A Study Investigating M L Sultan Technikon's Students Awareness and Rating of the Technikon's Presence on the World Wide Web

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ABSTRACT

This paper serves to outline the advantages of a tertiary institution, in having a Web site as a form of advertising. It draws on theories of consumer behaviour and services marketing in order to establish the basis for Internet advertising, in relationship with literature obtained on Web based marketing. The paper is based on a case study (M L Sultan Technikon) and it poses the question of whether M L Sultan Technikon students are aware of the Web site. It also tries to determine how the students rate the Technikon's Web site. The research is descriptive in nature and self-administered questionnaires were used as the research instrument The findings of the study show that there was a high level of awareness of the Technikon's Web site amongst students but there was low usage of the site.

It was found that students preferred using the Central Applications office more to obtain information regarding their application to a particular programme. It was further established that students relied to a large extent on previous students' word-of-mouth on the programmes on offer. The Internet did not appear as a particularly popular medium for gathering information. Here, it was established that students did not have access to computers, thus resulting in poor usage of the Web site. The overall comments and rating of the Technikon Web site was average.

It has thus been concluded that the Technikon needs to update the Web site more often in order to keep users from re-visiting the site and to create an overall exciting impression. The Technikon also has to invest in marketing the Web site more so that there is greater reach. It has also been concluded that the advantages of advertising on the Web is beneficial to a company in general. The Technikon needs to use Internet advertising in conjunction with traditional media to appeal to both the traditional and sophisticated student.

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

"To be a world class education institution of technology for entrepreneurial leadership"

M L Sultan Technikon Vision

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the past, M L Sultan Technikon utilised traditional media (newspapers, radio and television) only to advertise the institution and programmes on offer. Recently, in keeping with current technological trends, they have started advertising on the Internet by creating a web site. The web site contains information about the campus, programmes on offer (undergraduate, post-graduate and short courses), staff and extra-curricular activities. However, it is all well and good that a web site exists, but is it being utilised by the target market? Is it reaching the target market? Does the web site provide ample information for the prospective student? Is it easy to use? Does it create a positive image for the institution? These are the questions surrounding the issue of M L Sultan Technikon's web site.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO PROBLEM

One of the criteria that set Technikon's apart from universities is that Technikon's offer diplomas while universities offer degrees. However, most or almost all programmes are on offer at both types of institutions. This posed a problem in the past, as universities were seen as elitist and Technikon's were for the poor – financially and intellectually. Further, in a racially segregated era, academic institutions were racially divided. Thus, there were particular universities and Technikon's for the

whites and blacks. Financial status and acceptance at an institution is assumed to be the most important deciding factors for students.

However, post 1994, all institutions were open to the entire population. Anyone could study at whichever institution they desired. However, there still existed the different reputations and images of the individual institutions. In the Kwa-Zulu Natal region, there is the Natal University (Durban and Pietermaritzburg), University of Durban-Westville and UNISA. The 3 Technikon's are M L Sultan Technikon, Mangosuthu Technikon and Natal Technikon. Technikons are now allowed to offer postgraduate degrees. Short courses, part-time programmes and even distance learning programmes are offered at all institutions. Tertiary institutions are now working with industry to compile customized programmes for management studies.

There is rapid change within South Africa's economy after being allowed back into world trade. The industry scenes are changing with a demand for careers in technology. In the same vain, educational institutions are trying to keep up with world standards. In a fiercely competitive environment where small colleges and international satellite campuses are being started up, local institutions face a tough challenge of staying successful. Now, marketing strategies are being used to freshen images and reputations and to attract prospective students. There is a marked change from advertising practices in the past to the present.

The changes in advertising practice are occurring because the education sector was not directly seen as part of the service market industry. Education was seen as only academic and thus required no further marketing strategy to ensure student interest. However, *"educational institutions are a major service provider. It is also noted that marketing in educational sector was very limited and most of the marketing was left to the public relations department that had limited resources and budgets"* (Morgan, 1991). Now, with the trend in Internet marketing and with competition being very strong,

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the question is whether tertiary institutions, with special reference to M L Sultan Technikon, utilises the World Wide Web effectively to advertise their programs and institutions.

The **Web** has introduced a much broader audience to the Internet and allows any organization or individual to have a 24-hour a day presence i.e. the Web is time and location independent (Norton & Smith, 1996). Marketers can provide full colour virtual catalogues, on screen order forms and online customer support. According to Archer & Yuan (1999), it has been found that through the use of the Internet, companies can announce and even distribute certain products and services easily and then elicit customer feedback.

Cyber service overcomes many of the traditional problems of service marketing by giving the marketer control over all services. It may be argued that in services research, education as a specific marketing area has been ignored. Like many other "professional services", education has tended to shun marketing (Lovelock, 1983). Education, however, remains a service capable of being marketed as any other product or service. In this instance, education, being an intangible product, has to emphasize its external marketing strategies to attract new students. According to Gronroos (1982) and Oliver (1981), it is important to understand customer expectations, as it is the key to understanding and delivering quality service.

It is this change in reaching the student that is vital as the Internet is now the major source of communication for most students. M L Sultan Technikon, in trying to reach their vision statement, has to become more technologically orientated and innovative in their approach to learning methods in order to reach worldwide standards. Their presence on the Internet is a positive step in reaching the goal of becoming a world-class institution.

1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND - M L SULTAN TECHNIKON

M L Sultan Technikon is a 71-year-old institution that stands out quite uniquely among South African tertiary institutions. It was the only institution that was established and supported for decades by the Indian community, who were themselves the descendents of semi-slave workers brought by the British from India to work in South Africa's sugar plantation and mines. The generosity of M L Sultan, an Indian businessman, made possible the laying of the foundations of what is today a massive and progressive institution, with a student complement of 8500 and a staff complement of 800. In keeping with the transformation in the country, more than half of the student population is of the black population. The Technikon's equity policy is also facilitating changes in the demographics of the staff complement.

In 1946, the then Minister of Education declared the M L Sultan Technical College an approved institution for higher education and in 1953, the City Council of Durban donated six acres of land at Curries Fountain, Centenary Road. The institution became a College for Advanced Technical Education (CATE) from 1 March 1969. In May 1979, the status and name changed and M L Sultan Technikon became a tertiary technical institution. The Technikon is a full member of the Committee of Technikon Principals and as such subscribes to the ethos of Technikon education, which is to provide quality tertiary, career-oriented education.

"To be a world class education institution of technology for entrepreneurial leadership."

(M L SULTAN VISION)

"In its quest to train leaders for tomorrow, M L Sultan Technikon, strives for the transformation of higher education through sustainable, quality teaching, learning, research and development programmes in participation with industry and the wider community."

(M L SULTAN MISSION STATEMENT)

The M L Sultan Technikon is a tertiary institution providing quality career oriented education. There are a wide variety of programmes on offer in the 26 academic departments that make up the Faculties of Arts, Commerce, Engineering and Science. Besides a wide range of courses up to the diploma level, the Technikon has been granted permission to offer programmes leading to the award of Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech), Master of Technology (M.Tech) and Doctor of Technology (D.Tech). It also serves the community by offering intensive short courses in various high-level industrial and commercial skills, both in response to requests from individual companies and from the public in general.

The Technikon endeavours to attract top-quality staff and students by providing some of the finest facilities available and by offering a remission of fees to those who register with excellent matriculation symbols. For those who have difficulties, there is a comprehensive support system ranging from financial aid to educational development.

The Assistant Vice Chancellor is in charge of managing and implementing a host of student services in a rapidly changing and increasingly demanding tertiary educational arena. The office of the Assistant Vice Chancellor strives to contribute to the maximal development of the potential of the Technikon's students through non-formal education within the Technikon's multi-cultural environment. The mission of the office of the Assistant Vice Chancellor is to assist in the personal, academic, cultural and social development of students and in the development of a sound, active and democratic student life.

The Academic Support Programme functions under the label of Educational Development. Its primary goal is to provide the necessary backup in the form of educational assistance, especially in respect of skills training for disadvantaged students to enable them successfully to complete their academic programme. The programme has been in existence since 1990.

1.4 PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The objectives of this study are to look specifically at how M L Sultan rates on the Internet with regards to advertising and to determine if there is student awareness of the site. There are basically three objectives:

1. The first objective is to identify who uses the web site, whether there are more males than females and perhaps differences in use within race groups.

2. The second objective is to determine how students perceive M L Sultan's advertising on the Internet. This rating process will entail a system whereby students will be asked to rate the web site according to page design, imaging, and ease of use, responsiveness and availability of information.

3. The third objective is to provide recommendations and changes, which can be implemented to the marketing strategy currently employed.

This investigative study will be able to determine to a small extent, if M L Sultan Technikon's Internet based advertising is effective or not.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Time was a limiting factor as not all first year students could be approached due to the large number of students that were registered for the first year course. Another limiting factor is that only two departments were used as convenient samples. The two departments were, the Department of

Computer Studies and the Department of Medical Sciences. Access to these departments was viable and student numbers were sufficient, thus this made it the choice of sample.

Another limitation of the study was student access to computers. Not all students necessarily had access to computers prior to Technikon registration. Students who enrolled at the Technikon come from both rural and urban areas. The demographics of the first year population vary. However, the vast majority do come from the disadvantaged areas and prefer other more traditional methods of media. This problem was overcome by means of the questionnaire that enabled the researcher to determine whether computer access is a problem for those students who did not visit the Technikon's Web site. It was also found that first year students were shy and wary of answering questionnaires during their free time and even during lecture time. Another factor was that in some classes, not all the students attended classes regularly. This problem was overcome by using another class. This was easy to do, as the student numbers in both Medical Sciences and Computer Studies are large enough to continue sampling. Students were also assured of confidentiality and that failure to answer the questionnaire would not result in a penalty. The reason for the study was also given briefly.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

The dissertation is divided into two sections. The first section comprises the introduction and the literature survey. The literature review gives an overview of the theoretical aspect of the study and how this is applicable to the research problem. The second part of the dissertation comprises of the analysis of results, the conclusions and recommendations.

1.7 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

The focus of this chapter was on the problem that is posed to the management of M L Sultan Technikon with regards to advertising and also about the history of the Technikon, how it came into being and how it has developed. It also looked at the structure of the dissertation as well as limitations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

"Web commerce is information intensive; sites intended for transactions become very much information sources."

(Fortune, 1998)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The three theoretical concepts that have formed the basis of this study is as follows:

1. Advertising on the Internet

2. Services and Brand Awareness

3. Consumer Behaviour in a Services Setting

It is important that the reader understand the differences of advertising on the Internet as compared to advertising in traditional forms of media. There is also further explanation as to how Internet advertising can be more advantageous than traditional advertising. The second part, services and brand awareness, explains to the reader the differences between managing a product and a service on the Internet. It also provides an explanation of how brand awareness of a service can be successfully managed and implemented. The third aspect of the literature review gives an in depth analysis of consumer behaviour in a services setting. All these concepts are inter-related to form a holistic background to how technology can be implemented and managed in an educational environment.

2.2 ADVERTISING ON THE INTERNET

Throughout history, technological breakthroughs have created major changes in the way we communicate and relate to each other. In past years a new communication has broken through:

interactive networks that allow individuals to retrieve and deliver large amounts of information to one or more recipients. Information that is processed is digital thus allowing it to be manipulated, replicated and distributed easily. The largest and fastest growing network is the Internet, which has been termed as today's "information super highway". Research by Groenne P & Barker C (1997), found that the growth of the Internet is driven by increasing ease of use, access and telecommunication costs, cheaper and faster computers and increasing amounts of entertainment and information.

In a remarkably short time span the Internet has become an important method of selling goods and services to consumer and industrial buyers around the world. Research by McQuitty and Peterson (2000), has indicated that in 1995 the estimated value of all goods and services sold through the Internet was less than $2 billion and predictions show that annual online sales should increase to approximately 200% by 2001.

2.2.1 SEARCHING POWER GREATLY MAGNIFIED

The Internet offers searchers both convenience and potential cost saving benefits. The benefits of shopping or searching for information online are that online any product is available at anytime and from any location. As majority of consumers seek extraordinary values, they need to know what web sites offer a given product and at what price. This is quite similar to traditional shopping but now the searching power of a consumer is considerably magnified. An online shopper can visit ten different websites in ten minutes that cannot be said for other media sources. As in the tertiary educational sector, very often the telephonic enquiries are often busy and expensive; the Internet allows one to casually search for information regarding programmes, staff or facilities.

2.2.2 IMPORTANCE OF A WEB PAGE

According to Mcquitty and Peterson (2000), a web page is direct and self-selecting as *"only individuals who are interested in purchasing a particular product need spend time searching for information or visiting web sites"*. An Internet presence in most industries is getting stronger and almost all competing companies will have their own web page that can be easily accessed by any potential customer with Internet access. It is now important for management to recognize the importance of the Internet market and to set up a web page for their companies

According to Norton, B & Smith C (1996), the earlier companies that tried marketing on the Internet failed due to a sudden barrage of advertisements on the Internet. This caused the networks to become overloaded with information, resulting in angry Internet users. They failed to pay attention in targeting the groups that would be most interested in their advertisements. However they were successful in a way because they did manage to get their message through, it was a very low cost exercise as compared to normal advertising and they did get replies even if some were negative. Norton B & Smith C (1996) found that the shift in stance towards marketing has taken place since the advent of the World Wide Web. The appearance of the World Wide Web has made it easy for firms to write advertisements and allows consumers to come to the advertising site rather than being bombarded with what is regarded as junk mail.

2.2.3 WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT THE WORLD WIDE WEB?

According to Norton & Smith (1996), there are ten rules that make the Internet different to other forms of media. The ten rules have been thus summarised as follows:

1. Firstly, electronic consumers cannot be treated like television viewers, newspaper readers or people looking at billboards. Newsgroup messages are not delivered to a person like ordinary

mail. Consumers log on when they like, then glance at the subject of messages, take what they like and ignore the rest. With a World Wide Web site, the consumer chooses where to visit, how long to visit and when to visit. However with the World Wide Web, it does allow the company to monitor the visitors.

2. Secondly, it is just as important to make the site as interesting and attractive as when it is done for TV or paper based advertising. Internet users are also becoming increasingly sophisticated and demanding in their choices due to the many claims on their attention.

3. There are almost no restrictions, apart from cost, to the amount of information a company can make available. This availability is 24 hours a day and is even available on Sundays- the World Wide Web does not close.

4. It is vitally important that a company avoids brash marketing and unsubstantiated claims. Due to the unlimited potential of consumer reach of the Internet, if a company makes a promise it cannot deliver on, thousands of people will know about it in a few minutes. An upset customer will quickly pass on dissatisfaction.

5. Electronic communications are interactive- it is very easy for the consumer to reply. Marketing is no longer one-way communication. When a company asks a question, within minutes of transmission it can expect to receive many responses. In the past the advertiser invaded the consumers' living rooms, now it is returned. This two-way communication has the potential for building stronger relationships with consumers, wherever they may be.

6. The best World Wide Web sites are interesting, different and have more to offer than the usual marketing hype. These sites are constantly updated to keep the sites fresh, alive and thus more attractive for people to revisit.

7. The Internet allows smaller companies to compete in the global market without the cost of a multinational infrastructure.

8. Market entry is now easier and has a lower cost on the Internet. This increases the need for businesses to track what other companies are doing.

9. The global community has more cultural differences and companies have to be more sensitive when advertising on the Internet.

10. Paying for products and services in a secure and confidential way is slowly being resolved. There are genuine fears concerning interception and fraud.

2.2.4 WHAT ARE THE MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE WEB AND TRADITIONAL MASS MEDIA FROM AN ADVERTISING PERSPECTIVE?

The World Wide Web, according to Barker & Groenne (1997), is a hybrid medium that shares characteristics with mass communication as well as interpersonal communication. The web combines the ability of the mass media to disperse a message to a wider audience with a high possibility of providing individualized information using feedback and interaction. The low barriers to entry to the medium and the absence of gatekeepers between content providers and the audience means that validation of the quality and authenticity of the content becomes a key issue on the Web. The Web being an interactive medium allows the users to play a much more active role in the communication process than users of traditional mass media. The traditional mass media is characterised by an information push, which means that information is merely provided to consumers without any participation. The Web on the other hand is more driven by a basic information pull, meaning that the control balance of the communication process has shifted in favour of the consumer. The consumer that once had to do something actively to avoid the advertisements now has to do something active to access the advertising Web sites. This means that the World Wide Web is not as effective as television for advertising that depends on a high degree of intrusiveness.

Since Web users actively get information, rather than have it distributed to them, the costs of distribution on the Web are very low from the point of view of the advertiser. Thus, the marginal

cost of delivering extra information depth or letting more users access the information are very low. While the important factor in traditional media is the access to distribution as well as access to attention, the differing factor on the World Wide Web is only access to attention.

According to surveys conducted by Barker & Groenne (1997), it was found that the reach of the World Wide Web is still very limited. Their survey found that as of late 1995, there were only approximately 11,5 million people who accessed the World Wide Web in the United States. It was further found that in comparison to the 89% of television viewers the Web held only 2% of the population. This made the Web as not suited as a primary advertising medium for advertisers that rely to a large extent on frequent exposures to mass target audiences.

Barker & Groenne (1997) further established in their study that while the audience that can be reached through the Web is still very limited, the demographic characteristics makes it an attractive target group for many advertisers. It was found that users of the Web are generally affluent and well educated. The Web through its rapid growth is still attracting new users at a great pace. This increase in users will attract new content providers with better quantity and quality of content that in turn will attract more and new users. Further, the rapid and technological advances improving supply will make it cheaper, easier and faster to use the Web. This will expand the possibilities of delivering video, music and 3-D virtual reality clips. However, the limitation of expanding the World Wide Web to the less educated and less affluent parts of the population still has to be tackled. In South Africa this is a majority of the population.

On the Web, advertising revenues today are mainly derived from selling banner adverts. Banner adverts are the type of adverts that appear on other sites and can be flash advertising. Due to the limited size and the ease of with which the user can escape from them, the sensory impact and intrusiveness of banner adverts is very limited compared to advertisements on television or in

newspapers. However, banner adverts can be used to generate other browsers to the advertiser's Web site. Users that browse the web site voluntarily are generally actively interested and have an involvement in the advertisement that is high compared to traditional media. Thus, while the Web has a limited efficiency for advertisements that depend on a high degree of intrusiveness, it is an ideal advertising channel for advertisements capable of attracting exposure on demand.

Barker & Groenne (Advertising on the World Wide Web, page 5, 1997), however concluded that *"the Web is a medium that may become a tough competitor for traditional media because of its ability to provide large amounts of individualised information on demand to a self-segmenting audience, to proceed feedback, customer service, transactions and in some cases distribution with an ease which is unknown in mass media"*. However, they also conclude that advertising on the Web is to remain a secondary advertising medium for the majority of advertisers in the short and medium term because of its low reach and limited intrusiveness.

2.2.5 HOW THE WORLD WIDE WEB IS USED FOR ADVERTISING PURPOSES?

Groenne, P & Barker, C (1997) have researched three basic issues, that should be considered by companies wanting to advertise on the Internet. These factors are:

- **Audience fit**
- **Product fit**
- **General benefits to the company**

Audience fit refers to the similarity between the target group and the Web users (Groenne & Barker). Companies that target young, well-educated, affluent, techno-savvy users and students are likely to find a high audience fit. **Product fit** refers to how the product or service is suited to the medium, in terms of buyer involvement, information intensity and possibilities of increasing

purchaser facilitation (Groenne & Barker). Advertising on the Internet means that the consumer has a high control over exposure to advertisements. Thus the perceived relevance of the advertisements becomes a very important factor. High involvement products or services are more likely to gain significant exposure. The Web has the capacity to supply large amounts of updated information in the form of text and graphics and it also allows the customer to search this information in great detail from anywhere in the world. This then means that the Web offers greater possibilities unparalleled in other media for advertising information-intensive products or services.

"Products that have a high product fit and audience fit, such as books and software, have a high potential for being advertised on the Web and the medium is likely to draw ever larger portions of advertising spending from this category of spending". (Groenne P & Barker C, p5, 1997). It has been found that products such as sanitary towels, detergents and basic personal hygiene products hold a limited potential with regard to low audience fit and low product fit.

It has been found by Groenne & Barker, that companies advertising on the Internet also benefit by earning a better image and fewer problems with customers. The positive image effects associated with establishing a Web presence are important since companies that use the Web are perceived as being innovative and future-orientated. Another important factor to be considered when advertising on the Web is that interactive markets are very likely to prevail in the future, thus learning curve advantages increases with an already established Web site.

According to Groenne P & Barker C, (1997), most companies utilise the Internet as a secondary, supplementary component of their media mix both in the short and long term. While the traditional approach to advertising in mass media entails communicating simple, standardized messages to a passive, captive audience, the Internet communicates actively and allows for feedback. If a site is to

get valuable and lasting exposure that leaves a positive impression with the customer, it needs to provide some kind of value in return for the time and money the customer spends visiting the site.

Advertising on the Web is not just for a fleeting visit where the advertiser briefly captures the users attention. The site has to retain and reward the users attention in order to get the right kind of exposures. Thus, the traditional approach to advertising cannot be used in these circumstances if there is to be success on the Web. Advertisers have to adopt a value-based concept of advertising that focuses on providing value for the user. *"As different customer segments respond to different incentives and value proposals, the concept of value-based advertising also entails that the individual advertiser must focus on more specific segments and acquire greater knowledge about the needs and wants of these segments"* (Groenne P & Barker C, p6, 1997).

Research carried out by Groenne P & Barker C (1997) has found that there are three basic approaches that can create value for the customer. These three approaches are:

- **Infomercials**: small interactive commercials that allow a customer to view the product or service
- **Advertainments**: entertaining advertisements that attract users to revisit the site
- **Purchase facilitation**: a secure method for users to order and pay for items on the site

The three approaches do not have to be used on their own but can be used in combination of each other. This means that a Web advertisement can incorporate elements from all three basic approaches. A combination of these three basic approaches to advertising on the web provides value for the customer in ways that are far superior to what can be achieved through traditional media. However, the creation of a value-based Web site is not enough for successful advertising on the Internet. The advertiser must also invest in creating "traffic" to his site. This task can be quite difficult as there are a number of sites that compete for attention on the Web. Some of the ways in

which an advertiser can create awareness of his site is by creating *"banner advertisements, campaigns in traditional media, search engine registration and electronic word-of-mouth effects"* (Groenne P & Barker C, p6, 1997).

Advertising on the Internet should not be seen as an easy task. The difficulty lies in trying to hold the users attention long enough because this type of medium is not as intrusive as that of traditional media. Thus, Internet advertising has to fulfil real needs of the audience. This is further complicated by the increased quality and quantity of contents on the Web site resulting in Web users become more demanding. It is very important that companies attempting to advertise successfully on the Web understand the complexity of this type of medium and not just try to apply traditional media approaches. It is in this context that the authors Groenne and Barker emphasise the changing face of advertising. *"The future of the media landscape is likely to be interactive. The World Wide Web offers valuable insights and learning possibilities for advertisers who wish to understand and influence the development of advertising principles and practices shaped by traditional mass media."* (Groenne P & Barker C, p6, 1997).

2.2.6 WHY A BUSINESS SHOULD GO ON THE INTERNET

Sotkin J (2000) has examined the advantages of a business's presence on the Internet and has arrived at 20 different reasons why a Web site will be profitable to all businesses. The following table outlines the reasons.

TABLE 2.2.6.1: REASONS FOR AN INTERNET PRESENCE

REASONS FOR INTERNET PRESENCE
1.   To establish a presence
2.   To network
3.   To make business information available
4.   To serve the customers
5.   To heighten public interest
6.   To release time sensitive material
7.   To sell things
8.   To make pictures, sounds and video files available
9.   To reach a highly desirable demographic market
10. To answer frequently asked questions
11. To stay in contact with salespeople
12. To open international markets
13. To create a 24 hour service
14. To make changing information available quickly
15. To allow feedback from customers
16. To test market new services and products
17. To reach the media
18. To reach the education and youth market
19. To reach the specialised market
20. To serve your local market

Source: Joan Sotkin (2000) "Internet as a Marketing Tool" (www.sotkin.com/articles/dobiz.htm)

2.2.7 COST FACTORS

According to Norton, B & Smith, C (1996), the cost factors of advertising on the Internet are:

- The amount of space that is bought, usually in megabytes, translated into pages.

- The amount of development work required on information needed to structure it to work on the World Wide Web.

- The use of an experienced graphic designer familiar with the techniques needed for success on the Internet.

- The levels of sophistication and use of graphics in design.

- The numbers and types of hypertext links to other documents or sources on other computer.

- The method and frequency of updating and refreshing it.

Research indicates that in 1996, the price of a simple straightforward web design for a few pages would cost no more than $500 (R3000) to $600 (R4000).

2.2.8 WHAT KIND OF MARKETING STRATEGIES CAN BE USED?

Norton B & Smith C, p79, 1996, have identified nine types of marketing strategies that can be used successfully on the Internet. These are:

1. Catalogues, company contacts and pricing information

2. Product announcements and press releases

3. Promotional notices of special sales

4. Documentation and manuals

5. Market research and customer surveys

6. Reviews and service evaluations

7. Customer service information

8. Recruitment notices

9. Dialogue with and involvement for the customer.

2.3 THE NATURE OF SERVICES

Kotler (1998, p467) defines a service, as *"a service is any act or performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Its production may or may not be tied to a physical product"*. Kotler (1998) goes even further to distinguish services into five categories. Services can be seen as either a minor or major part of the total offer. Thus the five categories are:

1. Pure tangible good - the offer is primarily a tangible good such as soap, where there is no service to accompany the product.

2. Tangible good with accompanying services - the offer has a tangible good that is enhanced by the accompaniment of one or more services e.g. sale of an automobile entails not just the car but also consumer service during and after the sale of the car in terms of warranties, repairs and maintenance.

3. Hybrid - there is equal parts of product and service e.g. restaurants where the food is the good and the waiters are the service.

4. Major Service with accompanying minor goods and services - a major type of service that has supporting goods e.g. airline passengers buy a transportation service. They arrive at their destination without anything to show for the expenditure. However the trip includes meals and snacks and in-flight magazines.

5. Pure service - what is offered is purely a service e.g. babysitting and psychotherapy.

Kotler (1998) also defines services as having varying degrees of good-to-service mix. Services are seen to vary as to whether they are equipment based i.e. vending machines, or people based i.e. accounting services. People based services are further divided into whether they are provided by unskilled, skilled or professional workers. Then there are some services that require the client's

presence. Services also differ in their objectives (profit and non-profit) organizations and ownership (private or public).

Services also have four major characteristics that differ from that of products. These four characteristics are intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability. According to Kotler (1998), services are intangible where it cannot be seen, tasted, felt, heard or smelled before they are bought. Buyers generally search for evidence that the service is of quality before they engage in that service. The way that consumers search is by inferences about the service from the *"place, people, equipment, communication, material, symbols and price"* (Kotler, p469, 1998).

It is also impossible to separate the production and consumption of services. The person providing the service is an important part of the service. The consumer's presence at the time of the service is also part of the interaction. Thus, both provider and consumer interaction is a *"special feature of services marketing...both affect the service outcome"* (Kotler, Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, Implementation and Control, p469, 1998). Services also are highly variable as it is dependent on whom the provider is, where the service is provided and where the service is provided.

Most companies utilise a three-step programme in order to maintain good quality control. The first is that of investing in good human resources selections and training. The second step is to ensure that all service-performance processes throughout the company are standardised. The third step is to monitor consumer satisfaction through suggestions and complaint systems, consumer surveys and comparison-shopping so that any poor service is quickly detected and corrected. Another aspect of services is that services cannot be stored. If an appointment at a doctor's surgery is not kept then the service value existed at that point only. The perishability of services is not a problem when demand

is steady because it is easy to staff the services in advance. When demand fluctuates, service firms have problems with staffing and equipment in trying to meet those demands.

Firms can also anticipate those demands during peak times by:

- Differential pricing- introduction of peak and off-peak tariffs.

- Complementary services- provisions of alternatives while consumers are waiting for service.

- Reservation systems- these are efficient in managing demand in that they are able to foretell a busy season.

- Part-time employees- they are only employed during peak-times.

- Increased consumer participation- consumers are encouraged to participate in tasks.

- Facilities for future expansion- development of organisations will ensure that they are able to meet demands.

Thus it has been determined that the major differences between products and services are intangibility, simultaneity, heterogeneity and perishability. How does the World Wide Web handle these differences? According to Pitt, Berthon and Watson (1999), cyberservice manages to overcome many of the traditional problems that are associated with service marketing. It is believed that these problems can be overcome by giving the marketer unprecedented control over all the marketing characteristics. As an interactive medium, the Web combines the best of mass production and customisation. Pitt, Berthon and Watson (1999), look at the four differences in services and how they are overcome on the World Wide Web.

2.3.1 TANGIBILIZING THE INTANGIBLE

The first characteristic is that of intangibility. One of the main problems that are created for service marketers is that there is nothing to show the customer. Thus, experience and credence qualities are crucial to service marketers. They have to make sure that their customers know that their services exist. To do so, they can use the Web to provide abundant evidence of the services that are available. It is important that consumers have evidence of what they will get when they purchase a service. Fast-food giants McDonalds have employed this strategy of providing evidence of clean restaurants with the presence of cleaning staff. The Royal Automobile Club in the United Kingdom enables users to enrol for membership online (www.rac.co.uk). Information provided on the site includes details of the benefits of the Royal Automobile Club membership, the extent of assistance the club has provided, the service options available and the methods of payment. Most important is that the site e-mails back a new member within a few minutes of joining, confirming all the details and offering instantaneous, tangible proof of membership in the form of a member number. Once the e-mail is printed, it is as good as having a policy document. Under traditional service delivery systems, such as the mail, this transaction would have taken several days at least. The member could have received confirmation over the telephone, but the Web provides instant tangible access.

Although services are considered intangible, effective Web sites can lend a tangible dimension to them. According to Pitt, Berthon and Watson (1999), there is a critical reason for this. They believe that when a person cannot see what they are buying, they look for clues or what psychologists term "cues". In this respect, for example, when people or prospective visitors to a Disney Theme Park are often unsure about the visit because of the large amount of money to be spent. No matter how much of information they have obtained from friends and associates, the doubt will still remains until they have actually visited the park. The quality of the experience will be elusive. This is where the Web site plays an important role. The Web site itself tangibilises the experience. It helps visitors

to actually see and hear in graphic detail the characters and rides available. Potential visitors can obtain further information before booking the visit. Bookings are also done online.

According to Pitt, Berthon and Watson (1999), there are three critical elements that have to be remembered when managing a Web site. These three elements are:

1. Quality: a site must have good quality text, graphics, video and sound. When a customer sees a Web site and not the firm, the site becomes the firm.

2. Frequency of update: surfers generally will not visit a web site often unless it is updated regularly. To ensure that there are repeat visits there ahs to be changes made to the Web site. The Web site is compared to the window displays in the street front. Customers expect it to change.

3. Server speed: in the Web environment speed counts as well as ease of navigation (how easily one can get around the Web site). Customers hate waiting for long periods of time under normal circumstances. Likewise they will not wait a long time for a page to download. They will simply move on. *"Immediacy is central to service and a defining expectation in cyberspace"* (Pitt, Berthon and Watson; Cyberservice: Taming service marketing problems with the World Wide Web; p2; 1999).

2.3.2 SAMPLING IN CYBERSPACE

When a customer gets to sample a company's wares, it generally helps to persuade that customer to purchase that product or service. Product sampling is relatively easy, for example, with wines, customers are allowed to taste the different wines and can thus make a choice and purchase a case or a bottle of wine. Sampling is much more difficult within the services sector. However, the presence of a Web site has changed that. An example of this is the Harvard Business School Publishing Services. Each year they generate millions of dollars selling case studies, books,

multimedia programs and the famous Harvard Business Review. Previously, when instructors wished to sample certain reviews they had to wait a few weeks for it to arrive and then a further few weeks in order for the actual book or review to come. Nowadays, approved instructors from all over the world browse the Harvard site using powerful search facilities to find cases and other materials in which they are interested. The relevant material is then downloaded, with the watermark claiming it as a copy and not to be reproduced. The instructor can then decide if that is the material needed. The web site has made sampling so much easier. This is also the case with tertiary institutions. Students need not go to the campus physically and get brochures about the different programmes on offer. The web sites allow students to browse the different institutions at their own leisure.

2.3.3 MANAGING SIMULTANEITY

In the case of goods, production and consumption do not occur at the same time or place. When services are performed, both the producer and the consumer generally have to be present. Pitt, Berthon and Watson (1999), have found that service marketers can manage simultaneity on the web by customising, treating the customer as part-time employees, making innovation a part of customer participation, industrialising services and reducing customer errors. The Web excels at customisation, because its capacity is based on information technology, data storage and data processing rather than on employees and a physical location. It can customise on a scale that traditional service providers would find impossible to match.

Traditionally, to obtain services customers would have to go to the service facility itself. Clients enter banks, vacationers visit travel agencies and university students attend classes in classrooms. Once at the service facility, customers generally have to do a bit of work themselves. Often the quality of the service they receive is almost dependent on them as on the efforts of the service provider. Customers can then be seen as co-producers or "part-time employees" of the firm. In most

service settings this can be seen as an opportunity to save cost and to spark innovation. An example of such co-production is that of FedEx. Their Web site enables the customer to track the parcel through a tracking number on the Internet. Customers seem to prefer this method of delivery as it saves time on the telephone and is more efficient.

Service industrialisation involves changing the system instead of trying to solve problems that arise. Switchboard operators are replaced by the Web site that helps people locate addresses and telephone numbers. It is more specific and involves more information. When the required information is made available, the customer can also send a postcard via the Internet. Once visitors realise the potential for finding one number they immediately see the value and try to search for other friends and family. Thus, according to Pitt, Berthon and Watson (1999), redesigning the system to provide less service by replacing the human element, actually provides more service. Customers now have access to more information, which is the core element of any service.

An advantage of cyberservice is that customers can be led repeatedly and precisely through a process. Many Web sites require that the customer enter their e-mail address twice because of the high error rate. Whenever it is possible, service marketers are urged to use pull-down lists selections on their Web sites so that customers have less opportunity to make mistakes.

2.3.4 MANAGING HETEROGENEITY

Products tend to be the same in all instances. Manufacturing lines make homogenous products and have quality control procedures in place to test the products as they come off the line. This procedure is carried out in order to ensure that no defective product reaches the market. Services however differ in output where mistakes happen in real time during the service act thereby creating

a number of challenges for the service marketer. Once again the Web offers other unique opportunities to rectify such mistakes or even to prevent them from happening.

Some service marketers are hesitant to standardise activities, as it tends to mechanise and dehumanise interactions between people. On the Web, interactions that occur include electronic help desks, brochures for general information, safety options for any transactions that will involve personal details and credit card details and even frequently asked questions and answers for first time users. In a traditional setting, customers are faced with different service encounters depending on who is serving them and the circumstances involving that person. However, on the Web, the service is relevant, efficient and highly consistent.

Service marketers can gain a general insight into how the service is fairing against competitors by means of electronic eavesdropping. Customers often discuss products and services on the Internet on forums and chat groups. Newsgroups and forums provide a channel through which consumers throughout the world can comment on the company's offerings. The people who do the talking fall into three groups, external customers, competitors' customers and internal customers or employees. By eavesdropping on these comments, companies can collect and analyse comments to learn more about their customers and competitors. Cyberservice involves listening more to customers more intently and reacting electronically in real time. This provides the perfect opportunity to get closer to customers and focus on their needs.

Interactive Web-based questionnaires are a convenient and inexpensive way to collect customer perceptions of service quality or some other aspect of a service. Many companies have the on-line version of SERVQUAL but written in JavaScript that captures customers' expectations and perceptions of service quality. Web-based questionnaires reduce the length of the feedback loop so

that quality problems are rapidly detected and corrected before too many customers are turned away.

2.3.5 MANAGING PERISHABILITY

Services are produced and consumed simultaneously thus companies are unable to store a service away for future use. If a service is not utilised on the same day as production then it is lost forever. Service marketers who are turning to the Internet are using Web sites to productively manage supply and demand. Managing supply in a conventional service includes attention to variables such as retail hours, staffing and decisions on how many customers will be able to use the service at a particular time. The Web solves these issues, as it is a 24-hour service at anytime and at any place. Managing demand on Web sites involves using aspects of the service marketing mix such as pricing, promotions and service bundling to stimulate or dampen demand. Most airline companies resort to auctioning remaining seats on-line even if it is at a low price. Airline profits are still substantial as full capacity is reached on flights with little or no increase in costs.

Cyberservice overturns the traditional hierarchy between the two kinds of corporate offerings, products and service. The Web achieves this by its three unique characteristics that are quantization, search and automation. Quantimising of services, where the services are broken into the smallest possible elements, allows mass customisation by recombining those elements into different and unique packages. The search facilitates hyper-efficient information markets, which allow companies to match supply and demand accordingly. Automation allows users to bypass service bottlenecks, returning power to the customer and overcoming the traditional limitations of time and space.

2.4 BRAND AWARENESS

Imagine a world without brands. It existed once and still does, in some of the world's poorest places. There are no ugly billboards and no McDonalds. Yet, surprisingly, if these people were given a little extra money and a chance to leave this place, they would leave it instantly. In pre-industrial days, people knew exactly what went into their pies and which butchers were trustworthy. However, once they moved into the cities, they no longer knew what to trust. A branded product provided the guarantee of reliability and quality. The storeowners had to ensure that each pie was as good as the last one, so that customers would return. Just as distance created a need for brands in the 19th century, so in the age of globalisation and the Internet, it reinforces their value. *"Consumer trust is the basis of all brand values, therefore the companies that own the brands, have an incentive to retain that trust"* (Sunday Times, October 7 2001). It has been thus found that successful brands are dependent on consumer trust and consistent quality. Public services however, exist in a "no logo" world. If the public sector attempts to brand their products or services, this would arouse suspicion and even derision. This is so because brands have value only where the consumer has a choice. In the public sector, consumers rarely have a choice of service provider.

According to Aaker (1991) and Porter (1980) the attributes of a brand, name or symbol that confer image or reputation is referred to as "brand equity" or "brand identity". The intangible nature of the education sector increases the importance of the institution's name rather than its individual service. Onkvisit and Shaw (2000) emphasize that brand identity is important for services, as the perceived risk of making an incorrect decision is high. Image is critical to the purchasing decision as a brand or name with an established reputation reduces perceived risk. A study done by Aaker (1989) found that managers of service enterprises ranked reputation for quality and name recognition/high profile as significant sources of competitive advantage.

According to Keller (2000), more and more firms are recognising that one of their most important assets is the brand name associated with their products or services. A brand is a *"name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller and to differentiate them from the competition"* (Keller KL, Strategic Brand Management, p2, 2000).

In the services sector, the challenge of marketing a service lies in the fact that it is intangible and very often varies in quality. Thus, in order to address this intangibility and variability, it is important that service companies enhance their brands. Brand symbols may also be especially important as they help to make the abstract nature of services more definable and concrete. Brands can help to identify and provide meaning to different companies that offer the different types of services. In financial organisations, branding is important as it communicates to the consumer the different types of portfolios available.

Brand awareness is created by increasing the familiarity of the brand through repeated exposure and strong associations with the relevant purchase or consumption cues. Brand awareness is characterised by depth and breadth. *"The depth of brand awareness relates to the likelihood that the brand can be recognised or recalled while the breadth of brand awareness relates to the variety of purchase and consumption situations in which the brand comes to mind"* (Keller KL, Strategic Brand Management, p50, 2000).

One method employed to create brand awareness is to increase the familiarity of the brand through repeated exposure. According to Keller (2000), there are basically two general guidelines that can be employed in order to establish brand awareness. The first guideline is that the brand name should be verbally and visually reinforced with enhancing brand elements. It has been suggested that the slogans or jingles used, automatically pairs the brand with the appropriate purchase or consumption

cues. Brand elements such as logos, symbols, characters and packaging can be used. The second guideline that is useful is to pair the brand with appropriate cues through a wide range of communication options. These communication options are advertising, promotion, sponsorship and public relations. Research shows that any experiences the consumer has with the brand increases familiarity and awareness.

Linking "*strong, favourable and unique associations*" to the name of the brand in memory creates a strong brand image. (Keller, Strategic Brand Management, p51, 2000). Brand associations can also be created in a variety of different ways e.g. by direct experience; from information that is commercial and non-personal such as consumer reports or other media types; word-of-mouth and by inferences that come about through the association of the brand with a company, country or maybe some particular person or place.

Some of the most cynical consumers are the young adults. Consumers are also becoming harder to reach. They are busier; more distracted, more sophisticated in their choices, more fussy with decisions and have more media to choose from. Research also shows that these consumers lead lives that are more complicated and less predictable. Companies that sell detergent can no longer count on its core consumer being a white housewife. In order to stay ahead of the game, companies need to adopt the new marketing approach that is to build a brand and not the product, to sell a lifestyle or a personality and to appeal to emotions. The attempt by brands to adopt a social component, to embrace a lifestyle, is giving consumers a lever to influence the behaviour of the companies that stand behind them.

According to a survey on brands and brand awareness carried out by the Sunday Times October 7 2001 edition, it was found that in the newspaper group, the Sowetan was the top newspaper. One of the reasons given for this was that the newspaper reflected its close identification with the black

community. The newspaper is seen to be so immersed in the affairs of the community and have thus established a very close relationship with the community. The Sowetan is not a national paper in the same way as the Sunday Times but it is sold all over the country. The Sunday Times came second in terms of brand awareness and relationship. The Sunday Times is targeted at the top end of the LSM scale i.e. LSM 7 upwards. Their awareness is translated into sales. The Sowetan is pitched at a lower level where there are a lot more people. According to Sunday Times editor, Mike Robertson, research shows that newspapers pitched at lower economic levels are likely to score higher in terms of brand loyalty and awareness than those aimed at a higher level. However, it was found that loyalty and commitment to niche papers were higher than even awareness.

The degree to which consumers are committed to particular brands of goods or services depends on a number of factors:

- The cost of changing brands
- The availability of substitutes
- The perceived risk associated with the purchase
- The degree to which they have obtained satisfaction in the past

The changing face of tertiary institutions across the country has had an enormous effect on brand awareness and loyalty. Academic institutions are no longer seen as far from the real world and research is now concentrated on the real issues and practical outcomes and not just on far-fetched ideals. Demographic transformation has literally changed the former white face of institutions. Academics are now expected not only to teach and do research but also to form partnerships with business and industry to access sources of funding. Competition between higher learning institutions has become ferocious. Advertising combined with strong brand awareness and brand elements highlight the excellences of each institution. The days of dutiful young people enrolling at the institutions where dad went are over. Now the young people are sophisticated consumers who

know what they want and where they can obtain them. They are even very conscious of the brand or image of the institution that they attend. According to marketing and media consultant to the University of Natal, William Saunderson-Meyer (Sunday Tribune, July 15, 2001), many of the historically black institutions have seen undergraduate intakes plunge. Universities as a whole have lost students to the new Technikons, which can now award degrees and are perceived as producing career-oriented training.

Private institutions such as the new university colleges that are now offering degrees through the University of South Africa have found a market niche and have broken the education monopoly. These institutions have drawn students that could have enrolled at conventional institutions. In order to stay ahead of the race, many institutions have looked to re-inventing themselves in the mind of the public. The University of Natal, a major competitor to the other institutions in the Kwa-Zulu natal region, has embarked on a 3-year-long campaign to reinvent itself in the mind of the public. The university acted quickly to transform demographically. However, this seemed to alter the image of the institution. There are perceptions that degree quality might have suffered, that maybe even a university degree was not necessarily the route to finding employment and also that the degrees on offer were no longer recognised internationally, caused a sudden drop in the numbers of students who registered for courses at the institution.

The University of Natal went on an extensive advertising campaign in order to reinvent their image and to increase brand awareness. It stressed that academic exit quality is high, that the degrees have international recognition, that the degrees offered are flexible and career-oriented and also that the University has enormous physical and human resources. Students however, still have other options in their choice tertiary institutions. M L Sultan Technikon also has had to reinvent itself demographically as well as in offering degrees and distance learning programmes.

2.5 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN SERVICES

According to Zeithaml & Bitner (2000), services and goods have three categories of properties that consumers use to evaluate them. These three categories are:

- Search qualities - attributes that a consumer can determine before purchasing a product or service. These qualities include colour, style, price, fit and feel.

- Experience qualities - attributes that can only be discerned after purchase or during consumption. These qualities include taste and durability.

- Credence qualities - characteristics that the consumer may find impossible to evaluate even after purchase and consumption. Two examples of these are medical and mechanical skills. This is so as very few people possess sufficient skills in those areas to evaluate whether these services are necessary or even performed properly.

In the services sector, experience and credence qualities dominate. Consumers then employ different evaluation processes than those used with goods. The difference in the evaluation process lies in the '*information search, evaluative criteria, size and composition of the evoked set of alternatives, perceived risk, and adoption of innovations, brand loyalty, assessment of value and attribution of dissatisfaction. Emotions and moods and consumer compatibility also play a significant role in evaluating services*' (Zeithaml & Bitner, Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm, p31, 2000).

Consumers obtain information from personal sources (friends and experts) and non-personal sources (mass or selective media). However, where services are concerned, consumers rely to a greater extent on personal sources. Personal sources communicate more information on experiences. The post-purchase experience is more valuable than the pre-purchase opinion. It has been found that in services the evoked set of alternatives is much smaller for three reasons:

1. Purchases of services almost always occur in an establishment where only one "brand" is on offer.

2. The availability of the same kind of services in a given geographic area is limited while the product may be found in numerous stores.

3. It is also more difficult to obtain adequate pre-purchase information about services.

Perceptions and evaluations of any experience are very often influenced by a person's emotion and mood. Emotion is a more stable and enduring while a mood is transient and pertains to a specific time and circumstance. Emotion and mood play an important part in the way information is absorbed and retrieved. Memories are encoded thus if a negative feeling is associated with an encounter then that memory will be recalled negatively. Culture is also an important part in the service sector because of its effects on the way consumers evaluate and use the services. Values and attitudes help to determine what members of a culture think is right, important and desirable. Education and social institutions are both kinds affected by and are agents of cultural diversity. The structure and functioning of such institutions are heavily influenced by culture. Culture also has a way of influencing brand loyalty.

Consumers who desire to make a purchase and are willing to spend time searching for information will often find an abundance of relevant data. *"Web sites nearly always include information on how to contact the company for further information through telephone numbers, e-mail addresses or mailing addresses"* (McQuitty and Peterson, International Journal of Consumer Marketing, Vol. 17, No. 3, 2000). Once sufficient information has been obtained customers are in a position to make a purchase decision.

Consumer behaviour in traditional shopping contexts has received much attention and a number of models of the buying process have been developed. The first stage in each of these models is

generally identified as the information search. This is seen as the most important phase during which promotional messages should reach the intending consumer. Like many other stages of the buying process, information seeking becomes more structured and constrained in the electronic environment.

2.5.1 MODEL OF THE CONSUMER BUYING PROCESS

This model used by Rowley, J (2000), proposed by Engel et al (1990) and discussed by Brassington & Pettitt (1997), outlines the consumer decision making process and then identifies the stages of information search and information evaluation as key preparatory stages to a decision, which then leads to a purchase.

FIGURE 1. THE CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Problem Recognition
⇩
Information Search
⇩
Information Evaluation
⇩
Decision
⇩
Post-purchase Evaluation
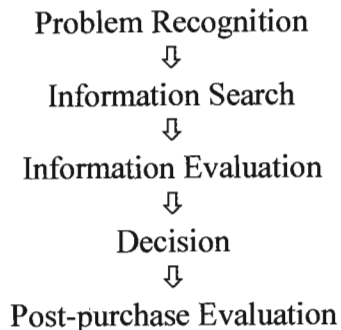
Source: Rowley J (2000), Journal of Consumer Marketing: Product search in e-shopping, vol. 17 no. 1, p21.

This model is applicable in the education sector as well. Many students, especially first time students are very concerned as to which institution offers the best programme. Universities and Technikons face competition in the form of self-study institutions and small colleges. Majority of the programmes offered are repeated in all the institutions and students have a range of choices to make. This is where the external marketing along with the internal marketing of an institution is important. First time students identify the problem that they need to study a particular course. If the

course selected is for example, computer studies, they then proceed to the next step of identifying the different institutions that offers the programme. The information search is an important phase as the quantity and quality of information received is then evaluated in the next step. This then eventually leads to a decision or choice of institution.

Through this information gathering, a relationship develops between the student (customer) and the institution (supplier). Norm Archer and Yufei Yuan (2000) developed a detailed seven-phase life cycle that shows activities between supplier and customer. However, their study was more orientated towards the business-to-business relationships. For the purposes of this study, this life cycle has been adapted to a five-phase cycle suit the education sector. The procurement life cycles are shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2.5.1: CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP LIFE CYCLE ACTIVITIES, FUNCTIONS, TOOLS AND MODERATORS

Life Cycle Stage Process	Student Activities	Institution Function/activities	Supporting Tools	Moderators
Information gathering	Searching, observation	Marketing: advertising, student interaction	Web vendors, catalogues, adverts	Word-of-mouth, competitors, corporate image, brand awareness, experience
Institution contact	Learning, evaluating, comparing	Marketing: sales: selling	Interactive marketing, web sites, e-mail	Service quality, performance, pass rate, customization, competition
Background Review	Evaluation	Service	Web service support	Reputation, experiences of other students
Consumption, maintenance and disposal	Learning, using, evaluating, feedback	Service, marketing, supporting, training, updating	On-line info, web site service, interactive and network marketing	Experience, evaluation, perceptions vs. expectations
Renewal	Review, exam results, registration	Lecture updates, syllabi, announcements	Interactive and network marketing	Experience, satisfaction, loyalty, competitors, switching costs

Source: Archer N & Yuan Y (2000), Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy Vol. 10 No.5 p391

In phase 1, the student searches for information on the programme offered at the institution. Moderators influence the student's perceptions of the information collected, including word-of-mouth, competitors, corporate image of the institution, brand awareness and previous experiences with the institution. Thus, institutions can create a positive awareness by joining electronic marketplaces or advertising through the Web, where potential students can find information on the programmes offered or about the institution itself. This helps the prospective student to search for information more efficiently and to gain quick answers to any queries.

In phase 2, the student establishes a list of potential institutions, gathers more information about the programme and institutions, to determine if it suits his/her needs. If web technology is used to provide information on the institution's background, programme offered and services provided, then it is normally backed up by e-mail facilities to contact relevant staff. Competition is normally based either on price, reputation or other attributes. This is important as contact and reply enhances the institution's reputation and further information can be supplied. Customization of a programme can occur and the student will either accept or reject.

In phase 3, evaluation of the chosen institution can occur most often via contact with past or current students and staff. One of the ways that an institution can increase student trust is by providing testimonials by alumni and credentials gained by past students and staff. This is important as this a final stage of making a "sale" and here a student can either feel positively or negatively about the institution.

Phases 4 and 5 are the basic registration and learning process involved in the institution. Here a student realizes during the course of the programme whether expectation has been significantly met. If it has, then, the course is duly completed at the same institution. If it hasn't, then the student either changes course or institution that can reflect negatively on the entire institution.

Thus, information search greatly influences decisions on choice of institution and this impacts heavily on an institution's competitive advantage. It then becomes imperative that educational institutions make a greater effort in their marketing efforts to gain the greater market share.

The external marketing strategy emphasizes the pricing, promotion, positioning and the product itself. Institutions need to develop brand identity (quality image and high market profile) and information technology. This enhances the information search carried out by potential students as seen in Table 1 life cycle stage process.

Mazzarol and Soutar (1999) have found that organizational expertise and learning was a source of competitive advantage. In the education sector, students select courses on reputation and expertise of teaching staff. It is important that educational institutions constantly update their knowledge and is either on par or a step ahead of industry demands thus giving students the confidence in choosing that particular institution. This is important in brand image, as students feel more confident in choosing a particular institution that has staff with relevant and current degrees.

Since the emergence of modern technology, the value of computers to the development of competitive advantage has been emphasized. Ives and Jarvenpaa (1996) found that for education institutions, information technology is emerging as a critical source of competitive advantage as the Internet allows them to offer their services globally. According to Earl (1988), he believes that management has to be duly committed to supporting the use of information technology for it to be effective. Unless senior management is willing to support the implementation of new technologies and accept the risks associated with it, the value of such technologies may be reduced (Leonard-Barton and Kraus, 1985). Considering that an educational institution is highly information intensive, information technology would be the answer that will be able to push the company forward.

"The basis of developing a competitive advantage lies with the development of marketing strategies at a number of levels that will generate or enhance distinctive competencies. Key outcomes in this regard are likely to be the creation of an image of quality, the generation of a high market profile and development of offshore teaching operations, usually in coalition with overseas partners. The assembly and employment of suitably expert staff, supported by information technology and an innovative culture, are also likely to be vital parts of a strategy implementation."

(Mazzarol and Soutar, 1999, p296)

2.6 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

This chapter focussed on how companies can advertise on the Internet. Thus, it was safely concluded that the cost factors of advertising on the Internet does eventually work out cheaper than traditional media and the benefits of such a medium outweigh other forms of advertising. The Internet is a sophisticated tool that has to be implemented by companies in order to keep abreast with technological changes in industry and with a more sophisticated consumer.

The chapter further dealt with the issues of the nature of the services act and how brand awareness of a service can actually influence consumers' decisions. The chapter succinctly points out the differences between a product and a service and thus defines methods of how companies can manage these differences. The issue of brand awareness in the services sector also deals with the management of brand awareness in services. An important example quoted in this chapter is that of the University of Natal. As this is in the education sector and is also a service provider, the institution undertook several steps in order to reinvent itself in the minds of the consumer. Thus, the

reader was informed of the differences between products and services and how brand awareness of services can be managed successfully.

Another aspect of this chapter looked at consumer behaviour in the services sector and how this affected the choices of services. It also focussed on studies that revealed strategies that the education sector specifically could utilise to stay ahead in a technologically changing environment. Finally, a model was derived that could be utilised by the education sector to successfully market their services. Thus, with the emphasis on web-based marketing and the move towards on-line learning, M L Sultan Technikon has to move quickly in order to compete in the industry. Currently, the institution does have a web page, however it is important to know if there is student awareness and how they rate the web page. This study would give some indication of how to improve their external marketing strategy and to provide more and valuable information to prospective students so that their final choice is M L Sultan Technikon.

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCESS

The essence of a research design can be narrowed down to three criteria. The first criterion, in the research design, is to draw a plan for selecting the sources and types of information that will be used to answer the research question. Secondly, the design itself is a framework for specifying the relationships among the variables in the study. The third criterion is that the design is a blueprint that outlines each procedure from the hypotheses to the analysis of the data.

This study is descriptive in nature and its main thrust is to determine whether the Technikon's Internet advertising is effective in reaching the student, and if so, what improvements can be made. The time dimension of this study is cross-sectional where there is representation at only one point in time.

3.2 SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The sampling frame for this research will is the entire registered full-time new and repeat first year students at M L Sultan Technikon. This sample frame is chosen as first year students had to research the different institutions for their tertiary career and gain sufficient information before they made a decision.

The sampling method chosen is convenient sampling. The sample was drawn from the departments of Computer Studies and Medical Sciences. The sample had a random distribution of sexes, race and age. Sampling was carried out only in these two departments as the first year student body at M L Sultan Technikon is very large and the time in which to conduct such a survey is limited. The

entire first year student population which excludes repeat students, is 3000. The sample size was determined by calculating ten percent of the entire first year student population. Thus the sample size was calculated to be 300.

3.3 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The tool for collecting the data is a self-administered questionnaire, which is handed out to the students and is then filled out. A rating scale asking students' opinions of the Technikon's web site has been devised and is not a comparison to another institution. A five-point Likert scale was used where the respondent had five choices from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire was based on the Internet rating questionnaire, WAMMI (Ireland & Nomos Management, 1998). The questionnaire is subdivided into three sections. The first part of the questionnaire relates to demographic information such as age, sex and race of the respondent. The second part of the questionnaire concentrates on awareness of the Technikon Web site and how the respondent became aware of the Web site. It also looks at how many respondents actually visited the Web site. Another leading question looks at reasons as to why respondents did not visit the Web site. The third part of the questionnaire focuses on how the respondents rate the Technikon Web site overall. These questions are in keeping with the three objectives outlined in the introduction.

Secondary data was used from mostly Internet sites and journals. Literature searches have shown that there are not many books available with information regarding educational institutions advertising on the Internet. Notwithstanding this, the Internet itself however, is a vast bank of knowledge that has other links that will enable access to more information.

3.4 ANALYTICAL TOOLS

The data analysis technique that is employed is standard deviation, central tendency, t-tests and frequency counts. Standard deviation is a measure of spread, which is referred to as dispersion or variability. It describes how scores cluster or scatter in a distribution. Central tendency refers to the measures of location and generally includes the mean, median and mode of a distribution. The mean is the average, median is the midpoint of the distribution and mode is the most frequently occurring value. T-tests are used to determine the statistical significance between a sample distribution mean and a parameter. In classical tests of significance, the null hypothesis is used for testing. This test is usually done to determine whether a real difference exists in the population. Thus the following hypotheses were formulated to test whether there were any differences in respondents' awareness and rating of the Web site.

3.5 HYPOTHESES

H_1:   There is no difference between the means of the respondents who are aware of the Technikon's Internet presence than those students who are not aware.

H_2:   There is no difference between the means of the respondents who have visited the Technikon Web site than those students who have not visited the Technikon web site.

H_3:   There is no difference between the means of the respondents who rate the Web site as easy to use than those students who do not rate the Web site as easy to use.

H_4:   There is no difference between the means of the respondents who rate the Web site imaging as attractive than those students who do not rate the Web site imaging as attractive.

H_5:   There is no difference between the means of the respondents who rate the Web site as quick to download than those students who do not rate the Web site as quick to download.

H_6:   There is no difference between the means of the respondents who rate the Web site as having sufficient information for application than those students who do not rate the Web site as having sufficient information for application.

H_7:   There is no difference between the means of the respondents who rate the Web site as excellent than those students who do not rate the Web site as excellent.

3.6 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

The methodology basically outlines how the research was carried out, what instruments were used for gathering data and the analytical tests used to analyze data. Hypotheses were developed in order to test whether there are differences in the means of the respondents. Thus, this will determine how many students are aware of the site, how many students use the site and also how the students rate the site. It will also determine which of the races and gender use the web site more. These tests will also be able to determine whether the hypotheses will be accepted or rejected.

CHAPTER FOUR- ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

4.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

TABLE 4.1: DEMOGRAPHIC OUTLINE OF RESPONDENT

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE	FREQUENCY %
GENDER:	
1. Male	55.3
2. Female	44.7
Chapter 2 RACE GROUP:	
1. Black	40.3
2. White	1.0
3. Indian	52.7
4. Colored	5.3
5. Other	0.7
Chapter 3 AGE (YEARS)	
1. 17 – 21	85.6
2. 22 – 26	12.4
3. 27 onwards	2.0
TOTAL	100

According to the results above, there are more males who have answered the questionnaire than females. The majority of respondents are of Indian descent, followed by Blacks, Coloreds and then Whites. The respondents also fall into the 17 - 21 age group that is typical of first year students.

4.2 THE MEDIUM THAT WAS USED FOR INFORMATION GATHERING

TABLE 4.2: WHICH MEDIUM WAS USED THE MOST BY STUDENTS TO GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAMMES

MEDIUM	FREQUENCY %
CAREERS EXHIBITION	
Yes	21
No	79
SCHOOL VISIT	
Yes	12
No	88
M LST STUDENT	
Yes	44.7
No	55.3
TEACHER	
Yes	15
No	85
RADIO ADVERT	
Yes	8.0
No	92.0
PRINT MEDIA	
Yes	40.3
No	59.7
CENTRAL APPLICATIONS OFFICE	
Yes	56.7
No	43.3
INTERNET	
Yes	13.0
No	87.0

The results show that of the media that was most favoured by the respondents was that of the Central Applications Office. The next most used medium of communication that was used was an M L Sultan Technikon student that is then followed by the print media. The Internet did not fare very well with only 13 % of respondents using the Internet to gather information. The medium of radio however, fared most poorly with only 8% of respondents using it to gather information.

4.3 THE MEDIUM THAT WAS EASIEST TO ACCESS

TABLE 4.3: THE MEDIUM THAT STUDENTS FOUND THE EASIEST TO ACCESS

MEDIUM	FREQUENCY %
RADIO ADVERT	
Yes	11.0
No	89.0
PRINT MEDIA	
Yes	55.3
No	44.7
CENTRAL APPLICATIONS OFFICE	
Yes	71.0
No	29.0
INTERNET SOURCE	
Yes	22.7
No	77.3

According to the results, the Central Applications Office was the easiest source of information to access. The respondents found the print media the second easiest to access, with the Internet source as third with radio last with only 11 %. Thus the easiest source of information to access was the Central Applications Office.

4.4 AWARENESS OF THE TECHNIKON WEB SITE

TABLE 4.4.1 RESPONDENT AWARENESS OF THE WEB SITE.

AWARENESS OF WEB SITE	FREQUENCY %
Yes	80.7
No	19.3

TABLE 4.4.2 T-TEST: RESPONDENT AWARENESS OF THE WEB SITE.

					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
			One-Sample Test			
			Test Value = 1			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Awareness of web site	-8.465	299	.000	-.19	-.24	-.15

Frequency counts and percentages show that the number of respondents who are aware of the Technikon's Web site is higher than those respondents who are not aware. Results of the t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference between the respondents who are aware of the Technikon's Web site than those who are not.

4.5 NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE VISITED THE WEB SITE

TABLE 4.5.1 NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE VISITED THE WEB SITE

NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE VISITED WEB SITE	FREQUENCY %
Yes	37.3
No	62.7

TABLE 4.5.2 T-TEST: NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE VISITED THE WEB SITE

					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
			One-Sample Test			
			Test Value = 0			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Have you visited the web site	13.346	299	.000	.37	.32	.43

56

Frequency counts and percentages show that there are fewer students who have visited the Technikon Web site than those who have not. Results of the t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference between the respondents who have visited the Technikon Web site than those who have not.

4.6 REASONS FOR NOT VISITING WEB SITE

TABLE 4.6: REASONS FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE AWARE OF WEB SITE BUT DID NOT VISIT THE WEB SITE

REASON	FREQUENCY %
NO COMPUTER ACCESS	
Yes	54.7
No	8.3
Not Applicable	37.0
NOT COMPUTER LITERATE	
Yes	18.3
No	44.7
Not Applicable	37.0
PREFER OTHER MEDIA	
Yes	19.7
No	43.3
Not Applicable	37.0

This frequency table shows that the most common reason for students who did not visit the Web site was that they did not have access to computers. Not being computer literate and preference for other types of media was not a major factor for them. However, there are some students who are computer illiterate and would thus be unable to access the Internet.

4.7 SUFFICIENT INFORMATION ON THE WEB SITE

TABLE 4.7.1 INFORMATION FOR APPLICATION

SUFFICIENT INFORMATION FOR APPLICATION	FREQUENCY %
Strongly Agree	6.7
Agree	15.3
Neutral	9.7
Disagree	4.0
Strongly Disagree	1.7
Not Applicable	62.7

TABLE 4.7.2 SUFFICIENT INFORMATION ON PROGRAMMES

SUFFICIENT INFORMATION ON PROGRAMMES	FREQUENCY %
Strongly Agree	5.3
Agree	18.7
Neutral	7.0
Disagree	6.0
Strongly Disagree	0.3
Not Applicable	62.7

TABLE 4.7.3 T-TEST: SUFFICIENT INFORMATION ON WEB SITE

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Sufficient information on programmes	29.459	299	.000	5.53	5.16	5.90
Sufficient information for application on web site	29.588	299	.000	5.55	5.18	5.92

Frequency counts show that in the question relating to information for application, the majority of the students agree that there is sufficient information on the Web site for application. The frequency counts for the question relating to sufficient information about the programmes also show that

majority of the students agree that there is sufficient information. Results of the t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference in the means between the respondents who find that there is sufficient information on the Web site and those students who do not find sufficient information.

4.8 WEB SITE IS QUICK TO DOWNLOAD

TABLE 4.8.1 WEB SITE IS QUICK TO DOWNLOAD

WEB SITE IS QUICK TO DOWNLOAD	FREQUENCY %
Strongly Agree	6.3
Agree	10.3
Neutral	13.3
Disagree	6.3
Strongly Disagree	1.0
Not Applicable	62.7

TABLE 4.8.2 T-TEST: WEB SITE IS QUICK TO DOWNLOAD

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Web site is quick to download	30.750	299	.000	5.61	5.25	5.97

Results of the frequency counts show that majority of the respondents remain neutral with regards to the Web site being quick to download. There are a large number of students who also agree that the Web site is quick to download. Results of the t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference between the respondents who find that the Web site is quick to download.

4.9 IMAGING ON THE WEB SITE IS ATTRACTIVE

TABLE 4.9.1 WEB SITE IMAGING IS ATTRACTIVE

WEB SITE IMAGING IS ATTRACTIVE	FREQUENCY %
Strongly Agree	6.3
Agree	13.7
Neutral	12.0
Disagree	4.0
Strongly Disagree	1.3
Not Applicable	62.7

TABLE 4.9.2 T-TEST: IMAGING IS ATTRACTIVE

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Pages are very attractive	29.908	299	.000	5.56	5.20	5.93

Frequency counts show that majority of the respondents agree that the Web site pages are attractive. However, 36% of the respondents remain neutral. Results of the t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference between the respondents who find that the Web site is quick to download.

4.10 EASE OF USE

TABLE 4.10.1 EASE OF USE OF WEB SITE.

WEB SITE IS EASY TO USE	FREQUENCY %
Strongly Agree	8.0
Agree	15.0
Neutral	11.3
Disagree	1.3
Strongly Disagree	1.7
Not Applicable	62.7

TABLE 4.10.2 T-TEST: EASE OF USE OF WEB SITE

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Using web site for first time is easy	28.811	299	.000	5.50	5.12	5.87

Frequency counts show that majority of the respondents agree that the web site is easy to use. There are only 8% of respondents who strongly agree that the Web site is easy to use. Results of the t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference between the respondents who find the Web site easy to use and those respondents who do not.

4.11 OVERALL RATING

TABLE 7.11.1 OVERALL RATING OF WEB SITE.

OVERALL RATING	FREQUENCY %
Poor	4.0
Average	24.3
Excellent	9.0
Not Applicable	62.7

TABLE 4.11.2 T-TEST: OVERALL RATING

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 2					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
How would you rate the Technikon overall	22.972	299	.000	4.44	4.06	4.82

Frequency counts show that there are 24% of respondents who rate the Web site as average and only 9% who rate the site as excellent. Results of the t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference between the respondents who rate the Web site as average to those respondents who do not.

4.12 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

This chapter looked at the analysis of the raw data. The results were calculated using frequency counts and t-tests.

CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 DISCUSSION

The first objective was to identify who uses the web site i.e. the demographics of users.

The sample that was taken comprised of first year Technikon students. There were 166 male respondents and 134 female respondents. The race groups were divided into Black, White, Indian, Coloured and Other. It was found that the majority of the respondents were Indian (52.7%). The sample was drawn from the Medical Science and Computer Studies departments. The average age of the students was found to be 18.

It is also interesting to note that the three main sources of information for the first year students in choosing their course was that of the Central Applications Office, a fellow M L Sultan Technikon student and print media. From this, one can conclude that the Central Applications Office still plays an integral part in student applications and enquiries. What is interesting to note is that students also used M LST students to find out about the courses on offer. This particular type of advertising is word-of-mouth and it is important to the Technikon, as bad publicity from registered students will actually turn students away from the institution. What is surprising from this survey is that radio advertisements are sadly lacking in their appeal to students. The Technikon is either not utilizing the radio for advertisement or using the wrong stations or perhaps students are not interested in radio advertisements.

The Internet was found to be a medium that did not feature as prominently as other more traditional media. Only 13% of the respondents actually utilized the Internet to find out more information on the courses on offer at M L Sultan Technikon. This brings to the forefront why this is so as in this

day and age one would expect the young adults to be 'surfing the net' frequently. One explanation for this is that students found the Central Applications Office to be the easiest to access with print media following closely. As these two sources of information can be obtained by post, it would make sense that the majority of the public would prefer the most well-known or well-advertised sources of information.

Hypothesis 1 was rejected, as there was a significant difference in the means of the respondents who are aware of the site as compared to those that are not aware. It was found that for hypotheses 2 the hypothesis had to be rejected, as there was a significant difference between the means for both groups. These point to the fact that not all the respondents are aware of the Web site or even if they were aware, have actually visited the Web site. There is ample awareness that the Technikon's Web site does exist but it is obviously not being utilized often enough.

This is proven by the fact that although students are aware of the web site, more than half of the respondents did not actually visit the Web site. It was discovered that the most important reason for this was that over 50% of the respondents did not have access to computers. Computer literacy and preference for other media did not play such a significant role in the reasoning for not visiting the Web site. This would then be quite a major hurdle to overcome in terms of Internet advertising as the Internet relies solely on computers and telephones as its medium of transmission.

With regards to the lack of usage of computers, one has to look at which LSM level the typical M L Sultan Technikon student belongs to. As majority of the respondents did not have access to computers, it can be assumed that most of the students come from the lower income to lower middle level group. Ownership of computers with access to the Internet is generally thought of as a luxury item in these groups. Hence, there is a high respondent awareness of the site but no actual visits to the site.

The second objective was to determine how students perceived M L Sultan's advertising on the Internet. This rating process entailed a system whereby students were asked to rate the web site according to page design, imaging, ease of use, responsiveness and availability of information.

On testing the hypothesis, it was found that the hypotheses had to be rejected, as there were significant differences in all the means. Students found that there was sufficient information on the Web site both for application purposes as well as for information purposes. This abundance of information on the Web site needs to now be communicated even more strongly as this will help to cut down on advertising costs. The availability of this information also needs to be communicated to the public in order to make them aware that such information is available all the time and at any time. It will actually save a student time in getting the information, instead of waiting for a reply to a request by traditional mail which generally takes a week.

With regards to the question of download time, majority of the students remained neutral. However, overall it was found that the web site is quick to download. Download time is an important factor when working on the Internet, as a site that is slow to download is time-consuming and frustrating to the Web user. This would lead to the conclusion that the respondents would actually be happier with a quicker response time.

The hypotheses for the ratings of the Web site had to be rejected as well as there were significant differences between the means of those students who rated the site as average and those who did not rate the site as average. This means that the students had different opinions about the Web site. Overall it was found that students were satisfied with the appearance of the Website, the logical settings and the ease of use of the web site. Although this is accepted, it is not enough just to have a satisfactory Web site. In order to survive in this dynamic technologically challenging environment,

the Technikon has to constantly update and refresh its image. It has to do this to keep Web users re-visiting the site to see if there is anything new added to the site. The more visits to a site, the greater awareness of the Technikon and its programmes on offer. This is local as well as international exposure. By having this international exposure, the Technikon will be able to meet its vision by becoming a world leader.

Some of the respondents rated the Web site as being average with some students actually rating it as poor. It is important that one takes notice of the students who do rate the Web site as being poor as word-of-mouth can hamper the use of the Web site as an advertising medium. Students also did not seem very impressed with the poor response of staff when they e-mailed queries through. This kind of feedback is vital in any Web site as it determines revisits and further interaction with the institution. It is also not very encouraging for students to rate a Web site as average. Having found that the young adults are now very sophisticated and fussy in what they are involved with, an average Web site is not going to say much for the Technikon. Thus, the Technikon has to always update and change its face as well as its offerings in order to meet the demand of the consumer. The sophisticated student wants to be associated with an institution that is both technologically advanced and with an upmarket image. They do not want to be associated with an institution that is not recognised or seen as "old-fashioned". It is in this light then that M L Sultan Technikon has to look carefully at this average rating and try to update its image on the Web site.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The third objective was to provide recommendations and changes.

This study found that the Central Applications Office and print media are still the major sources of information that students turn to. There is high awareness of the Technikon's Web site but not enough visits by potential students. The main problem for this is that students do not have access to computers. To try to solve the problem of providing the potential student population with computer

access would be impossible and financially not feasible. However, creating higher awareness of the Web site and the ease of use of the site could attract more students. There are now more and more cheap Internet shops that have opened in malls and even in suburbs. The Technikon could target those areas to create awareness that these options are available. As it has been shown in the literature survey that Internet advertising and the existence of Web sites are far cheaper and more convenient for consumers.

The Technikon has to also make the site far more attractive to the students. The average rating that the Web site was given, is not what will assure repeated visits. There also has to be constant updates and responses to frequently asked questions. Staff has to take an active interest in trying to answer the different questions that students ask. The Technikon Web master has to be alert of the latest trends in Web advertising and site management. Advertising on the Internet has to be done alongside print media advertising. The Technikon's web site has to appeal to the global community. If the local students rate the site as average, then it is not going to appeal or be very attractive to the larger community. The Technikon has to ensure that that the site improves on its downloading time and its responsiveness as far as emailing goes. From the analysis it can be concluded that students want a far more advanced site than the Technikon has to offer at the moment.

CHAPTER SIX - CONCLUSION

Thus, it is concluded that there is student awareness of the Technikon's Website. The students' perception and rating of the Web site is average in content, style, downloading time as well as responsiveness. This provides an opportunity for the Technikon to improve its advertising on the Web site and also to create an even greater awareness and the need to visit the Web site. The need can be created by the Web site being seen as a far more sophisticated means of applying for programmes at the institution as well as communicating with the institution. It can be seen as a time saver as there is less time wasted in telephone calls and waiting periods for the post. Everything can be done on-line and within minutes, as well as after hours. There are no excuses for items to get lost in the mail. Students will be kept up to date with changes in programmes timeously and there will always be reports of staff and student activities on the site.

The management of the Technikon need to ensure that the Web site advertising works hand-in-hand with traditional media to ensure that both types of advertising create a positive image for the Technikon. Technology is seen as progressive. Keeping an up-dated Web site informs the student that the institution is progressive and well informed. The Technikon needs to rethink its advertising strategy in order to attract the attention of students who can eventually be an advertisement for the Technikon itself.

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