot go abroad for Master's; they had to consider options in Nigeria
	Motivation to study	Motivated to study because of the excellent experience at undergraduate; to improve on lower grades or boost the HND
	The desire to be different	To be different and stands out in the competitive job market, you have to have what others do not have, and that includes a Master's degree
The university	Reputation	Reputation is very relative to individuals. They consider a reputable university through word of mouth and experiences
	Location	The physical location of the University in the country. Easy transportation access and security are essential
	Availability of course	Students are motivated to attend a university that meets their specific needs with regards to the course they offer
	Facilities	The physical structure on campuses such as accommodation, library (including internet access) and lecture Hills
	Fees	The lesser of two of many evils. Fees of private universities are expensive, but notwithstanding, students decide on overall experiences and not the cheapest
The course	The entry requirement	It is not just about the course of interest, but if students have the required entry qualifications

(continued)

Table 8.2 (continued)

Main theme	Sub themes	Description
	Teaching method	The teaching team, facilities and assessment methods, influence student choices, especially for matured students with commitments
	Career advancement	It is essential to attend a university that will propel one's career. Students consider a university with industry connection, successful alumni, and opportunities for internship
Other stakeholders	Family	He who pays the pipers dictates the tune. The parents provide the money, and they can influence the university, Siblings can do so as well. For matured students, their partner and children influence their decision
	Religious affiliation	With the University founded by a church, the religious affiliations play a role in influencing their choice, often as a sense of loyalty
	Societal influence	The pressure to be different and have something different is embedded in the society which influences the student's decision about a postgraduate degree. *If you cannot go abroad, do it in Nigeria. Just be different*

Discussion

Each year, many young adults decide whether to pursue their Master's degree studies at a particular higher education (HE) institution (Sipilä, Herold, Tarkiainen, & Sundqvist, 2017). This study presents an exploratory analysis of the factors that influence the choice of university by postgraduate students. The study recognised vital characteristics (and

related factors) of universities (Le et al., 2019) which affects student choice making. This includes the location of the university, the facilities available, and the course being offered. Students consider university that offers their course of interest guarantees professional and career progression, and learning delivered in a safe and conducive environment.

This is in line with previous research that has identified the university's location as a relevant choice factor (Brown, Letsididi, & Nazeer, 2009). Our studies showed that in Nigeria, location is essential, both for economic and security reasons, especially when the inadequate transport facilities and security situation of the country is taken into consideration. There is a tendency for prospective students to stay close to home, mainly for economic reasons (Christie, 2007). Students want to study in a place they do not have to spend much time on the road, and their safety is guaranteed. The facilities are also considered necessary, both for students from public universities where facilities are not in good state and those who are from private universities that have experienced excellent facilities. This aligns with previous studies which noted that the physical environment of the service production constitutes an essential element in the decision-making process (María Cubillo, Sánchez, & Cerviño, 2006).

In addition to the characteristics (and related factors) of universities, individuals characteristics of the student were also found to influence their choice of university. This includes their desire to actually study for a Master's degree, the unfulfilled desires to travel abroad, and because of that they consider the best available option in their home country, In addition, the experience of their undergraduate university also influenced their choices, Those who prefer their undergraduate university were more likely to continue in the same university for their Master's degree. These students feel they are more conversant with the lecturers, the location and the facilities, while those who were not very happy with their undergraduate university might want to consider another university. This was seen with those who left the public university to study for their Master's in a private university, even though it is more expensive.

The image of institutions and recognition of educational qualification are also essential factors in determining which to study, as seen with

international students who travelled to the United Arab Emirates for tertiary education (Ahmad, Buchanan, & Ahmad, 2016). The results also showed that while the reputation of the university is essential for students, ranking was not considered very important. Perhaps this is something unique to Africa where ranking is still an evolving measurement of reputation and the underrepresentation of postgraduate studies in the ranking tables (Kiraka, Maringe, Kanyutu, & Mogaji, 2020). This, however, contradicts prior research that emphasises ranking as a choice factor (e.g. Briggs & Wilson, 2007; Veloutsou, Lewis, & Paton, 2004). Students in Nigeria measured reputation through word of mouth, and family members and friend's perception about the university, which is perhaps a different approach to ranking in Africa (Kiraka et al., 2020).

This study also recognised the influence of external stakeholders. These are parents, relatives, family friends and siblings. Parents, especially those who are making financial commitments and want their children to be better, have a significant influence on student choice. A participant noted that they rarely disregard the influence and opinion of their parent in the choice-making process. Nigeria, with a score of 30, is considered a collectivistic society (Hofstede, 2019) and as Le et al. (2019) found out in Vietnam that shared same values, parent(s) play(s) an essential role in the student choice making which proves that they are considered a valuable information source for Nigerians students when considering universities. This finding is consistent with reports from various sources concerning the role of parents in university choice. Iacopini & Hayden (2017) found that parents feel responsible for making sure their children are better qualified than them; more of making sure their future is guaranteed. Even though the parents cannot afford to send their kids to universities in Europe, they make effort to send their children to one of the best private universities in the country. The influence of siblings, who through positive word of mouth, can convince their brothers and sisters.

The study found that WOM, which refers to the "informal communications between consumers concerning the ownership, usage or characteristics of particular goods, services and/or their sellers" (De Matos & Rossi, 2008, p. 578), is a valuable information source for prospective students considering Master's degree in Nigeria. They rely on words

from parents and relatives who have a right attitude towards the university because they know the founder (church in this case), and siblings and friends who have attended or known someone who attended the university and shared their positive experience. This is consistent with the findings of a previous study conducted by (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) on the motivation factor of international students studying, where the comments and advice persuade the students of their friends and family members which suggest that WOM is a vital influence; not just in international study choice, but also still crucial for students making choices about studying in their home countries.

Characteristic of the university to be experienced during Open days and ordering prospectus are seldom explored. Participants noted that they explored information from the university's website, engaging with friends and family, and asking their lecturers. Some of the participants said they did not visit the campus, as they relied on word of mouth and social media posts, such as status update of friends and families, and the interest of their parent to attend that particular university.

While Le et al. (2019) noted that information on social media was only crucial for respondents who intend to study abroad, our findings present a different perspective. Though these students have an unfulfilled intention to travel abroad, they made effort to choose the best alternative by engaging with social media of peers to gain an insight into life in the university. They often do not engage with social media posts by the university, which hardly markets the university, but provides information for present students (Olaleye et al., 2020).

Even at the postgraduate level, career prospect is still an essential determining factor. Students are interested in a university that offers internship, and is accredited and respected by the industry, as well as an assurance of enhancing employability. As Bourke (2000) found that enhanced career prospects and higher status are factors for studying abroad, Nigerian students are still mindful about their career prospect even as they study at home. Some students cannot go abroad to study. Instead, they make the best use of what is available in their country. Ultimately, their career prospects are still significant in their choice.

The chapter makes both theoretical and managerial contribution. This study contributes to literature on higher education marketing,

especially in Africa and for postgraduate students. The chapter presents an integral insight into marketing higher education in Nigeria and Africa, as this is an under-researched area. Specifically, in the Nigerian context, it highlights the influence of location of the university, especially with regards to the economic and security concerns. Likewise, the personal attachment and loyalty to the founder of the university are recognised. This is a factor that has not been explored in literature. Prospective students and their parent feel a sense of loyalty to attend the university that was established by their church. This aligns with the fundamental values in a collectivist culture like Nigeria, where loyalty is paramount—a long-term commitment to the group (Hofstede, 2019). This highlights implication in reaching out to prospective students who are non-religious, or of another religion Importantly, and it confirms previous studies that recognise career prospect, fees, and courses on offers as essential factors (Dao & Thorpe, 2015; Mogaji & Yoon, 2019). The ranking was, however, less critical in Nigerian setting. Instead, positive WOM was considered a better measure of a university's reputation.

While previous studies are often focused on undergraduate students, this present study focused on postgraduate students and highlighted some key differences between the choice making. Postgraduate students often feel they can decide on their own, with fewer influences from their parent. They feel that they were spending four years doing a course they were not sure of, but at this stage of their career, they know what they want to do. Postgraduates were not consulting school counsellors before making a choice. They were not excited about attending Open days, as they place more emphasis on the course on offer and the facilities.

The findings provide insights for university managers in understanding the factors influencing postgraduate students' choice of university and highlight the unique information needs of the target segments of prospective students. The findings indicate the importance for HEI managers to consider criteria such as variety of courses, job opportunities, career progression, facilities and reputation of the university when making strategic decisions to enhance their institutions' profile. This study recognises the dynamics of higher education market in Africa

(Ndofirepi, Farinloye, & Mogaji, 2020; Olaleye et al., 2020), especially in Nigeria where the demand for university placement is higher than the supplier. It is not surprising to see that public universities that are oversubscribed are not often motivated to advertise because even if they choose not to market themselves, they will still have students. However, this is a different challenge for private universities who are aiming to attract prospective students who do not want to go to public universities, or those considering studying in Europe or other countries in Africa like Ghana and South Africa.

This finding is relevant to university marketers who may be investing in online platforms as an essential tool for relationship marketing. Universities need to recognise the different stakeholders they are engaging with on social media (Farinloye, Wayne, Mogaji, & Kuika Watat, 2020), and therefore provide relevant information to prospective students and retain the present students. While prospective students are not very likely to rely on social media as an information source during their decision-making process (Le et al., 2019), it can be used as a medium of building relationship and engage on a more personalised level. Using the findings of this study, practitioners can customise their marketing communications and provide suitable content across their communication channels to fit targeted segments, including the parents, siblings and the prospective student.

University managers should develop strategic marketing communications to influence the WOM from parents and siblings. They are stakeholders who pose a strong tie with prospective students and can influence them. Universities could provide emotionally appealing shareable contents on the university website and social media platform (Mogaji, 2016a; Sipilä et al., 2017). As Farinloye, Wayne et al. (2020) argued in the use of social media for strategic communications by universities, media used by stakeholders are different, and effort should be made towards personalising the content, as what appeals to the parent may not appeal to the siblings. In further attempt to engage these stakeholders to experience the university themselves, universities could reach out to them and invite them for events and occasions. Perhaps not just at graduation which is at the end of the whole study, but

different events, maybe during festive period and before graduation; whereby the parents and siblings can have a better insight and experience about the university.

Likewise, to further enhance the positive WOM, universities can tell stories and create a narrative around their alumni and current students—those who have passed through the university and have achieved something from their career and those presently going through. As prospective students are paying attention to graduate student job success (Henriques et al., 2018), these sharable contents can offer and inspiration to prospective students who are looking for a convincing reason to attend. These stories can be shared on social media, including LinkedIn, where parents might come across it.

Managers should also consider prospective students' characteristics when designing marketing strategies (Henriques et al., 2018). Siblings were found to influence student choices. Parents are also more likely to allow their children attend the same university, Family discount for siblings attending the university, as a form of financial aid, should be explored by the university. While the WOM shared among siblings are influencing, the financial aid will be of interest to the parents.

Unlike undergraduate decision-making process whereby the students rely on school counsellors to offer options and advice, the role falls on the lecturers. In this case, the lecturers were not actively influencing the choice, but the students found them inspirational and will want to continue under their tutelage. This highlights an implication for having highly motivated lecturers who will challenge and motivate the students, and these students are more likely to come back to the same university for their Master's. This is corroborated by Angulo-Ruiz, Pergelova, Cheben, and Angulo-Altamirano (2016) as they found that HEI staff are factors that profoundly affect the evaluation of a tertiary education provider selection. As suggested by Le et al. (2019), information regarding scholarship opportunities should be clearly stated, and career prospects after graduation should be emphasised in promotional campaigns via university websites, to target the international student segment (Mogaji, 2016b).

Conclusion

This chapter sought out to identify the factors influencing students' choice of university for their postgraduate studies. This study is contextualised in Nigeria, the most populous black nation in the world and the biggest higher education market in sub-Sahara Africa (Olaleye et al., 2020). A sample of postgraduate students studying for their Master's degree in a private university was used to understand these factors influencing student choices. The study recognised that postgraduate students have a different expectation and they evaluate universities differently because they are more experienced and familiar with educational choices and decisions.

The factors influencing student choices at postgraduate level can be summarized into three areas. Firstly, the essential characteristics (and related factors) of universities (Le et al., 2019) which includes the location of the university, the facilities available and the course being offered. Students consider university that offers their course of interest guarantees professional and career progression and learning delivered in a safe and conducive environment. Secondly, the individual characteristics of students, which includes their desire to study for a Master's degree, the unfulfilled desires to travel abroad, and because of that, they consider the best available option in their home country, In addition, the experience of their undergraduate university also influenced their choices; and thirdly, the role of other stakeholders like the parents, family friends and siblings. This chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of marketing higher education in Africa (Mogaji, Farinloye, & Aririguzoh, 2017; Ndofirepi et al., 2020), and especially the choice factors of prospective students considering HEI. Understanding factors that influence choices allows managers to develop and implement a strategic marketing campaign in the competitive HEI market.

Although the study was carefully designed and conducted, the limitations of this study warrant attention and future research. Firstly, the postgraduate sampling is considered unique, but it is not representative of the whole of the prospective students applying to an HEI, and

therefore results may not be widely generalizable. Secondly, the study only focused on postgraduate students in a private university. There are possibilities that the choice-making process of postgraduates in the public universities may be different, as these universities are well located across the country, often offer more courses and are cheaper. Future research could explore the choice-making process and factors that influence their choices. Thirdly, a qualitative methodology was adopted to have an understanding of the factors influencing the student choices, given this methodological approach, the investigation does not provide a basis for generalising to the population of prospective postgraduate students in Nigeria. The investigation does, however, provide opportunities for future research to understand how decisions are made in Nigeria about the selection of a university to attend, especially on a postgraduate level. Given the importance of the discoveries made in this study, it is relevant to develop these finding further by adopting a quantitative methodology. Explicitly asking students to rank the criteria used when choosing the HEI that they wish to attend. This inquiry would shed light on the relative importance of each criterion, and by doing so, would contribute to improving the rigour of the management of the HEI institutions by offering its managers success indicators.

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9

Factors and Sources of Information That Influence a Student's University of Choice

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Introduction

The importance of knowledge and the participation in the knowledge economy in the twenty-first century has highlighted the significance of Higher Education (HE) qualifications for society (World Bank, 2000). However, for members of society to participate in the knowledge economy a new set of human skills is required. These new skills require individuals to be adaptable and capable of greater intellectual independence, have a hunger for knowledge and be in possession of a quality higher education qualification (World Bank, 2000).

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For centuries, HE providers, such as universities, were the knowledge providers for the elite (Fremerey, 2002). As the years progressed, universities have had no other choice but to adapt and change with the times. HE providers, especially universities, could no longer refute the need for research, which investigated current, societal problems (Dias, 1998). Modern day universities are not only mandated with providing solutions to societal problems through teaching and research endeavours, but also to assist students in becoming socially adjusted citizens.

The number of universities is increasing in the world and in Africa. The top ten most populous countries in Africa shows just over 740 universities, serving some 660 million of Africa's 1 billion people (Dahir, 2017). Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, has approximately 40 federal universities, 44 state universities and 68 private universities. National governments are not capable of meeting the growing demand for university education and private institutions are entering the HE market in African countries. South Africa has 136 universities and the island of Mauritius has at least 7 universities, including 3 international universities (AU Forum, 2019). The increase in the number of universities in Africa requires university marketing management to position their universities as brands that potential customers (students) can consume.

As a sector, HE has entered into a market-driven environment in which it is seen as a product to be sold to customers (students) due to the reduction in government subsidy and the need for the university to be sustainable and make a profit (Bezuidenhout & De Jager, 2014; Frølich & Stensaker, 2010). Similar to the competition in other sectors for customers, the recruitment of students has become a perplexing and competitive practice (Wiese, Jordaan, & Van Heerden, 2010).

In the case of HE, university marketing management can only determine what the potential customer (student) would like and what would persuade the customer to choose a specific product, by understanding the factors that influence the customer. Decades ago, Chapman (1981) suggested studying the forces and stimuli, which influence prospective students in their choice of university. The factors that influence a student's choice of university differ from country to country.

Universities must have a focused, clearly articulated brand, product offering and an informed marketing strategy (Ali-Choudhury, Bennett, & Savani, 2009; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007). Universities must decide on which marketing strategy or approach to invest in to recruit students. Universities can still use traditional recruitment strategies to recruit students including printed advertisements, flyers or brochures and university websites (Fleming, 2017). However, university marketing strategists increasingly use traditional marketing activities together with new, digital marketing activities, such as social media, email, SMS marketing and search engine optimisation marketing (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2017; Kotler & Keller, 2016). The recruitment approaches must be able to satisfy the information needs of the globally aware, digital-technologically-savvy prospective student.

Universities in Africa are experiencing increased interest and enrolments in study programmes by local and international students. The diversity of study options and programmes available to students, requires university management to understand the factors that influence a student's choice of university. The factors differ from country to country as university rankings, programmes being offered, location, fees, campus activities and safety and security all have various degrees of influence on a student's choice of where to study.

It is therefore essential for universities to identify their target markets and effectively communicate their marketing messages. Theoretical research in understanding students' choice and universities' marketing strategies has been conducted extensively internationally. However, the understanding of the factors that influence a student's university of choice in HE in an African context has not been thoroughly investigated.

The layout of this chapter is as follows; firstly, a literature review on related theories are presented, followed with literature on university choice decision-making models, recruitment strategies and factors that influence a student's university of choice decisions. A description of the research methodology as applied in the study is presented followed by the survey results and finally some conclusions are offered.

Literature Review

The concept of a university of choice will be discussed in this section and in the following sub-section, the theories relating to this research study are firstly briefly discussed.

Stakeholder Theory and Means-End Theory

This research study is based in both Stakeholder Theory and Means-End Theory. Stakeholder Theory is traditionally seen as a business management theory specifically influencing organisations and businesses with various stakeholders (Reynolds, Schultz, & Hekman, 2006). It digresses from the norm in that it advocates that organisations should not only focus on amassing wealth for its shareholders but rather endeavour to recognise, value and satisfy the requirements of all stakeholders with a vested interest in the organisation (Miles, 2011). Reviewing the literature on this theory, HE is rarely associated with it. However, as an organisation that must make money to supplement that which government provides them in subsidies and striving to meet the needs of the community around them, universities and their workings can be evaluated in terms of Stakeholder Theory.

The Means-End Theory or Means-End Chain Theory is conventionally discussed in terms of understanding the decision-making process of customers, specifically in the retail sector. As this study posits that university students are in actual fact customers, this theory can apply to the HE sector as well. The Means-End Theory understands consumers as goal-oriented decision-makers, who will engage in activities that will likely lead them to activities most likely to lead them to their desired outcomes (Costa, Dekker, & Jongen, 2004). Research on university of choice and why students enrol as their chosen university indicates that there are various factors that influence a students' decision (Chapman, 1981; Maringe, 2006; Sanchez, 2012; Sorrells & Cole, 2011). However, it can be posited that all students opt to study at a specific university of their choice with a certain end-goal in mind. Similar to the contribution to Stakeholder Theory, the research will add to the body of knowledge regarding Means-End Theory as it relates to the HE context.

The Concept of University of Choice

Universities are globally being forced to re-evaluate their place in society and more so the connections with their various communities and stakeholders (Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno, 2008). Massification and commercialisation of HE have further led to an increase in the number of HE students globally (Boshoff & Quinlan, 2016). This increase encompasses the steady growth in the number of international students wanting to study outside of their home country, as well as new countries opening their doors as study destinations (Cubillo, Sanchez, & Cervino, 2006). Due to the needs of its target market and stakeholders, the diversification of the HE sector and the various institutions willing to enrol students, the sector has had to change its mind-set and look at education as a commodity of trade over the last couple of years (Farirai, 2010).

Universities can no longer afford to offer the same programmes as its competitors due to the sector moving towards a market-based system (McManus, Haddock-Fraser, & Rands, 2017). Kotler and Fox (1995) further identify population growth, economic growth and well-being as reasons for the upsurge in the demand for education internationally. In 2017, there were an estimated five million students studying outside the borders of their home country (OECD, 2017; StudyPortals, 2017).

There has been a rapid growth of the international student market over the last 40 years. Figures from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows a drastic increase in international students especially in the last 20 years. However, from 2010 onwards, the number starts to stabilise with limited growth. Nevertheless, it is estimated that the number of mobile students studying abroad will increase to eight (8) million in 2025 (OECD, 2017).

Globally, HE and the recruitment of international students have become tremendously competitive. Adams and de Wit (2011, p. 29) state that "competition has become a central preoccupation in higher education and has moved from the national to the regional and international arena". The competition within the HE sector is a natural consequence of the global knowledge economy and the development it stimulated among institutions and nations (Adams & de Wit, 2011). As

with any competitive environment the actors partaking in this competition rely on competitive advantage and key performance areas to set them apart from the rest.

Internationally, this competitive environment made relevant stakeholders and institutions reassess the way they recruit students and highlight the importance of understanding the behaviour of consumers from a cross-national perspective (Cubillo et al., 2006). In the 1980s, universities started to focus on determining choice factors, which could in turn inform their marketing and recruitment strategies (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989). More recently, some stakeholders and institutions are adopting a market-related marketing strategy to assist them in recruiting students (Jooste, 2011). Stage and Hossler (2000), however caution that students form expectations of a university based on their experience of the university's recruitment and admissions process. These expectations will be met, surpassed or not met as the student progresses at the university.

With numerous study options available, various factors will ultimately influence a student's university of choice. These factors differ from country to country as culture, educational needs, campus activities, safety and security and socio-economic issues such as economic downturn and country instability all have various degrees of influence on a student's choice of where to study. The question regarding the definition of the term "student university of choice" arises. This term was defined by Hossler et al. (1989, p. 234) as "a complex, multistage process during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, followed later by a decision to attend a specific college, university or institution of advanced vocational training."

Maringe (2006) states that it is important for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to note and take into account that, students are no longer passive consumers, but discerning choosers in the HE marketplace. Evaluating the literature on branding of universities internationally, research studies advocate for the collection of opinions and insights from students as to which avenues influenced them the most when deciding on their university of choice (Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007). Thus, who the target market is, their distinctive

traits, who or what influences them and what factors they consider when making a decision on university of choice are vital in ultimately recruiting local and international students.

By identifying and understanding the factors that influence students' decisions, HEIs could develop a strategy, a marketing message and recruitment campaigns more efficient and more in line with the needs and ways of thinking of their target consumer (Pride & Ferrell, 2011). Recruitment of international students is a universal practice and similarities could be found within customer markets, however it varies greatly from region to region and country to country (Keegan, 2014; Strawn, 2019).

Market segmentation stems from knowing your target market and the students a university wants to recruit. In the HE sector, segmentation of student markets into segments of students with comparable needs and/or characteristics permits universities to match positioning strategies based on core differentiating points to specific target markets (Mogaji, 2016).

University of Choice Decision-Making Models

University of choice decision-making models cannot ignore the importance of individual factors on a student's ultimate university of choice decision (Stage & Hossler, 2000). University of choice factors are not only important for recruitment purposes but are also reliable indicators of educational intent and university success (Stage & Hossler, 2000). In the HE sector, there are several prominent models that specifically endeavour to explain and understand student behaviours (Hossler et al., 1989; Vrontis, Thrassou, & Melanthiou, 2007). The model set applicable to this study is labelled combined models. The most applicable combined models are:

- The Jackson model (1982)—this model suggests three stages prior to decision-making: the preference stage, exclusion stage and finally, the evaluation stage. This last stage includes a ranking scheme that leads to the final choice of university (Fig. 9.1).
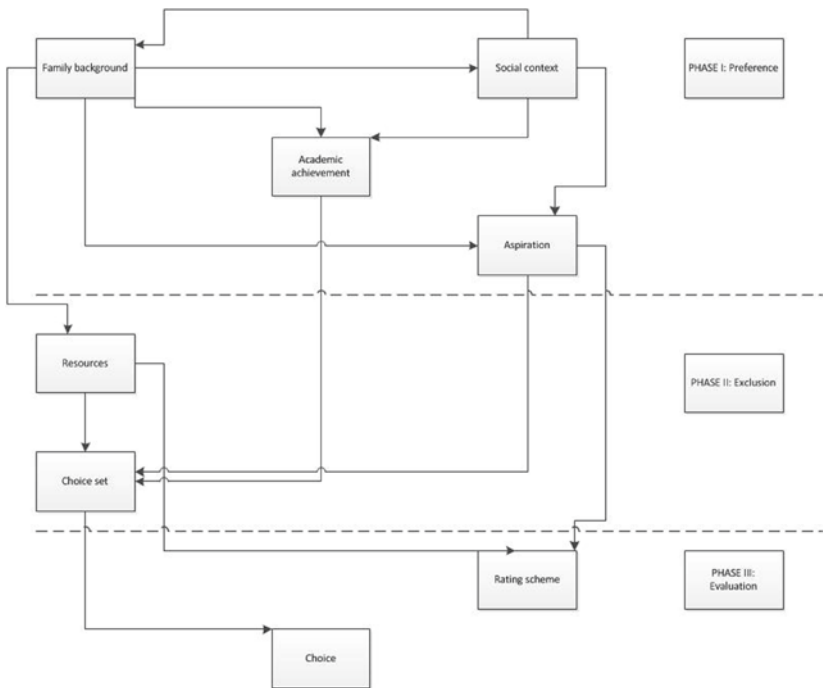
Fig. 9.1 Jackson student choice model (Jackson, 1982)

- The Chapman model (1981)—this model proposes that a prospective student's perception regarding university choice "forms when various student characteristics, such as socio-economic status and scholastic aptitude, interact with external influences from significant others or (university) characteristics" (Vrontis et al., 2007, p. 981). Chapman's model (Fig. 9.2) can thus be divided into two parts, namely pre-search and the search stage. In the pre-search stage students' preferences are influenced by family income and academic compatibility. In the search stage students collect information about their main preferred universities of choice.
- The Hanson and Litten model (1982)—this model (Fig. 9.3) also suggests a three stage approach to determining university of choice: the decision to participate in tertiary education, collection of university information and the compilation of a 'candidate' list. The last
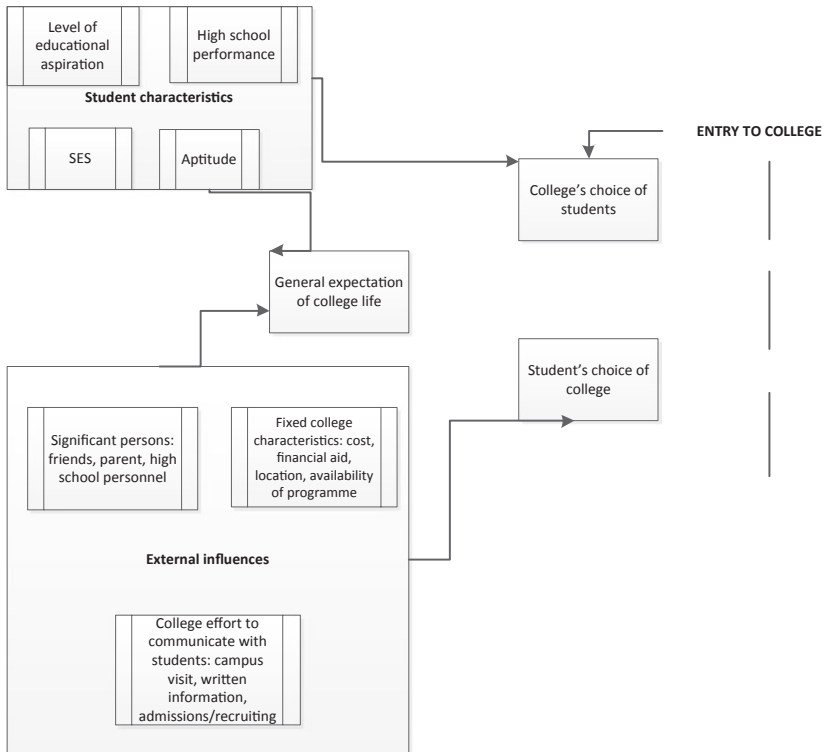
Fig. 9.2   Influences on students' college choice (Chapman, 1981)

stage encompasses the application and registration process (Vrontis et al., 2007). According to this model, there are a further five distinct processes that a prospective university student goes through:

– Having college aspirations;
– Starting the search process;
– Gathering information;
– Sending applications; and
– Enrolling.

Litten (1982) further refined his original model and proposed the expanded model.
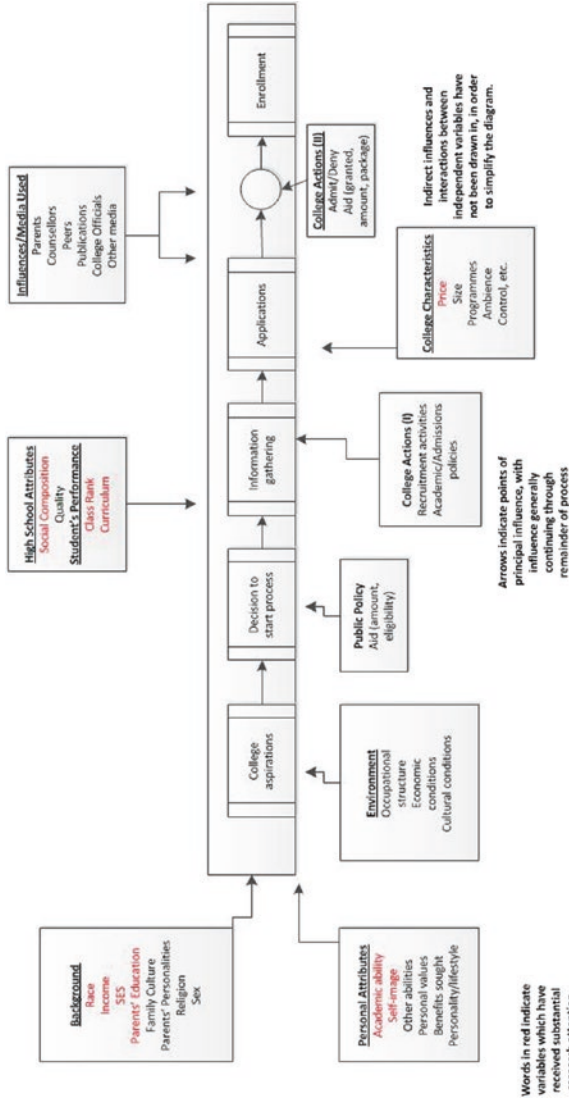
Fig. 9.3   An expanded model of the college selection process (Litten, 1982)

Recruitment Strategies

Marketing within the HE sector, is a specialised area (Manea & Purcaru, 2017). Researchers indicate that relationship marketing is better suited for the HE sector, as the focus is on creating value for the student (Beneke & Human, 2010). Not only should the HEI's value proposition match the students' needs, but the creation of value should be a long-term focus of the institution and include life after graduation (Helgesen, 2008).

To recruit students, a university must not only have a focused, clearly articulated brand, but also an informed marketing strategy (Ali-Choudhury et al., 2009; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007). Much like a marketing strategy for a company, a university must be clear on its market and the potential students it would like to target. Ali-Choudhury et al. (2009), however caution that a university must ensure that several diverse student publics must be able to identify with the university brand, without weakening the brand and/or rendering it unattractive to certain publics.

Due to a university's target market being made up of a variety of student market segments, it must decide which marketing strategy or approach it will invest into recruit students. A university can invest in:

- a *mass marketing* or *one-size-fits-all* approach (seeing no need for segmentation or differentiation in approach, the university views its market as one target market);
- a *target marketing* or *focused* approach (segmenting its market and targeting specific growth areas); or
- a *programme-differentiated marketing* approach (using specific programmes' target markets to build a recruitment and marketing strategy from) (Kotler & Fox, 1995).

It has become evident, that universities can no longer solely rely on a mass marketing strategy and approach to recruit students (Mogaji, 2016). Target marketing or segmentation can allow a university to target specific growth areas, especially in the African HE sector, which has been mandated by its governments to recruit a more diverse study body (Mogaji, 2016).

Universities primarily used paper-based recruitment strategies to recruit students and ultimately persuade them to enrol at their institution. The recruitment strategies included printed advertisements, flyers or brochures, billboards and later university websites. The recruitment of students was regarded as an important growth area, not only to ensure that an institution stays relevant and operational, but also for revenue purposes. As the competitiveness of the market increased, a standard and dated approach to recruiting students has become increasingly irrelevant (Fleming, 2017; Hanover Research, 2014; Maringe, 2006). These recruitment approaches will no longer be able to satisfy the information needs and curiosity of an ever-evolving, globally aware individual and will further not be able to persuade an indecisive student to apply.

Researchers thus emphasise that marketers should find a balance between traditional marketing activities and new, digital marketing activities, such as social media, email, SMS marketing and search engine optimisation marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Kotler et al., 2017). The increased usage of online or social media recruitment avenues will allow universities to transition into a more relationship building model of recruitment and marketing.

Hobsons (2017) in their annual International Student Survey found that most international students (93%) preferred regular email communication from the university. Eighty five percent used social media as part of the research process when deciding where to study and 82% of international students used social media before making an inquiry. The top five communication channels preferred by international students are Email, WhatsApp, SMS, Real time chat and surprisingly, a telephone call.

Universities primarily use recruitment strategies to recruit students and ultimately persuade them to enrol at their institution. The recruitment of students is important, not only to ensure that an institution stays relevant and operational, but also for revenue purposes. As stated above the 'one-size-fits-all' approach to recruiting students is becoming more and more irrelevant (Maringe, 2006; Mogaji, 2016). These recruitment approaches will not be able to satisfy the information needs and curiosity of an ever-evolving, globally aware, technologically-savvy student.

Factors Influencing University of Choice

Humans are influenced by internal and external stimuli and decisions are swayed by various information attained in the decision-making process (Macdonald, 2014). Various elements are taken into consideration and can be intuitive in nature (trusting one's 'gut') or rational in nature (drawing up a pro/con list) (Macdonald, 2014). For the purpose of this research study, these elements are defined as factors, which influence a student's university of choice decision in varying degrees.

The first documented research studies with specific focus on the factors that influence a student's university of choice were conducted in the USA and UK in 1981 (Soutar & Turner, 2002). These two studies identified the following factors as influential in the decision-making process:

1. USA study: attractiveness of university campus, informative campus visit, recommendation of family, course suitability, informative university catalogue (prospectus or brochure), closeness to home and friendliness of the campus atmosphere; and
2. UK study: course suitability, university location, academic reputation, distance from home, type of university (modern/old), and advice from parents and teachers (Soutar & Turner, 2002).

Both studies' samples were local school-leaving students about to enter university. Most of the factors are similar in nature, apart from the UK study, where participants also highlighted the type of university and academic reputation as important. An Australian study by Soutar and Turner (2002) endeavoured to survey school-leavers from Western Australia to determine which factors influence their university of choice. The study used existing factors identified by school-leavers from other countries to base their survey on.

The study found that the top four factors identified were: course suitability, academic reputation, job prospects and teaching quality (Soutar & Turner, 2002). However, the study found that the highest rated factor, *course suitability*, had a relative importance of 15%, whereas the

lowest rated factor, *where friends were going*, had a relative importance of 7%. Soutar and Turner (2002) thus cautions that even though one can identify the most influential factors, there are still other, less influential factors considered by students. A conscious/unconscious trade-off of factors occurs.

The factors which influence a student's university of choice, for both local and international students, evolve and change as the sector changes—especially when government policy changes. In 2010, the UK government amended policy which essentially negated student choice on the grounds of tuition fee differences (Browne, 2010; McManus et al., 2017). Three main amendments were proposed by Browne (2010), which called for allowing private higher education providers and FET colleges the right to award formal qualifications, gradual removal of the student quota system and allowing higher education institutions in the UK the opportunity to charge up to £9000 in student fees (McManus et al., 2017).

Cubillo et al. (2006) comment that due to the high costs involved in study abroad, the decision to do so is complex. One must also be cognisant of the fact that a student studying abroad, whether for a short period or a longer period, is not only buying the education service offered by a specific university, but is also acquiring a pack of services jointly provided with the core education service (Cubillo et al., 2006). These services include lifestyle (accommodation, amenities, travel opportunities, etc.) and social services. As these services are intangible, there is a perceived high level of risk involved in studying abroad (Cubillo et al., 2006).

Factors of Influence for International Students

The factors which influence international students' university of choice differs somewhat from the factors which influence local students' choice. International students not only assess the perceived status and quality of education at a university, but also consider various characteristics of the host country when deciding where to study. For example,

safety, security, internationalised nature of the country, cultural activities, quality of life, university environment and visa and study permit requirements (Cubillo et al., 2006). The host city and country and the perceived image of both will influence the student's final choice (Cubillo et al., 2006; Moreira & Gomes, 2019).

Focusing specifically on factors which students will consider in recruitment strategies, the following have been identified:

- Programmes and quality of programmes;
- Ranking;
- Location;
- Accommodation;
- Fees;
- University brand; and
- Student life (Chapman, 1981; Maringe, 2006; Sanchez, 2012; Shamsudin et al., 2018; Sorrells & Cole, 2011).

However, the above factors cannot be observed out of cultural context. When it comes to the recruitment of students from culturally diverse backgrounds, the factors students consider vary. Bhati and Anderson (2012) conducted a study that investigated why Indian students opted to rather enrol at an Australian University Campus based in Singapore than at the Campus based in Australia itself. The factors identified as contributing to these decisions were observed safety (especially since the increase in attacks on Indian students in Australia), cost of studying and living, employment prospects, distance from home and the similarity in climates between India and Singapore. Different cultures do not deem the same factors as influential. Universities must thus be aware of the factors their specific target markets deem influential and tailor their recruitment strategies accordingly.

The maturity of a student also plays a role in the type of factors that influence their choice of university. Studies conducted by Sanchez (2012), Maringe (2006), and Soutar and Turner (2002) concluded that postgraduate students, specifically master's degree students, took the following factors into account when choosing their university of choice:

- Reputation with employment of the university/faculty/academic offer;
- Career opportunities;
- Graduate employment rate;
- Quality of teaching staff;
- Specific differential aspects (specialisations, timetables, services, etc.); and
- Cost or value for money.

Research Methodology

Across the globe, universities and other HE providers are all competing for international students. Desktop research of most universities' visions and strategic plans provides reference to internationalisation and the increase in the global competence of its students and faculty as well as the number of international students on campus. Due to the accelerated drive for free education in South Africa for local students and the observed trend globally, international students are set to become a substantial income source for universities across the globe (Dominguez-Whitehead & Sing, 2015; Rumbley, Altbach, & Reisberg, 2012).

The cost of recruiting students globally thus speaks directly to the need for this study. By understanding what factors influence an international student's choice of university and what information avenues the students use to make their decision will greatly assist those departments responsible for the recruitment of international students (e.g. International Offices) in developing cost-effective recruitment plans that not only targets specific markets, but also increases the possibility of a high return on investment. The research problems addressed in this study are firstly, that African universities generally do not know what factors influence international and local students' university of choice decisions. Secondly, South African HEIs make use of a general, mass marketing recruitment approach in their endeavour to recruit international students. Due to the increase in competition for international students globally, this approach is becoming extremely expensive and leads to a disproportionate international student body.

The objective of this study is to investigate which factors influence local and international students' decisions where to study at a university in South Africa. An exploratory research study was conducted using a convenience sample to address the research question: What factors influence local and international students when deciding on a university of choice? A questionnaire was operationalised from literature, questionnaires used in similar international studies and a pilot study was conducted. The questionnaire consisted of three sections, namely demographics, factors that influenced university of choice and sources of information. The statements in Sections 2 and 3 were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale.

In this study, the positivistic philosophy and a deductive approach were followed, making use of a survey strategy using snowball sampling. The South African student survey was distributed by Nelson Mandela University Business School's first-year MBA students, in 2016. This class included national students and included the cities of East London, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pretoria in South Africa. Each student had to survey ten individuals in their immediate work environments and the individuals had to have a bachelors or post-graduate qualification. Data were collected from 2909 participants nationally and analysed to identify important factors that influenced their university of choice.

The second survey, the International student survey was distributed during 2017 to all international students, currently studying at Nelson Mandela University in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, by the Nelson Mandela University Office for International Education. The international students could have either completed a paper-based survey or electronic survey using QuestionPro, the Nelson Mandela University survey tool. The survey request was send to 1450 international students and 147 fully completed responses (10% response rate) were finally received.

The data analysis was conducted with the assistance of the NMU Research statistician, making use of the statistical package, Statistica. Descriptive statistical analysis included frequency distributions of demographic information of the measurement items. The survey consisted of a total of 40 closed-ended and open-ended questions divided amongst four main sections: demographics, parents and family, sources of information and factors of significance. Respondents were asked to

rate items relating to each factor, on a 5-point Likert scale on level of importance (1-Not important to 5-Very important). In the following section, the responses recorded by respondents for Important/Very important were combined for reporting purposes.

Results

A combination of inferential and descriptive statistics was used to analyse the quantitative data from the surveys. A total of $n=2909$ fully completed responses were analysed for the South African student survey and $n=147$ for the International student survey, international students studying at the Nelson Mandela University during 2017.

South African Survey

The majority of the respondents for the South African survey were between the ages of 22–50 years (86%, $n=2509$) with the largest group being individuals between the ages of 31–40 years (32%, $n=921$). The respondents were male (49%, $n=1414$) and female (51%, $n=1495$). A further breakdown of the demographics of the respondents illustrated the following:

- 56% ($n=1614$) of the respondents were African, while 26% ($n=745$) were Caucasian and 15% ($n=435$) of Dual Heritage; and
- The majority of the respondents resided in the Eastern Cape (69%, $n=2008$) followed by Gauteng (17%, $n=492$) and the Western Cape (11%, $n=306$).

The South African respondents were given 37 factors to rank according to level of impact on their choice of university. The factors ranked as Important/Very important by South African students when choosing to attend a university are presented in Table 9.1. The factors ranked highly by South African students were the quality and variety of academic programmes, the university reputation and ranking and the use of new technologies and tuition fees.

Table 9.1 Factors identified by South African students

Factor	Percentage
Quality of academic programmes	49% ($n=1413$)
Variety of academic programmes offered	38% ($n=1111$)
Specific career-related programmes	37% ($n=1083$)
University reputation/ranking	35% ($n=1031$)
University's level of technology	35% ($n=1017$)
Accessible facilities	33% ($n=952$)
Tuition fees	32% ($n=943$)
Scholarships/bursaries available	32% ($n=920$)
Reputation of faculty	31% ($n=916$)
Job placement rate	28% ($n=829$)
Cost of living	28% ($n=800$)
Closeness to home	28% ($n=806$)
Live at home	26% ($n=749$)
Availability of accommodation	25% ($n=722$)

The International Student Survey

The majority of the respondents who completed the international survey were between the ages of 18–25 years (76%, $n=111$) and 44% of the respondents were male ($n=64$) and 56% female ($n=83$). The majority of the international students were from USA, Germany and Namibia. The respondents further included students from France, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden, Mauritius, Nigeria and Uganda.

A further breakdown of the demographics of the respondents illustrated the following:

- 76% ($n=111$) of the respondents indicated that South Africa was their first choice for international study;
- 73% ($n=107$) indicated that Nelson Mandela University was their first choice for international study; and
- The majority of the respondents studied bachelor qualifications (73%, $n=107$) and 27% ($n=40$) post-graduate qualifications.

International respondents were given 46 items to rank according to level of impact on their choice of university. Eighty six percent ($n=126$) of the students indicated that Lectures in English and 75% ($n=110$) that

Table 9.2 Factors identified by international students

Factors	Percentage
Lectures in English	86% ($n = 126$)
Cost of living	75% ($n = 110$)
Quality of academic programmes	74% ($n = 109$)
Location of university	73% ($n = 108$)
Variety of academic programmes	72% ($n = 106$)
Accommodation options	69% ($n = 102$)
Tuition fees	69% ($n = 102$)
Quality of lecturers	68% ($n = 100$)
University culture	63% ($n = 93$)
Campus social life	58% ($n = 85$)
Transportation	55% ($n = 81$)
Reputation of the International Office	50% ($n = 74$)

Cost of living were important/very important. The other factors ranked as important/very important by international students are listed in Table 9.2.

The factors, which were ranked as important/very important, coincide with the majority of the main factors identified by international researchers (Maringe, 2006; Sanchez, 2012; Sorrells & Cole, 2011; Whatley, 2017). The following factors were ranked highly by the international students:

- Lectures in English;
- Locality of the university;
- Safety and security;
- Finances—cost of living;
- Finances—cost of studies;
- Facilities and new technologies; and
- Academic programmes.

The factors ranked important for marketing and recruitment by international students were as follows:

- Word of mouth; including friends, family and students (Alumni) from the institution;
- University information; specifically, the usefulness of the university website and the effectiveness and efficiency of the university's International office;

Table 9.3 The difference between national and international students' perceptions regarding safety and security

Year	n	Mean	S.D	Difference	t	d.f.	p (d.f. = 3054)	Cohen's d
2016	2909	2.94	1.44	−1.14	−9.41	3054	<.0005	**0.80**
2017	147	4.07	1.13					**Large**

- Home country government advisory service and visa processing; and
- Adverts in media and university fairs.

The study additionally tested if there was a difference in the influence of the safety and security factors between the national and international students' concerns regarding safety and security on campus. A Welch's Two Sample *t*-test and Cohen's d test were used. Cohen's d is a statistic tool used to measure practical significance in a One-sample *T*-test and ANOVA test and is used to indicate the difference between two means. The Interpretation intervals for Cohen's d are <0.20 (non-significant), 0.20–0.49 (small), 0.50–0.79 (medium) and 0.80+ (large). The Welch's Two Sample *t*-test was used, as the test does not assume equal sample size or equal variance.

The results showed that the alternative hypothesis tested with the Welch's *t*-test ($t = -9.41$; d.f. = 3054; *p*-value = 0.0000983) is accepted in that there is a difference in the respondent's perception of the impact of safety and security on campus. The Cohen's d test difference is 0.80 indicating a large practical significance (Table 9.3), indicating that international students are thus more concerned about safety and security on campuses.

Conclusions

Universities in Africa have been accustomed to recruiting students using a traditional, mass marketing approach. This approach has been applied to the recruitment of international student's to a country as well. This mass marketing approach does not lend itself to the building of relationships within a targeted group of prospective students

(Beneke & Human, 2010). It has become evident that universities cannot rely on one type of recruitment approach alone as prospective students differ in culture and study level (Karzunina, West, Ali, O'Callaghan, & Philippou 2018). If universities would like to truly recruit a diverse study body, the marketing practitioners of these institutions must be able to satisfy the information needs of the international digital-technologically-savvy student.

The decision-making process in terms of university of choice changes as world events influence society (Altbach & de Wit, 2017). The literature reviewed indicated that the factors that influence students' university of choice differs. Various factors influence students' university choice, including programme quality, ranking, location, accommodation and finances. All three decision models discussed in this chapter (Figs. 9.2–9.3) highlight the importance of the information gathering stages during a student's university of choice decision making process. The expanded model (Litten, 1982) specifically highlights the importance of influences (friends, students, recruiters) and media used by the university's marketing department (websites, social media and specifically university fairs).

The results of this study, the first study conducted in South Africa, indicated that South African students considered the quality and variety of the academic programmes first, followed by the reputation and rankings, the use of new technologies and finances and funding. The international students studying in South Africa indicated that they considered the factors lectures in English, locality of the university, safety and security and cost of living and studies.

Universities targeting international students to come and study in Africa must implement marketing strategies that allow marketers to target specific market segments and growth areas. Traditional marketing strategies, including web-sites and word-of-mouth methods must be used in combination with digital marketing strategies and social media.

Countries in Africa are affected by political and ideological activities, which lead to actions that affect university students. The ICEF Monitor's (2012) cautioned university management to regularly investigate the factors that influence a prospective student's decision-making process as it ultimately influences the recruitment and retention of students.

The Means-End Theory indicates that consumers are goal-oriented decision-makers, who will engage in activities that will likely lead them to activities most likely to lead them to their desired outcomes (Costa et al., 2004). The research results on university of choice and why national and international students chose NMU, indicates that there are various factors that influence a students' decision (Sanchez, 2012; Strawn, 2019; Moreira & Gomes, 2019). International students decided to study at NMU with a certain end-goal in mind, namely obtaining a quality qualification, at a reasonable cost, in a safe environment and having lectures in English.

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10

Consumer Behaviour and Student Motivation Influence the Choice of Higher Learning Institutions in Nigeria

Genevieve Bosah

Introduction

Higher institutions are competing for the finite number of students and access to funding; therefore, in recent years, there has been an upsurge of time and money being spent on marketing and promotion in the academic community. (Van Heerden, Wiese, North, & Jordaan, 2009). A great deal of research has already been conducted surrounding what factors students consider in deciding where they will attend university. However, most of this research has been conducted in the United States and other Western countries while little is known about how consumer behaviour and student motivation influence the choice of higher education institutions in Africa (Wiese, Jordaan, & Van Heerden, 2010). At present, a search of academic databases reveals very few academic studies about the factors that influence how students in Africa who are contemplating higher education decide to choose one institution over another.

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There is a gap in the literature concerning how consumer behaviour and student motivation influence the choice of higher education institutions in Africa. However, this gap presents an opportunity to get greater insight into what students in Africa who are planning on attending higher education institutions consider in their decision-making process.

The current study aims to investigate the factors which motivate and influence students' choices of which higher education institutions to attend in Nigeria. The research question that is addressed in this study is what drives students to choose institutions of higher learning. This study is important not only to understand how students seeking to pursue higher education in Nigeria are deciding which institution to attend, but also for higher education institutions that must compete at a time when opportunities for higher education are expanding in Nigeria and across Africa. As more young people can attend universities and other higher education institutions, it is also essential for these institutions to be able to market themselves in line with the factors that are important to prospective students (Agrey & Lampadan, 2014).

Factors Influencing Choice

This section explores various factors that have been identified in the literature, to influence students' choice of higher institution.

Family and Friends

Researchers have found that among prospective university students in Africa, the opinions of friends and family are highly valued, and sometimes an essential factor in deciding which university to attend (Ghansah et al., 2016; Ryan et al., 2010). However, the importance of the influence of family and friends on the choice of higher education institution may be more nuanced. Van Heerden et al. (2009) found that among students in universities in South Africa, 60% stated that friends were an essential source of information about higher education institutions. In comparison, Wiese et al. (2010) found in their investigation

of the factors that impacted student decisions of higher education institutions in South Africa that the opinions of family and friends were more important for Afrikaans-speaking students as compared to English-speaking students. In this regard, there may be a cultural component to the overall importance placed on the opinions of family and friends on students' decision-making of which higher education institutions to attend.

The real impact of family and friends, and particularly family members such as parents, on the decisions of students regarding higher education, must be recognised to be at least somewhat limited. Researchers have found that even if/when parents have a strong influence over which higher education institutions students in Africa attend, this influence does not extend to the choice of the subject area to study (Taale, 2011). This may seem somewhat unimportant, but it is an indication that parent may be a significant influence for some students in their decision-making about which university to attend while being less important than other factors for other students. Another way of thinking about this is that parents may undoubtedly be a significant source of information, as may also be the case with the opinions of friends, but may not be the ultimate reason why students choose one particular higher education institution over others.

Academic Factors

Academic Affairs is another essential factor in the higher education institution decision-making process of students in Africa. It is necessary to define that academic affairs encompasses many specific characteristics and attributes of higher education institutions, including the physical presence and appearance of the bookstore, counselling services, the availability of desired academic programmes and courses of study and the quality of teaching provided by the faculty (Afful-Broni & Noi-Okwei, 2010; Rudhumbu, Tirumalai, & Kumari, 2017). In this regard, prospective higher education students may examine a variety of conditions and issues related to academic programmes and services that are available to them.

For example, researchers who studied the factors that influenced students' decisions to attend a university in Ghana found one of the most important factors was the lecturing style of faculty members (Ghansah et al., 2016). Students who were considering the university in Ghana was influenced by how faculty engaged in classroom lectures. Other researchers who investigated prospective university students found that the presence and quality of the computer and library facilities had a significant influence regarding decisions about which higher education institutions to attend (Du Plooy & De Jager, 2006).

Ryan et al. (2010) examined the factors that influenced university choice among undergraduate university students in Kenya and found that one of the major factors was the flexibility of course requirements. The researchers explained that the students had been influenced to attend a university based on the ease of availability of required courses, the requirements to be able to take specific courses, and the tuition fees that were needed for particular courses. Even more, university students in South Africa indicated that the actual content of university courses was a factor that influenced their decision-making about which universities to attend (Bonnema & Van der Waldt, 2008).

Overall, the literature regarding the importance of academic characteristics on student decision-making of higher education institutions has revealed that the academics of a university encompasses many specific characteristics and traits. It might seem that asking students about the quality of the academics of a higher education institution would be sufficient to measure whether academic characteristics are an essential factor in deciding upon a university to attend. However, there are many specific issues related to the academics of a higher education institution, such as the presence and quality of certain services, including computer labs and guidance offices, the methods of lecturing and instruction used by faculty, and the ability and flexibility to register for required courses. It is essential to understand how specific aspects of the academic programmes and procedures of universities in Nigeria may impact the decision-making of prospective students.

Financial Issues

It is not surprising that finance is a major consideration in deciding which higher education institution to attend. Prospective students consider the cost of the institutions and the availability of financial aid and assistance when deciding which universities to attend (Bonnema & Van der Waldt, 2008). The ability to afford to attend a university is a major influence on the choice of higher education institutions in Africa (Ghansah et al., 2016). Similarly, researchers have found that students take into account the reasonableness of course fees and make decisions about which universities to attend based on their perceptions of the cost of courses (Du Plooy & De Jager, 2006).

As with other factors, there may be a cultural component to the importance of financial issues in the decision-making process of prospective students. Researchers have found that financial assistance is of greater importance to Afrikaans-speaking students than English-speaking students in Africa (Wiese et al., 2010). Once again, this raises the question of how cultural and social conditions of students may impact the importance of specific factors in the decision-making process of which higher education institution to attend.

Bonnema and Van der Waldt (2008) explained that how the decision of choosing the higher education institution is most likely impacted by socio-economic conditions and that socio-economic circumstances have differing impacts on students' university choices. For students from higher socio-economic backgrounds, financial aid and assistance may not be a major concern in their decision-making of which universities to attend. In contrast, for students from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, the availability of financial aid may mean the difference between being able to attend or not attend any higher education institution. In this regard, students from poorer socio-economic backgrounds in Africa may be limited in their choice of universities based on which provides the most financial aid and assistance to be able to afford to attend that university.

Reputation

Another issue that has been identified within the academic literature as having a significant impact on decisions about which higher education institutions in Africa to attend is reputation (Rudhumbu et al., 2017). Students consider whether a higher education institution has a strong reputation in terms of being considered to provide a quality education for students and generally being viewed as providing a better foundation for students to succeed in their careers (Ryan et al., 2010; Afful-Broni & Noi-Okwei, 2010). Students want to attend universities that are known for having a reputation for providing a quality academic experience (Du Plooy & De jager, 2006).

One issue that has been raised in recent years is whether students remain focused on older notions of reputation that may no longer be accurate. Oketch (2009) conducted a study of high school students in Kenya regarding their plans and aspirations to attend public universities, which are regarded as elite and viewed as providing higher-quality education as compared to the growing number of private universities in Kenya. The researcher explained that the ever-increasing number of private universities in Kenya offer a similar quality of education to students, but are viewed as less reputable than the larger older public universities. The research showed that high school students in Kenya aspired to attend larger public universities that had reputations as being elite schools as compared to smaller private universities. The importance of the research is that it shows that perceptions about the reputation of higher education institutions may indeed be just that: a perception of reputation rather than reputation based on reality. Students may perceive that one university is better than another simply because the institution has been around longer or has attracted more attention from the public.

Employment Prospects

Employment prospects of students upon graduation have also been found to have a significant influence on the decision-making of students

regarding which higher education institution to attend. Bonnema and van Der Waldt (2008) explained that students in South Africa were concerned with their ability to find employment upon graduation from a university, as well as whether an institution would help them find employment after graduation. Students were influenced both by the employment rate post-graduation of other alumni and the role the university played in assisting students in finding jobs.

Researchers found that students in Botswana chose to attend a university, in part, because of their positive perception about the ability of students to find employment. The argument could be made that perceptions about the employment prospects of students upon graduation might be related to the reputation of the university. Students may want to attend higher education institutions that are considered to be more prestigious or more well-respected because they believe that they can use the reputation of the institution to more easily obtain employment when they graduate as compared to if they attended a lesser-known or lesser-reputable institution.

Campus Life, Sports, and Location

Campus life is another factor that has been identified as an important influence on the decision of students about which higher education institution to attend. However, as with other factors that have been examined, campus life can mean different things to different students. For example, some researchers have found that campus life includes whether extra-curricular activities are available for students, as well as the opportunity of meeting friends (Ryan et al., 2010). For other students, the presence and reputation of sports teams on campus was a factor that influenced their decisions of which higher education institutions to attend (Bonnema & Van der Waldt, 2008; Wiese et al., 2010). Regardless of whether students were concerned about extra-curricular activities, making friends, or the quality of sports teams on campus, these factors might easily be grouped as being related to the overall atmosphere on campus. Some students are also concerned about whether there is an atmosphere of fun interaction and comradery among classmates.

However, for other students, the issue of campus life might be more of practical concern. Some students were found to factor in the proximity of the institutions to their homes (Ghansah et al., 2016). It would seem appropriate to assume that some students may not want to move far away from family, or may lack the financial means to live away from their families. In this way, the location of the university is important as it impacts the ability of some students to be able to attend university.

Du Plooy and De Jager (2006) found that an aspect of campus life that was important to prospective university students was campus safety and security. The researchers found that students selected universities in which they would feel safe on campus. This is another practical aspect of campus life that is important to some students.

As with other issues that have been discussed, it is important to examine a variety of characteristics that might collectively be called campus life. While campus life has been identified as a factor that influences student decision-making about which higher education institutions to attend in Africa, there are specific aspects of campus life that may be more important to some students. For some students, the ability to engage in socialisation and the presence of sports teams may be necessary. For other students, the location of a university is important due to need or desire to be close to home.

Campus Visits

Campus visits and open days in which prospective students are encouraged to visit and tour university campuses have also been found to be important for some students in the process of deciding which higher education institutions to attend. De Jager and Du Plooy (2010) reported in their investigation that campus visits had a greater influence on the decision-making of which higher institution to attend than opinions of family and friends. In this regard, being able to visit the campus and experience the atmosphere and characteristics of a university first hand may have a great impact on their choices of university.

Van Heerden et al. (2009) found in their study of university students in South Africa that 30% of the participants in the study rate

campus visits and open days as being excellent in terms of a source of information about universities. However, the researchers also noted that the responses about the importance and usefulness of campus visits and open days had the greatest standard deviation of all of the decision-making factors that were examined in the study. This result would seem to indicate that for some students, the ability to visit campus and experience a university first-hand is a major factor in the decision-making process about which university to attend. While for other prospective students, campus visits may not be as useful as other factors in the process of deciding which higher education institution to attend.

Another factor noted by Van Heerden et al. (2009) where a large percentage of the students surveyed reported that campus visits and open days were not offered by the universities they were considering. While this study was conducted a decade ago and more universities may be offering campus visits, it is interesting to consider that many higher education institutions may not be offering prospective students the opportunity to visit their campuses and experience campus life first-hand. This would certainly seem to be a misstep on the part of higher education institutions given that some students in Africa find campus visits to be an important factor in deciding which institution to attend. From a marketing standpoint, universities and other higher education institutions that do not offer campus visits may be missing out on attracting students because those students are unable to experience campus life for themselves before making a final decision about which institution to attend.

Advertising

A final factor that might be overlooked as influencing the choice of higher education institutions in Africa is the marketing of the university. Researchers have found that students have indicated that university publications were an important and useful source of information for prospective university students in South Africa (Van Heerden et al., 2009). Other researchers who investigated the South African university

students also noted that university advertisements on radio, university websites, newspapers and magazines, were important sources of information that influenced decision-making about which university to attend (De Jager & Du Plooy, 2010).

It could be argued that the previous studies were focused on a single country, South Africa, which might mean that university advertising is less important in other African countries. However, Rudhumbu et al. (2017) found that among students at a university in Botswana, university advertising and promotional events influenced the decision-making of students about whether to attend the university. The fact that researchers have found that university advertising efforts have an impact on the decision-making of prospective students about whether to attend a university is important. Higher education institutions have to recognize that their promotional efforts have an impact on prospective students. It is important to recognize that while some students may be sceptical of advertising or of specific sources of advertising, promotional and advertising activities can have a great influence on students' decision-making efforts (Bonnema & Van der Waldt, 2008).

Overall, the limited research that is available regarding consumer behaviour and student motivation in the process of choosing higher education institutions in Africa reveals a variety of factors that seem to work together to impact student decisions. These include the opinions of family and friends, the academic facilities and characteristics of the university, financial aid, location, reputation, employment prospects upon graduation, and campus life. Furthermore, universities can influence the decisions of prospective students by holding marketing and promotional events such as campus visits and by advertising via radio, newspapers and on various websites.

For some students, factors such as financial aid and the proximity of a university to their homes are certainly more important than for other students who may be more concerned about campus life and the presence of sports teams on campus. In this regard, some students may be more influenced by practical decisions based on their socio-economic conditions rather than by factors that might seem to be more about quality of life issues. For a country such as Nigeria, the question arises

as to whether there is more homogeneity in the factors that influence students or whether differences in the factors that are important in decision-making about which higher education institution to attend occur due to socio-economic differences.

Many of the previous studies on the factors that influence the choice of higher education institutions in Africa were conducted in South Africa. There is a gap in the literature with respect to how consumer behaviour and student motivation influence the choice of higher education institutions across Africa and in countries such as Nigeria. The current study aims to fulfil this gap. Information about the factors that influence students in Nigeria to choose higher education institutions is needed to understand better how Nigerian students choose which higher education institutions to attend. Additionally, this information can also help higher education institutions in Nigeria be more competitive and better reach out to students.

Methodology

The current study employs a quantitative approach to understanding the factors related to why students choose a particular university. Quantitative research helps gather more information from the participants of the research as compared to qualitative research (e.g., interviews and focus group). Literature in educational research has largely employed quantitative methodology, and especially on higher institution choice research (McDonough, 1994). Quantitative research also helps researchers find within-subject factors like gender, age and education level, among others. Online survey methodology is used to collect the data for this study; the population of this online survey consists of students from various age groups and education level. Questionnaire surveys were administered online. Roscoe (1969) has shown that for behavioural studies, a sample size larger than thirty and less than five hundred is appropriate. Cavana, Delahaye, and Sekaran (2001) have also shown that these numbers are effective for both qualitative and quantitative research. For data collection, a snowball sampling

technique was used to recruit participants. This technique is effective in questionnaire (or self-reports) studies where initially a few participants are recruited. The initial participants are asked (voluntarily) to invite other participants to take part in this study. Although 201 students filled the questionnaires online, only 198 could be used in our analyses due to missing values in the 3 omitted questionnaires.

The questionnaire has two main sections. The first section includes demographic information to be collected from the students, while the second section includes the factors which have been shown to be important in making a university choice. The items within the questionnaire were formulated based on previous research in college choice and qualitative behavioural choice studies (Joseph & Joseph, 2000; Lau, 2009; Liu, 2005; Sia, 2013).

The demographics question included six items for age, gender, current education level, religion and ethnicity. The second section included 23 items to measure the factors which are being studied. The questionnaire included items on education, marketing of the university, peer advice, financial costs and location to gauge how much each of these factors influences the decision making of the prospective students. These questions are based on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. For instance, how much effect 'variable X' has on choosing the university will need to be ranked by the respondent with 1 being 'not important at all' to 5 being 'extremely important.'

Demographic Analysis

The participants in this study are undergraduate students of various age groups and education level from two federal universities in Nigeria. One from the South East and the other from south-west (see Mogaji [2019] for a typology of Nigerian Universities). The questionnaire has been filled in by 198 students. Table 10.1 displays the distribution of gender, age and education types for the 198 participants who agreed to take part in the study. The majority of the participants are graduates with more than half (55.5%) of the participants above the age of 27, as shown in the Table 10.1.

Table 10.1   Demographic analysis of participants

Demographic variable	Number (%)
Gender	
Male	117 (59.10)
Female	81 (40.90)
Education type	
18–21 years	19 (9.60)
21–24 years	38 (19.20)
24–27 years	31 (15.70)
27–31 years	48 (24.20)
31–34 years	20 (10.10)
34–37 years	26 (13.10)
Above 37	16 (8.10)
Education level	
Graduate	144 (72.70)
HND, ND OND	18 (9.10)
Secondary School	36 (18.20)

Findings and Discussion

Data was collected on several factors which may affect the choice of the university, analyzing the data can help us determine the importance of each factor according to the students. The figure below reports the factors which students reported as being important when choosing a university. The most important aspect, according to the participants in the course accreditation, followed by costs and location of the university. The least important factor was marketing, and only 26.29% of the participants reported being influenced by the marketing of the university (Fig. 10.1).

The most influential factor for students is the "course accreditation", 59.40% of the participants reported it as being an influential factor before choosing a university. This indicates that courses being offered at the university are a key motivation for prospective students when they make the decision to study in a particular programme. The university offering the courses according to the ambition and interests of the students results in students choosing it over others, so a wide range of programmes will suit a bigger sample of students. There are no differences
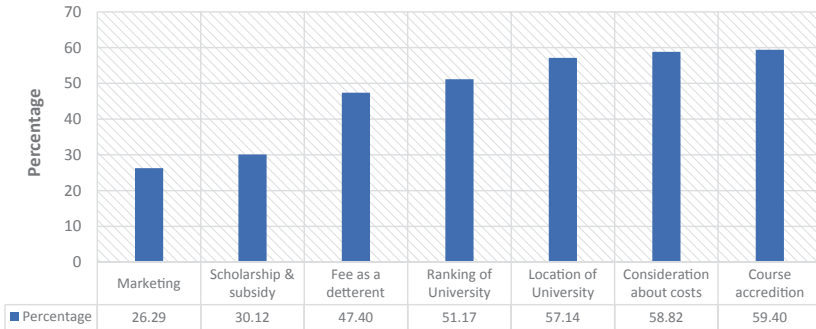
Fig. 10.1 Factors influencing the choice of the university according to the students

in gender according to Pearson chi-square test, $\chi^2(1) = 0.914$, $p > 0.05$. While students reported the programme on offer as the most important factor, they were also very mindful of the financial aspects as 58.82% of the respondents' reported it as being an important factor as they do not want to be overly burdened by the costs associated with studying at a particular university. This is also evident as 47.40% of students reported high tuition fees as a deterrent while choosing a university. There was also no difference in these among male and female students. The third major factor after course accreditation and costs is the location of the university, which 57.14% of the students reported as being an influencing factor. If we look at the marketing factor, there is a significant difference between male and female student respondents, with male students considering it more important than female students ($p = 0.001$).

Table 10.2 shows the items measured on a scale of 1–5, with a higher value showing greater importance of each variable for the students. We can see parental influence had the highest impact on the choice of the university, followed by regional security and location. If we further analyze the parental influence, only 15.38% of the respondents reported that parents did not influence their decision making, while 30.07% reported it to have "a great deal" of influence. The education level of participants shows that the students whose highest level of education is "secondary school" had the biggest influence of parents (mean = 3.28) as compared to HND, ND OND diploma holders (mean = 3.20). Parental influence and encouragement has always been an important

Table 10.2   Factors which influence the choice of students

Factor	Mean score (SD)
University ranking	2.54 (1.34)
Cost of living	2.57 (1.40)
Distance	2.65 (1.51)
Campus accommodation	2.69 (1.43)
Advice of friends	2.72 (1.48)
Training and education	2.77 (1.34)
Geographical zone effect	2.96 (1.56)
Regional security	3.11 (1.62)
Parental influence	3.25 (1.48)
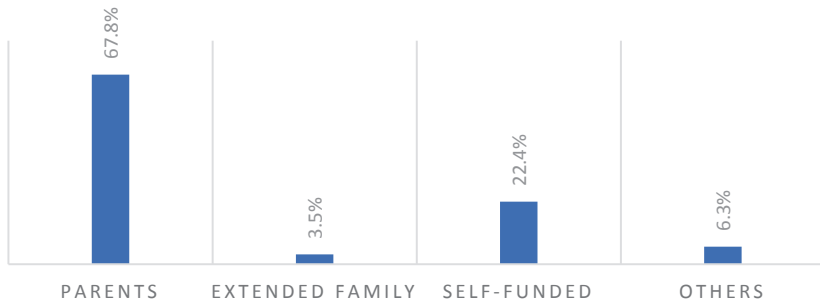
Fig. 10.2   Students response on who is funding their education (percentage)

factor in students choosing a university and has been reported by many previous studies (David, Ball, Davies, & Reay, 2003).

To further understand this parental influence, Fig. 10.2 shows the response of students when they are asked who is funding their education. This can partially explain why the parental influence is high among the participants of this study as more than 70% of the participants reported being funded by their family (parents and extended family) while only 22.4% are self-funded.

Strategic Implications

According to the results in the survey, it is established that students considered course accreditation (programme), costs and location as the important factors in the selection of the institution. The students also

reported a high parental influence in choosing the institution for their higher education. The implications for practitioners based on our findings are below for each of these factors.

Course Accreditation/Programmes

Course accreditation and programmes were reported as being the most important factor when deciding on a higher education institution. Therefore the universities should focus on providing courses that match prospective students' educational needs. The higher education institutions should also focus on promoting these courses/programmes to potential students through education fairs and other promotional events to generate awareness. The programmes being offered and its duration can be better marketed to the prospective students to help enable them to make a choice according to their needs.

Cost

Students reported cost as the second biggest factor in the decision of which university to attend. Therefore it is important that universities develop strategies to reduce the effect of fees being a deterrent for prospective students. The universities can provide scholarships or subsidies for high performing students, loans for those requiring financial assistance and generate awareness of such existing funding options. 70% of the participants reported not considering student grants and other financial assistance options to subsidise costs because they were not marketed correctly.

Location

The location of the university is critical from the marketing point of view. Therefore, the universities should make efforts to promote the attractiveness and convenience of their respective locations. Potential students would like to know about the university environment and its

surroundings, including nearby markets and access to public transport, etc. All location-related aspects, including size and appearance, should be conveyed to the potential students to make it more attractive for them.

Parental Influence

With more than 2/3rds of the students being funded by their parents, the universities should not only provide information to the potential students but also target their parents, guardians and extended family who are the primary funders of the students' education. This can be achieved by making information available on various digital sources such as social media, websites and blogs. In this digital age, the internet has become a popular source of information. Universities can take advantage of it by marketing their programmes online and use them to influence parents in making a better decision for their children's higher education. These channels can also be used to inform parents and peers about scholarship, subsidies and bank loan options available to subsidise the potential students' education.

Conclusions

The current study provided a better understanding of the factors behind student selection of a particular university or higher education institution. The factors deemed most important are programmes being offered, costs, location and ranking of the university. From the marketing point of view for universities, the authorities should be aware of what the potential students' selection criteria are and how to cater to their needs. Hussin, Tan, and Md. Sidin (2000) argue that while universities must provide a holistic educational experience to the students, they must also deliver quality services to meet the expectations and needs of the prospective students.

Based on the student selection factors and strategies implications discussed earlier, the universities can revise their marketing strategies.

Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) have considered the social, economic and educational factors which result in student selection of a higher learning institution. The findings from the current study can also help authorities and policymakers to develop a marketing strategy to attract and retain students.

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Part IV

Attracting Prospective Students

11

Minding the Gap: An Assessment of the Quality of Course Information Available on the Websites of African Universities

Emmanuel Mogaji, Amarachukwu Anyogu⊙, and Thomas Wayne⊙

Introduction

Deciding which university to attend and what course to study are essential choices for prospective undergraduate students. Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989) considered it a sophisticated and multistage process, and factors influencing the process and ultimately, the final decision have been well explored in the literature. Financial support, suitability and availability of the programme on offer, ease

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and flexibility of enrolment procedure, career prospects after gradua-
tion, quality and availability of facilities and institutional reputation
are essential considerations that have been shown to influence student
choice of University (Adefulu, Farinloye, & Mogaji, 2019; Dao &
Thorpe, 2015; Iacopini & Hayden, 2017; Ivy, 2001; Maringe, 2006).
Students invest time in making an informed choice. They consult differ-
ent sources of information such as the University's website and prospec-
tus, attend open days and utilise student online forums.

Prospective students want to know the content of the course, num-
ber and pattern of assessments, accreditation with a relevant professional
body and their career options if they decide to study the course (Mogaji,
2016a). Often, students may want to check the prospectus for information
about their program, but there are some restrictions. First, there are limi-
tations on the number of words and pages that can be printed for all the
programmes run by the University. Second, as print prospectuses are often
published a year or two in advance, the information could be out of date
by the time the prospective student accesses it. Finally, in an effort towards
sustainability, some Universities no longer provide print copies of the pro-
spectus. This leaves the University's website as an essential source for stu-
dents to get detailed information about the programs they want to study.

University websites have been considered a vital source of information
for prospective students (Mogaji, 2016b) as it can be updated regularly,
is accessible to a global audience, and content can be well detailed and
easily updated. This now puts the responsibility on the Universities to
invest in developing and presenting the required content on their website
as it is one of the first points of engagement with prospective students.

In the first part of the introduction, the importance of the course and
University choice and how students seek out information to help with
the decision making has been established. The study adopts the ALARA
Model of Information Search on website (Mogaji, 2019), a novel meth-
odology, which brings together case study research, stakeholder roleplay
and netnography. Taking the role of a prospective student, the research
explores the availability, location, accessibility, relatability and actiona-
bility (ALARA) of information provided on University websites.

The University program in the context of this chapter represents the
award a prospective student will achieve at the end of a pre-determined
course of study (e.g. Bachelor of Arts in Marketing, [BA] Marketing).

These programs are made up of a pre-approved combination of core and option courses (sometimes called modules or units) that students register for in each year of study. Each course is attributed to a unit or credit value. Students get their program award upon successful completion of all approved courses. While many Universities may offer the same programme (e.g. BA Marketing), there are often variations in pedagogic approach such as the teaching and learning activities, assessment instruments, support services etc. used across institutions. Understanding the different features and uniqueness of these programmes offers an opportunity for prospective students to compare and make an informed choice.

This study contributes to the understanding of student choice, marketing of higher education and decision-making process. It offers a different perspective from previous studies that place the responsibility on students to look for information but instead, considers the responsibility of Universities in making the information readily available and accessible. Besides, it offers practical implications for University Managers, Program and Course leaders at Universities, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Marketing Communications and Recruitment Team on how to develop their websites and make the information available to aid the decision process.

The next section of the chapter explores the factors influencing student choices, with a specific focus on courses, followed by the information search process and the role of websites in information gathering. The methodology for the study is subsequently presented, followed by the result and its discussion. To conclude, a summary, highlighting the study's contributions, limitations and ideas for future research, is discussed.

Literature Review

Student Information Search

Deciding between the University to attend and importantly, the program to study requires effort in filtering through information from different sources. Using the Universities website, requesting a prospectus, reading reviews and blog post. This information search can be tedious

and not surprising to find that there is a limited active information search on the part of the students (Menon, Saiti, & Socratous, 2007). Menon (2004) also found this particularly surprising that some of the students did not consider it necessary to become involved in an information search process personally. The reluctance on the part of the student to become involved in information search that would allow systematic comparisons between higher education institutions has been noted. Even when it comes to financial support to attend higher education, Mangan, Hughes, and Slack (2010) found that many students appear to be just as ignorant of grants and loans as bursaries as they had not engaged in a substantial search for information on financial support, the authors noted that many students search for information about local universities and may not search further if they feel their needs have been met.

Taking into consideration the high cost of international education, it can be suggested that prospective students trying to study abroad are more likely to be from a higher socioeconomic status family, understating the importance of the decision and therefore make an effort to search for information (Mogaji, 2016b). Pyvis and Chapman (2007) described it as a self-transformative investment as they seek a new way of viewing the world, new habits of thinking and new skills, thereby proactive in search of information regarding which University to attend and it is, therefore, vital for the Universities to make the information available.

While the responsibility can be placed on the student to search for the information, the availability of this information has been questioned. James, Baldwin, and McInnis (1999) found that many applicants were under-informed on essential matters regarding their choice of a higher education institution. They noted that University applicants reported generally low levels of knowledge of specific characteristics of universities and the courses offered by them. Mangan et al. (2010) also found out that the provision of information on financial support was inadequate for many of the UK prospective students; however, they suggested a proactive search for information by the students.

Building on the implication of research by Menon et al. (2007), it is suggested that Universities should stimulate information search among

prospective students, providing relevant information through various promotional campaigns, invitations to prospective students for visits of the university premises and well-designed websites. A pro-active promotional strategy on the part of universities, aimed at stimulating information search by prospective students is encouraged (Mogaji, 2016b). Menon (2004) concluded that higher education institutions need to encourage prospective in greater information search, based on the idea that information search among these students is less than what is expected under traditional economic theory. The author suggested that higher education institutions can focus on their comparative strengths, making their University appealing through advertisement, inviting students for the open day and maintaining an informative website.

Universities website has been considered an essential source of information for students. The internet has become an important marketing communication tool for recruiting university students, as prospective students check the websites to get quick information and insight into life at the universities (Mogaji, 2016b). The internet offers geographically remote students a means to access the universities and information on their courses (Armstrong & Lumsden, 2000). The websites function as a unique platform to provide information to the broader community as well, transcending geographical barriers. As information is uploaded into cyberspace, it is not restricted by geographical constraints (Sife & Grace, 2013). Thus, to market higher education in an increasingly global environment, university websites offer a convenient way to reach out to the students across the world.

Gomes and Murphy's (2003) study explored how educational institutions use their websites to market to prospective students, suggesting a two way communication between the University and the prospective students, the Universities will have to provide the information for the student and it is expected that it will be relevant and timely for the searching prospective students (Mogaji, 2016b). Previous studies as also suggested that it is essential for universities to pay attention to how they communicate with their prospective students through their websites, and to update them regularly. They note that the words, images and symbols contained in these marketing materials constitute the basis on which the institutions begin forming relationships with

their students (Hartley & Morphew, 2008; Mogaji & Yoon, 2019). In this age of advancement in information technology, the importance of university websites for those in search of information should not be under-estimated.

This study aims to hold the Universities responsible for the quality of the information provided on their website, specifically with regards to the programs being offered by the university. There is a range of programs available for the students to study as they envisage their career prospect, making an informed decision is therefore essential, suggesting the need for students to know how the courses will be taught. Many programs may have a similar name (BSc Marketing or BSc Marketing Management); having detailed information can help the student different between the plethora of programs available. While it is the responsibility of students to search, University needs to provide the information as students should not make choices based on inaccurate knowledge and insufficient information (Brennan, 2001).

Information Searching and Search Models

The emergence of the Internet has enabled many end-users to search for information themselves as there is a practically immeasurable amount of information, with its own unique set of information characteristics (Knight & Spink, 2008; Xie, 2010). Information searching can be defined as 'users' purposive behaviours in finding relevant or useful information in their interactions with information retrieval (IR) systems. (Xie, 2010, p. 2592). This information search is characterised with several complex processes which can be user-related or system-related (Knight & Spink, 2008). Information retrieval (IR) systems are considered as the websites provided by the Universities to aid the information search process (ISP). The ISP describes the cognitive processes involved in searching activities (Knight & Spink, 2008) of the prospective student.

The information search is influenced by three factors which possess unique characteristics depending on the situation, and they also have a considerable influence on each other (Knight & Spink, 2008).

There is the information need (Broder, 2002) which is the motivation to start the quest for information, as there is an information need that should be met, this can also refer to the users' goal and task. Secondly, there is the information Searcher (Kuhlthau, 1991) who is the individual who has recognised the need for the information and making an effort to search. Thirdly, the information Environment (Johnson & Meischke, 1993), in this case, the website design, the interface design and the organisational context to aid the information search as the design of IR systems have been found to affects users in their selections of search strategies (Xie, 2010). The complexity of task and stages of task play significant roles in influencing search strategies (Xie, 2010), likewise context of the information needs of the searcher, processes of searching and the environmental factors relating to the information has been found to influence the information search behaviour (Heinström, 2000), suggesting that the design of a website may encourage the desire to keep searching for information or consider a different website for the information.

Many theoretical insights have been offered in understanding this information search behaviour. Wilson's (1981) Model of Information Behaviour argued that the personality of the searcher and the environment in which search is being carried out are core variables that continually influence each other and the overall information seeking process. The Behavioral Model for Information System Design (Ellis, 1989a, 1989b) presented six information-seeking actions/strategies regarding information behaviour—Starting, Chaining, Browsing, Differentiating, Monitoring, Extracting. The model was further refined with an additional two actions—verifying and ending, while Browsing, Chaining and Monitoring were more (Ellis, Cox, & Hall, 1993). Another Information-Seeking Model was developed by Kuhlthau (1991), which model people's information-seeking behaviour in the context of assumed rather than observed cognitive processes (Knight & Spink, 2008). Marchionini (1995) made an effort to integrate all these models, recognising the concept of information need, information searcher, and information Environment and then introduced the fourth factor which is the various interactions between the entities of the searcher, the information need and environment. This recognises the partnership between

the user (the prospective students) who has recognised the information need (to know the programs offered by the Universities) and retrieving that information from the Universities' information Environment (the website).

Theoretical Framework

While acknowledging that many theoretically-based, contextual, macro model for investigating Web-based information behaviour has been developed, they are however from the user's perspective—the user recognising the need for information and doing the search with little expectation from the custodian of the IR system, especially with regards to the provision of the information, its availability and accessibility. As earlier stated, this study takes an alternative perspective to the information search process, laying the expectations on the Universities to provide the information for the students. There is no empirical evidence yet that Universities are not providing information about their program and therefore, the purpose of this study to fill that gap in understanding.

To achieve this, a novel theoretical and methodological approach is adopted. ALARA Model of Information search on Website (Mogaji, 2019). ALARA is an acronym that stands for Availability, Location, Accessibility, Relatability and Actionability (Fig. 11.1). The model explores the website with a specific intention of understanding if the Information is available, and if so, the location of the information. This is often indicated by the buttons, which may be situated on the home page as a form of importance or a drop-down menu or at the footer of the website. Once the location of the information is identified, the accessibility becomes essential as well. Perhaps the button links to a dead-end, has a broken link or the page has no content. Besides, the relatability of the information that has been accessed is essential. It questions how relevant it is if the information is incorrect or inconclusive and importantly if the information is actionable, question the visitor's action or perhaps there is a prominent call-to-action (CTA).
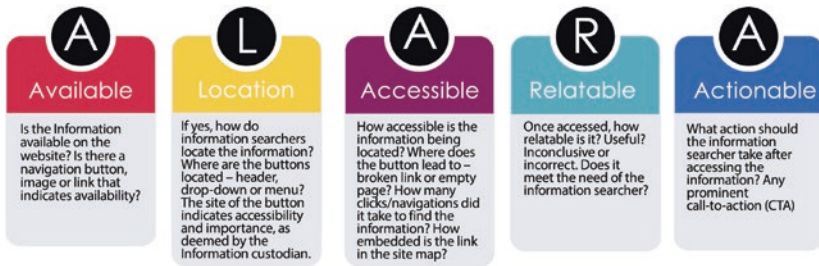
Fig. 11.1   The ALARA model of information search

This theory builds on the Marchionini (1995) effort to recognise the various interactions between the entities of the searcher, the information need and environmental local of the information. In this study, it is hypothesised that Universities will make the information about the course available on their website for prospective students who have recognised the need. It is anticipated that information will be accessible, through icons and navigation menus that are easily identified. Importantly, the information will be relevant to the students, and they will be prompted to act. The conceptual framework is presented in Fig. 11.2, recognising the role of the Universities in providing accessible and relevant information which meets the student's expectation. The methodological approach for the ALARA model is discussed in the subsequent section.
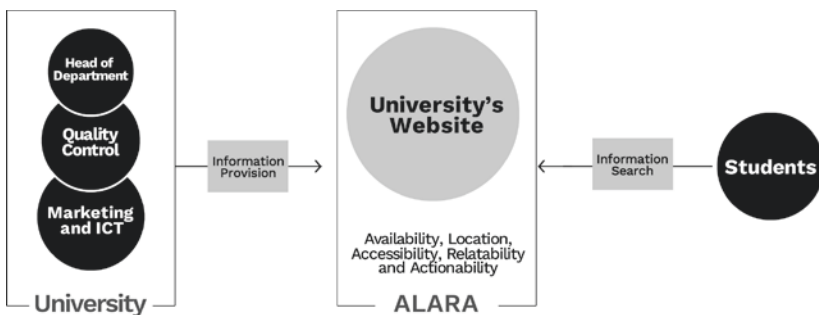
Fig. 11.2   The conceptual framework

Methodology

This study adopts a novel research methodology, the ALARA Information Search Model, as an approach to studying information search and experiences on Websites. The methodology takes up the role of an information searcher and incorporates the idea of netnography and user experience design. The methodology highlights the provision of information for the prospective visitor to make an informed choice. It places the responsibility on the website owner, the Universities, in this case, to provide the needed information for prospective students in a user-friendly and engaging manner. The methodology enhances understanding of digitally occurring interactions, experiences and phenomena of information search on websites. Seven key stages are outlined in using this method. These stages are discussed in subsequent subsections.

Stage 1: The Role

The research adopts the role of a prospective student in Africa looking at studying in one of the best Universities in Africa. The student is willing to explore several University website to find an institution offering a bachelor's degree in marketing or any related programme (Advertising, Public Relations or Business Management).

Stage 2: The Information

The student is interested in knowing more about the programs on offer. The research looked out for information (provided in Table 11.1) on the University's website:

Stage 3: The Website

The study is carried out to understand the quality and quantity of information about undergraduate programs available in African Universities. As it may be difficult and time-consuming to collect data from all

Table 11.1   Information descriptors for university programs

S/N	Information	Code	Description
1	Program overview	PO	Welcoming the prospective students to the program, highlighting the value of the program, what students will gain on the program and the type of industry they are being prepared for. This section also highlights career opportunities for prospective students
2	Program structure	PS	The provision of the number of years on the program. The course/modules to be covered in the different years of the program
3	Entry requirements	EQ	As entry requirements are relative to the University, individual students and the course, this information provides the entry requirement for the students. It shows the grade that the Universities are expecting. This could also cover information about $i=$ equivalent of International grades
4	Fees and financial support	FS	The information section covers the fees for the course; if it is different from other courses? If students are charged per credit/unit? This information also includes financial support, in the form of scholarship and Bursaries available for prospective students
5	Assessments	AS	Exams, Group Presentations or Business Report. This information section covers manners in which students will be assessed on their courses
6	Teaching and learning	TL	This information covers how students will be taught on those modules. Will it be seminars, tutorials or Lecture? Would they be involved in any activities learning activities outside the University?
7	Teaching and learning facilities	TF	This information presents the facilities provided by the University to enhance the student' teaching and learning experiences. This may include simulation tools, software for analytics, Library and information technology, including access to Internet

Table 11.1   (continued)

S/N	Information	Code	Description
8	Faculty on the course	FA	Providing the Staff Profile on the course. This is to reassure the students of the knowledge and expertise of those to teach them on that model. The Head of Department's picture could be provided to welcome prospective students
9	Accreditation	AC	These are external validation of the courses, often to reassure the students. This could be from the regulatory body for Universities or professional bodies (which gives students some exemptions when they want to take their professional exams)
10	Ranking	RA	Universities are showcasing their rankings on the league table. This could be for the University (Top 10 University in the Country), the student experience (No. 1 University for Student Experience) or ranking of the program (No. 1 for Marketing in the country)
11	Employability and job prospects	EM	Highlight plans put in place to enhance the employability of the students. This may include internship opportunities, connections with the industry, or helping students with their CV
12	Successful alumni	AS	Showcasing an alumnus, this could be a picture and a quote or an interview where the alumni share experience and acknowledge the contribution of the program to their career progression

the Universities in Africa, the study focused on the best Universities in the continent using the approach that was adopted by Vasudeva and Mogaji (2020). The sampled Universities were the top 30 ranked African Universities in the 2019 Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE, 2018). These rankings are widely known and generally accepted as the benchmarks for numerous comparisons

of schools and universities (Kiraka, Maringe, Kanyutu, & Mogaji, 2020). According to the ranking, 47 Universities were ranked in the top 30. Some Universities shared the ranking number, for 11 Universities shared example number 6. These Universities were located in 9 different countries. Egypt has the highest number with 19 Universities while Ghana, Kenya and Uganda have one each. Table 11.2 presents the list of Universities and sample for the study.

Table 11.2 List of universities and sample for the study

S/N	Africa rank 2019	University	Country
1	1	University of Cape Town	South Africa
2	2	University of the Witwatersrand	South Africa
3	3	Stellenbosch University	South Africa
4	4	University of KwaZulu-Natal	South Africa
5	5	Makerere University	Uganda
6	=6	American University in Cairo	Egypt
7	=6	Benha University	Egypt
8	=6	Beni-Suef University	Egypt
9	=6	Covenant University	Nigeria
10	=6	University of Ibadan	Nigeria
11	=6	University of Johannesburg	South Africa
12	=6	Kafrelsheikh University	Egypt
13	=6	Mansoura University	Egypt
14	=6	University of Pretoria	South Africa
15	=6	Suez Canal University	Egypt
16	=6	University of the Western Cape	South Africa
17	=17	Alexandria University	Egypt
18	=17	University of Béjaïa	Algeria
19	=17	Cairo University	Egypt
20	=17	Fayoum University	Egypt
21	=17	Ferhat Abbas Sétif University 1	Algeria
22	=17	University of Ghana	Ghana
23	=17	University of Marrakech Cadi Ayyad	Morocco
24	=17	Mohammed V University of Rabat	Morocco
25	=17	University of Sfax	Tunisia
26	=17	Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University	Morocco
27	=17	Sohag University	Egypt
28	=17	Tanta University	Egypt
29	=17	Tshwane University of Technology	South Africa

Table 11.2 (continued)

S/N	Africa rank 2019	University	Country
30	=30	Ain Shams University	Egypt
31	=30	Al-Azhar University	Egypt
32	=30	Assiut University	Egypt
33	=30	Badji Mokhtar University—Annaba	Algeria
34	=30	University of Constantine 1	Algeria
35	=30	Helwan University	Egypt
36	=30	Menoufia University	Egypt
37	=30	Minia University	Egypt
38	=30	University of Monastir	Tunisia
39	=30	University of Nairobi	Kenya
40	=30	University of Nigeria Nsukka	Nigeria
41	=30	University of Sciences and Technology Houari Boumediene	Algeria
42	=30	University of South Africa	South Africa
43	=30	South Valley University	Egypt
44	=30	University of Tlemcen	Algeria
45	=30	University of Tunis El Manar	Tunisia
46	=30	Université Hassan II de Casablanca	Morocco
47	=30	Zagazig University	Egypt

Stage 4: The Search

This stage involves visiting the websites to extract the information. The 47 University websites were visited in July 2019 from Google Chrome, a web browser developed by Google in South West England. This allowed some of the website to be translated into the English Language. The websites were searched to identify the twelve essential information highlighted in Step 2.

Stage 5: The Location

The location of the essential information on the websites was noted in a Notepad by the Researcher. Importantly, if the information was not available, the location becomes irrelevant. The location in this context recognises the location of the buttons leading to the program information. The stage involves identifying if the button was located on the top button, as header images or the footers. The drop-down and subpages

were also identified. The location gives an indication of hierarchy and how important the University has deemed the. Information. This stage recognises how embedded the information can be, and it is, therefore, essential to make considerable effort to search around the website even though there could be an initial indication that the information is not available.

Apart from the buttons, the location of the information was also noted. While the University may have different pages for their staff and faculty, the analysis was looking for Faculty that are teaching on the Program. Likewise, as Universities may have information on fees and entry requirement on a specific page for all prospective students, this location search looked for information that is specific for the programme. The quality and quality of the information were also observed and recorded as part of extraction in Stage 6. The Action on those pages was also recorded. This includes actionable links for the prospective students such as link to other relevant information from the University, contact details of the Program Leaser, Opportunity for web chat or link to download other useful information about the program.

Stage 6: The Extraction

On visiting the website, both quantitative and qualitative information is collected during the location stage. The quantitative information requires the use of a coding sheet that codes the websites and the amount of information available. While there is the opportunity for using a paper coding sheet, a Google form was used for the data collection. The form asks for the University, Country and if any of the 12 information is available on the website. In addition to the form, a Visit Note (VN) is also prepared on each visit to the websites. These VNs are a qualitative insight into the information search process. The Researcher can either write out these observations or type it out as word documents. The VNs for this study were typed out. The VNs includes description of buttons, the quantity and quality of information, accessibility issues and challenges with the website and other information that was not covered by the coding sheet (such as some

Fig. 11.3 A summary of methodology approach for the ALARA model of information search

Universities providing closing date for their applications and the duration of the courses). The VNs also contained screenshots from the website, which visually illustrates the observed points such as empty pages and irrelevant content. There were individual VNs prepared for each website.

At the end of the extraction, the Google Form data was extracted into Microsoft Excel and then into SPSS for descriptive analysis of how the information is presented on the website. Likewise, the 47 VNs, with an average of 378 words and three screenshots were saved as PDF and exported into NVivo for thematic analysis using the ALARA Model. Stage 7 is the reporting stage which is presented in the subsequent section. A Summary of Methodology is presented in Fig. 11.3.

Results

Websites of the best Universities in Africa was viewed to understand the amount of information provided for prospective students about the programs they intend to study. To achieve this, the chapter adopts the ALARA Model of Information Search on Website, and the result of the findings are presented in subsequent sections.

Availability

Twelve 'information descriptors' (Table 11.1) were identified and sought out for on the website to understand the frequency at which this information was being provided. Overall only 12 Universities out of 47 provided one or more 'information descriptors' about their programs on their website. This shows that 74.46% ($n=35$) of the best Universities in Africa do not provide any information about their program. There was no information about the program, the course under the program, the assessment or career opportunities. None of the Universities in Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Tunisia and Uganda provided information about the program. Prospective students considering these Universities have no insight into the program they will be studying as there is no information on the Universities websites.

Universities in South Africa, specifically Stellenbosch University, University of KwaZulu-Natal and the University of Pretoria provided the highest number of information for prospective students. Their program webpage had five out of the expected 12 essential information. They provided information about the program, courses that students will be taking under the program, how the programs are being taught, faculties on the program and career options. The University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa also provides 4 of 12 information while University of Cape Town and University of Johannesburg offered 3 of 12 information. It is also acknowledged, and as included in the VNs, these South African Universities also presented some relevant information that was not included in the 12 prepared lists of information such as Application process specific to the program, closing dates of

Application, Mode of study and duration. Four other Universities from Egypt—American University in Cairo, Assiut University, Suez Canal University, Tanta University, One University from Nigeria—Covenant University and another from Algeria—Ferhat Abbas Sétif University 1, provided one or more information about their program, often this is an overview of the program.

Location

For Universities that made this information available, the first touch-point on the website is the header button, often the third or fourth button after the Home, About the University and Academic Button. This information is often located under the Faculty Button which then has a drop-down menu to either all the faculties in the University or further split it into Undergraduate or Post Graduate studies and then students can click to have a list of the programs. Some Universities do not have the drop-down menu but lead to another page which contains all the Faculties.

In entering the Faculty page, there is often a link for the departments within the faculty where the student can then select which program they want to study as seen with the Stellenbosch University which offered an easy flow in the information search for a prospective student looking to study marketing. University Home Page (Stellenbosch University) > Faculty Page (Economic and Management Science) > Department Page (Business Management) > Program Page (Marketing Management). Each page maintained the same look and feel but often differentiated with the name of faculty, College or department on the header. While it could be seen that not all the information about the program are there on that single page, at least some key information like an overview of the program, career possibilities in the field of marketing and Undergraduate courses offered in Marketing Management are at the student's disposal after clicking just four links.

The location of the links is considered necessary in the information search process. As with the University of Marrakech Cadi Ayyad, most of the buttons on the home page did not indicate what program the University is offering. There are buttons like Research and Cooperation,

Company Relations, Training, Training Continues and Campus life on the main page of the University. There is nothing like the commonly used terms like Admission, Faculties or Study here which may be of more interest to prospective students. Instead, the University has information about its program almost at the bottom of their home page. Instead of using standard terms like Faculties, School or Division, they called it Establishment, which again may not be what students are used to, especially International students.

Clicking on the National School of Commerce and Management (ENCG) Establishment to have an insight into the Marketing course offered by the University, the same issue with the location of the information was observed. On the ENCG webpage, there was no information about the programs offered. Some of the buttons were *Discover the ENCG, Study at the ENCG, Research and Cooperation*. On clicking the *Study at the ENCG*, which offers the closest ideas to what to study, the information was again irrelevant. There is no clear path to understanding the programs offered by this University.

This inappropriate location of the navigation menu on Homepage was also seen with Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University Morocco which had seven navigation menus on the home page which includes *The University, Governance, Culture and Press*, with no indication about the programs they are offering. In terms of hierarchy and user experience design, it appears student recruitment and program information are not given priorities. Formation menu (drop-down menu) which offers closest idea does not highlight these programs for prospective students to consider.

In addition to the top banner buttons for easy navigation around the websites, some Universities has made an effort to present information to prospective students on the sidebars of their website, and an example is Covenant University.

Accessibility

The inappropriate location of these navigation menus has an impact on how accessible this information is. Especially for prospective students who have to search through different University websites to make an

informed decision. In addition to this, other key issues are affecting the accessibility of the information.

Language

Taking into consideration that there are many languages spoken and used as a means of teaching in different countries in Africa, the language on the website poses an issue for students who may not be familiar with French or Arabic. Even though Google Translate was able to translate some of the pages and some websites also have inbuilt translators, the language offers a barrier in fully accessing the information, primarily when the University websites direct students to download course information as a Portable Document Format (PDF) which has not been translated into English.

Empty Webpages

Most of the websites do not contain any information. Even though they have a navigation button that leads to the page (passing the Stage Two of location), the pages are empty and contain no information. As seen with Makerere University Business School and the University of Nigeria, the pages and the menu buttons have been created, but they have not been populated with relevant information. Any prospective student following the navigation button will only discover that there is no information for them.

Pages Under Construction

While some pages are left empty, there are some which are populated with their webpages with irrelevant information because the web pages are still under construction. As example is the University of Ibadan where the Faculty news is not a real word but a replacement/placeholder text—*Sodales neque vitae justo sollicitudin aliquet sit amet diam curabitur sed fermentum* and so also was their address—*Sailor company Inc, Sailor suite room. Someplace 71745.* Besides, there was a silhouette image for the head of the department.

Broken Links

Likewise, sometimes when the link is available to either access more information about the program or download the course information, there is a broken link as the document on websites cannot be accessed. So, the fact that there is a button does not resolve the issue of missing information. For example, to see what is being offered under BSc marketing at Covenant University, the student has to click a link for more details, the website link is http://bus.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/marketing/, but the page cannot be found. This page was accessed on June 2019, accessed again in July 2019 and as at 09:23 hrs GMT on 13 August 2019, the page still cannot be found. That suggests that prospective students who want to study marketing at the university will not have enough information about the program from the University's website.

Loop Links

While some universities may not want to have an empty page or a page under construction, the link to their information ends up in a loop where nothing happens. An example was found with the University of Ghana, where they had a link to the marketing degree—https://www.ug.edu.gh/departments/m# but upon clicking, it takes the visitor back to the page that was initially clicked (accessed on 13 August 2019). So instead of providing a dead link or an empty page, they had to loop the link. On observation, the Marine and Fisheries Sciences worked as it led to the departmental page. The page for the marketing department has not been hyperlinked, or it was intentional to leave it in a loop, albeit the fact remains that prospective students are not getting the information they need to make an informed choice.

Relatability

This section of the ALRA model explores how useful, and relevant this information can be. While Universities may think they are offering information, the presentation may be confusing to prospective students.

The Program Faculties

Where programmes are located within the institution's academic structure differs across the continent. Usually, the program (BSc Marketing) is run within a department (Department of Business Administration) which is under a Faculty (Faculty of Commerce). This is the three form of hierarchy often adopted, but sometimes the term and hierarchy are different. While some Universities uses Faculty, some use colleges or Schools.

Sohag University Egypt and University of the Witwatersrand South Africa, for example, uses the 3-step hierarchy—Program > Department > Faculty while University of Ghana, Covenant University and Makerere University had a 4-step hierarchy—Program > Department > School > College while Stellenbosch University has Program > Department > Division > Faculty. Students searching for information about their degree might find it difficult to relate with these different terms and hierarchy as they come across different terms on different Universities across the continent.

Apparently, to address this inherent confusion, University of Cape Western added a link on their Faculty drop-down menu to allow prospective students explore 'All areas of Study', perhaps if the student is not sure of where marketing fits in in the different faculties of the University, the student can explore all areas. Likewise, the University of Pretoria had a link for 'What to Study' which allows the student to explore various programmes through a search function. While Tshwane University of Technology South Africa has the 'I want to study' link. Student can search for their degree, and it brings relevant programs, and student can filter according to degree or faculty.

The number of faculties can also be confusing for the prospective student. While the University of the Witwatersrand South Africa has five faculties, Stellenbosch University, South Africa has ten faculties, University of Nigeria, Nigeria has 17 faculties and South Valley University Egypt has 24 faculties. These faculties also have many other departments and programs which can make the decision process more confusing for prospective student.

The Amount of Information

Prospective student wants to enhance their career prospects, and they have decided to get a degree with requires studying and passing some course. Likewise, the entry requirement for the course and the application fees is essential. Though Universities are making an effort to provide this information, they are not enough to justifiably decide. As earlier stated, 74.46% ($n=35$) of the best Universities in Africa do not provide any information about their program, and for those who provide it is not enough.

To make an informed choice, students' needs to have an overview of the program, how each University is approaching it and students can consider how this fit into his/her learning style.

The University of Pretoria described their BCom (Marketing Management) as;

> A three-year full-time programme. Customers constantly pressurise organisations to act responsibly to provide quality products and services and to offer exceptional customer service. BCom (Marketing Management) equips students with the knowledge and skills to address decisions regarding product price, distribution and promotion. Students are also exposed to the principles of services marketing. Attention is given to consumer behaviour, marketing research, personal selling, brand management marketing issues and strategic marketing.

While the University of the Witwatersrand makes a personal appeal to their prospective student, asking them about their interest and perhaps to make sure marketing interests them.

> Are you fascinated by trends and fashions, and why certain brands are so much more successful than others? Do you ever wonder what makes last season's cool "must-haves" suddenly "so last year"? Would you love to shape the world's desires? Then Marketing could be your dream career. https://www.wits.ac.za/bcom/marketing/

Also, to this overview, courses to be studied as part of their program is essential for the students. While some Universities did not provide

any information, University of the Witwatersrand made an attempt in providing the various courses as part of the Program, University of KwaZulu-Natal provided the specific course and title, American University in Cairo and Stellenbosch University provided an additional insight into the course offered, not just the title and code but describing what the course entails. Here is a description of a course on Stellenbosch University Marketing Management programme.

> **Advertising and Sales Promotion 244**
> Advertising and the marketing process; the consumer audience; portfolio planning and research; functioning of advertising; advertising planning and strategy; advertising media; media planning and buying; printed media; creative advertising; integration of the elements of marketing communication.

The form of assessment for these programmes was, however, not presented on the website. Students are not aware of how they will be accessed on what they have studied to get the grades. Likewise, the teaching and learning facilities to enhance learning on the programme were not presented. Accreditation and partnership with professional bodies were rarely presented on these web pages. Likewise, fees that are specific for the course, ranking for the course as a sense of external recognition were not mentioned as well. Testimonies and comment of alumni, to serve as a motivation for student and word of mouth to market the courses are absent. Students will be interested in knowing what their predecessors have gone on to achieve, their challenges and perhaps what to expect when they start the course. The career options and possibilities in the field of marketing were, however, present on some of the Universities.

Outdated Information

There were incidences of outdated information on the Universities' websites. This information becomes irrelevant and of no use to the prospective student. Some of the websites have not been updated in years and

still contains information about previous years which may be misleading and irrelevant in the academic years in which the student hopes to study. This also aligns with some evidence of irrelevant information as one of the Universities included names of former heads of department on the welcome page of the program; these former head of departments are of no use to a prospective student looking for information about what to study.

Actionable

Upon visiting the program webpage and reading the information, Students are expected to take actions after seeing a prominent call-to-action (CTA). However, this is not always the case. Taking into consideration that there are unresponsive pages, broken links, incomplete pages and pages with few information, there are limited actionable links on the website. Notwithstanding, some do stand out which are worth mentioning.

Stellenbosch University invited students to find out more about other courses within the faculty. The University of Pretoria has many calls to actions on the right side of the program web page. The department invites students to click on the application icon which leads to online applications portal, invited them to come and take a look around the campus, to get in touch by email to ask a question or give us general feedback. They also included the link to the faculty brochures, inviting the students to read more about the faculties and programmes they offer. Likewise, University of the Witwatersrand provided a link for those who want to read more. Perhaps those who feel few words of overview was not enough. Also, the University had the 'Apply Now' button in different colour on the right side of the programme page, contrasting the design of the page as they invite students to apply for a place.

12 Universities provided information, and only four provided actionable points. While some thought they did (providing additional information and course content), they were broken links and empty pages.

Discussion

Previous studies have confirmed that the program offered by universities influences student choices (Briggs, 2006; Maringe, 2006). Providing information about course choice is critical in making decisions about what to study and where to study.

Our work suggests an alternative approach, putting the responsibility on the Universities to provide information. With that premise, this study sought to explore how African Universities are presenting information about their programs for prospective students. In addition to its theoretical contribution to marketing higher education, this study offers implication for Academic staff responsible for programme development, Universities' Marketing Communication Team responsible for communicating with prospective students and the Information and Communications Team responsible for developing and updating the Universities' website with current and relevant information.

The study adopted a novel theoretical underpinning methodological approach to understanding the availability of relevant information on African Universities' website. The availability, location of the information and how relevant the information is for the students were explored. The study found that prospective students are short-changed as the Universities are not providing enough information for them to decide.

More than 70% of the best Universities in Africa did not provide any information for their prospective students about the programs they intend to study. None of the Universities in Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Tunisia and Uganda provided information about the program. South African Universities were the most proactive in term of information being provided, albeit not enough as there can still do more. The universities that provided information gave the student insight into the programme, course to be taken on the programme and career opportunities. However, information around fees specific to the program, the form of assessment, tutors on the programme and testimonies from prosperous alumni of the program were not presented.

The layout and design of the Universities were also concerning, especially Universities form the north of Africa with few exemptions like the

American University in Cairo, Egypt. Makerere University, Uganda had a good design as well, and most of the Universities in South Africa were well designed with the user in mind, they were engaging and easy to navigate. The design of Stellenbosch University, South Africa, is worthy of mention; it was easier for a prospective student to select the program they want in just four clicks. The pages had the same look and were easy to navigate. For some other Universities, they had incomplete web pages, with broken links and irrelevant text. If this is happening on websites of some of the best Universities in Africa, it indicates what to expect in other Universities on the continent.

This study further questions previous findings which suggest that students are interested in the program and will make a conscious effort to search. How much interest do they have in the courses? How much effort are they making in searching for information and perhaps if the Universities are the ones not making the information readily available? This study also questions if the Universities are aware of the need to provide information about their programs? Importantly if Universities cannot declare what they are offering the students in terms of course content, it raises a concern about the quality of information the students are receiving and likewise how employable the students become.

The pedagogic approach of the Universities also become concerning the analysis of these websites. Taking into consideration the lack of information about teaching and learning, facilities and assessment, it suggests that if students were to rely solely on the University website as a source of information about the programme, they are perhaps making an uninformed decision. They are not aware of how they will be taught, who will be teaching them and way they will be assessed. It is essential for students to know this and check that it aligns with their style of learning, perhaps an International student who has always been taught in French language and those with learning difficulties may be better prepared and seek assistance before starting the program.

Websites play a prominent role in recruiting students in the global North (Mogaji, 2016b; Ortagus & Tanner, 2019; Saichaie & Morphew, 2014), this study provides that this may not be the case in Africa as the information provided is not sufficient enough to make an informed decision for the prospective student. There were evidence of broken

links, empty pages, pages with text placeholder, and separate pages opening in another window with a different layout and design. This shows that these University have not been checking and auditing their website. Those responsible for the website needs to keep it refreshed and updated.

While the argument that the demand for higher education is greater than the supply seems correct in the African context (Olaleye, Ukpabi, & Mogaji, 2020), as there are many more people willing to study than the available university space and therefore if Universities do not market themselves, they will still have students, this does not, however, remove the responsibility of Universities to teach, impact knowledge prepares the students for their career through quality education. Reclining on this responsibility influences the employability of the students and the impact they will be making in the community.

The study offers both theoretical and practical implications. Firstly, it contributes to the study on factors influencing the choice. Recognising that while students are expected to search for information, universities are expected to provide the information to enhance the choice-making process. If university programs are essentials, then the university needs to provide the information. Secondly, it added to the study of marketing higher education in Africa, notably as the study identified the poor user interface design of University websites, the lack of information and its impact on marketing. Universities need their website to market their programs, so it should be well presented. Thirdly, it contributed towards the deployment of the ALARA Model and the novel methodology.

There are managerial implications from this study which will be relevant for University Managers, Academic and Non-academic/professional services staff and even regulatory bodies. Universities Managers must take responsibility for the content of their website. The Top Management Team, Marketing communications, ICT and the Quality Assurance team must also take responsibility for the quality of the information being offered to prospective students. The information should be relevant and up to date, presented engagingly.

All the programs at the University should have a page containing specific information about the program. This page should contain information about the program structure and all the courses to be taken under

the program, entry requirements, fees and financial support, how students will be assessed, teaching and learning, including facilities like laboratory or studios; lectures teaching on the program, accreditation which can give an exemption for professional exams, ranking, specific to the course; career options and testimonials of successful alumni. As much as possible, this information should be provided on a page to allow the student to have full information on one page. This can be presented in tabs or accordion. Tabs are horizontally aligned while accordions are vertically stacked (Bassi, 2019). Access to this page should also be easy to navigate, perhaps—Home > Faculty > Department > Program. Search bottom for programs are also recommended.

The Academic staff must also take responsibility for providing information about their program. The ICT team may have created the pages; it should, therefore, be populated and not left empty. There are many best practices to adopt in Africa (especially South African Universities), Europe and North America. Some students will need this information to make an informed choice, Course and Program leaders should push for this information to be made available on their program pages.

The ICT team needs to make sure that all broken links are fixed, the empty pages should be populated with text; pages with text holders should be removed and replaced with the relevant information. This sort of inconsistencies does not say well of the University. University should look into redeveloping their website to be more responsive and user-friendly, ensuring that that prominent information is available on the home page. This also builds on the marketing communications stakeholders in higher education; prospective students need to know the information that is directed towards them and should be able to access it easily. There are websites with information about the tender process on the home page banner buttons, and this is not important enough to justify a place on the home banner. Universities need to recognise their stakeholders and be able to develop website contents to meet their needs (Farinloye, Wayne, Mogaji, & Kuika Watat, 2020).

Some factors are thought to be responsible for the gaps in the provision/quality of information available on websites—first, the lack of awareness of the importance of such information to students' decision-making process. Second, the lack of technical know-how or

infrastructure (Human/ technical resources) to deal with traffic/requests demanded and lastly, the lack of understanding of pedagogical under-pinning for teaching and learning. These factors highlight training needs for University administrators and academic staff to understand the need of program information and the ability to design courses that are relevant to current needs and learning style of the student and the economy.

Policymakers also need to be mindful about the quality of information offered by Universities. It is not just about approving new universities or validating course but to ensure that the courses are pedagogically rich, program information for prospective students are available as many efforts should be made at standardising it across the countries. Universities should be encouraged from a quality point of view to have this information on their website. Importantly there could be moved towards a unified term, especially with regards to the use of faculty, colleges, schools and division.

Getting this right has enormous potentials for the University and the quality of students they are likely to attract. There is the potential for developing an institutional brand and gaining international recognition. Potential for profit-making and improving quality standards. In developed countries, higher education is an export making a significant contribution to GDP, this drives investment, suggesting the needs for African Universities, especially the Private Universities to ensure that website is up to date as it is often the first point of contact for international students (Ndofirepi, Farinloye, & Mogaji, 2020). Some of the Universities in this study are privately owned and if they want to increase their source of revenue, must make significant investment in information provision online.

Also, the growing population is becoming more tech-savvy; they are searching for information to make an informed decision. Universities are therefore expected to invest in their IT infrastructure, in other to be globally competitive. Universities in the developed countries are providing information about their programs, and it will be a loss to African universities if they do not improve on the quality and information they provide—engaging with prospective students who want information and profile their staff to position them for international partnership and collaboration.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the University short-changes prospective students in Africa. This study is considered the first attempt to investigates the provision of course information on University websites in Africa. The study analysed content of the best Universities in Africa finding reveals that the universities are not given the students enough information to make their choice. The students are not adequately prepared as they go in for their study. It appeared they are walking into their programs with their eyes closed. Perhaps the students are not even aware that they are not receiving enough information from the Universities. The Universities, therefore, needs to take responsibility for providing relevant information for students.

Ideally, the program information should be easily accessible to prospective students. There should be no more than four clicks before accessing the information.

Home Page: As illustrated in Fig. 11.4, the University home page should contain a navigation button for Faculties/Department or Programme, preferably a drop-down menu which allows students see all the faculties at a time.

Fig. 11.4   Landing page of the university

Faculty Page: Fig. 11.5 shows a sampled faculty page that provides information about the courses and various department. The page may also contain a link to all the undergraduate course and importantly as search bar to allow student search for courses based on subject, course title or keywords. This search feature allows students to fast track their information search process.
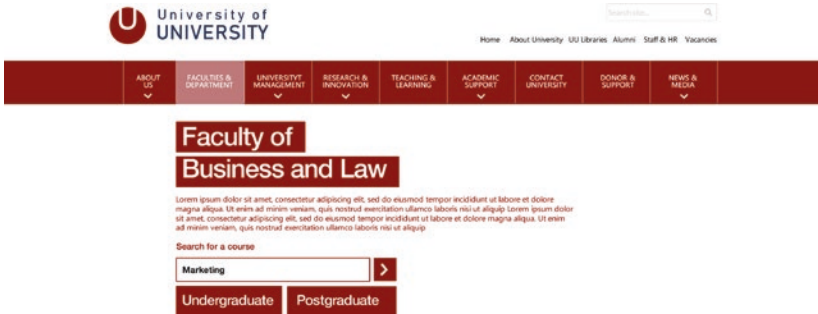
Fig. 11.5 A sampled faculty page

Search Result Page: Fig. 11.6 illustrates a sampled search result page. The page provides different courses based on the keyword search. This allows the prospective students to see the course that interests them and possibly other options that they may not have even considered.
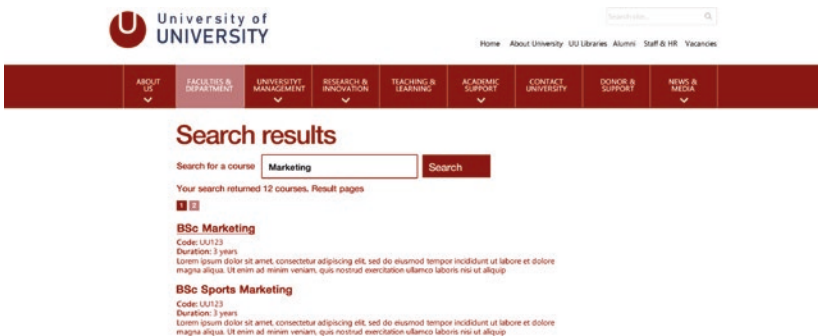
Fig. 11.6 A sampled search result page

The Programme Page: This should be the destination in search of information for a program. Figure 11.7 provides a sampled program page which contains an overview of the programme, the structure of the program and the entry requirements. These are information that is specific for the program. The assessment for the program, teaching and learning and accreditation for the program are essential. Besides, faculty on the course and testimonies from alumni should also be provided.
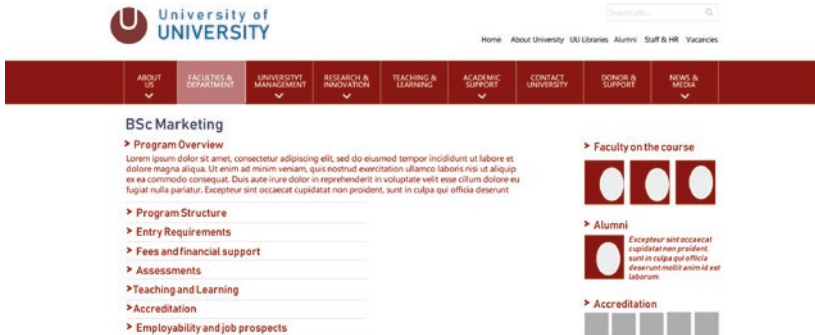
Fig. 11.7 Sampled program page

The links, navigation and pages are not that important compared to the information on those pages. As seen with some Universities, they have the pages but not the information. University should, therefore, ensure that the information is available in order to support the students make an informed choice. University lectures responsible for the programme development should provide the information, marketing and IT team should make sure it is uploaded and updated on the website. Quality Assurance team to ensure that it remains relevant to prospective students.

The study offers both theoretical and managerial implication. It extends knowledge about marketing higher education, understanding student information search and the user interfaces design of African university websites. In like manners, the study further develops the ALARA Model of information search on Website. The study

also implication for University Managers, Academic staff, Marketing Communication Team, Information and Communications Team and other teams responsible for developing and updating the Universities' website with current and relevant information about the programs offered by the University.

Although the study was carefully designed and conducted, providing valuable information and insight, this study has limitations which warrant attention and future research. These limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the result.

First, the results may not be widely generalizable because the study only used a single undergraduate programme. Future research may want to consider if Universities provide more information for postgraduate studies and or another program.

Secondly, the study focused only on 47 Universities out of hundreds of Universities on the African continent. These 47 universities however are the best Universities which are expected to be a leading example. So, if the best Universities in Africa are not getting it right with their information, future studies might want to examine how other Universities in individuals' countries are providing information for prospective students.

Thirdly, the study adopts a novel methodology which is still evolving in its development, though it offers an insight into the level of information provided by the University. Further studies can endeavour to test the model using quantitative scales and considering other sectors for information search such as hotels or banks. The involvement of the researcher, taking up the role of a prospective student in the search process should also be noted. Besides, future studies might explore the possibilities of developing an ALARA Scale to quantitatively identify the way Universities are offering information for prospective students. As indicated that some Universities (especially those from South Africa) are providing more information, there is a possibility for ALARA score, to rank universities and establishing if there is a correlation between ALARA score and league table ranking.

Lastly, websites were accessed at a particular time in July 2019, and changes could have been made to these websites before the publication

of this paper, notwithstanding, an insight into the reduced level of information provided by African universities has been unveiled.

While acknowledging that one of the main benefits of attending University is to acquire quality education to enhance career prospects, it is therefore imperative on the part of the Universities to provide information about the program as this allows students make an informed decision about where and what to study. Getting information about the programs on offer by the University is therefore essential.

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12

The Importance of University Rankings for Students' University of Choice: A South African Perspective

Margaret D. M. Cullen, André P. Calitz, and Watiri Kanyutu

Introduction

In just over two decades, university rankings and league tables have become principal measures of institutional performance (Elken, Hovdhaugen, & Stensaker, 2016). Through league tables, report cards and ranking guides, higher education stakeholders are learning which universities lead in research and teaching within a particular country or region (Marope, Wells, & Hazelkorn, 2013), In their book "Global survey of university rankings and league tables", Usher and Medow (2009) argue that it is through attempts to measure university performance across borders that the ranking practice has grown in popularity. However, these classification systems in some way strengthen the

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dominance model of higher education Anglo-Saxon research universities (Ishikawa, 2015).

Marginson and van der Wende (2007) caution that the growth of global referencing should not be used to designate the higher education sector as one universal network. Rather, users of the league tables should acknowledge the existence and identity of the individual higher education institutions. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1987) notes that the dominance of the ranking and measuring process can be termed as *cultural colonialism*, which in most cases fails to measure what is principally intended—the capabilities of the individual Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Espeland and Sauder (2009, p. 2) affirm that any form of measure "provokes responses from people who intervene in the objects they measure".

Humans are impulsive beings by nature and will constantly monitor the world and habitually fine-tune accordingly. Since quantitative measures are significant social tendencies that are vital to governance and accountability, Espeland and Sauder (2009) warn that the production of such results can lead to changes in status structures, work relations and reproduction in inequality.

The layout of this chapter is as follows; firstly, a literature review on university ranking and ranking organisations is presented and discussed followed by a description of the research methodology applied in the study. The results from the survey are presented and finally some conclusions are offered.

Literature Review

Over the past two decades, the higher education sector has progressively become transparent, advanced and competitive (Altbach, 2017). The higher education stakeholders inter alia: university leadership, government, industrial partners, private donors, students, parents, employers and the general public are becoming sensitive, demanding information on excellence, efficiency and effectiveness from the sector (Horstschräer, 2012). These demands are leading to the quest for "world class" education and status (Altbach, 2017), a term that not even the world's leading

ranking and academic professionals can define with certainty (Amsler & Bolsmann, 2012).

The majority of universities attempt to gain world class status, a position that is highly influential within the society. Accordingly, World Class Universities (WCUs) tend to use public disclosure to inspire social perceptions, whilst expanding their own reputations (Rodriguez-Pomeda & Casani, 2016). According to Altbach and Salmi (2011), higher education management promotes university research, obtains financial support and attracts talent, all in an attempt to be classified as world class institutions.

However, Justin Lin (Senior Vice President and Chief Economist, World Bank, 2009), warns that the quest for world class status may not be a reasonable goal for some institutions as it is for others. Even though knowledge transfer promotes social cohesion and partnerships, upward mobility, values and innovation, debate amongst academics exists. Decision makers argue and debate on the relevance and costs incurred when attempting to transform higher education institutions into WCUs (Badat, 2010). Whether or not the costs and efforts associated with this attempt are worth it, depends on how much the HEIs management requires the status.

Even though sometimes disputable and controversial, rankings act as a transformative agent within the higher education sector (Jons & Hoyler, 2013). Usher and Medow (2009) contend that rankings more often than not act as a 'fashion arena'. HEIs tend to compare themselves with each other, whilst creating and building their own identities (Usher & Medow, 2009). These views are supported by Dill and Soo (2005) who assert that depending on the hierarchies created within the society, rankings provide prestigious positions, which these hierarchical universities use as strategic development tools. Further, Sowter (2013) observes that ranking measures have been used by the elite institutions to present dominance over others, a strategy that is eventually used to develop marketing and strategic messages. Altbach (2015, 2017) notes that factors such as rapid growth of the ranking practise, emphasis on different aspects of performance and ranking methodologies are more likely to subvert such hierarchies.

Ranking organisations have positioned themselves as gatekeepers for the higher education sector. In the eyes of the audience, rankings shape an image of the world's best universities, ultimately influencing what and who are measured and to what degree (Ishikawa, 2015). For example, the top ten universities in the league tables effortlessly fit in the 'world class' category, which include MIT, Stanford, Harvard, Yale, Oxford and Princeton. Harvard, Yale and Princeton are also known as the 'Big Three' colleges in the United States of America (Altbach & Balán, 2007; Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2007; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). Together with Cambridge in the United Kingdom, the "Big Three" universities are labelled as 'global models', which all other universities are expected to emulate (Liu, Wang, & Cheng, 2011). These universities excel in most of the criteria, for example, awards and medals received by either students or faculty, journal ranking and internationalisation as used by ranking institutions (Jons & Hoyler, 2013).

Notably, Marginson (2014, p. 50) observes with concern that such ranking measures are "reductionists" and lack performance alignment because they favour some institutions and disciplines over others. Furthermore, rankings are measured in relative rather than absolute terms (Sauder & Espeland, 2007), which makes competition for rankings "zero-sum" (Altbach, 2017), meaning that ranking outcomes tend to split winners and losers (Marginson, 2009). Unfortunately, the use of hierarchies to rank ensures that the number of leading institutions is fixed, which helps these institutions to safeguard more than the average share of resources for talent, status, funds and high performance within the higher education sector (Marginson, 2014). League tables therefore tend to operate as relatively closed systems, which replicate the oligopoly of 'leading institutions' (Marginson, 2014).

Even though university rankings originated nearly a hundred years ago (Meredith, 2004), the practice has recently become popular and invigorated the higher education sphere (Tilak, 2016). As early as the 1870s, the United States Bureau of Education produced annual reports, which ranked universities based on statistical data (Meredith, 2004). Moreover, McDonough, Antonio, Walpole, and Pérez (1998, p. 513) note that "… rankings of academic quality have been part of the US

academic scene for approximately 100 years". However, informal ranking practices existed long before, for example, the Ivy League (Brooks & Waters, 2009; Salmi, 2009), which has progressively become symbolic of the elite world class universities (Hallinger, 2014). Another case in point, is the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which has regularly classified, published and updated colleges and universities valuations since 1973 (Altbach, 2017).

It was not until the 1980s (Espeland & Sauder, 2009) and 1990s (Horstschräer, 2012) that league tables were produced for consumers; students, parents and government among other stakeholders (Marope et al., 2013). Stakeholders are individuals or groups who can affect or are affected by, the actions and results of an organisation (Freeman, 1984). Universities' main stakeholders include the international scientific community, industry, politics, the public sector and the general public (Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno, 2008). The democratisation of the universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s implies that more categories of university employees, as well as students, were given formal roles in the decision-making process than was the case in the universities at the beginning of the twentieth century (Bjorkquist, 2009).

In the late 1980s, the media began producing rankings of graduate programmes and colleges, which were meant for consumers rather than insiders (Sauder & Espeland, 2007). Throughout the twentieth century, a variety of institutions, organisations and individuals (especially in the USA and Germany) designed and produced university rankings for academic insiders (Horstschräer, 2012). It is through the era of higher education globalisation that league table publications have risen (Huang, Chen, & Chien, 2015), a practice that has generated more societal scrutiny and increased competition within the HE sector (Mok & Cheung, 2011).

As early as the 1990s, university rankings were used in Germany by both universities and students, to compare the quality measures of public universities (Horstschräer, 2012). Public university comparison in Germany however, changed in 1999 with the introduction of the European Bologna declaration. This declaration provoked a transformation in the German Higher Education System, creating comparable tertiary degrees throughout Europe and stirring international

competitiveness within the European system of higher education (Horstschräer, 2012). Earlier in 1983, the U.S. News and World Report (USNWR) had established media involvement by publishing the first American college's rankings (Espeland & Sauder, 2009). Since the 1983 publication by U.S. News and World Report, other publishers, media, professional associations, governments and the private sector have since developed their own hierarchical measures targeting different consumers (IHEP, 2007).

University rankings can be summarised as a game of three main players—universities, publications and students (Dearden, Grewal, & Lilien, 2014). Consequently, the ranking benefits may differ depending on the incentives sought by each of the players. Results produced by league tables may symbolise a HEI's status, which can affect a student's enrolment choices (Huang et al., 2015; Soo, 2013). On the other hand, an institution's ranking position may positively affect a student's perception, which may ease the process of university selection (Kehm, 2014). It is through the search for information by students and reputation by universities that ranking publications increase sales via online advertising incomes (Dearden et al., 2014). Hence, the ranking game is predominantly played by prospective students who aspire and search for information relevant in making enrolment decisions and HEIs who desire the increased prestige and higher sales and benefits from the instability created by HEIs that strive to move up the league tables (Martin, 2015).

Even though the ranking practice is not a new phenomenon in some developed countries, for example, the USA and United Kingdom, efforts to analyse performance within higher education have spread all over the world (Elken et al., 2016). Over 40 countries use rankings to ascertain the academic quality and status within and amongst individual national HEIs, whilst the emergence of international ranking systems compares HEIs across national borders (Stack, 2013). Surveys reveal that even though ranking systems use different methodologies to produce league tables, some dominant characteristics of the results prevail. Furthermore, academics and researchers observe that diversity rather than uniformity governs the ranking systems (Usher & Medow, 2009).

There are 11 international ranking institutions and more are expected to arise as the ranking phenomenon gains popularity (Stack, 2013). However, Jeremic and Jovanovic-Milenkovic (2014) indicate that three major world university rankings exist, namely:

- the Academic Ranking or World Universities (ARWU);
- the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THEWUR); and
- the QS (Quacquarelli Symonds Limited) World University Rankings.

Additionally, there are national rankings, which are sponsored by governments and media bodies such as the US News & World Report (USA), Maclean's (Canada), Der Spiegel (Germany), Good University Guide (UK), Asahi Shimbun (Japan) and others across the world (Huang et al., 2015).

All three global rankings, namely the Academic Ranking or World Universities (ARWU), the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THEWUR) and the Quacquarelli Symonds Limited World University Rankings (QSWUR) are discussed and analysed in this chapter. These systems were selected based on their global presence, popularity, as well as diversified nature of structures, methodology and characteristics.

Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)

The Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), which is sometimes referred to as the Shanghai ranking was originally updated and published by researchers at Shanghai Jiao Tong University (Elken et al., 2016). According to Shanghai Ranking Consultancy (2017) and the ARWU (2016), the Academic Ranking of World Universities was published and updated by the Center for World Class universities (CWCU), Graduate School of Education (formerly the Institute of Higher Education) of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China. Since 2009 however, the Shanghai Ranking Consultancy, which is an independent organisation of HE intelligence became the official publisher

of the ARWU (SRC, 2017; ARWU, 2016). The ranking research is however still conducted by researchers from the CWCU at the Shanghai University (Rauhvargers, 2014).

Since its inception in 2003 (SRC, 2017), the ARWU ranking has stimulated high levels of interest amongst academics, researchers, users and competitors, whilst inviting debate, controversy and emulation from the users (Paradeise & Filliatreau, 2016). ARWU has become a main source of information for higher education stakeholders such as students, parents, university administrators, country officials, students and society (Docampo & Cram, 2014). The motivation behind the inception of ARWU was a personal, but academic one, where the creators wanted to compare how Chinese universities performed in relation to others from around the world (SRC, 2017; Liu & Cheng, 2005). Hence, the original purpose was to examine what makes world class universities (Soh, 2015), whilst lobbying for appropriate government support in order to support the 'dream of generations of Chinese' (Liu, 2003).

The ARWU uses a complex multi-indicator to rank the selected universities (Altbach, 2017; ARWU, 2016). Six indicators comprising of the ranking guide are scaled and combined into a single series, which enable the creation of a league table (Rauhvargers, 2011). The indicators used by ARWU are Nobel Prizes awarded in the Science disciplines and Field Medals in mathematics won by students (10%), the same awards won by current members of faculty (20%) and highly cited faculty researchers (20%). Other indicators include the research outputs based on the number of papers indexed in the Web of Knowledge (20%) in the previous year and in Science and Nature (20%) in the previous five years and finally all the above indicators combined and expressed on a per full-time faculty basis (10%) (SRC, 2017). ARWU ranks more than 2000 universities, but only 500 are published on the web (ARWU, 2016). Table 12.1 provides a summary of the indicators and weightings used by ARWU.

In order to determine the ranking positions of the universities, the highest scoring university is assigned a score of 100 based on each of the six indicators, whilst the scores of the other universities are calculated as a percentage of the highest score. The rank of an institution therefore

Table 12.1 Indicators and weightings used by ARWU

Criteria	Indicator	Weight (%)
Quality of education	• Alumni of an institution winning Nobel Prizes and Field Medals	10
Quality of faculty	• Staff of an institution winning Nobel Prizes and Field Medals	20
	• Highly cited researchers in 21 broad subject categories	20
Research output	• Papers published in Nature and Science	20
	• Papers indexed in Science Citation Index—expanded and Social Science Citation Index	20
Per capita performance	• Per capita academic performance of an institution	10

Source ARWU (2016)

reflects the number of institutions that is listed above the institution (SRC, 2017). As one of the oldest international ranking institutions, ARWU is also considered to be the most transparent (Altbach, 2017). As mentioned earlier, the institution measures research productivity, with a clearly stated methodology, which is applied over time.

Consequently, these factors have enabled stakeholders to have a high level of trust in ARWU, in addition to the institution having a first mover advantage as a credible research ranking institution (Marginson, 2014). Unfortunately, ARWU is criticised for failing to include indicators that measure research work in the social sciences, humanities, professional disciplines and graduate students and PhDs (Rauhvargers, 2011). However, ARWU justifies the exclusions, with the reason that these disciplines are not globally comparable (Marginson, 2014). Therefore, for universities that specialise in such disciplines (for example the London School of Business), the weight allocated to Nature and Sciences is rather transposed to other indicators (ARWU, 2016).

Even though the ARWU methodology is objective, transparent and credible, it is criticised for some short comings. According to Altbach (2017), the criteria are noted to favour older prestigious western universities and in particular, those universities that have previously produced or can attract Nobel Prize and Field winners.

Times Higher Education World University Ranking (THEWUR)

Not all parties approved the status hierarchy of the Academic Ranking of World Universities. After the first Shanghai ranking, the Times of London published a league table, which listed the self-described 'World's Best Universities' in the year 2004. Unlike ARWU, which published the league table focusing on research factors, Times Higher Education World University Rankings focused on factors that would support student decision making in the global degree market (Times Higher Education, 2016). Times Higher Education (THE) provides a list of the 'best universities' by evaluating factors such as research, international outlook, reputation and teaching (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007), which are meant to assist students in their choice of where to study (Times Higher Education, 2016).

THE is the second most published ranking system, used by the media, governments and universities (Huang et al., 2015). Since its inception in 2004 (Times Higher Education, 2016), data collation, standardisation and compilation were organised by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), a marketing firm that used less rigorous techniques than those used by ARWU (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). However, in 2010, THE World University Ranking disengaged its relations with QS and commissioned Thomson Reuters Corporation with the ranking compilation. After the detachment, QS continued to publish its own university rankings (Jons & Hoyler, 2013). Thomson Reuters is a New York based multinational information company, known for its research publication platform ISI Web of Knowledge. The appointment of Thomson Reuters introduced a complete overhaul of the methodology used by THE World University Ranking (Jons & Hoyler, 2013).

Since inception, an assortment of ranking indicators was used. Unlike ARWU, who use objective indicators that focus mainly on research oriented activities, THE attempted to take and use a broader look at what makes a WCU. Accordingly, the indices used to rank institutions by THE World University Ranking went through several changes, but since the year 2006, these indices have stabilised. The indicators are divided into five main areas; 'Research' which consists

of three indicators (volume, income and reputation) and weighs 30%, 'Teaching' consisting of five indicators with a total weight of 30% and 'Citations', which has research influence as the only indicator and weighs 30%. The other indicators are 'Industry income – innovation' with a weighting of 2.5% and 'International outlook – staff, students and research' weighing 7.5% in total (Rauhvargers, 2014).

Over the past decade, the THEWUR has changed its ranking methodology as well as added other products into the ranking portfolio (THE WUR, 2016). These products include Young University Rankings, Japan University Rankings, Asia University Ranking, BRICS & Emerging Economies, US College Rankings, Latin America Rankings and World Reputation Rankings (QS WUR, 2017). The Times Higher Education Emerging Economies University Rankings 2018, which is in its 5th year, includes only institutions in countries classified by the FTSE as *advanced emerging*, *secondary emerging* or *frontier* (THE WUR, 2019). The same indicators in terms of teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook are used, but are recalibrated for universities in emerging economies.

South Africa is classified as an advanced emerging economy together with Brazil, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Malaysia, Mexico, Taiwan, Thailand and Turkey. South Africa has nine institutions in this ranking. Often the work of universities, who are relevant to their context, goes overlooked because they do not have the prestige or the platforms to share the work that they are doing or because it is not one of the ranking criteria. Even though some of the indicators used in the World University Ranking methodology, for example research outcomes, international outlook, learning environment are similar across the other seven products, only the indicators and methodology used in the World University Rankings have been highlighted in this study. Table 12.2 illustrates the indicators as used by THEWUR in the 2016–2017 publication.

As illustrated above, the rankings by THEWURs are presented as a conglomerate league table. Overall, THEWUR uses a series of subject specific rankings, which supplement the thirteen indicators presented in Table 12.2. These subjects include; Arts and Humanities, Business and Economics, Computer Science, Engineering and Technology, Life

Table 12.2 THEWUR criteria and weightings

Criteria	Indicators	Weighting (%)
Teaching (the learning environment)	• Reputation survey	15
	• Staff-to-student ratio	4.5
	• Doctorate-to-Bachelor's ratio	2.25
	• Doctorates-awarded-to-academic-staff ratio	6
	• Institutional income	2.25
Research (volume, income and reputation)	• Reputation survey	18
	• Research income	6
	• Research productivity	6
Citations (research influence)	• Research influence	30
International outlook (staff, students and research)	• International-to-domestic-student ratio	2.5
	• International-to-domestic-staff ratio	2.5
	• International collaboration	2.5
Industry income (knowledge transfer)	• Knowledge transfer/innovation	2.5
Total		100

Source THE World University Rankings (2016)

Sciences, Medicine, Physical and Social Sciences. All the ranking tables that are produced by THEWUR can further be filtered according by country and personalised based on the five key indicators to suit the user preference (THE World University Ranking, 2016). Even though the reputation league table is based purely on subjective judgement, THEWUR maintains that there are no better placed people to judge the excellence of the universities than the field experts who include senior, well published academics (THE World University Rankings, 2016).

The subjective components used in the indices received the most criticism from various stakeholders. For example, international reputation amongst peers and employers were regarded more heavily than research outputs from universities (Marginson, 2014). Such concerns tended to favour the 'best known universities' as compared to the 'best performing universities' (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). In Autumn 2010, the methodology was revised and ranking data are currently provided by Thompson Reuters, a commercial company that is thought to have an

interest in protecting the journals that are published by its competing publishers (Marginson, 2007). Since the change in methodology, THEWUR has recognised the importance of measuring the quality of teaching and hence identified and assigned proxies to measure the teaching component. Some of these elements include questions based on teaching, number of PhDs awarded per staff members, teacher student ratio amongst others (Altbach, 2011).

Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Ranking

In 2004, Quacquarelli of QS, launched the world university rankings in conjunction with Times Higher Education (THE) (Marginson, 2014). Originally, the purpose of the ranking was to 'serve students and their families' by providing them with information helpful in career decision making. However, the published data are now used by university leaders, government and benefactors for strategy decision making (Rauhvargers, 2014). Currently, all the rankings by QS are compiled and published by the QS Intelligence Unit, which works in consultation with the QS Global Academic Advisory Board. The data that are supplied to score the citation sections of the methodology are supplied by Elsevier, which is the world's largest citation and abstract database of research literature (Barron, 2016; QS World University Ranking, 2017). Since the separation from THE in 2004, QS Quacquarelli continued to publish its own global ranking using the name QS World University Rankings, a decision that led to the addition of the third major annual university rankings in circulation (Jons & Hoyler, 2013).

The methodology used by QS currently has six indicators, which are weighted differently and hence produced diverse scores. Whilst four of the indicators are based on 'hard data', two are based on a global survey from global surveys—academic's and employer's reputation (Top Universities, 2019). The majority of the institution's indices comprise of opinions by other academic 'peer review' (40%), whilst the opinion of global employers contributes a weighting of 10%. Additionally, the student staff ratio (20%), a quantity measure which intends to identify the teaching quality within an institution, 20% comprise of research

Table 12.3 The indicators and weighting as used by QS World University Rankings

Criteria	Indicators	Weightings (%)
Teaching	• Academic reputation	40
	• Student-to-faculty ratio	20
Employability	• Employer reputation	10
Research	• Citations per faculty	20
Internationalisation	• International faculty ratio	5
	• International student ratio	5
Total		100

Source Top Universities (2019)

citations per academic staff unit whilst 5% indicate the proportion of students and staff (5%) who are international (Salmi, 2009). The QS methodology has shown consistency over the last ten years and measures four main areas, namely Employability, Internationalisation, Teaching and Research (Top Universities, 2019) (Table 12.3).

Similar to the ARWU and THEWUR, QS generates and publishes a wide selection of products. These products include the QS World University Rankings, QS University Rankings: Asia, QS University Rankings: Latin America, QS University Rankings by subject, QS Best Student cities and QS 50 under 50 (Top Universities, 2019). Other similar products have also been developed, for example QS Classification of universities, which measures the size of the student body, publication output as well as the presence of a specific range of faculties. Additionally, the QS Stars audit initiative has been developed to enable users to benchmark and compare the performance of between six and 30 universities. Universities pay for these audits and the results are posted online next to the score of each university and can be awarded stars depending on their respective performance (Rauhvargers, 2014).

Stakeholder Theory

It has become common practise to view a corporation or institution as a collection of internal and external groups that have a stake in

decision-making processes (Richter & Dow, 2017). University rankings should address higher education stakeholders inter alia university leadership, government, industrial partners, private donors, students, parents, employers and the public. Questions arise about what is right for their specific situation or set of needs and how to balance competing stakeholder claims (Richter & Dow, 2017). Stakeholders, as defined by Freeman (1984) in Stakeholder Theory, are all parties affecting and/or affected by corporate policies and activities, or alternatively, a group without which an organisation would cease to exist.

According to Jongbloed et al. (2008), today's higher education institutions have to respond to a number of groups of individuals, with students being the most important stakeholder group. Raisman (2012) agrees with the importance of students as stakeholders but adds that academic staff are equally important.

This research study focuses on the student body who are both internal (current) and external (prospective) stakeholders. The resulting objective is to determine the desirability of rankings and what factors a ranking system should include, from a South African student's perspective.

Research Methodology

This study follows a positivistic research philosophy, a deductive approach and a quantitative survey strategy. Quantitative data are considered more objective, allow for statistical and numerical analysis and allow for the findings to be inferred onto the population (Park & Park, 2016).

A questionnaire was developed from literature and captured on the online survey tool Questionpro. The URL was distributed to post-graduate students at the Nelson Mandela Business School in South Africa. Post- graduate students at Nelson Mandela University were deemed representative of students attending universities in South Africa. As they are post-graduate students, they would have an informed idea of what was important when making the choice of where to study a qualification at a HEI in South Africa.

Table 12.4 Cronbach's alpha coefficients values for the factors ($n = 886$)

Factor	Cronbach alpha
Overall perception of ranking	0.68
Influences of ranking	0.66
Student decisions/choices	0.81

University Rankings focus on factors that support student decision making and therefore the opinion of this sample is relevant to the importance of rankings in decision-making. The items on the questionnaire were operationalised from the literature and existing ranking measuring instruments. Convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used. A total of 900 people responded. The questionnaire comprised of a demographic section and Likert scale statements pertaining to the ranking of universities (1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree) for three factors. For reporting purposes, the Likert scale agree/strongly agree and disagree/strongly disagree responses were combined to indicate overall agreement or disagreement with the statement.

The following factors were identified in the literature in order to measure students' perceptions of the importance of university ranking in the South African market:

1. Overall Perception of Ranking;
2. Influences of Ranking;
3. Student Decisions/Choices.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient values (Table 12.4) for each factor all meet the minimum requirement, indicating acceptable (0.5–0.69), good (0.7–0.79) and excellent (0.80+) reliability.

Results

The majority of the respondents in the survey, 82.86% ($n = 744$) had a tertiary qualification as indicated in Table 12.5.

Table 12.5   Respondents highest level of education

Education level	Count	Percent (%)
Less than matric	3	0.3
Matric	125	13.9
Diploma	241	26.8
Degree	269	30.0
Post graduate degree	234	26.1
Other	26	2.9
Total	898	100

The objective of this paper was to determine the importance of university rankings from a South African perspective. Ninety seven percent ($n=872$) of the respondents were South African as indicated in Fig. 12.1. The 'Other' 3% were foreigners studying in South Africa.

Figure 12.2 presents the responses regarding the overall perception of ranking. This factor contained eight items, which are coded between PR1 and PR8. The first statement required the respondents to indicate whether university ranking is important for all stakeholders (PR1), where 80% ($n=717$) agreed with the statement, 15% ($n=127$) were impartial and 5% ($n=42$) disagreed. An overwhelming majority (91%, $n=802$) agreed that competent and qualified academic staff are
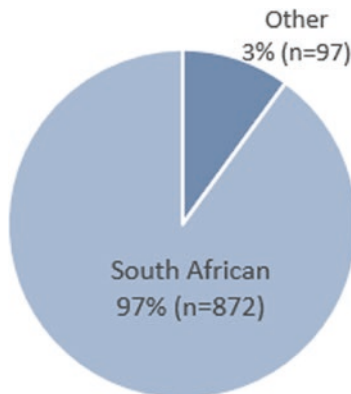
Fig. 12.1   Nationality of respondents

Question	Count	Score	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
University ranking is important for all stakeholders	899	3.99					
Competent and qualified academic staff are important for University ranking	899	4.32					
Quality infrastructure is important for university ranking	899	4.18					
Internationalisation is important for university ranking	899	4.01					
University rankings influence a student's choice of university	899	4.03					
Courses and programme mix influence a student's choice of university	899	4.08					
Academic staff's research and publication record influences university rankings	899	3.99					
Accredited academic programmes influence university ranking	897	4.17					
Average		4.1					

Fig. 12.2 Frequency distributions: overall perception of ranking ($n=886$)

important for university ranking (PR2), while 8% ($n=71$) remained neutral and 1% ($n=13$) disagreed with the statement. Only 2% ($n=23$) disagreed that quality infrastructure is important for the university ranking (PR3), while 11% ($n=96$) were neutral and the majority (86%, $n=802$) agreed. Additionally, the majority (80%, $n=706$) agreed that internationalisation is important for university ranking (PR4), while 17% ($n=150$) remained neutral and 4% ($n=30$) disagreed with the statement. Asked whether university rankings influence a student's choice of university (PR5), 3% ($n=33$) disagreed, 82% ($n=723$) agreed and 15% ($n=130$) remained neutral to the statement.

Regarding whether courses and programme mix influence a student's choice of university (PR6), 85% ($n=757$) agreed with the statement, 12% ($n=105$) remained neutral and 2% ($n=24$) disagreed. The majority of the respondents (79%, $n=696$) also agreed that the academic staff's research and publication record influences university rankings, while 18% ($n=162$) remained neutral and 3% ($n=28$) disagreed. Only 1% ($n=14$) of the respondents disagreed that accredited academic programmes influence university ranking (PR8), while the majority (88%, $n=782$) and 10% ($n=90$) remained neutral. The questionnaire items were operationalised from the literature on rankings. All were positively supported by the respondents.

Table 12.6 Frequency distributions: influences of ranking ($n=886$)

Code	Statement	Disagree		Neutral		Agree	
IR1	Stakeholders' perception/outlook affects university ranking	90	10%	268	30%	528	60%
IR2	Teaching and learning influences the ranking of a university	25	2%	131	15%	730	83%
IR3	The availability of a university's resources and infrastructure influences its ranking	35	4%	105	12%	746	84%
IR4	The international orientation of a university determines its ranking outcomes	48	5%	224	25%	612	70%
IR5	Student's university of choice affects rank position of a university	123	13%	239	27%	524	60%
IR6	The programme/course mix offered in a university impacts on its ranking position	59	7%	203	23%	624	70%
IR7	The quality of a university's faculty has an impact on its ranking position	24	2%	115	14%	747	84%
IR8	A highly research oriented university results in a favourable ranking	38	4%	195	22%	653	74%
IR9	Accreditation can influence the ranking position of a university	18	2%	120	14%	748	84%

Table 12.6 presents the respondents' perceptions on the influence of rankings. The majority of the respondents (60%, $n=528$) agreed that stakeholders' perception/outlook affects university ranking (IR1), while 30% ($n=268$) remained neutral and 10% ($n=268$) disagreed. Three percent ($n=25$) of the respondents disagreed that teaching and learning influences the ranking of a university (IR2), while the majority 82% ($n=730$) agreed and 15% ($n=131$) remained neutral. Only 4% ($n=35$) disagreed that the availability of a university's resources and

infrastructure influences its ranking (IR3), 12% ($n=105$) remained neutral and the majority (84%, $n=746$) agreed with the statement.

Regarding whether the international orientation of a university determines its ranking outcome (IR4), a quarter of the respondents (25%, $n=224$) were neutral, the majority (70%, $n=612$) agreed, while only 5% ($n=50$) disagreed with the statement. While 60% ($n=524$) of the respondents agreed that student's university of choice affects rank position of a university (IR5), 27% ($n=239$) remained neutral and 13% ($n=123$) disagreed. The majority (70%, $n=624$) also agreed that the programme/course mix offered in a university impacts on its ranking position (IR6), 23% ($n=203$) were neutral and 7% ($n=59$) disagreed with the statement. Only 2% ($n=24$) disagreed that the quality of a university's faculty has an impact on its ranking position (IR7), while the majority (84%, $n=747$) were in agreement and 13% ($n=115$) remained neutral. The majority 74% ($n=653$) of the respondents agreed that a highly research oriented university results in a favourable ranking (IR8), only 4% ($n=38$) disagreed and 22% were neutral. Regarding whether accreditation can influence the ranking position of a university (IR9), 2% disagreed, the majority 84% ($n=748$) agreed and 14% ($n=14$) remained neutral.

Table 12.7 illustrates the effect of rankings on the student university decision/choices. The codes used for this factor were SC1 to SC5. The majority of respondents (69%, $n=610$) agreed that changes in a university's ranking influences a student's choice of university (SC1), while 10% ($n=93$) disagreed and 21% ($n=183$) were neutral to the statement. Three quarters (75%, $n=657$) agreed that rankings provide data that support a student's choice of university (SC2), 18% ($n=161$) remained neutral and only 7% ($n=68$) disagreed. Furthermore, the majority (83%, $n=736$) agreed that the status of a university influences a student's choice of university (SC3), 12% ($n=102$) were neutral and only 5% ($n=48$) disagreed with the statement. Only 5% ($n=43$) disagreed that high achieving students put more emphasis on a university's rank when selecting the university to attend (SC4), while the majority (84%, $n=739$) agreed and 11% ($n=104$) remained neutral to the statement.

Table 12.7   Frequency distributions: student decisions/choices ($n = 886$)

Code	Statement	Disagree		Neutral		Agree	
SC1	Changes in a university's ranking influence a student's choice of university	93	10%	183	21%	610	69%
SC2	Rankings provide data that supports a student's choice of university	68	7%	161	18%	657	75%
SC3	The status of a university influences a student's choice of university	48	5%	102	12%	736	83%
SC4	High achieving students put more emphasis on a university's rank when selecting the university to attend	43	5%	104	11%	739	84%
SC5	Students from an affluent background consider university ranking more than those from a less affluent background	64	7%	163	18%	659	75%

Regarding whether students from an affluent background consider university ranking more than those from a less affluent background (SC5), three quarters of the respondents (75%, $n = 659$) agreed, while 18% ($n = 163$) remained neutral and 7% ($n = 62$) disagreed. The factor Student choices delivers strong evidence that rankings influence students' choice of where to study.

Conclusions

It is evident from the results that quality education and the items used by the ranking systems are important to the South African market. However, the question arises as to whether South African Higher Education Institutions can compete with the criteria used for world class universities, where the classification systems in some way strengthen the dominance model of higher education, which is of the elite, Anglo-Saxon research universities (Ishikawa, 2015; Ordorika & Lloyd, 2015; Olaniran & Agnello, 2008). Marginson and van der

Wende (2007) caution that the growth of global referencing should not be used to designate the higher education sector as one universal network and acknowledge the context specifically of universities in emerging markets. In essence, the principal intention of the measure, which is to measure the capabilities of the individual HEI should remain top of mind.

University rankings can be summarised as a game of three main players—universities, publications and students (Dearden, Grewal, & Lilien, 2014). Consequently, the ranking benefits may differ depending on the incentives sought by each of the players. In this study, the opinion of graduates and current students was investigated. According to Jongbloed et al. (2008) today's higher education institutions have to respond to a number of groups of individuals, with students being the most important stakeholder group. Students are the university's business; their primary business and thus, primary customers or stakeholders (Raisman, 2012).

Stakeholders use university rankings to evaluate higher education opportunities both nationally and internationally (Vernon, Balas, & Momani, 2018). The interests of the stakeholders are valuable to the organisation for their own sake and not because addressing their interests could benefit any other group. The salience of the student stakeholder group lies in their power to influence a university's choices with regard to ranking by deciding whether to study there or not. They, therefore, are deemed both internal and external stakeholders, those currently studying and those intending to study. The current student body has a legitimate interest in the quality of the education they receive, which could possibly be enhanced by ranking.

Higher education institutions within society compare themselves against each other, irrespective of the societal statuses held by such institutions and the context (Brunsson & Jacobsson, 2000). Marginson (2014) observes with concern, that such ranking measures are "reductionists" and lack performance alignment because they (criteria) favour some institutions and disciplines and context over others. Vernon et al. (2018) caution against rankings, which extensively rely on subjective reputation and "luxury" indicators, such as award winning faculty or alumni who are high ranking executives. They comment that they

are not well suited for academic or research performance improvement initiatives.

Unfortunately, ranking exposes HEIs to a controlled global competition, which favours some universities, nations or regions and impedes others from competing fairly, due to lack of resources (Kováts, 2015; Marginson, 2007; Soh, 2015). This study has confirmed the desirability of ranking from a student's perspective. Further research has to be conducted as to whether ranking is the best indicator of quality education in the emerging market context. Can universities not achieve quality education without ranking and be relevant to their context? Africa only has ten tertiary institutions in the latest ranking of the Center for World University Ranking out of 1000 (Kazeem, 2016). In the interim, perhaps South African universities must rely on internal quality measures like internal audits where factors can be benchmarked against appropriate institutions locally and globally. Emphasis should also be placed on meeting National accreditation body requirements as well as Industry accreditation requirements. Future research on International rankings needs to be conducted from a viability and feasibility point of view by South African Higher Education Institutions. There is an opportunity for a South African ranking system to be developed, which focusses on quality as well as context.

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13

Experiences of Doctoral Students' Vulnerability in South Africa

Nevensha Sing

Introduction

The high-level skilled and analytical PhD (doctoral) student is regarded as a contributor to knowledge in universities that are themselves regarded as knowledge producers, and embracing the promise of this relationship, higher education institutions drive retention and throughput strategies with renewed zest. Research reveals that doctoral students experience high levels of psychosocial vulnerability that impacts on their academic success (Van Breda, 2017b). Students dissatisfaction with society and high unemployment rates, has been revealed through an increase in student uprisings with a united stand against colonisation and the symbolic high exclusionary student fees (Prinsloo & Slade, 2016). The doctoral candidate thus requires tenacity and a firm commitment towards goal achievement in the pursuit of developing a scholarly identity, contributing to knowledge transfer and creation, and the fulfilment of career

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aspirations through the demonstration of the potential to conduct research independently. However, doctoral journeys are often potholed with many trials and tribulations. We can only but learn from the experiences of others. Access to higher education has reached a tipping point in South Africa, with calls not only for increasing and stabilising student enrolments' but for access with fee-free institutional policy changes. However, despite the ongoing strategic negotiation between students, institutions and government, physical access to university is not to be confused with epistemological access (Morrow, 1994). Due to the legacy of apartheid, epistemological access is still compromised due to many schools not having equal access to safe teaching and learning environments', proper sanitation (*news24*, 2018, March 16), water (UNICEF, 2010), teaching and learning infrastructure and resources, quality teachers and leaders and so forth. The ripple effect of unequal educational opportunities is evident when students access university less than prepared and overwhelmed. Students from rural, disadvantaged, impoverished backgrounds, whose levels of performance are low, gain access to universities (Pillay & Ngcobo, 2010). A concern is that the focus of broadening access, is at the expense of giving adequate attention to ensure that students are supported and succeed. With over ZAR 4 billion a year spent by the government on investing in student enrolments' through increasing financial aid, subsidies and grants, there has not been a substantial return in student graduates (Scott, 2012). South Africa has high levels of income inequality and earnings (WorldDataBank, 2018a) suggesting an imbalance between need and supply, in other words, there is a need for support but inadequate resources available to meet those needs. The highest youth unemployment rate recorded globally was 57.4% in 2017 (WorldDataBank, 2018b) leaving the youth in South Africa vulnerable, further hampered by the country's socio-economic profile (Van Breda & Theron, 2018). Research has found that students need mental health support due to increases in depression and suicide attempts (Garlow et al., 2008; *news24*, 2018, August 9) with alcohol and drug abuse being a correlate of stress related factors (Pillay & Ngcobo, 2010).

Against this background, this chapter reports on a study of how students experienced vulnerability in their doctoral studies. Literature suggests that stress levels are a matter of concern as they impact on

students' level of functioning and academic performance (Pillay & Ngcobo, 2010) with escalating dropout rates (Letseka & Maile, 2008). Wastage is a phenomenon that manifests as dropout or is revealed through incidences of unsatisfactory levels of student retention, poor pass and completion rates and an increase in repetition rates (Sing, 2015) that not only causes damage to the individual's self-esteem and self-image (Chikoko, 2010) but is a cause for concern for universities as it has a bearing on financial expenditure as well as institutional reputation (Maringe & Sing, 2014).

Students who dropout, not only lose their initial financial investment, they also are prone to loan default, in addition to the social aspects of loss of reputation and feelings of inadequacy. Students lose time—valuable 'life' time, time spent where little was gained (Swail, 2006, pp. 1–2). Thus organisational factors within an institution are crucial and student integration into the institution is necessary (Chikoko, 2010). Data were collected through narrative interviews and an online survey, soliciting both quantitative and qualitative responses from students who identified themselves in their own words, to be at risk.

While many studies have investigated student experience, only a few have examined the narrative experiences of doctoral students' vulnerability. The chapter argues that their experiences gives rise to epistemological challenges of student support. It furthers asserts that because knowledge and information is looked upon as the new electricity of the economy (Castells, 1993) higher education institutions serve society in addressing the imbalances of the past with regards to access, race and gender. Such commitment, necessitates the call for universities to ensure quality. The chapter proceeds by conceptualising student vulnerability and the conceptual framework for the study.

Research Problem

The voices of the vulnerable have not been adequately captured in existing research and literature, and as such, for this study, evidence is best sought through qualitative research which targets the very students

experiencing such vulnerabilities. The abrupt shift from the controlled environment of school and family to an environment in which students are expected to accept personal responsibility for both academic and social aspects of their lives, would create anxiety and distress, undermining their normal coping mechanisms (Choy, Horn, Nuñez, & Chen, 2000; Lowe & Cook, 2003; McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001) leading to the label of being a student at-risk. The vulnerable students at-risk do not fit into the mainstream areas of institutional support provided and therefore if not identified or adequately supported, they have the potential to dropout, perform inadequately or contribute to the phenomenon of wastage. These aspects are examined using the theory of vulnerability to explore the narratives of at-risk students to better inform policy and practice. The study aimed to investigate how doctoral students who are at risk negotiate their academic and social lives to better cope with the demands of their study programmes by conducting narrative interviews with students who self-identified to be at-risk.

To develop a sound understanding of the problem, the following research question guided the study:

> How do at-risk doctoral students negotiate their sense of vulnerability to cope with the demands of their studies and how might the stories of their lived experiences inform debates around student support?

Student Vulnerability

Student at-risk is a label that that could be both exclusive and discriminating. They are usually identified as those students who are viewed by their supervisors/lecturers as being at-risk of failing and repeating their study courses and modules (Perez, 1998). This chapter argues against such assumptions to avoid perpetuating the unproductive categorisation and stigmatisation when many more different forms of vulnerability exist. While a variety of definitions of the term vulnerability have been suggested in the literature, I adopt the view that vulnerability encapsulates the conditions that influence the capacity of students to confront

the requirements of their studies successfully (Blaikie, Cannon, Davis, & Wisner, 1994). The chapter argues that vulnerability therefore represents structural inequality, which might have compromised the student's achievement of learning goals and educational outcomes.

Although I use the term 'at-risk' students throughout this chapter, it needs to be pointed out that it is a problematic label that depicts students in a deficit mode, without the acknowledgement of the structural factors that create risk. It is, however, a widely used catch phrase in academic circles when trying to determine which students require the services of various interventions. As such, I use this term, with caution and qualification, as well as awareness of the connotations attached. As a result, being at-risk is synonymous with being vulnerable—a category in which a surprising number of students for many different reasons would classify themselves. For clarity: at risk is written without a hyphen unless it is used as an adjective before a noun, e.g. *at-risk student, but a student at risk.*

Student vulnerability is not a homogeneous phenomenon and therefore different student support structures, strategies and policies need to be devised for different issues and problems experienced by vulnerable students. The chapter argues that as long as effective and adequate institutional support is lacking, student vulnerability will continue to be a 'wastage' catalyst.

Doctoral Studies

There are three general categories of doctoral degrees defined (Gardner, 2009) differently according to country, discipline, institution, research component and time to completion.

(a) *Professional Doctorate.* Designations: M.D., J.D., and Psy.D. Fields of medicine, dentistry, psychology, and ophthalmology. No thesis but lengthy internship.

(b) *Professional Research Doctorate.* Designation: Ed.D. (Doctor of Education). May include a research component but also professional training.

(c) *Research Doctorate.* Designation: Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) or D.F.A. (Doctor of Fine Arts) or Th.D. (Doctor of Theology). Includes a Thesis.

Doctoral students are perceived to become tomorrow's scholars, researchers, leaders and educators, however despite this importance, doctoral students development is rarely addressed in literature (Gardner, 2009). This study aims to contribute to fill this gap in literature by highlighting the narrative experiences of doctoral students. While any doctoral student may desire an academic career, academic employment is not guaranteed, as doctoral students experience tensions and challenges integrating into academia. They may hold incomplete understandings on the importance of teaching and research and can perhaps not align their own values with institutional values (McAlpine, Jazvac-Martek, & Hopwood, 2009) added to the pressure of producing research publications.

The three-phase model of doctoral student identity development is described below (Gardner, 2009), however not all doctoral students complete the three phases:

- Phase 1—Entry (admission processes)
- Phase 2—Integration (social and academic integration with peers and faculty/supervisor)
- Phase 3—Candidacy (completed/job search).

Globally, in Africa and South Africa, the total number of doctoral graduates increased by 125% in 2000–2012, which was reflected in South Africa by an increase of 78% drawing attention to the role that higher education plays in the generation of the knowledge economy (Cloete, Mouton, & Sheppard, 2015) and the importance of the doctorate. The highest funding that universities receive, is for producing PhD graduates which serves as an incentive to increase doctoral student enrolments. Statistics reveal that South Africa is producing doctorates

at only one eighth of the rate the European Union does in the 25- to 34-year age group. Research reports that South Africa does not compare favourably (Dell, 2010) with comparable economies such as Brazil which is praised for being an emerging knowledge-driven economy. In 2010, South Africa produced 1423 doctorates compared with the 2244 doctorates by the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil (Masondo, 2014). Higher Education South Africa (HESA) found (Masondo, 2014) that for every one million citizens, Korea and Brazil produce 187 and 48 doctoral graduates respectively, and only 28 for South Africa. This study aims to shed light on how best South African institutions' may improve doctoral student retention and throughput rates.

The high increases in doctoral student attrition is a cause for concern due to the following four reasons (Gardner, 2009):

- Doctoral student attrition is expensive for institutions even before students begin their programme (marketing, recruit days, resources, materials, and so forth)
- Has social consequences (they may not remain in the country after the degree is conferred)
- Personal reasons as attrition can ruin lives by making students feel like failures
- Institutions need to understand their experiences so to best support them.

The doctoral education experience is a complex process of formation of the intellectual, growth of personality, character, habits of heart and mind and discipline, it is more than professional development, it entails growth of the whole self (Gardner, 2009). Literature demonstrates that doctoral students experience the following issues amongst others(McAlpine et al., 2009): time management issues; slow progress of writing process; negatives effects of isolations; lack of social opportunities; exhaustion; overwhelmed; anxious; writing blocks; intellectual fatigue; lack of access to resources (latest literature/journal articles), lack of support, and lack of feedback and encouragement. Doctoral students are under pressure to produce their research timeously however,

such pressure can lead to burnout. Burnout has potentially serious professional and personal consequences that may diminish several qualities for example, integrity, honesty, altruism, and self-regulation (Dyrbye & Shanafelt, 2016).

Conceptual Framework

Through narrative research, the study explored the stories and experiences of students who identified themselves in their own words, to be at risk. Many theoretical frameworks were consulted however; this study encompassed more than just one framework to do justice to the complexity of vulnerability and being at risk. This study therefore adopted an integrated approach to expand the notion of vulnerability by combining three approaches (Maringe & Sing, 2014): *Risk-Hazards approach* (the causes and effects of identified risks/hazards); *Political Economy approach* (how political and economic factors underscore susceptibility to a risk/hazard); and the *Resilience approach* (how individuals cope with stress) (Fig. 13.1).

When students face challenges of inequality and social disadvantage, resilience should encompass the potential for such marginalised and vulnerable people to transform aspects of their difficulty without holding themselves responsible for the barriers that they face (Hart et al., 2016), looking beyond the individual. Resilience is defined as the ration between the presence of protective factors and the presence of hazardous factors (Van Breda, 2001) however, research debates whether resilience is a process or an outcome. Resilience as a process, involves engaging people in contexts of adversity to minimise risk factors, alternatively resilience as an outcome involves people who show well-being in the face of adverse experiences. Thus, articulately further defined, resilience can be a process of resiling that leads to a resilience outcome (Van Breda, 2017a).
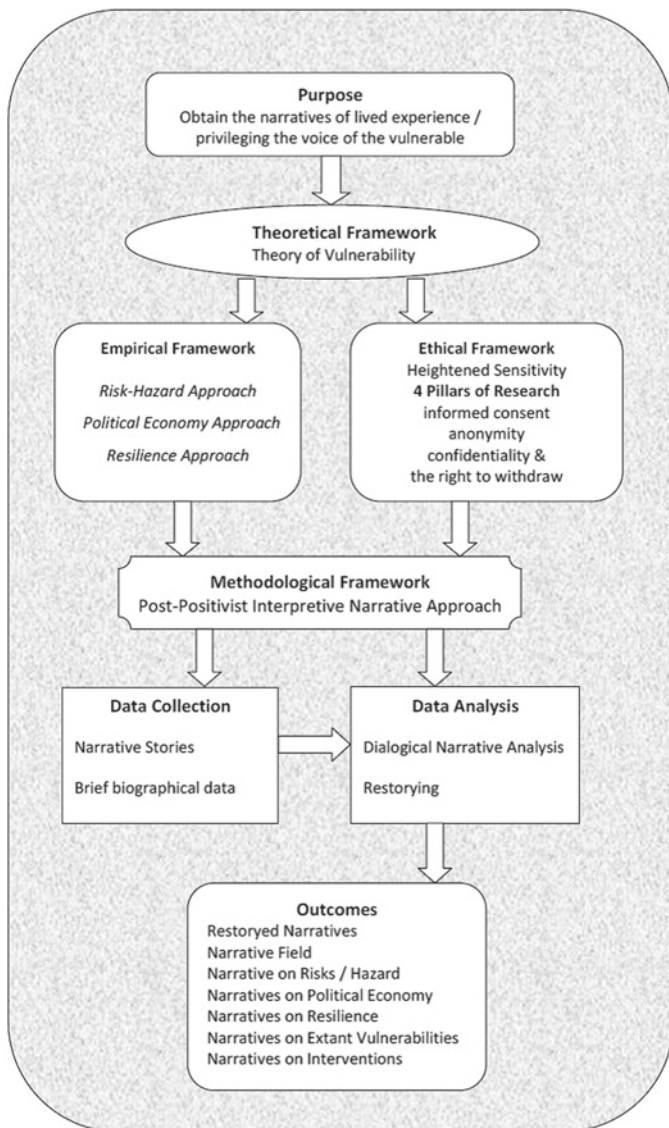
Fig. 13.1 A model for researching vulnerability in higher education (Sing & Maringe, 2014)

Methods

The study adopted a narrative research approach based on the foundation of socio-cultural theory, embedded within a qualitative research framework. A qualitative framework in the field of investigation necessitates a study of phenomena in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of and interpret these experiences in terms of the meaning that people bring to them. As such, the study explored the phenomenon of vulnerability through semi-structured narrative interviews, tapping into the lens of the lived experiences of self-identified, students at risk at a university in the Gauteng Province, in South Africa.

Procedure

The study espouses an interpretive post-positivist paradigm within a qualitative methods design that uses a multi-stage procedure, essential for collecting narrative and survey data.

Sampling Design

The sampling design for accessing the entire population of students at the institution was multistage, also referred to as clustering (Creswell, 2014, p. 158), which was considered as ideal as it was not possible to compile a list of at-risk students. Academic records were not used to determine who the, at-risk students are in this study, as that would go against the understanding of what is vulnerability.

Participants

Gaining access to a vulnerable group of people is a challenge. Marks or scholastic academic achievement is not an adequate indication of vulnerability as there are other forms of vulnerability that may not simply be equated to academic scores. In other words, a student may be academically passing or performing satisfactorily but are in fact "not coping" and

are vulnerable in other ways. Therefore vulnerable students who do not fit "mainstream" and taken for granted definitions of at-risk, often go unheard and therefore unsupported at universities. This targeted vulnerable group had to voluntarily identify themselves and want to be heard and supported. This complexity was addressed by firstly applying for and securing ethical clearance from the institution to gain access to the different schools in the respective faculties and their students. With ethical clearance secured, assistance from the university registrar was sought to disseminate invitation letters to participate to students from the faculties of: Engineering and the Built Environment, Humanities, Science, Health Sciences, as well as, Commerce, Law and Management. Ethics is about reducing potential harm to participants and this was achieved through informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and the freedom to withdraw at any time. Data were collected through narrative interviews with 13 students from different faculties of the university, who volunteered and self-identified themselves as at-risk, while 95 students completed a detailed online survey. This chapter deals with the analysis of data of only the narrative interviews and not of the survey.

Data Analysis

Narrative is constitutive of reality as well as of identity (May, 2011) and is therefore a basic human way of making sense of the world as we lead 'storied lives' (Reissman, 1993). Narrative research is the study of how human beings experience the world, and narrative researchers collect these stories and write narratives of experience (Moen, 2008). Texts were analysed through thematic analysis, coding, categories, and themes. Key themes emerged from the data and analysis of the narratives were done in relation to the integrated conceptual framework of vulnerability that was adopted for the study.

Restorying

Because people do not tell their stories in a logical way, the narratives have to be restoried. For purposes of this study, the restorying was

informed by the empirical framework utilised by this study. Narrative inquiry space is three-dimensional: personal and social (the interaction); the past, present, future (continuity); and the place (situation). The three-dimensional inquiry space allows for new themes to emerge from the restorying. Restorying has common features such as a beginning, middle and an end, however when narrated, the narration is rarely in a chronological sequence. Restorying usually involves predicament, (a conflict, or struggle), a protagonist/character; and a sequence with implied causality (i.e., the plot), in other words, a time, place, plot and scene. Restorying follows a Dialogical Narrative Analysis (DNA) approach that regards each story as a whole. Phronesis is an iterative process of hearing stories speak to the original research interest, and for that reason are chosen to be represented in writing by the analyst from the total of stories (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011).

Results

An aggregated view of the respondents experiences are described below utilizing the integrated conceptual framework of vulnerability. This view demonstrates in brief, the possible verification of different forms of vulnerabilities that students' may be exposed to.

Risks/Stressors/Hazards: Sense of Vulnerability

An excerpt:
   Difficulties began when supervision feedback became a 'very big problem' as Cherise could not understand what she was doing wrong and did not know what was not acceptable.

> …I have been so frustrated, so demoralised, after reading the first line, being told that this will not work.

Cherise felt that her supervisor did not listen to her and she felt that the supervisor hated her. She felt alone and felt so frustrated that she never wanted to come back to university.

> …I felt that I was being judged and not my work … like I was being dismissed, not knowing where I went wrong/right. I needed direction to know exactly what to do. I had no real engagement that elaborated on what I needed… my research was eventually not even on a topic that I wanted to do.

Cherise lost faith that the communication between them would ever work. After submitting her proposal, Cherise, took a conscious decision not to return to the university and to apply elsewhere.

> …without being given advice or the opportunity to express oneself in meetings…
> I can't write like that, but I had to always think of what the supervisor wanted me to think… But sadly, my research proposal kept on moving from one picture to a new picture to another picture all in the month of my proposal submission…

They experienced risks and stressors such as…

- Not differentiating between acceptable and non-acceptable norms
- Cultural beliefs, customs and traditional differences
- Death of supervisor made the student feel exposed and uncared for
- Fell prey to being stereotyped with false perceptions, a lack of information by others and discrimination based on: gender, race, language and nationality
- Hiding away from ethnic identity to some extent (denial/do not reveal nationality in fear of being treated unfairly and differently)
- Language barriers creating problems in communication and understanding
- Nationality and ethnicity differences resulted in students experiencing xenophobic contempt (simply did not fit in and were constantly made aware of this by the actions of others) which left the student in fear for personal safety
- New supervisor put student down by attacking her sense of self-worth
- No time for friends and thus a gap was created with a lack of friendship and peer support

- Past jobs filled with hardship
- Personal experiences and challenges were on three levels: home, identity and university
- Poor supervision such as the lack of timeous feedback
- Struggled with class and identity (self, peers, and supervisor)
- Supervisor mismatch
- Uncertainty about progression in department
- Yet to overcome issues of the past.

Political Economy: Why Are They Vulnerable?

An excerpt:

Cherise is reminded that in Kenya, class and ethnicity issues are transferred from elementary school to high school to university, whereas in South Africa, racism is seen and experienced daily in class.

> …in class Whites are treated better. Black people are looked down upon and White people think Black people cannot deliver. If you are Black you really have to go out of your way to prove your worth. You cannot range yourself with other people – you have to over excel.

Cherise, with pent up emotion, asked,

> so, when is doing your best – enough?
> …see me where I am today… I feel it has been a painful journey… I regret doing this PhD degree…

They think that they are vulnerable because…

- Did not see the need to ask for help
- Difficult early childhood background of being a victim of bullying at school and unfortunately, the bullying continued into university
- Emotional/anger/helplessness due to unfair politics of the university
- Fear of being looked at as 'dumb' with feelings of being less than others

- Fear of failure was so great that the better choice was 'no choice but to stick it out'
- Fear of not completing the degree
- Intercultural, ethnicity problem is brought and dealt with over the border
- International African student being regarded as a foreigner or less than and not as an international student
- Lack of social support
- Language and accent/physical size (height)/over 7-foot (over 2 metres) race/gender/stereotypes forced the student to live with stigma surrounding physical appearance and the unfounded perception of being abusive/racist without valid reason
- New supervisor/supervisors show prejudice and racism towards the student
- Not being South African or having dual citizenship left the student feeling like they don't really belong
- Rejection by supervisor on day of submission (refusal to sign off creating situations of power and control)
- Speaking a language that is not their mother tongue
- Studying away from home
- Transnational conflict (perceptions follow you—cannot escape stigmatization)
- White-dominated staff and student body creates student anxiety of not being good enough or ablility to fit in
- Xenophobic tendencies—easy for South Africans to recognise "a wrong" dialect that posed as danger especially when using public transport

How Did the Respondents Cope?

An excerpt:

Cherise regretted that she did not have any support from South African students. She believed that part of the problem of not mixing with South African students, was to protect her self-identity.

> … I did not reveal my inner self. Else, I will be looked at as not good enough to fit in.

Cherise's advice is that PhD students need counselling as the temptation to quit comes with life-threatening thoughts.

> … I feel like I'm going to be giving up not just on a degree but that I am falling further into a hole… from there is that feeling of being like a failure… you can come all the way to South Arica and because you did not make it, how can you go back home to face your family and friends?
>
> We are mature students. Supervisors and the university cannot take us for granted… People we know and don't know are measuring us all the time, one against the other. But we are at different levels and yet, you feel so inadequate, when some PhD students brag about writing even the 6th paper – and you haven't even written one paper… you feel alone and devastated…

Cherise affirmed that her strongest feeling is that counselling for PhDs would be a suggestion that could prevent thoughts of suicide and dropout.

> …supervision determines the level of complication with the PhD. As students we cannot pretend that we come in perfect, however we all struggle with supervisors who always throw egg on your face.

She considers that a counselling opportunity with a focus on the PhD journey and on PhD supervision is needed. Furthermore, Cherise articulated that as a PhD student your identity is questioned. She spoke of stages of not knowing who she was and sadly, there was no one to talk to. Even worse ramifications are that PhD students do not talk about their work due to fear, discrimination and not fitting in.

They cope with their vulnerability by…

- Belief in personal journey of self-discovery
- Belief in the Church and God with singing and prayers
- Forming circles of intimacy with people who spoke the same language

- "Eat humble pie" and accept the mistreatment until one finds the strength to stand up
- Family support
- Fear of not completing the degree and being humiliated by family and friends back in the country of origin
- Holds a passion for the profession
- Husband's love and support
- I learnt to be invisible
- If you present yourself as desperate then you get treated less than
- If you put your cards on the table and lay down your expectations, you get treated better
- No institutional support
- No South African support or interaction with colleagues reaffirmed the feeling of loneliness.

Discussion

> We cannot trample upon the humanity of others without devaluing our own. The Igobo, always practical, put it correctly in their proverb, *Onye ji onye n' ani ji onwe ya*: He who will hold another down in the mud must stay in the mud to keep him down. (Achebe, 2009)

Unfortunately, the doctoral supervision process is not presented as ideal. There exit tensions brought about by race, language, nationality, and gender. Institutions have a responsibility to support their doctoral students. With each intake of students, come students with unique challenges and circumstances. Such vulnerability is at the heart of the condition of being a student (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, pp. 55–56).

The study argues that the support interventions at universities exclude a silent number of students who suffer various forms of less obvious, but nevertheless equally and if not more debilitating vulnerabilities. Such students are not supported through conventional support strategies and structures and therefore feel marginalised from mainstream support services. Students at academic risk negotiate, use facilities available to them as far as they are aware of these, despite some

levels of scepticism about the effectiveness of these facilities. Students facing other kinds of risk cope with their vulnerability through the relationships developed through friendship, family, and religious support. Stress is based on the individual's perception and interpretation of demands placed on them and not the demands themselves. Stress management of students through mentorship, can contribute to retention and throughput.

Universities need to strategise on how to integrate and help students to develop a sense of belonging as South Africa's number of international student enrolment has increased. International students experience stressors which create a distance, a sense of estrangement (Chinyamurindi, 2018). Studying as an international student outside one's home country is a life changing venture associated with hardship and struggle (Forbush & Foucault-Welles, 2016).

Limitations

This research has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First it does not track the long-term experiences of doctoral students after their participation in the study. Second, the study did not investigate the experiences of the supervisors with their students, and they should be included in future research.

Conclusion(s) and Recommendations

The study was conducted with a specific focus on the narrative experiences of at-risk students in a South African University in the Gauteng Province. The evidence indicated that students in HE had experienced the phenomenon of being at-risk and that this study, through their narrative experience of vulnerability, might be considered as significant to open the debate on how student support could improve retention. Although this study is on university experiences, the right to a safe schooling environment, does affect student's access as well as success at university. Water, sanitation and hygiene education (WASH)

in schools is imperative to provide safe drinking water, improve sanitation facilities, and promote lifelong heath (UNICEF, 2010). The study thus motivates for researchers and practitioners to look beyond the individual (Hart et al., 2016) and to work with an inclusive definition of vulnerability that embraces the individual, society, community, and the environment aimed at systemic transformation and knowing the difference between the needs that can and cannot be met. Students found their levels of integration within the institution as low, thus not being able to cope well. Greater efforts are needed by institutions to help students better integrate (Chikoko, 2010). When students are vulnerable, their studies are threatened (Van Breda, 2018) and they therefore need support during these times to learn skills of bracketing their distress for short periods of time to focus on their studies, thus calling on supervisors to cultivate in their students, a love for learning.

As long as effective and adequate institutional support is lacking, student vulnerability will continue to be a 'wastage' catalyst. However, understanding individual student vulnerabilities in a university can provide insight into how the institutions, their systems, and organisation harbour their own vulnerabilities. A key aspect of introducing a systemic and systematic approach to support which flows top-down from management to first-year, can address such institutional vulnerability.

New Research

The study has several potential implications for planning and conceptualising student support in universities. These are briefly reviewed below.

- While the experiences of student vulnerability illustrated in this chapter are not an extensive list, they do provide a good basis for conceptualising new research in the field of student support.
- New research is needed to increase the scope of the study thereby generating data to be analysed in order to inform student support structures, strategies and policy that is needed to address the gap of supporting vulnerable students adequately.
- While the model for researching vulnerability adopted in this study, provides a useful basis through which we can understand

postgraduate student vulnerability needs, more research is required to determine ways in which institutions may identify students at-risk and better support their vulnerability so that they may achieve academic success and thus enhance institutional throughput.

Although this research is related to the social and educational system, culture and customs of South Africa, the dynamics of the relationship between doctoral students and their doctoral supervisors, is not race, gender, age, or country bound (Ali, Watson, & Dhingra, 2016; Lee, 2018; Nomnian, 2017). Despite, the development of supervisors being a relatively new and under researched area (Van Breda, 2017b) they need to stay abreast of new developments in their fields. Universities', need to provide support to students beyond the routine of counselling services and on an interpersonal level, lecturers and tutors need to acknowledge students as humans too (Van Breda, 2017b) taking into cognisance facets of their whole lives, including their vulnerabilities.

Therefore, institutions' need to pay attention to supervisors' academic developmental activities. The study found that doctoral students' do struggle with communicating or finding a common purpose with their supervisors and when combined with their 'psychosocial vulnerabilities, it also impacts on their well-being and academic progress (Van Breda, 2018). Supervisors are sometimes ignorant or insensitive to challenging circumstances of their students (Van Breda, 2018) and they therefore need greater insight to be able to empathise and provide circles of care and support. When a student remains enrolled but does not make any significant progress, empathy is essential to move the process of supervision forward. Only through empathy, shared experiences, and understanding the vulnerability, would there be a refocus on common goals and a shared purpose of student and supervisor success.

The supervisor and doctoral student need to engage in clear communication combined with empathy which leads to empathetic communication. Thus open channels of mutual consideration, will foster trusting partnerships, thereby creating a sense of connectedness (Geller & Porges, 2014). Such empathetic communication will allow for the doctoral student to feel understood, heard and accepted. The supervisor

shall also feel a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment of purpose by witnessing the doctoral student's active engagement through clear empathetic communication.

> Narrative methods are always exploratory, conversational, tentative and indeterminate… they do not produce the truth but instead offer a measure of coherence and continuity of experience… narrative researchers are not scientists seeking laws that govern our behaviour… they are storytellers seeking meanings that may help us to cope with our own circumstance (Hart, 2002)…

Thus, this chapter has attempted to share through the lessons of doctoral students lived experiences, their challenges, struggles, hope, and resilience to illuminate the conceptualization of a multi-perspective approach to supporting student vulnerability.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to research and authorship of this chapter.

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14

Making a Christian Private University Appealing to Prospective Students: The Case of Covenant University

Stella Aririguzoh ⓘ

Introduction

University and tertiary education refer to formally organised learning procedures and activities that lead to the award of degrees and diplomas. The Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004, p. 36) defines tertiary education as "the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses". The basic aim of tertiary education is to provide high-level manpower that can contribute to national development through the application of knowledge. In Nigeria, it has been the government preserve to provide tertiary education. However, this changed in 1993 and thus allowed the private sector to establish universities.

Marketing refers to the actions that promote the selling of physical products that can be seen with the eyes or intangible services like

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the provision of educational services. Stanton (1984) regards marketing as the total system of business activities designed to plan, price, promote and distribute want-satisfying goods and services to the present and potential customers. However, Ogunnaike, Borishade, and Jeje (2014) and Minculete and Chisega-negrilă (2014) advise that organisations should go beyond these to include relational marketing since it is the consumers who play the very critical role of deciding to buy. Edumarketing includes all the processes involved in connecting prospective students to higher educational institutions. The primary aim is to appeal to prospective students to prefer to apply to a particular school. Schools are educational organisations. Students are the consumers of educational services. Tertiary educational marketing sells school services to potential students, their parents or guardians. Ivy (2001), Cubillo, Sanchez, and Cervino (2006) and Maringe and Foskett (2002) claim that educational marketing aims to attract more enrolment.

All universities offer educational services. Nigeria has 174 universities already in existence while some new ones are waiting to be licensed. It is evident that competition has set in. The profusion of private universities means more choices and an increased need for school marketing. Each university has to brand and distinguish itself from the others. Because the education market has changed, some universities have adopted marketing strategies to attract candidates. Davis and Ellison (1997) say that the schools must develop means of promoting their goals and values to the students and their parents who are not within the schools' control.

Covenant University is the highly ranked and adjudged best private university in Nigeria. This paper examines the marketing approach adopted by this institution by examining how it has deployed various elements in the marketing mix to achieve its acclaimed success. Notably, the seven factors in the service marketing mix—product, price, place, promotion, people, processes and physical evidence—are examined.

Covenant University: Leading Private University in Nigeria

Covenant University is the leading private university in Nigeria. It is a Christian faith-based university located in Ota, Nigeria. It came into existence on October 21, 2002. Its vision is to be a leading world-class Christian mission university committed to raising a new generation of leaders in all fields of human endeavour through pioneering excellence at the cutting edge of learning. The university's seven core values: spirituality, possibility mentality, capacity building, integrity, responsibility, diligence and sacrifice are its guiding principles. It is rated by the Times Higher Education World University ranking as the best university in Nigeria; the fifth-best in Africa and in the best 500 universities worldwide. The university is aspiring to be one of the top 10 universities in the world by the year 2022. The Federal Government approved its operation as a private university in Nigeria with the presentation of an operating license on February 12, 2002. About 1500 pioneer students resumed for academic activities in the same year. It is operated by the Living Faith Church popularly known as the Winner's Chapel. The proprietor of the university makes two promises: to the students first, and then their parents/guardians. To the students, it promises to facilitate their desires for excellence and career exploits by offering them the highest standards of educational service in the world. To the parents, it offers them the best value for their investment in their children.

Literature Review

Marketing and the Marketing Mix

Marketing is a persuasive communication that deals with the actions involved in selling a product or service. It links the producer to the consumer through information. Companies engage in marketing activities

to promote the buying of their products or services through advertising. Marketers create, transfer and deliver value to the consumers in order to make a profit. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines marketing as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large". This means that marketing is not just a one-off thing but an unbroken chain aimed at realising the customer's interest and satisfaction. Kotler (1980) describes marketing as the satisfaction of needs and wants through a give-and-take process.

The marketing mix is the tactical or operational part of a marketing plan. Traditionally, the marketing mix is made of four composites commonly called the 4Ps: product, price, place and promotion. The *product* is the good or service that a company offers to satisfy the need of the consumer. The *price* is the cost of purchase or the amount charged the customer for buying the goods or using the service. The *place* is the convenient place of distribution or the location where the consumer goes to make his purchases. *Promotion* encompasses the efforts made to tell the buyers about a particular product. The promotional efforts create brand awareness, rouse interest and persuade. According to Singh (2012, p. 40), these are the four factors any company should consider before launching a product so that it can achieve some competitive advantages. Al Badi (2015, p. 136) points out that this mix can be frequently adjusted to meet the changing marketing environment. In other words, the manufacturer has to create a product/service that consumers need; inform them about it; sells the same at a reasonable price and in convenient places. Ndofirepi, Farinloye, and Mogaji (2020) adopted the 7Ps to explore the heterogenous higher education market in Africa.

There is a clear difference between product and service marketing. This may have prompted Booms and Bitner (1981) to propose the 7Ps mix for the marketing of services. These seven factors are the traditional 4Ps plus three more: people, process and physical evidence. The *people* are the customers, employees, management and everybody involved with the branding process and service delivery. The *process* is the procedure, mechanisms and flow of activities in the service provision. The

physical evidence points to the business's physical environment where the service is rendered and where the firm and customer meet.

Therefore, it is expected that every person involved in marketing a service should be thoroughly familiar with the methods by which it is provided to the consumers. In turn, the customers should be able to point to the specific benefits arising from using this particular service.

Educational Marketing Mix

Kotler and Fox (1985, p. 6) define educational marketing as "the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with a target market to achieve organisational objectives". Chapleo and O'Sullivan (2017) and Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) point out that increasing global competition has forced universities to search for unique ways to differentiate themselves from other schools in order to attract students. Ramachandran (2010) observes that the higher education sector has recently been influenced into marketing in order to increase its international presence and boost its student profile. He, however, points out that the marketing theories that apply to the commercial sector may be irrelevant in the higher education sector because schools operate on the principles of self-governance and academic freedom. Nicolescu (2009) writes that marketing principles can be applied to the higher education sector but advises the use of a consumer-focused philosophy. Mazzarol (1998) places educational marketing in the services sector compartment.

Kotler (1991, p. 16) sees the marketing concept as holding the key to achieving organisational goals: determining the needs and wants of its target markets and delivering the desired satisfaction more effectively and efficiently than the competitors. Educational marketing's role is to point out the unfulfilled needs of the prospective students and creating new and attractive solutions that meet them. A prospective student's unfulfilled need is to go to a university. Maniu and Maniu (2015) list nine marketing strategies adopted by higher educational institutions as their website designs; search engine optimisation; web analytics;

social media strategies; mobile devices development; short message services and text messages; quick response code; social events; and even use of their current students. Davies and Scribbins (1985) and Keen and Warner (1989) believe that marketing higher education should adopt well-established above-the-line (advertising) and below-the-line approaches (e.g. public relations) as they are used in the business sector.

What Influences Student Choices of Higher Educational Institutions?

Oana (2019) comments that students are seen as consumers. As consumers, they make two rational choices: the higher education courses to read and the institutions to read same. Baldwin and James (2000) claim that they can become more informed consumers making sensible decisions on their preferred choices of courses to study and the institutions offering them. Understanding the factors that influence their choices will enhance the educational marketing efforts of universities. For Kim and Gasman (2011), the primary determinant is the image of the school. Maringe (2006) and Yusof, Ahmad, Tajudin, and Ravindran (2008) add student perception of the quality of the staff, teaching and education. Employability while still in school or after graduation influence choice. Brewer and Zhao (2010) write that how much students pay for their tuition and other allied costs are determinants. Wagner and Fard (2009) aver that higher costs correlate with lower rates of enrolment. The higher the cost of education, the lower are the possibilities of poorer students applying there. Other factors that may influence choice include visits to the prospective student's present school or the prospect visiting the proposed school (Pampaloni, 2010); campus safety (Ritesh & Mitesh, 2012); campus location (Beneke & Human, 2010) and availability of social life on campus (Wiese, Heerden, & Jordan, 2010).

Therefore, proprietors of higher educational institutions should understand that they are providing intangible services and not selling physical products. They must ensure that the right people with the right attitude are the ones providing services to their students. This will, in turn, give them an edge over other competitors.

Fig. 14.1 Marketing mix

Covenant University Marketing Mix

Product

The core job of any university is to produce graduates who have undergone specified training over some time. These graduates are to add to the national skilled labour force, help to solve the challenges confronting their societies and create new products that would make life more comfortable for many. The graduands are awarded bachelors, masters or doctorate degrees in their different fields of study. These fields are as indicated in Table 14.1.

The school has tried to be innovative by trying to fashion graduates that are different and can stand out from those of other schools. Apart from a thorough combination of sound biblical principles and academics, some of the courses are bundled with professional certification. For example, students of Accounting are expected to complete

Table 14.1 Courses offered

College	Department	Programmes

Business and Social Sciences	Accounting
	Banking and Finance
	Sociology
	Mass Communication
	Business Administration
		Accounting
		Banking and Finance
		Sociology
		Mass Communication
		Business Administration
		Industrial Relations/
		  Human Resource
		  Management
		Marketing

	Economics	Demography and Social Statistics Economics
Leadership	Political Science	International Relations Policy and Strategic Studies Political Science Psychology/Counselling English Language

Science and Technology	Architecture
	Industrial Chemistry
	Computer Science
	Microbiology
	Industrial Physics/
	  Mathematics
	Biology
	Estate Management
	Biochemistry
	Management
	  Information Systems
	Building Technology
		Architecture
		Industrial Chemistry
		Computer Science
		Microbiology
		Industrial Physics/
		  Mathematics
		Biology
		Estate Management
		Biochemistry
		Management
		  Information Systems
		Building Technology

Engineering	Mechanical
	Civil
	Chemical
	Petroleum
	Information and
	  Communication
	Electrical
		Mechanical
		Civil
		Chemical
		Petroleum
		Information and
		  Communication
		Electrical

the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) examinations to qualify as chartered accountants. Similarly, those studying Banking and Finance are also expected to complete the Chartered Institute of

Bankers of Nigeria examinations. The university also runs speciality courses like Entrepreneurialship. Apart from these, the university runs some short time proficiency courses, workshops and conferences to train and impart knowledge to other people from its internal and external environments.

Place

The university is located in rural Ota. This distances it from the hustle and bustle of the city lives of Lagos and Abeokuta. The serene campus is conducive to academic learning. Because educational services are not physical products that can be displayed, this particular factor is not emphasized. However, prospective students and their sponsors can quickly come to the university campus. They can also call the help desks if they need further help. Usually, prospects enrol online for the post-Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) entrance examinations. In Covenant University, it is called the Covenant University Scholastic Aptitude Screening (CUSAS). Before, prospective students have to come to the school to buy the application forms as well as write the examinations. As Aririguzoh, Mogaji, and Odiboh (2019) share, they can be in the urban, suburban or even rural areas. Farinloye, Mogaji, Aririguzoh, and Kieu (2019) remark that some people's behaviour may change if they travel out of their residential areas. This may have influenced the school management to add other examination centres to stop prospective students and their parents who live very far away from travelling to the school premises in Canaanland to write the CUSAS entrance examinations. This examination is now written in Port Harcourt and Abuja for potential students resident in the south-south; the middle belt and the northern geographical areas. There are also prospects of other cities being added as new centres. Payment of school fees is also made more easy. Instead of carrying physical cash that may be stolen, students can pay online. They can also pay through dedicated platforms in different banks, depending on which one is most convenient to them.

Price

Pricing is influenced by cost, demand, and competition. Initially, this institution was charging penetration price as tuition fees. However, the university has since changed its strategy. Covenant University charges premium prices or tuition fees based on the course of study. At the beginning of the 2019/2020 session, freshmen registration and tuition fees for those coming to read Accounting, International Relations, Policy and Strategic Studies, Political Science, English Language, Psychology/Counselling, Mass Communication/Public Relations and Advertisement, Architecture, Computer Science, Industrial Chemistry, Building Technology, Management Information Systems, Estate Management and Biology is ₦977,500.00. First-year students coming to study Biochemistry, Microbiology and Industrial Physics/Mathematics are to pay ₦984,500.00. All engineering freshmen paid ₦1,002,500.00. The remaining students who came in to read Banking and Finance, Business Administration, Demography and Social Statistics, Economics, Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management, Marketing and Sociology are to pay ₦937,500.00. However, the fees for the other levels were slightly lower than for the new students. Naturally, some students and their parents have complained that the fees are exorbitant. The pricing emphasises the gap between the poor and the rich as indigent pupils from low-income families may not be able to afford these fees. The relatively high school fees reduce the number of students that may come to study at this university. The higher the fees, the more some of the parents think their children are getting more valuable education.

Promotion

The university engages in strategic storytelling to market itself. Every year, it produces documentaries telling its success stories, activities and achievements. These documentaries are shown to members of the proprietary church, The Living Faith Church Worldwide (aka Winners Chapel) during church services. From the church platform, regular announcements about the university are made, including imminent

CUSAS examinations. Worshippers also hear about breakthrough researches and latest ranking of their school.

The same documentaries run in the various campus Reception Rooms. In the earlier years, they were also aired on television. There are media visits and regular press interviews with key officials of the universities. It also advertises itself every day on its website by telling of one accomplishment story after another. It streams live events like the matriculation and graduation ceremonies from its website and its other social media handles. These highlight the value of social media for communicating with stakeholders (Mogaji, 2019). Strategically, it has mounted a massive billboard in front of Canaanland gate to announce itself to whosoever is passing. Part of the promotional activities include the use of branded items carrying the school's logo. Some of the items include T-Shirts, bags, bathing towels, books and many other souvenirs.

Another popular marketing strategy is the use of personal selling. The chancellor and his employees sell the idea of the university to the parents and guardians of students in the other educational institutions run by the church, especially its chain of Faith Academy secondary schools, and the Covenant and Landmark universities secondary schools. Even the pupils in the Kingdom Heritage Model Schools—the pre-primary and primary arms of the church—are also told to desire to attend Covenant University.

People

The best asset any organisation has are the people working in it (Branson, n.d.; Fulmer & Ployhart, 2014). They are the brand ambassadors. There are two broad classes of people in the university: the students and the staff consisting of the academic and non-academic staff. The university's chancellor is a famous preacher, and his church has branches in many countries. His name is popular. The school has a 24—member management team.

No student is admitted if he does not pass the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) organised by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the CUSAS as well as meet the

basic requirement of having a minimum of five ordinary level credits at not more than two sittings. However, international students are not required to write UTME. Both groups of prospects are also to meet the specific departmental requirements. At the end of semesters, students whose CGP are less than 1.5 on a grading scale of 5 are advised to repeat or withdraw. However, no student in the penultimate year with more than 15 units of failed or outstanding unregistered courses is promoted to the final year class. Such classes of students are placed on probation. Students are not allowed to transfer from other schools to Covenant University. Between 2002 and 2019, Covenant University has admitted 29,245 students and graduated 18,726 (Source: Covenant University Center for Systems and Information Service). All graduates join the *CU Alumni.* This forum looks at ways of helping the graduates themselves as well as move their alma mater forward. Each graduating class leaves a legacy in the physical development and beautification of the campus. One class built a water fountain decorated with a stone monument of a flying eagle. Others built an arch separating the student residential area from the staff quarters and academic areas; the beautiful park between the College of Business and Social Sciences Building and the University Chapel and provision of shelters at different bus stops in the university. Some of the alumni have become successful and famous entrepreneurs in diverse fields including television production, farming, writing, singing, acting and computer technology.

Most employees in this university are degree holders. After hiring, they are re-trained to build capacity and offer quality service. Their words are to encourage both students and staff. It is an unwritten law that they should not use their lips to say what may be interpreted as unfavourable. Hence, a standard pronouncement by most is *God bless you!* The network of interpersonal relations makes communication more easier and faster. Both staff and students appear in the work areas and during office hours in corporate clothes. Whosoever does not wear compliant clothes is first admonished and still turned back to change the apparel or face a disciplinary panel.

Staff members *adopt* students as if they are their children in *in loco parentis* relationships. Hence, there is the Faculty Support and the Student Support Programmes where faculty members stand in as

parents to encourage some students and at times recommend counselling and financial help. The Student Council also liaises between the student body and the school management and is expected to intervene in favour of the studentry. Olokundun, Ogunnaike, Peter, Ibidunni, and Amaihian (2017) claim that there is a link between university support systems, knowledge sharing and innovation.

As of July 31, 2019, the university has 1132 staff: 629 non-academic and 503 academics. Three hundred four of the lecturers possess doctorate degrees, and 103 of them are in the professorial cadre and experts in their different areas. The National University Commission (NUC) recommends that every lecturer must have this degree to be appointed as a lecturer. For the few that do not possess this yet, it was found that most of them are already enrolled in different programmes leading to the award of this coveted degree. To further enforce the acquisition of this degree, the university management does not promote any academic staff beyond Lecturer 11 who does not have it. Scopus has also ranked six of the lecturers among the top 10 authors in Nigeria by publication volume between 2014 and 2020. It can be said that Covenant University has skilled manpower to teach the students. In the February 2015 Webometric ranking of Universities, the university was ranked first in Nigeria and as well as in West Africa. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings is generally regarded as the largest and most diverse university ranking. It grades almost 1,400 universities across 92 countries on 13 performance indicators on teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook. It has positively ranked Covenant in the following categories:

2019: World University Rankings (WUR) placed it as 6th African best University

2019: World University ranking (WUR) placed it among the world's best 800 universities

2019: World University ranking (WUR) placed it among the top 160 universities in the emerging economies

2019: Times Higher Education (THE) as the Best West African University

2019: THE ranked it among the top 500 universities worldwide

2019: THE Subject Rankings in Business and Economics in the 501+ range among universities globally

2019: THE Rankings in Engineering and Technology in the 501–600 bracket globally It is the only Nigerian institution to make this mark

2019: THE ranked it as Number 151 Globally in THE Emerging Economies Rankings

2019: THE ranked it 301+ in the inaugural THE Impact Rankings

2019: THE ranked it 151–200 range among universities under 50 years old globally

2020: THE ranked Covenant in the 401–500 bracket globally, as the best of four institutions in Nigeria and the fourth in Africa after Universities of Ibadan, Lagos and University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

2020: The University emerged as No. 7 in improvement over last year's performance.

Covenant is the only African University being ranked with world-famous universities like Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) which was established in 1861; Stanford University (established in 1885) and Harvard University (established in 1636). Covenant was established in 2002. Covenant won an African Development Bank Center of Excellence in the ICT slot to become one of the World Bank Africa Centres of Excellence (ACE-Impact). All these appear to show Covenant University as a high performer in the educational sector. The university also has core competencies in Computer Science, Materials Science, Mechanical Engineering, Business Management, Accounting and Economics. However, Covenant University is behind in internationalisation: attracting international students, faculty and co-authorship. There is no joint supervision of postgraduate thesis, student or staff exchange. Between 2017 and 2018, the school only had four visiting scholars and thirty-seven international students from 10 countries (Peter, 2019).

Processes

Covenant University decision-making processes revolve around its seven core values: spirituality, integrity, possibility mentality, capacity building, responsibility, diligence and sacrifice. Spirituality is the anchor

holding the other principles together. It is deep reverence for and fear of God according to biblical standards. Chapel services, Bible study classes, Christian fellowships and Covenant Hour of Prayer (CHOP) are regular features organised to build up spiritual values. Both staff and students are expected to attend. These conform Gaiya's (2014) observation that the main difference between the secular and Christian universities are their strong pillars of spirituality and Christian morality with deliberate integration of faith, clear theological orientations and Christian values into academic learning.

Covenant University's mission is "to create knowledge and restore the dignity of the black man via a human development and total man concept-driven curriculum employing innovative, leading-edge, teaching and learning methods, research and professional services that promote integrated, life-applicable, life-transforming education relevant to the context of science, technology and human capacity building" (https://covenantuniversity.edu.ng/About-Us/Mission). To achieve this, the university introduced some specialized in-houses courses like Entrepreneurial Development Studies (EDS) that teaches students business and hands-on-skills, Total Man Concept (TMC) that teaches relevant life skills and gives the students the mind to conquer life challenges; Diploma in Leadership (DLD) that impacts leadership virtues; Human Development (HMD) that teaches them how to communicate effectively, become and live as good members of the society. All these courses are to integrate sound academics with life skills aimed at making the students handle challenges within and outside the university competently. Other Nigerian universities have copied the teaching of EDS from this university. NUC has now made Entrepreneurial Studies compulsory courses for all students in any Nigerian university.

Besides, students are expected to attend all lectures or have at least 75% attendance in all classes to qualify to write examinations at the end of the semesters. Those who do not meet with this demand are not allowed into the examination halls. Similarly, all staff are to clock in on resumption of duties as evidence of coming to work.

As part of its processing, students engage in athletics and other physical exercises to keep fit and win trophies. Among the different departments and colleges, there are different competitions, especially

in football, basketball and volleyball. Different squads are engaged in the Private Universities Games Association (PUGA) and other friendly inter-university sports events. Many times, the sports teams have engaged those from Babcock University, Ilishan and other universities.

Uniquely, most work processes in Covenant are computer-based and online. Sobowale, Amodu, Aririguzoh and Ekanem (2015) say that the Internet is a tool of learning. Covenant University has deployed this technology in its work processes to save time, space and money as well as improve reach. Communication technology has made it possible for any prospective student to log into the university's website from any part of the world to access the information on the services he needs, pay online and even choose a convenient day within the provided frame time to write the examination. Students register for their courses online. Even fees can be paid online. Lecturers upload lecture notes to the online *Moodle* platform that students can access from anywhere. Some of the examinations are Computer-Based Tests (CBT). These imply that work and study can be done conveniently at any time and in any place without having to wait to be in the physical offices or classrooms. In other words, the university blends best practices in learning and working by integrating traditional classroom with online and digital-based learning to optimise outcomes, higher levels of interactivity, flexibility and personalisation. This confirms Aririguzoh, Sobowale and Usaini's (2016) finding that most of the students prefer to use the internet as their most preferred media of communication. The university supports their dreams. There was a time the University gave each student a tablet to enhance the use of Internet-based technologies. Then, the school also launched laptop acquisition schemes that enabled students to buy laptops and pay in instalments.

The service units such as the Cafeterias, the Guest House, Bookshops, Bakeries and the Shopping Malls are run as profit-making enterprises. They confirm to Ball and Youdell's (2008) description of internal privatisation that allows some operations in schools to be run in business-like manners. These units must make a profit to remain relevant.

External bodies come to access and validate what the university does. The NUC carries out institutional as well as individual courses accreditation. Other professional bodies like the Institute of Charted Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN); Council of Registered Engineers

of Nigeria (COREN); Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON); Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV), Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA) and so many others also come to evaluate different programmes. As of today, all the programmes are accredited by NUC and the relevant professional bodies.

Physical Evidence

The university is located inside serene Canaanland. Canaanland houses the headquarters of the Living Faith Church Worldwide (LFCW). This is also the venue of the church's annual *Shiloh* programme that draws millions of worshippers and visitors. This casts a big garb of spirituality on the university operations and facilities that are located within the compact campus. The campus is a green environment with a lot of lush green lawns, gardens and trees that shade people from the harsh sun.

The school tries to create a student-friendly environment. Each student is provided with a bed space, two lockers, a wardrobe, a reading table and a chair. The classrooms have seats for each student. The laboratories and work studios are appropriately equipped. There is literally round the clock provision of water, electricity and security. Cameras are mounted in strategic places. The workers are not unionised. This effectively removes any case of industrial actions that have trailed and disrupted academic activities in public schools. Thus parents have the assurance that their children who meet the graduation requirements are released at the appropriate time.

No staff is permitted to engage in any despicable act including soliciting for any gift from a parent; or sex from any student. No student is allowed to indulge in sex or any immoral behaviour with another fellow student, staff or even an outsider. They are also banned from being members of any secret cult, getting involved in wild party scenes, alcoholic drinking sprees and drug abuse. They are forbidden to come to school with guns, any dangerous weapons, revealing, short or too tightly fitting clothes. Where cases like these are reported and investigated, the offenders are summarily dealt with.

Theoretical Contribution

This paper contributes to the fast-paced discussion on the rise of educational marketing (Mogaji, 2016). It shows the value of engaging a variety of marketing factors to attract students. Importantly, it contributes that marketing is not an erratic venture that can be engaged haphazardly. It boosts the relevance and benefits of private university education, particularly Christian higher education. Christian universities provide sane environments for academic learning. The benefits of Christian-faith education cannot be overemphasised. Ajani (2013) says that people who have received Christian education can help in nation-building as well as improve the Nigerian society if they allow what they have been exposed to, to permeate their lives and activities. Their education creates the basis for Christian stewardship, Christian leadership, advocate for equity and fairness in the rule of law, and offer responses to the menace of corruption in Nigeria. They can do these based on Dockery and Morgan (2018) assertion that Christian higher education produces a distinctive way of thinking, teaching, learning, scholarship, curriculum, student life, administration and governance. All these are rooted in the Christian faith.

Apart from training students, these schools employ millions of people as well as contribute to the physical development of their host communities. They engage in community relations to further foster the clement relationship.

Managerial Implications

The following are the implications for the Covenant University management as these will ultimately influence student choices:

1. Marketing is a management function that should flow down from the top management. It should not be left to just a few personnel. The marketing message reflects the vision and mission of any organisation and influences the perception of potential, new and existing

customers. Edumarketing should be purposely engaged in by the university management to attract and retain students. The management of Covenant University should play up three factors: spirituality, its location and excellent rankings.

2. There is a need for collaboration with other universities of like visions. Nothing stops Covenant University and other Christian universities from forming an Association of Christian Universities across Nigeria and in Africa.

3. University management should make more efforts to attract international faculties and students. This will improve the school's profile. Besides, the school should build a community website where prospective students and their parents can make suggestions and offer feedback. This will further help to promote the school.

4. The university should carve a niche for itself by focusing on speciality courses where it has core competencies and gradually phase out courses that have consistent low enrolment figures.

Limitations to This Study

This study examined the edumarketing mix of Covenant University. This does not reflect the general marketing practice of all the Christian-faith based universities in Nigeria. Because of this, the findings of this study cannot be generalised for all faith private universities.

The focus was on Covenant University. The other private and public universities were excluded. Maybe the narratives would have been different if these other schools were included. Nevertheless, this paper indicates the broad factors that these other educational institutions should consider when presenting their marketing messages.

More research is needed to explore the specific factors that attract students to Christian based universities. If Covenant University or any other university can exactly pin-point these, they can peg their marketing messages to make the marketing processes more effective in attracting and keeping more students.

Conclusion

Educational services, like other services, have unique characteristics that pose peculiar marketing challenges. Managers of private Christian universities have to develop sufficient marketing skills and knowledge to manage these challenges in order to brand their universities, and then persuade potential students and their parents to prefer them.

Universities are regarded as critical institutions in the production and circulation of knowledge. The most explicit role allocated to them is to produce highly skilled labour and research output that are expected to move the countries and their citizens forward. The entrance of private universities has changed the educational landscape by opening more access routes for enrolment. It appears evident that private universities have earned good reputation and have excellent facilities. Because there are so many new universities springing up, each one has to market itself to insure institutional survival. The marketing function identifies the market forces and optimises same for profitability. Out of the seven factors involved in its marketing mix, Covenant University has effectively deployed just five: product, people, its physical evidence, processes and pricing. Its pricing policy or the school fees paid by the students has effectively listed it as an elitist school. The number of students that can enrol is effectually limited. However, the university can introduce a reward program for both parents and staff to encourage them to bring their wards here. Parents with more than one ward should be given a percentage discount from the tuition fees payment of the second or any other child that they send to Covenant University. Staff and faculty members should be offered rebates in the fee payment of their children/dependents. To attract students from the diaspora, the school should offer them rebates and scholarships. This will increase diversity.

Recommendations

The following are recommended to university education marketers:

1. The academic reputation of Christian universities should be emphasised and well-founded. Christian universities reputations for academic excellence and highly competitive selective admission process should be advertised. Cutting-edge facilities should be available. Faculty members should be leaders in their fields. Even the professional accomplishment of the alumni should be loudly pronounced. Nobody would like to go to a school where he knows that the lecturers do not even have what it takes to teach and the necessary infrastructure is deficient. Prospects should be made to know that the qualified staff component is readily available.
2. The positive outcomes for students should be stressed. Students enrol to be trained so that they can make meaningful support to their families when they graduate. Possible outcomes include employment opportunities for students after school; work and school programmes; part-time work within the school; scholarships; education loans; subsidies and even start-up businesses on graduation.
3. Excellent quality of life as a student should be guaranteed. Prospective and existing students should have the assurance that they are safe in school, have good hostels and effective support systems.

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Part V

Conclusion

15

Student University Choice Making in Africa: Emerging Challenges, Opportunities and Agenda for Research, Practice and Policy

Emmanuel Mogaji, Felix Maringe, and Robert Ebo Hinson

Introduction

The need to understand how students decide on which university to attend is important. This understanding is relevant for University manager as they develop their marketing and recruitment strategies. Higher education institutions are facing challenges that has necessitated the need to develop new marketing approaches (Simões & Soares, 2010) as

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Universities need to effectively position themselves in the competitive market.

With specific focus on Africa's higher education market, this book has presented critical insights into student university choice making. Chapters of this book offers theoretical and practical implications in an area that has been neglected. These studies supplement the existing literature on the field of higher education marketing and student choice by highlighting the factors determining the decision-making process of African students.

These topics were covered over three themes. Theme 1 covers *Choice and Decision Making* with chapters theoretically position universities as custodians of information and with the obligation to share the information to allows student to engage with it. Theme 2 explores factors influencing choice with studies from Nigeria and South Africa while Theme 3 focuses on *Attracting Prospective Students* which highlights how Universities are positioning themselves to attract prospective student, with through using ranking, information on website or the marketing mix.

In concluding this book, this chapter has three objectives. First, to summarise the key findings presented in the book, providing critical insights into student university choice making in Africa. Second, to present a summary of both theoretical contributions and managerial implications for scholars, students, managers, practitioners, and policy-makers in the field of higher education marketing, and thirdly, highlight research agendas for a better understanding of marketing higher education in Africa.

Summary of Studies

Although the chapters in this book do not constitute a representative sample of research on the student choice across the African continent, they nevertheless represent some of the latest offerings on the subject. Thirteen chapters were included with two having a general focus on the African continent, majority of the book chapters focuses on Nigeria,

Table 15.1 Summary of all the chapters

Conceptual/thematic area	Author/s and country	Topic	Country Focus	Methodological emphases	Contribution to the field
Theme 1: Choice and Decision Making	Robert Ebo Hinson, Emmanuel Mogaji	*Co-Creation of Value by Universities and Prospective Students: Towards an Informed Decision-Making Process*	Africa	A largely theoretical chapter, providing an analysis for co creation of value between Universities providing information and University students process the information	Presented a theoretical framework Exploring the relationship between supply and demand of information. University needs to highlight their values and enhance the students' information processing stage
	Clement Adamba	*Understanding High School Students' University Choice—Implications for Marketing and Management of Higher Education in Ghana*	Ghana	Questionnaires administered to final year senior high school students in Ghana using stated preference (intent to choose) approach	Final year senior high school students from Ghana recognising institutional reputation, infrastructure, economic and family as factors influencing their choice of higher education
	Godwin Muhangi	Delving into Undergraduate students' choice of higher education in Uganda	Uganda	A largely descriptive and analytic paper based on both primary and secondary data analyses	Factors such as reference groups, family background and sponsorship influence students' choice of a higher education institution

(continued)

Table 15.1 (continued)

Conceptual/thematic area	Author/s and country	Topic	Country Focus	Methodological emphases	Contribution to the field
	Felix Maringe and Otilia Chiramba	International and Southern African perspectives on Choice and decision making of young people in Higher Education	South Africa	Systematic review of literature to understand perspectives on choice and decision making of young people in Higher Education	The review identifies ten descriptors of the nature of emerging research on choice and decision-making in higher education in Southern Africa; it further suggests that qualitative studies tend to be predominant. The research in this area is described as tentative, mostly descriptive and a theoretical. There is call for more diverse form of research to explore choice, decision-making and recruitment in an increasingly competitive and commercialised higher education sector in Southern Africa
Theme 2: Factors influencing Choice	Samuel Adeyanju, Emmanuel Mogaji, Johnson A. Olusola, Muhammed A. Oyinlola and Babajide Macaulay	*Factors Influencing Students' Choice of a Federal University: A Case Study of a Nigerian Federal University*	Nigeria	Quantitative study. Questionnaires administered to Undergraduate students at a single federal University in Nigeria	Personal interest of student to attend a federal university is reported. This is followed by parental influence, university reputation, university ranking, and fees. The results provide an understanding of students' choices for universities in a Nigerian context, especially from a federal university point of view

Table 15.1 (continued)

Conceptual/ thematic area	Author/s and country	Topic	Country Focus	Methodological emphases	Contribution to the field
	Yirakpoa Ikaba and Charles Enyindah	*Evaluative Criteria for Selection of Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria*	Nigeria	Quantitative study, survey students across the Geopolitical zone of the country to understand their selection criteria	Identifies location as an important choice factor for Nigerian students. Teaching quality, opinion of parents, facilities, reputation and proximity were also found to be significant
	Adesoga Adefulu, Temitope Farinloye, Emmanuel Mogaji	*Factors Influencing Post Graduate Students' University Choice in Nigeria*	Nigeria	The research utilised multiple qualitative in-depth interviews to discover factors influencing post-graduate students' university choice in Nigeria	Confirms and better illustrates the concerns with location as a factor influencing choice of University in Nigeria. The economic and security reasons of travelling on poor road networks often makes student choose University that is close to home. Religious affiliations and prior experience at Undergraduate level are also significant factors

Table 15.1 (continued)

Conceptual/ thematic area	Author/s and country	Topic	Country Focus	Methodological emphases	Contribution to the field
	André Calitz, Margaret Cullen, Carlien Jooste	*Factors and Sources of Information that influence a Student's University of Choice*	South Africa	Quantitative study. First questionnaire was distributed to home students while second questionnaire was distributed to International student to understand factors and sources of information that influence a student's university of choice	Differences in national and international student's source of information and facto influencing choice. The results will assist the international offices and marketing departments to identify the important factors to consider and focus their attention on, when recruiting students, specifically from Africa
	Genevieve Bosah	Consumer behaviour and student motivation influence the choice of higher learning institutions in Africa	Nigeria	Quantitative study. Questionnaire was distributed to students in a Nigerian University	Course accreditation and programmes were reported as being the most important factor when deciding on a higher education institution. In addition, there are other social, economic and educational factors that influences students' choices

Table 15.1 (continued)

Conceptual/thematic area	Author/s and country	Topic	Country Focus	Methodological emphases	Contribution to the field
Customer service and/or satisfaction theme 3: Attracting Prospective Students	Emmanuel Mogaji, Amarachukwu Anyogu, Thomas Wayne	Minding the Gap: An assessment of the quality of course information available on the websitesofAfrican Universities	Africa	A content analysis of programme pages on institutional websites of Africa's top 30 Universities using the ALARA Model of Information Search	The need for African universities to provide information about their programme and keep their website updated as prospective students will engage with the quality of information provided
	Margaret Cullen, André Calitz and Watiri Kanyutu	*The importance of University Rankings for Students' University of Choice: A South African perspective*	South Africa	A questionnaire was developed from literature and captured on the online survey tool Questionpro. The URL was distributed to post-graduate students	The chapter confirmed the desirability of ranking from a student's perspective, however, Universities should rely on internal quality measures like internal audits where factors can be benchmarked against appropriate institutions locally and globally

(continued)

Table 15.1 (continued)

Conceptual/ thematic area	Author/s and country	Topic	Country Focus	Methodological emphases	Contribution to the field
	Nevensha Sing	*Narrative Experiences of Doctoral Students' Vulnerability in South Africa*	South Africa	A narrative research approach based on the foundation of socio-cultural theory, the study explored the phenomenon of vulnerability through semi-structured narrative interviews with self-identified doctoral students at risk	Students' vulnerability is a multi-dimensional concept, however with the understanding of individual student's vulnerabilities, Universities can improve their systems and support network, including training the Doctoral supervisors
	Stella Aririguzoh	*Making a Private University Appealing to Prospective Students: A Case of Covenant University*	Nigeria	Utilises a case study approach and Marketing Mix to theoretically explore the University's marketing strategies	The paper uses 7P marketing mix to provide insights into what the best private University in Nigeria is doing to attract prospective students

with five chapter and this was closely followed by South Africa with four chapters. Ghana and Uganda were a focus of one chapter each.

Considering the m methodological emphasis of the chapter, six chapters adopted a quantitative methodology using questionnaires with students while two chapters utilised Qualitative in-depth interviews with participants. There were one chapter each using case study, content analysis, descriptive and analytic research, systematic review of literature and theoretical positioning. Table 15.1 presents a summary of all the thirteen chapters. This fills a gap in the unresearched higher education market in Africa (Mogaji, Farinloye, & Aririguzoh, 2017).

Implications of Studies

The research presented in this book has important implications for marketing and recruitment strategies pursued by HEIs in Africa. The chapters present type of information prospective students will need in order to make an informed decision, the most useful sources of information and advice and the factors influencing the choice.

The information search stage of decision making is a noteworthy influence on consumers' choices (Simões & Soares, 2010). While Universities are recognised for their marketing communication, it is important they strategies and be more effective in their marketing and recruitment drive. Universities websites should be updated with relevant information. Social media should also be considered for engaging with different stakeholders. Content creation strategy should be out in place to regularly update profile with relevant information (Farinloye, Mogaji, & Kuika Watat, 2020). Universities can modify their activities on social media to satisfy the information need of their prospective students, this can include observing the online discussions, replying to comments and questions on social media and providing accurate information (Le, Dobele, & Robinson, 2019).

Considering that in some part of Africa, especially the disadvantaged communities, they are limited, or unreliable or intermittent access to the internet and this suggests that universities may need to consider other ways for promoting themselves to the recruitment market (Maringe, 2006). This could mean updating their prospectuses to provide relevant

information for students, if printed copies cannot be posted, it should be made available online for download. In addition, to position the university brand to attract prospective students, public relations, corporate social activities and global partnership should be explored.

It is not surprising that in Africa, applicants will rely on current and former students, tutors, parents, siblings and friends for guidance and information about University. This highlights opportunities for Universities to engage with these stakeholders, carrying them along and ensuring they provide a positive word of mouth in their role as communication channels.

Regarding the choice factors considered by prospective students, the studies highlighted location, future job prospects, teaching quality, staff expertise, and availability of program and fees as essentials. These factors however differ from country to country. Though previous studies from developed world has identified factors that shapes student decision, it is important to note that higher education institutions (HEI) cannot simply extend the practices designed from other countries (Ahmad & Hussain, 2017) for recruiting and admitting students in Africa, considering its unique and emerging segment of higher education market. This studies further suggest that Universities need to better understand their students and differentiate communication strategies according to search patterns (Simões & Soares, 2010).

The higher education environment has become increasingly competitive and this research has demonstrated that applicants to HE are no longer passive consumers in this environment (Maringe, 2006). As Applicants are becoming discerning choosers in the HE marketplace, University managers needs a better understanding of the choice factors and information sources utilised across various segments in order to develop an effective campaign. Universities need to recognise that different segment of the student body will require different form of information, therefore using the findings of these chapters, Managers can customise messages and provide suitable content across their communication channels to fit targeted segments.

Finally, while there some differences as well as similarities in findings between these countries, it is important to note that findings not be directly transferrable to other countries within the continent, likewise

what is applicable for individual institutions may not be applicable in another University, even in the same country, so there needs to be a contextual understanding of these factors. Subsequent section presents research agenda to fill this gap in knowledge.

Agenda for Future Research on Students' University Choice Making in Africa

It is essential to acknowledge that this book covered only a limited scope of students' university choice making in Africa. While attempts have been made in providing theoretical insight through the chapters in this book, there are opportunities to extend knowledge about this subject area as findings will be relevant for:

- Students studying and researching higher education marketing and management;
- Scholars and academic researchers in higher education marketing, providing a theoretical underpinning for their research and theory development;
- Universities' Managers and Administrators who needs to understand student choice and decision making in order to develop their marketing and recruitment strategies
- Practitioners—marketing, advertising, and brand agencies with interest in marketing higher education in Africa; and
- Policymakers who are responsible for the quality and quantity of higher education in Africa.

This section highlights five broad areas for future research to shape knowledge about the educational sector in Africa.

Student Choice Across Africa as a Unique Market

It is recognised that African universities' challenges multifaced. They face unique developmental challenges located in narratives of poverty,

postcolonialism, coloniality, and more recently, decolonization (Maringe, 2020), this therefore necessitate the need to theoretically explore and understand the uniqueness of Africa as a different market, in terms of students option of which University to study (to stay at home country, travel to other countries in Africa, attend International Brand Causes or go outside Africa). This strand of research should focus on specific and unique African problems.

Student Choice Across Other Countries

The studies in the book predominantly focuses on Nigeria and South Africa, though the education system in these countries are huge, there are opportunities for research to explore how student choose their universities in other part of the continent. While there is a study from Uganda, representing the East Africa, there is no insight yet from the North Africa. That is an area that was not covered in this research and therefore opens opportunity for future research. It is paramount to extend knowledge about student choices in other part of the continent, to understand if the choices found in south and west of the continent is important or different from other parts of the continent.

Student Choice Across Different University Type

Ndofirepi, Farinloye, and Mogaji (2020) recognise the heterogenous nature of Africa Universities. The cost has often been a determining factor for students to consider public Universities but with growing middle class on the continent, there are growing demands for private University education and International education outside home country. Future study should endeavour to empirically establish the factors influencing choices among different Universities. Why does students choose government university over public university? Could it be the fees or the availability of relevant programs? With different types of universities, fields of study and types of university, for example, public and private universities, and arts, humanities or science subjects (Dao & Thorpe, 2015; Farinloye, Adeola, & Mogaji, 2020), future studies should endeabiour to

identify factors affecting student choices of these univrrsities. Likewise, about the choice between religious and non-religious private university. Could a religious affiliation of the students (and parents) influence their choice of studying in a religious private university?

Student Choice Influenced by Different Factors

Future studies should endeavour to understand how specific factors are shaping student's decision-making process, with specific focus on the African higher education market. Factors to consider includes servicescape of Universities in Africa, perhaps students are not deterred by poor physical environments and excited by enthusiastic staff and students in the public universities (Winter & Chapleo, 2017), the impact of facilities (Price, Matzdorf, Smith, & Agahi, 2003), location (Winter & Thompson-Whiteside, 2017), ranking and prestige (Dearden, Grewal, & Lilien, 2019), safety and security (Calitz, Cullen, & Jooste, 2019) and destination image (Phau, Shanka, & Dhayan, 2010).

Student Choice Influenced by Who and What

A more indebt insight is needed into understanding the who and what influences the students in Africa. The 'who' recognises the people around the students, their parent, siblings, friends and school counsellor, how they influence the student into choosing a University. The 'what' explores the physical features of the University, including the location, programmes and prestige. Research into the sources of information is also important. Do African Universities produce prospectus even though it has been found to be an effective source of information (Mogaji & Yoon, 2019), if they do, what are the content, what messages are they conveying to prospective students? How can these messages be strategically positioned to appeal to the students? As internet plays a crucial role in communicating and engaging with the students (Mogaji, 2016), how updated is the website to provide information? How are student engaging with social media? The challenges with access

to internet facilities should also be recognised. How about the roles of parents, especially in collectivistic society where there is a close long-term commitment to the member 'group', be that a family, extended family, or extended relationships and loyalty (to place of worship and religious University) is paramount (Hofstede, 2019). The understanding of these 'who' and 'what' will assist in shaping the marketing strategies of the Universities.

Conclusion

Understanding how student decides which University is important, more like understanding the consumer behaviour in order to develop the strategic marketing communications to engage with the students. The expectations of students are changing and importantly communicating with them is evolving (Mogaji, Maringe, & Hinson, 2020a). Irrespective of the type of university, there are marketing challenges as they engage with students who have choices to make about which university to attend. In the competitive higher education market, developing strategies to reflect the decision making proves of the students is important for any University that wants to remain viable and attract partnership and global recognition.

Empirical insights have been provided through various chapters of this book, and this chapter attempts to offer key summaries and present a theoretical framework for student university choice making in Africa. The resultant chapters in the book are different in focus, likewise in terms of the methodologies that were adopted. The authors' affiliations are also international in scope. The collection reflects the diversity and breadth of current research within this stimulating research area. This however also highlights the challenges of researchers in Africa who do not have the resources and capabilities to produce rigorous research which can be published in high-quality journals and books.

Some manuscripts exploring interesting topic were ultimately excluded from publications because of the poor research. design and theoretical underpinning. This inadvertently will affect the quantity and quality of research output from that part of the world. African

universities need to champion the redefinition of what counts as research and knowledge to rediscover lost knowledge forms and values, which help in the development of shaping new identities and a sense of being of the African university (Mogaji, Maringe, & Hinson, 2020b).

In addition, there are some limitations with regards to this book which should be considered. Not all the countries and education systems in the continent have been covered, and some areas still need further research to extend our understanding of how student decides on which University to attend, the factors influencing their choices and their source of information. The preceding section presents areas for future research.

It has been a great pleasure to contribute to knowledge on higher education marketing from the student decision making point of view, and it is anticipated that this will shape further discussion and theoretical advancement which will be relevant for scholars, students, managers, practitioners, and policymakers in the field of higher education marketing.

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Correction to: Factors Influencing Students' Choice of a Federal University: A Case Study of a Nigerian Federal University

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The original version of this chapter was inadvertently published with incorrect chapter co-author names. The names were published as "Johnson Olusola" and "Mohammed Oyinlola" instead of "Johnson A. Olusola" and "Muhammed A. Oyinlola", respectively, which have now been corrected. The corrections to the book have been updated with the changes.

The updated version of this chapter can be found at
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