An In-Depth Look At The Positioning Strategy Of The University Of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, Based On Scholar And Student Perceptions

By

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Declaration

Hereby I, Lisa-Claire Garden, declare that this dissertation is my own original work and that all sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged, and that this document has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university in order to obtain an academic qualification.

L.C. Garden

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Abstract

This research has been conducted in an attempt to aid the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, in being more market oriented in a market that, until recently, saw little need to market its institutions in the past. Traditionally tertiary educational institutions have relied on their reputation to attract students. Fortunately tertiary institutions have recognised the need for marketing and positioning themselves in the market.

Scholars highlighted what they considered to be the most important attributes when choosing a tertiary institution. Using this information, marketers at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg (UNP), can tailor its marketing strategies around these attributes and the scholars that view them as important. The top 5 attributes that the scholars indicated were the most important are as follows:

1. Highly Qualified Lecturers
2. Academic Standards
3. International Recognition
4. Reputation
5. Affordable Fees

The scholar's perceptions of institutions based on the most important attributes showed that the University of Cape Town (UCT) is perceived as being the top university – the market leader and can therefore be considered as the benchmark. UNP has been perceived as "average", between institutions such as UCT, Rhodes, Stellenbosch and Wits on one side and Damelin, Varsity College, University of South Africa (UNISA) on the other side.

Generally the scholars perceived UNP in a positive light. The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg is perceived positively with regards to up-to-date facilities (in terms of the laboratory, computers and the library), as well as a good social life, multi-racial mix, sports facilities, approachability of lecturers, security upgrades, and that it is an excellent academic institution. These represent the strengths of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg and must be stressed and communicated to potential customers as well as present students who will in turn act as marketers themselves when with friends.

The negative perceptions towards the UNP were related to:

- Safety on campus at night,
- The idea that the social life at UNP is what university is all about,
- The lack of personal attention, and
- Students being treated as nothing more than a student number to staff.

These negative and poor perceptions must be dealt with through effective communication that will highlight the strengths of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

The result of the findings relating to the University's position in the market (based on the important attributes) is reflected in the positioning maps. From these maps it can be seen that the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg does not occupy a distinct position in the market. The mere fact that UNP was rated as average on the most important attributes reflects the poor positioning in the minds of the customers. It is a distinctive nature of positioning that must be sought after.

As a result of the poor position the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg holds in the minds of the customer, steps to successful positioning were revisited and recommendations were made to the University. In communicating the position of UNP it must be remembered that the marketing mix needs to be aligned with the intended position of the business. The University's use of the 7P's, a vital component of the positioning strategy, was evaluated and recommendations made to the University.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

When a scholar has decided to further his/her studies there are various factors which influence his/her decision when choosing a tertiary institution. One of the determining factors would be the scholar's perceptions of various tertiary institutions. Often, the behaviour of the customer is directly determined by these perceptions.

To assist the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg (hereafter UNP or the University) in effectively meeting the needs of its customers and potential customers by being market oriented, the researcher will attempt to discover what attributes scholars (i.e. potential customers) consider to be vital in any tertiary educational institution. Once identified, these attributes will be compared to attributes, which were deemed important by current University students who completed a similar study previously. The results of such a study will enable the University to gauge their progress in reaching their target market, and will provide a foundation for the University to satisfy the needs of their customers.

The main purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions held by scholars and students about the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. Marketing theory shows that customers act according to the perceptions they hold about a particular business, product or service. Moreover, the positioning strategy a business adopts is established on the perceptions held by their potential customers.

The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg's position in the market will then be identified relative to the competition based on the attributes the scholars listed as important. By plotting the University's position on perceptual maps it can be established how it is positioned in the minds of the competition. In addition to this it can be determined as to whether UNP, is seen on par with other universities or whether it occupies a unique position in the market.

One of the main purposes of this report is to benefit the University's marketing by identifying key positive perceptions that can be considered as strengths and enforced as such; as well as identifying key negative and poor perceptions that need to be addressed. Based on the scholars' perceptions, the University's positioning strategy will be evaluated. Recommendations for various positioning options will also be given incorporating the University's use of the 7P's.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Looking at the positioning strategy of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, other concepts will be expanded on so as to give a broad base on which to build this research paper. Therefore as a preamble to positioning, the fundamentals of perceptions will be looked at including a glance at exposure and attention. The study will then look at positioning through a magnifying glass, combing through the finer aspects of positioning in general before looking at services in particular. The chapter will be wrapped up by looking at the University as a service provider.

2.1 Perception in the Literature

"You look for the solution to your problem not inside the product, not even inside your own mind. You look for the solution to your problem inside the prospect's mind." Therefore you concentrate and focus on and deal with the perceptions of the prospect, and "not the reality of the product" (Ries & Trout, 2001:9)

Positioning is based on perceptions. How the customer sees (i.e. perceives) the business translates into the way in which the business is positioned in their minds. By focusing on the mind of the customer (in studying his/her perceptions) we learn principles and concepts that will greatly increase the effectiveness of the communication process. "Marketing is a game of mental warfare. It's a battle of perceptions, not products or services." (Ries, 1992:5). It is in the mind that marketers fight their battles and it's in the mind that they lose or win (Editorial, 2000).

Perception, as explained by Schiffman & Kanuk (1994:161), can be described as "how we see the world around us". It is the process that an individual goes through when he or she "selects, organises, and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world". Marx & Van der Walt (1993:83) summarised perception similarly.

A stimulus is any unit of input to one of the senses – for instance anything that we experience through our senses of seeing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and hearing (Hoyer & MacInnes, 2000:92 – 96). Things that are classified as stimuli are for example products, brand names, advertisements, and packages. Not everything seen, heard, tasted, felt

or smelt by a person is taken in, organised, and interpreted. Hence the person selects what they want to hear or see and from there tries to place the stimuli in a coherent picture of the world or business.

In marketing it means that there is no guarantee to what the customer will select to interpret. If marketers are putting a message of professionalism across to the customer in their advertisements but they receive inadequate service from the personnel, there is no guarantee that the customer will select the advertisement to formulate a perception and not the inadequate service received.

This highlights the significance of the entire marketing mix supporting the position which the organisation is attempting to maintain. If one aspect of the organisation reflects the organisation poorly it could be that aspect the customer uses to formulate a perception. This will also be dealt with in depth at a later stage in the literature review.

Stanton, Etzel, Walker, Abratt, Pitt & Staude (1993:147) described perception as the way we "interpret the world around us", and this perception depends on the object (product/service) as well as past experiences.

2.1.1 Perceptual Limits

Stanton *et al* (1993:147) and Marx & van der Walt (1993:84) gave the following factors that limit our perceptions:

⇨ <u>Selective attention</u>

Only those stimuli that catch and hold our attention are paid attention to and thus have a chance of being perceived. In other words, as Stanton *et al* (1993:147) explained, "we pay attention by exception". Marx & van der Walt (1993:84) call it **selective exposure** saying that a person chooses to expose himself/herself to certain stimuli.

This also means that a person can avoid or ignore an unwelcome or unwanted stimulus if they choose to do so, for example a person turning the page of an advertisement, or changing the channels when an advertisement comes on.

⇨ Selective distortion

Stanton *et al* (1993:147) said that people tend to distort information that is inconsistent with their beliefs and attitudes to fit in with what they want to believe. Marx & van der Walt (1993:84) call this **selective interpretation**, which occurs when the person perceives the information but does not interpret it in the way it was intended. This is easily done by distorting the meaning or misunderstanding it.

⇨ Selective retention

According to Stanton *et al* (1993:147) we retain only part of what we perceived, like watching a television advertisement but forgetting it later on. Marx & van der Walt (1993:84) added to this the ability of people to forget the important features of the advertisement – defined as **selective recall**.

⇨ Selective understanding

Marx & van der Walt (1993:84) added this "defence mechanism" – saying that it relates to the way people do not pay full attention to the stimuli presented. This leads to an incomplete **understanding** of the content of the marketing message.

The marketing message must be formulated to counter these "defence mechanisms" that people use to protect themselves from unwanted stimuli, which the marketer wants them exposed to.

2.1.2 Perception Principles

Various principles given by Schiffman & Kanuk (1994:162 – 172) that control our perceptions and interpretations of the world around us will now be looked at.

The Absolute Threshold

This is the point where the customer can experience a sensation – when they can tell the difference between "something" and "nothing". The example Schiffman & Kanuk (1994:162) use is that of a person driving on a highway, the distance at which he/she notices a specific billboard on the highway is that person's absolute threshold. If two people are driving together, they will invariably notice the billboard at different times (at different distances) – hence people have different absolute thresholds.

Differential Threshold

This is also called the "just noticeable difference" (j.n.d) and is used to describe the minimal difference that is detected between two stimuli. It is explained by Schiffman & Kanuk (1994:165) like this: "the stronger the initial stimulus, the greater the additional intensity needed for the second stimulus to be perceived as different". This law (known as Weber's law) means that businesses have to increase the intensity of their stimuli to ensure the differences in their product/service will be noticed.

An example is useful to clarify this principle: a biscuit manufacturer has to reduce costs, however no more price reductions can be afforded. He attempts to reduce the size of the box in which they sell their biscuits just enough so that the customers will not notice. This manufacturer is applying j.n.d. The reduction is minimal so as not to arouse customer's suspicions but there is enough reduction in the size of the box to make a difference to the costs of production. Regarding retail price discounts Du Plessis, Rosseau & Blem (1990:71) said that goods must be marked down at least 20 or 25 percent below the previous price or the discount is seen by the retailer as ineffective because the customer will not regard the discount as meaningful and hence not act on the discount.

There are two main reasons as to why businesses use and apply j.n.d. The first is so that noticeable negative changes (increased prices, reduced product size etc.) are not discerned by customers. Secondly it is used so that product improvements, like decreased prices or larger product sizes, are recognised by the customer (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994:165).

Subliminal Perception

People can also perceive stimuli without being aware of the stimuli in question, i.e. below their level of conscious awareness (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994:166). This means that stimuli which appear too weak or too brief may indeed be perceived without people being aware of it.

2.1.3 Types of Inputs

The creation of perceptions does not rely merely on sensory inputs, but on two types of inputs described below:

1. Physical stimuli – this is input from the outside environment.
2. Individuals themselves – this is found in the form of certain inclinations like expectations, motives, and learning based on previous experiences.

(Schiffman & Kanuk 1994:172)

"A motivated person is ready to act. How the person acts is influenced by his or her own perception of the situation" – Kotler & Armstrong (2001:186). This implies a direct link between perception and behaviour – a customer's perception or attitude affects his/her behaviour thereafter as the decision is based on the perceptions formed.

Du Plessis, Rosseau & Blem (1990:67) stated the following about perceptions:

> "Individuals act and react on the basis of their perceptions, not on the basis of objective reality (i.e. reality as recorded by a camera). Thus, consumers' perceptions are much more important to the marketer than their knowledge of objective reality, as perceptions affect the consumers' actions, buying habits and leisure habits. Because individuals make decisions and take actions based on what they perceive to be reality, it is important that marketers understand the whole notion of perception and its related concepts so that they can more readily determine what influences consumers to buy."

As Saunderson-Meyer (Marketing and Media Consultant to the University of Natal) said, "marketplace perceptions can be more important than reality and eventually shape reality" (Saunderson-Meyer, 2001) This is reinforced by Schiffman & Kanuk (2000:141) who said that the image a customer has of a product is probably more important to its success than the product's actual characteristics.

These thoughts are taken further by Moran (1990:11) who said, "A brand's perceived attributes, at least those of importance to consumers, are rather timely fixed by its early advertising and even more firmly by direct or vicarious consumér experiences with the product itself. Thereafter, except for the case of newly formed consumer households, *attribute perceptions are difficult to change without accompanying substantive, non-trivial changes in the product (or in competitive products)*" – italics mine. In other words, a

product's attributes are perceived (almost permanently) through its early advertising, subsequently perceptions are hence difficult to change.

This statement highlights the long-term nature of the "first impression" the product makes on the customer. It also places a great weight on the fact that perceptions that are formed will change only when new households are created or the product changes significantly.

More money is wasted on trying to change the mind of the customer than any other endeavour in advertising (Trout & Ries, 1989:20). They said that once a mind is made up it is almost impossible to change. What businesses have to realise is that "the way to get into a human mind is to change yourself" (1989:20).

These statements emphasise the reality that what matters most is *what the customer thinks*. In other words, everything else is insignificant until the customer's perceptions about a product or service are identified. It is from this point that marketers can then tailor the marketing mix elements and position the product/service effectively according to the customers' perception.

What the customers thinks must be established as it is directly related to the company's positioning strategy (or what the company wants the customers to think about the product). If there is no correlation, a repositioning strategy might be needed – done either by physical changes, reinvention or with image changes brought about through promotion.

The importance of perceptions therefore cannot be underestimated. Ries & Trout (2001:44) said, "Don't fight perceptions with facts. Perceptions always win." Customers act on the perceptions they have formed – perceptions that, as we've learnt, are almost impossible to change. So if a student perceives UNP to be an unsafe university through negative attention or second-handed past experiences – even if facts contradict that perception – they will still believe UNP is unsafe.

The University of Natal then needs to research how the students view the institution (i.e. perceive it) to know if their positioning strategy has been effective. In knowing how the customer perceives the University it can evaluate its positioning strategy and develop marketing strategies for the future.

2.2 Perception Creation Process

On introducing the perception creation process that occurs in the customer's mind, a brief look at exposure and attention would suffice (Hoyer & MacInnes, 2000:80).

2.2.1 Exposure

As a starting point the customer needs to be exposed to the product or marketing stimulus, which is information about the product/service communicated via various marketing channels, before they can be affected by it (Hoyer & MacInnes, 2000:81)

2.2.2 Attention

Attention is the process where we allocate mental activity to a stimulus. According to Hoyer & MacInnes (2000:84) there is a certain amount of attention necessary for information to be perceived and for it to activate our senses. They continue by saying that after information has been perceived, additional levels of attention may be paid to the information. In other words, people need to pay a certain amount of attention to an advertisement (billboard, pamphlet etc.) before anything sticks out to them.

Once they take notice of a product/service additional attention can be spent learning more about the product/service. Without the necessary attention being paid to the product/service the information will fall by the wayside: not penetrating the senses and therefore wasting opportunities and money.

Daily customers are bombarded by marketers advertising their wares through every medium possible. The level of attention that is to be paid to the advertising of the product/service is therefore crucial to the success of the positioning of the product. To attain this success then they need to innovate ways to high road their messages over all the noise created by other products/services.

Therefore the highest level of attention is needed for the product/service to be perceived by the customer. Hoyer & MacInnes (2000:87- 90) give four major ways of capturing attention:

i. Make the stimulus personally relevant – including messages that appeal to the target market's needs, values and goals. The University of Natal's cinema campaign (which can be found at http://www.nu.ac.za/) is an example of this where great leaders who all studied at the University of Natal are shown as having 'become someone' after graduating at the University.

The advertisement includes people like Alec Erwin (Graduated in 1983 and went on to become the Minister of Trade and Industry), Shamila Batohi (Graduated in 1981 and went on to become the Head of the Scorpions Special Investigations Unit), Mampele Ramphele (Graduated in 1982 and went on to become the Managing Director of the World Bank) and Shaun Pollock (Graduated in 1993 and went on to become the Captain of the South African Cricket Team). The advertisement ends with the statement "Become Someone".

ii. Make the stimulus pleasant – this is done by using humour in the advertising, attractive models, and music.

iii. Make the stimulus surprising – using novelty and unexpectedness in the adverts. For example the University of Natal's Adopt a Light campaign (see Appendix I) which was a series of advertisements attached to lampposts strategically around various schools.

iv. Make the stimulus easy to process – this involves boosting the customer's ability to process the stimuli. Stimuli are processed more easily when fewer things compete for their attention (Hoyer & MacInnes, 2000:90). A billboard in the middle of nowhere is more likely to be noticed and processed than one in a congested, sign-filled city.

2.3 Differentiation

The fundamental nature of positioning theory is a differentiated product/service offering: differentiating oneself in the mind of the customer relative to the competition. The next section gives an overview of differentiation as a prerequisite to positioning.

2.3.1 Product Differentiation

Berkowitz, Kerin, Hartley & Rudelius (1992:216) said it simply: "product positioning refers to the place an offering occupies in consumers' minds on important attributes relative to competitive offerings." They offered two approaches, which can be used when positioning one's product.

2.3.1.1 Head-to-Head Positioning

This involves meeting the competitors directly with similar product attributes in the same target market. An example of when this occurs is when a company notices a competitor reduce its price on a specific good, that company will then attempt to compete head on and reduce its price with a similar product.

2.3.1.2 Differential Positioning

Here the organisation seeks a less competitive and smaller market niche to occupy and to locate its brand. Usually this means differentiating a company's similar products in such a way that they focus on meeting different needs for different target markets. This is done to minimise cannibalism where one product steals sales or shares from another product within the company's product line.

Payne (1993:128) said that differentiation for a service is obtained through adding value to the basic core product. It is referred to as the product surround concept – the core product could represent 70% of the cost of providing the service but only has 30% impact on the customer. The core benefit/service answers the question "What is the customer really seeking?" – and it is the marketer's task to identify and understand this from the customer's perspective (Kotler & Fox, 1995:278).

The element called 'tangible product' was introduced by Kotler & Fox (1995:279–280). They held that the tangible offer consists of four characteristics – Features, Quality Level, Packaging, and Brand Name. These four characteristics can be modified to make the offer more attractive to customers.

By comparison the augmented product or product surround represents the additional services and benefits added on to the product (like guarantees, financing, delivery arrangements etc.). This accounts for 30% of the cost of the product but accounts for 70% of the total customer impact. This is depicted in Figure 1 below.

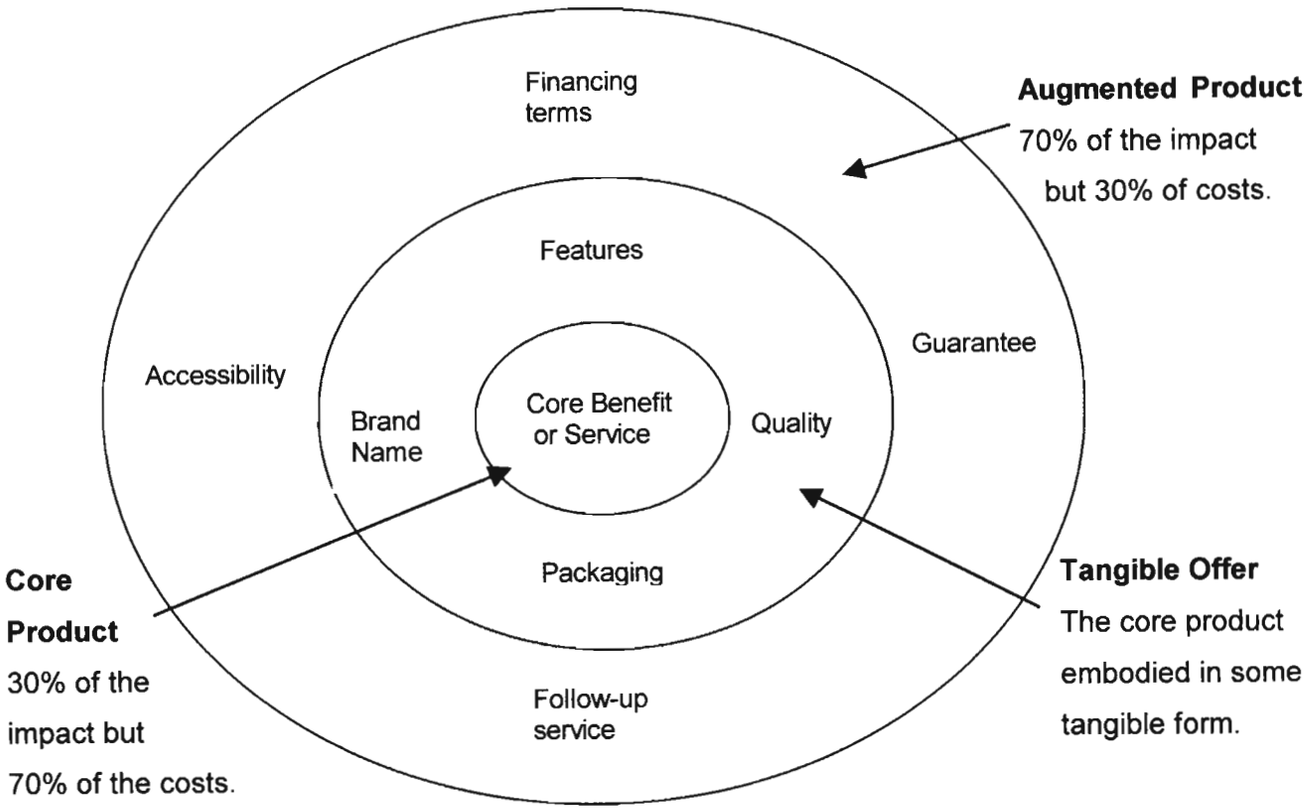


Figure 1 – Product Surround, Adapted from Payne (1993:128), Kotler & Fox (1995:279)

2.3.2 Differentiation in Positioning

"Differentiation is often at the heart of a successful strategy" according to Ackerman (1988:28), who went on to say that with effective differentiation comes recognition and rewards in the form of customer awareness, improved sales, better market shares and heftier cash flows.

A good and relevant saying attributed to an unknown author is, "innovate or die". The statement needs little explanation – if a company wants to survive in this competitive environment it has to be innovative, continually doing things differently or doing new things. If it chooses not to innovate or change, it will die.

Weinstein (1998:115) referred to an article written by Hendersen (1983) – an article entitled *The Anatomy of Competition*. Hendersen said that the world operates very much like the animal kingdom – no two species can coexist if they make their living in exactly the same way. If they live in the same territory, feed on the same prey and so on they will not survive. The similarities are easy to see: no two companies can coexist if they make the same products, target the same market under the same conditions using the same business strategy. Companies, similar to animals, must adapt, evolve and change or face extinction.

Sacrifice must be made when it comes to positioning and differentiating: you have got to "give up something to get something" – Editorial, 2000. It involves chasing after one feature, one differentiating factor, and driving that point home. A company could lose customers (those who do not value a company's differentiating factor) but it does mean that they are actively pleasing the core group of customers – Kaydo, 2000:114.

In his book "To catch a mouse make a noise like a cheese", Kornfeld (1983:250) gave the 57th Rule of Marketing: "If the position of your product is seen as parity with others on the market, repeat 'vive la différence' aloud until you've worked out a strategy for making it higher and less vulnerable. It's not good enough to be Just As Good." The key here is "It's not good enough to be Just As Good" – in this competitive world if you are not taking care of your customers someone else will.

In differentiating, the business needs to identify what makes it unique in the market – according to Ries & Trout (1985; cited by Kaydo, 2000:105). From that point on, that idea should be the centre of its entire sales and marketing strategy – driving the business' benefits and uniqueness to the customer. In identifying a differentiating factor Kaydo (2000:106) recommends going to your best customers (using focus groups/surveys) and asking them why they like the product and what makes it better than the competition.

One major problem with differentiation strategies is that they are inflexible and lack provision for a possible competitive response. Linked to this is an inability to adapt to a changing marketplace once the strategy is implemented and it must be taken for granted in this day and age that customer's needs will change – hence the strategy must be flexible (DiMingo, 1988:37).

Another problem is businesses describing themselves in ways that do not mean anything to the customer (Kaydo, 2000:110). For example, advertising the fact that the business has changed the colour of the label. Advertising a colour change does not convey an advantage or benefit to the customer, it must advertise something not matched by the competition or it will lose its effectiveness.

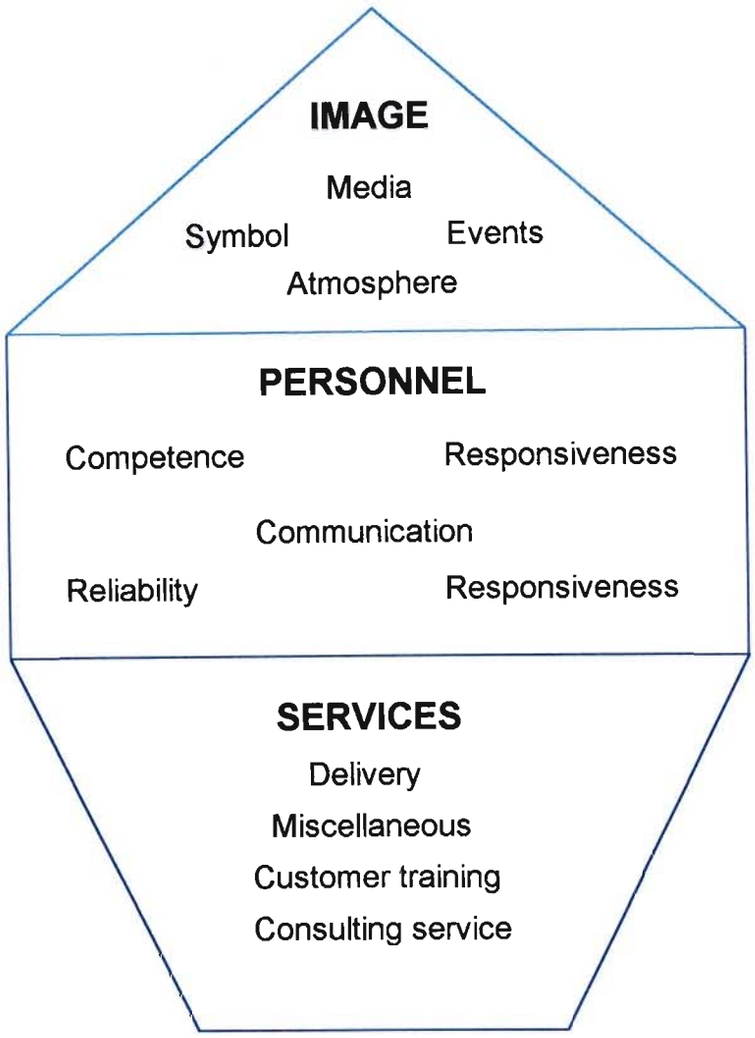
2.3.3 Differentiating Variables

Van der Walt *et al* (1996:133) spoke of differentiation variables which consist of the following:

- Product
- Services
- Personnel
- Image

These are features in the service or product that a business uses to make itself distinctly different from the competition. These variables are what Palmer & Cole (1995:330) regard as scales that can be used to position a business.

The variables that relate best to this research are Image, Personnel and Services – as illustrated in Figure 2.



<u>Figure 2</u> – Differentiating Variables (Adapted from Van der Walt *et al*, 1996:133)

The image of a company is the tip of the iceberg, which is visible to many people. The personnel make the image what it is, and at the base of the "iceberg" are the core services. Moreover, if one of the elements is problematic (for example a graduation ceremony that is marred by public violence) the perception of the University will be affected and as a result, it's positioning will be affected as well.

In practice, organisations have to use a variety of criteria based on features, promotional impact, customers' attitudes etc. to differentiate themselves and not just service delivery or price. Bateson (1995:122) suggested that what sets a service provider apart from the field is the *attitude* of the service providers.

Research looking at sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction for service consumers found that service failures did not necessarily lead to dissatisfied customers (Bateson, 1995:123). If these service failures (which includes unavailable or slow services) are handled properly it could result in customer satisfaction. This is key for staff to understand: even if computers are slow or systems are down, their attitudes can produce a positive outcome for the customer.

2.3.4 In the Absence of Active Differentiation

A company faces two possibilities if it is not actively differentiating itself (Kaydo, 2000:114). The first possibility is that the company will blend in with everyone else in that market and the customers will not see the company as being different. The second possibility is that if the company isn't positioning itself, the competitors are positioning the company. If the competition positions itself as the technical innovator in the market, the company is the "second rate" (Kaydo, 2000:114). The essence of Kaydo's point is that if the company isn't positioning itself clearly in a way that is unique and relevant to the customers, the customer has no reason to buy that product.

Adcock (2000:125 – 126) took this one step further by saying that the position selected by the company must be both different from the competition and sufficiently attractive to enough customers to be commercially viable. Both Kaydo (2000:114) and Adcock (2000:125 – 126) highlighted the fact that the company cannot be up there with everyone else, that there must be significant differences to the business or there will be a blurring of the differential lines.

Once a product has been positioned someone will set about to modify the product so that it will appeal to more customers, effecting an increase in potential market share (Moran, 1990:10). The result of this is that every brand tries to appeal to every other brand's customers, i.e. trying to be all things to all people.

This is what Ries (1992:7) called "the conventional way of doing business" which sees strategy as a tent: try to make the tent big enough so it can hold everything you might want to get into it. He argued, however, that the strength in business today is the concept of narrowing one's focus. "You can't stand for something if you chase after everything" (Ries, 1992:7). The biggest mistake some marketers make is to try to be everything to everybody (Editorial, 2000)

"You've got to go fishing where the fish are," points out Gronbach (cited by Excellante International, 2002). "By that I mean you market to your largest market. When you market to your largest segment (in this case the parents), you will get others. Go for the parents and they will bring in the rest. You cannot go chasing inefficient sectors in an effort to get everybody. Go where your efficiency is and they will bring in the others." One company that has benefited from this train of thought is the cigarette company Phillip Morris which narrowed its focus to men only (Ries, 1992:9). The brand Marlboro was targeted to an even smaller target market, that of men identifying with the 'cowboy'. Marlboro is the largest selling cigarette among men in the US, it is also the largest selling cigarette among women. In narrowing down Phillip Morris could evaluate the needs and desires of one target group (the cowboy) and focus all marketing activities to that group. By doing that the company also attracted the interests of other target groups.

Contradicting this theory is Hall (1990:5–9) who looked at the successful positioning strategy of GPT Stromberg-Carlson (Telecommunications equipment). In his opinion the company needs to find new and broader positions and jump out of the niche because "it could be tragic to be positioned solidly as the key supplier to the market that suddenly goes away" – (1990:9). In this example however, the telecommunications market consists of many fluctuating elements and activities. This would mean that the company could lose out had they continued to maintain the same strategies and programmes whilst their market around them changed.

2.3.5 Differentiation at Universities

The University of Natal is competing against many other tertiary institutions in South Africa and indeed the world as many foreign students cross the seas to study in South Africa and vice versa. For this reason (i.e. intensity of competition) differentiation is essential (Editorial, 2000).

Take for instance the airline industry: most of the airlines offer similar benefits, flying to the same destinations, with the same planes. The opportunity to differentiate would therefore only present itself in service levels offered by each airline (Bateson, 1995:122). Likewise universities are offering various courses, similar to other universities (locally and internationally) and need to differentiate in order to survive.

Ries (1992:8) asked this question: "Does any company proclaim itself as the unquality corporation? Everybody stands for quality; as a result, nobody does." What is his point? Well, who does not offer a good education? Every university offers a good quality education; the uniqueness of a "quality education" offered by all institutions renders quality as a trivial differentiating factor. In other words a university looking to differentiate by saying they offer a good, high quality education, isn't going to work.

Paraphrasing Theodore Levitt, Kotler & Fox (1995:281) said that competition isn't between what educational institutions offer in their classrooms, it is rather between what they add to their standard offerings in the form of services, financing, and other things that students value. The question to answer then is: what do students value?

Differentiation can be achieved in many ways as indicated by Kotler, Bowen & Maken (1999:241). Below is a partial list of ways by which a university can differentiate itself:

- Location
- Price charged
- Performance quality
- The caring manner of faculty and staff
- The nature of the curriculum
- Campus atmosphere

Kotler & Fox (1995:237)

None of these factors are a result of actions or assets, nor a result of advertising. This means that fortunes do not have to be spent on advertising to differentiate the product/service but it can be done through strategic and systematic planning and implementation of policies.

For example, a university could differentiate itself by offering programmes that are not offered elsewhere, e.g. UNP offers a MBA in Water Management. Or the University could differentiate itself from other universities in terms of providing a better service to students e.g. using WebCT to provide on-line material etc. The University could differentiate in

terms of its staff. High calibre lecturers and researchers are a valuable differentiating factor for universities.

The University may make it's service available to a greater number of students by offering distance courses, or by running satellite campuses, or the University may differentiate itself in terms of it's overall image. The differentiation chosen will depend mostly on what resources the University has at its disposal, but also what is important to the target markets. The *ultimate* positioning strategy will focus on communicating those differentiating factors that are most important to the target market in a relevant way (Kaydo, 2000:108).

2.4 Positioning in the Literature

Positioning is the key factor under research. As it has been established, successful positioning strategies are based on the perceptions the customer has of the product or service.

2.4.1 Positioning Defined

Kotler (1997:295) described positioning as the "act of designing the company's offering and image so that they occupy a meaningful and distinct competitive position in the target customers' minds." Schiffman & Kanuk (as well as Ries & Trout, 2001 and Saunderson-Meyer, 2001) speak of positioning as the image the customer has of a product/service. Marketers try to position their products/services in a niche that no other marketer occupies in the mind of the customer (1994:186).

Another definition is offered by Palmer & Cole (1995:380) who explained positioning as "developing a marketing mix to influence consumers' perceptions of the service and to give the organisation a competitive advantage with its chosen target market".

"Positioning is an organised system for finding windows in the mind. It's based on the concept that communication can only take place at the right time and under the right circumstances." – Ries & Trout (2001:21). This definition shows that communicating the position of a company/product/service can only take place successfully once the open windows of the mind have been identified and targeted, avoiding the closed windows. This means identifying open windows as positioning opportunities and closed windows as a "Dead Sea", i.e. pouring money would be a waste because nothing will come out of it.

Product positioning has also been defined as the way "customers perceive a product in terms of its characteristics and *advantages* and its competitive positioning" (italics mine) – Van der Walt, Strydom, Marx & Jooste (1996:133). In other words, the key to positioning is what benefit or advantage it gives – for example what benefit does the student get out of studying at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus and also what characteristics provide the benefit?

Products need to be positioned to directly meet the needs of the target market according to Assael (1985:6). A repositioning strategy is needed if the product is reaching the wrong people or if the product is reaching the right people but using the wrong methods. Positioning relates to finding a fit between a specific market offering and the needs of the target market – the better the fit the more accurately needs will be met. This means that more of the target market can be satisfied which could lead to a great market share. Following on with this thought Van der Walt *et al* (1996:133) emphasised the importance of communicating the product positioning to the target market. After all, people will not buy products which they do not know about or do not know will benefit them.

In basic terms positioning is "thinking in reverse. Instead of starting with yourself you start with the mind of the prospect. Instead of asking what you are, you ask what position you already own in the mind of the prospect." (Ries & Trout, 2001:219)

Using the motor vehicle industry Kuzwayo (2000:95) highlighted one of the traps of positioning that Nissan walked into – inconsistency. Changing their position from "We are driven" to "You can with a Nissan" and then "Life's a journey, enjoy the ride", they have fallen victim to the major positioning blunder called inconsistency. In other words, they have swapped and changed too many times for customers to have an idea of who they are and what they stand for.

2.4.2 The Positioning Debate

In an attempt to fully understand positioning, an extensive literature survey has revealed that there are two sides to the positioning coin. Shostack (1987:34) highlighted a debate which arose from different viewpoints regarding positioning. One point of view that was highlighted (that of Ries & Trout, 1981) says that positioning is purely a communications issue – i.e. the product/service is given, the objective however, is to manipulate the customer's perceptions of reality. DiMingo (1988:35) called this psychological positioning. Positioning has also been explained simply as it is not "what you do to the product, but what you do to the mind" by Trout & Rivkin (1996:ix), enforcing their standpoint.

On this side of the coin it is believed that with "the right name, the right positioning strategy and the right execution, advertising alone is the most powerful force in marketing" – Trout & Ries (1989:20). They are of the opinion that all things being equal (which they usually are in the real world) advertising alone can determine who will win the marketing war.

Shostack (1987:34) clarified the other side of the coin using Lovelock's (1984) point of view which said that positioning is much more than just advertising and promotion. The market position of a product can be affected by various elements including pricing, distribution and product – the core around which all positioning strategies revolve. (Shostack, 1987:34)

The argument then is that the *product* itself is the major positioning factor rather than trying to change the customer's perceptions. In other words, it is more important to manipulate the product (using packaging, pricing, placement etc) rather than manipulate the mind. They contend that one cannot rely on communications alone, criticising Ries & Trout's (1989:20) earlier statements of "advertising alone is the most powerful force".

Palmer & Cole (1995:329) reiterated Lovelock (1984) & Shostack's (1987:34) standpoint by saying that positioning has been regarded as a communications issue, but in fact it should be an issue that is dealt with far more sincerity. It should involve the considerations of pricing, distribution, and the nature of the service offer.

The researcher has used a combination of the two theories. Much of positioning has to do with perceptions and the customer's mind, however it would be naïve to imply that positioning has nothing to do with manipulating the product itself. Hence the researchers' standpoint takes into account the importance of manipulating both the product as well as the customer's mind in positioning.

2.4.3 Positioning Ambiguities

According to Adcock (2000:18 –19) positioning can be misunderstood. It can be classified into four distinct concepts, each masquerading under the same broad name of positioning.

- Market Positioning

  This is classified as the choice of target market, answering the questions of what market/business we are in and where to compete. It relates to the idea of strategy as a position.

- Company/Competitive Positioning

  Included in this concept are strategic choices such as first to market or me-too producers, specialist or volume producer and so on. These are orientations of the business and are affected by market position available.

- Product Positioning

  Positioning of an offering is about "assembling a total product/marketing mix to address coherently and cost effectively the wants and needs of a specific target market" (Adcock, 2000:18)

- Position as Perception

  This relates to how the customer rates the offering in relation to competitor offerings. Adcock (2000:19) said that in contrast to the other three concepts perception is a result rather than a choice, and it is this choice that matters in the end because it is what is critical in a purchase situation.

2.4.4 Basis for Positioning

The success of positioning comes from driving the competitive advantage of the business home to the customers. It is around this positioning that the strategy of the business flows out of – hence the importance of correct positioning.

There are seven methods of positioning a company can use (Kotler, 1997:299-300). They are ways a company can use as starting points for their positioning strategies. As can be seen below various unique elements/niche categories are focused on as the positioning foundation.

These bases will now be discussed briefly:

a) **Attribute positioning** – the company focuses on an attribute, for example *Trellidor's patented lock.*

b) **Benefit positioning** – a certain benefit is used to differentiate the product, an example here is security in *Thomas Cooks' traveller's cheques.*

c) **Use/application positioning** – this involves positioning the product according to its application/use, for example *2-Minute Noodles.*

d) **User positioning** – here the product is positioned directly at a specific group of users. An example is *SAA's Frequent Flyer and Voyager Miles* aimed at business people who travel a lot.

e) **Competitor positioning** – the product positions itself against an implied or named competitor suggesting that it is in some way a better product, the example here is the well known *BMW and Mercedes advert.*

f) **Product category positioning** – here the product is positioned as the leader in a certain field, for example ESPN (an American sports channel) claims that it is the *Worldwide Leader in Sports.*

g) **Quality/price positioning** – in this case the product is positioned as offering the best value for money, here an example is *Joshua Door.* They are positioned as having low prices – if you find any prices lower than what they are offering they will match it.

(Kotler, 1997:299–300)

The following diagram summarises positioning and puts it into perspective:

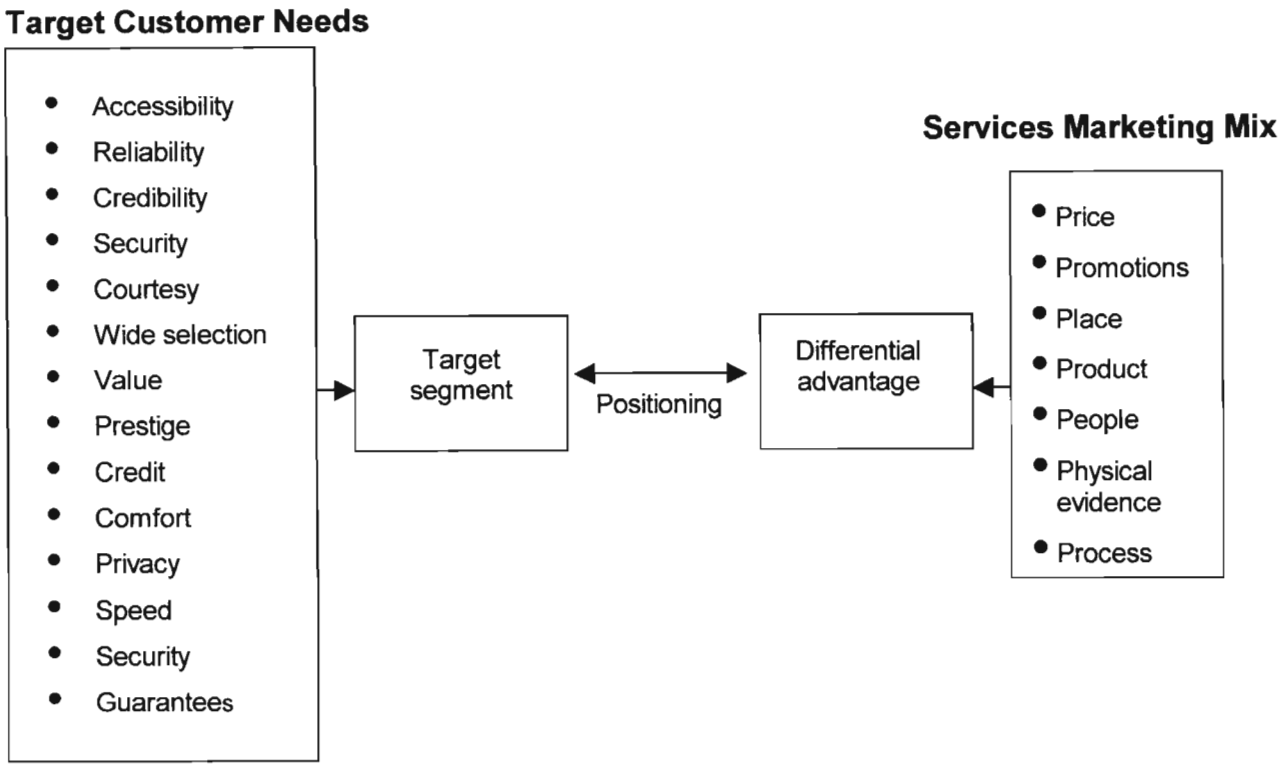


Figure 3 – Positioning Summarised (Adapted from Jobber, 1995:674)

2.4.5 Steps in Positioning

Positioning has been extensively discussed but how is it done, and how is it done well? The process of positioning as offered by Payne (1993:108–118) involves a number of steps including the following:

2.4.5.1 Determine the Levels of Positioning

This involves the decision of whether to position the service industry as a whole (i.e. *industry positioning*), the company as a whole (*organisational positioning*), a range or family of related services/products offered by the organisation (*product sector positioning*), or the positioning of specific products (*individual product or service positioning*) – Adcock (2000:18).

2.4.5.2 Identification of Key Attributes of Importance to Selected Segments

Through research the company must identify what needs are important to the specific target group. Payne (1993:109) emphasised that the way in which the purchasing decisions are made should be considered. Individuals – as opposed to companies/groups – make different decisions for different reasons.

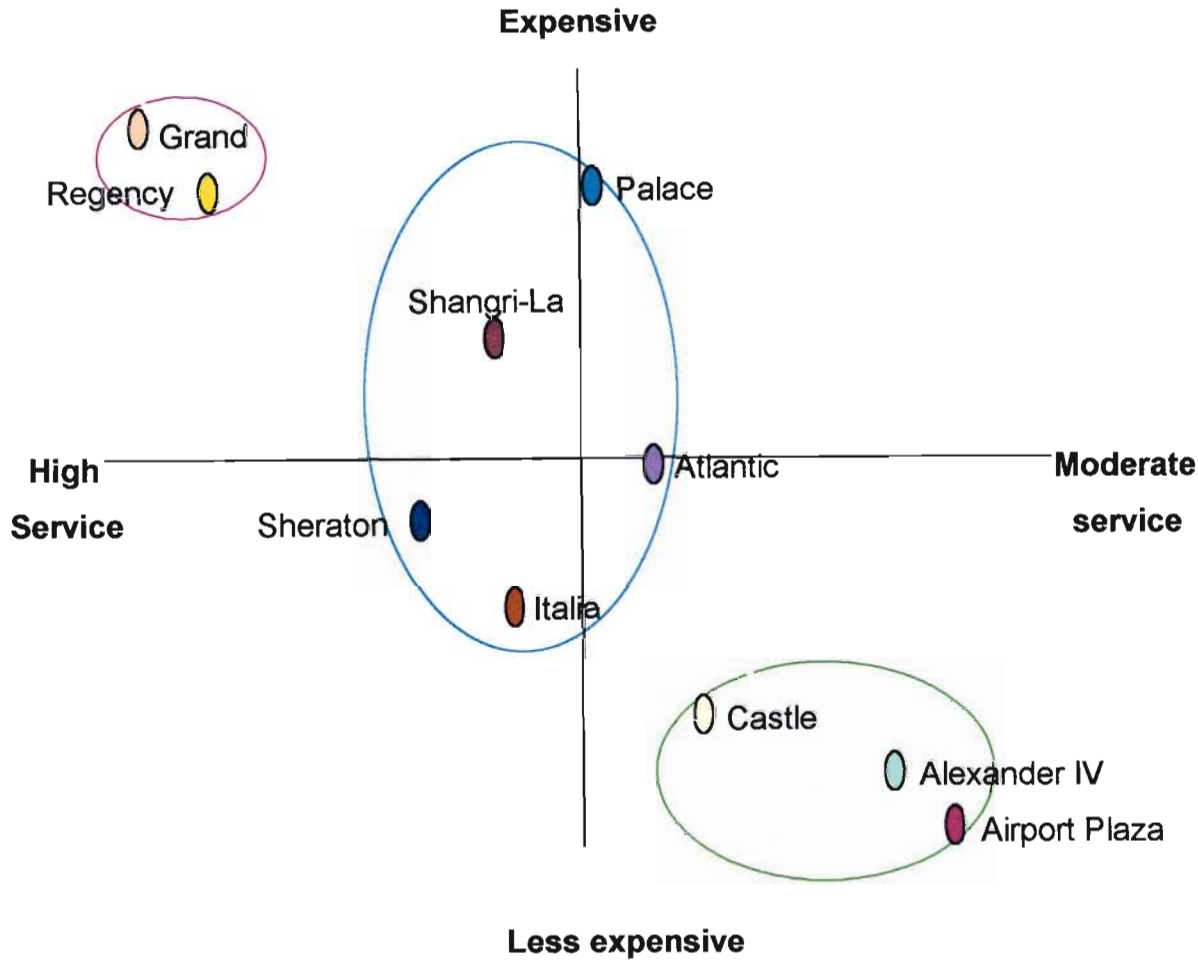
2.4.5.3 Location of Attributes on a Positioning Map

Mercer (1992:266) also speaks about the well-known product-positioning/perceptual map. These are maps that are drawn with their axes dividing the plot area into four quadrants, the parameters used in measuring position usually run from "high" to "low" or "+" to "-". This perceptual map is sometimes used to measure a brand's perceived position relative to its competition (Kotler, Bowen & Makens – 1999:260)

Palmer & Cole (1995:330) speak of scales that a business can use to position themselves - price and service quality being two of the basic scales. A high price combined with a high quality strategy may represent a sustainable market position for the service aimed at a wealthy segment that is looking for good quality. However there are segments that may be unsustainable over the long term, for example high prices for low quality goods will not bring the crowds to your doors.

In other words a positioning map is used to plot a company or its goods and services in relation to its competitors. By using this tool marketers can compare performance levels according to customers perceptions and from this point marketers can then develop strategies to strengthen perceptions or attempt to eradicate negative perceptions.

Figure 4 below depicts an example of hotels plotted on the attributes of price and perceived service.



<u>Figure 4</u> – Positioning Map (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 1999:260)

The circles are drawn around clusters of points that are not statistically significant distances from each other. Hence the customer would perceive them as being similar. This draws our attention to 'head-to-head' positioning and the ground lost due to indifferentiation and being the same as the opposition, which will be dealt with briefly later on.

Payne (1993:111) identified the need to establish the areas of core demand from these maps. The need to establish these areas is derived from different customer groups within the target segment with different preferences and the core demands can then be met with great accuracy and precision.

2.4.5.4 Evaluating Positioning Options

Payne (1993:117 – 118) quoted Ries & Trout (1981) when giving three positioning options:

i. Strengthening the current position against competitors: for example a hotel like the Palace (Figure 4) would attempt to strengthen an already healthy position.

ii. Identifying an unoccupied market position: the quadrant exhibiting a high quality and less expensive service is unoccupied (Figure 4). By using the positioning map the company can decide whether to enter that niche or not.

iii. Repositioning the competition: this would mean that the company chooses not to enter into head-to-head positioning by differentiating their product/service offering.

2.4.5.5 Implementing Positioning

The result of all positioning strategies has to be communicated to the customer. This would involve using the various elements of the company – its staff, policies, and image – to reflect a similar image, which together conveys the desired position to its target group (Payne, 1993:117 – 118).

Palmer & Cole (1995:331–333) give three basic steps to follow when positioning a service:

Step 1

Identify the organisation's strengths and opportunities and those exploitable opportunities in the marketplace. The position adopted by an organisation will be influenced by its strengths and weaknesses relative to the market which it seeks to target (Palmer, 2001:182). Customer familiarity with the company/service can be used as a strength – this support is invaluable when new enterprises are to be launched.

A successful position is one that "takes into consideration not only a company's own strengths and weaknesses, but those of its competitors as well" – Ries & Trout (2001:29). To ignore the characteristics of the competition could be fatal for a company.

Weaknesses can also be used to the company's advantage. For example Avis were second in the car rental industry – they had to try harder to get to the No.1 position. Using that mindset they positioned themselves to do just that. They developed an ingenious "We try harder" slogan which they have used to their advantage (Ries & Trout 2001:29).

Step 2

Evaluate the position possibilities and select the most appropriate. If market segments are too small and not feasible they need to be discarded, if the positioning strategy is inconsistent with the organisations' image or goals it will also need to be discarded. Positioning needs to be considered and reconsidered to ensure the right result is achieved. A mistake in the implementation of the positioning plan will lead to costly, unnecessary, and unwanted problems.

Step 3

Develop the marketing mix around the position and establish in the eyes of the target customers the position that has been adopted. The decision that the organisation has taken must be carried through into all functions in the business.

This means that recruiting staff, training, motivating and retaining staff that delivers the desired service has to be incorporated in every facet of every department. Every element of the mix must build a platform to develop a creative platform for the promotional program to make the business' position crystal clear to both employees and customers.

2.4.6 The Importance of Positioning

It has been established that positioning (i.e. each of Adcock's concepts) is an important strategic marketing tool which allows managers to ascertain what position they are in at the moment, where they want to be, and what actions are needed to attain that position (2000: 18–19). This allows market opportunities to be identified by considering positions that have not been met by the competitors.

Positioning therefore helps to influence both product development and the re-design of existing products. It also allows a firm to consider possible moves of the competition and responses so that appropriate action can be taken.

Positioning is how the customer sees or perceives the good or service relative to the competition. It is important to identify the windows that Ries & Trout (2001:21) were talking about because if a competitor occupies the position in the customer's mind the resources spent on the positioning strategy, and in fact the product itself, will be wasted. The positioning of a good/service in the mind of a customer (i.e. how they perceive it) will influence their behaviour towards that particular good/service. This behaviour will translate into purchasing behaviours and decisions with regard to the good/service.

Scientists believe that a person can handle only a limited amount of sensation. Beyond a certain point the brain goes blank and refuses to function normally (Ries & Trout, 2001:19). At that stage the brain is a saturated sponge that cannot and will not absorb any more information. For marketers this bears an important message – beyond a certain amount of stimuli the customer's mind is full, any more information poured in will be split excess, and therefore wasted. Based on this quote the various stimuli thrown at the customer daily will be looked at briefly.

There are thousands of adverts and messages competing daily for a share of the customer's mind – the battleground of marketing. Television came onto the market barely 30 years ago, not replacing any medium but rather adding to the media of radio, newspapers, and magazines. The average American family watches 7 hours and 22 minutes of television a day. A television picture changes 30 times a second, therefore an American family is exposed to 795 000 television pictures a day! And that's just television (Ries & Trout, 2001:12)! How many of the adverts sink into the memory of the television viewer?

What about newspapers? According to Ries & Trout (2001:13) to read a newspaper like the New York Times, which consists of roughly 500 000 words, would take 28 hours (reading at an average speed of 300 words per minute). How much of the advertising is getting through to the reader? Never mind the advertising on the Internet, taxis, newspapers, billboards, magazines, dustbins etc.

These figures stress the importance of positioning, without which the carefully constructed, financially doused messages get lost in the cesspool of adverts that haven't been perceived. Positioning or targeting a product/service into an empty gap would mean there is less interference from other stimuli and the customer would be more attentive and therefore should be more responsive (Ries & Trout, 2001:13).

2.4.7 Positioning Strategy

Positioning strategy is in fact the core of the marketing mix (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000:141) – it complements other components like the segmentation strategy and selection of the target market. This section gives marketers a basic understanding of the strategy required for positioning.

Positioning, according to Lovelock (1996:169), plays a key role in marketing strategy because "it links market analysis and competitive analysis to internal corporate analysis". From these three a positioning statement (which will be discussed shortly) can be crafted that will enable the business to identify their product/service offering (concept), what they as a business want to become as well as what actions need to be taken to get there.

"To succeed in our over-communicated society a company must create a position in the prospect's mind. A position that takes into consideration not only a company's own strengths and weaknesses, but those of its competitors as well" – Ries & Trout (2001:29). Part of the strategy's success will be to plot the competitors and their offerings in relation to the business itself.

In analysing competing institutions the following competitive roles can be revealed (Kotler & Fox, 1995:176–177):

- **Leaders**: the acknowledged dominant institution in a particular geographical, disciplinary or other market, for example Rhodes is the university to attend if you are doing Journalism.
- **Challengers**: runner-up institutions that seek to match or surpass the leader. These institutions seek to enhance their reputations, add innovative programmes or advertise more intensively.
- **Followers**: strive to hold on to their own present market. Followers are not seen as innovative although they might seek to refine their courses offered.
- **Nichers**: those institutions that seek out gaps and fill them. For example UNP's MBA in Water Management specialises in serving one particular market. Successful nichers look for niches of sufficient size and growth potential to be attractive (while not being served well by the competition) and that the institution can serve effectively.

Assael (1985:103) said that in the context of marketing, planning product positioning must precede strategy formulation. Once the product position has been defined, advertising and promotional strategies will follow. In this strategy, criteria like feelings and emotions, price, the consumer's self image and competitive products can be used to position a product.

Different customers see the service/product in different ways – it can therefore be positioned in different ways to different target markets. It can also be repositioned to the same target market without even changing the product physically. The University can position themselves to working people (potential part time students) in one way and to scholars in a different way.

The result of successful positioning is that it creates a distinctive, favourable image in the mind of the customer – an image that customers rely on when the time comes to choose a product (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994:187). As one can imagine, the pace in our highly competitive environment calls for marketers to create a distinctive product image.

2.4.7.1 Steps in Developing a Positioning Strategy

Lovelock (1996:171) identified three basic processes in isolating and identifying a suitable market position and developing the strategies to reach it.

i. **Market analysis** – factors such as the overall level and trend of demand and geographic location of the demand must be determined through the market analysis. Alternative ways of segmenting the market as well as an appraisal of the size of different markets and their potential should be considered. Research into customer preferences and needs should also be conducted within the different segments, looking also into the way the customers perceive the competition.

ii. **Internal corporate analysis** – this requires the business to identify its resources, limitations or constraints as well as the aims and goals of management. Using the insights gathered from this analysis the business can select a limited number of target market segments which it is able and willing to serve with either new or existing services.

iii. **Competitive analysis** – this process would bring to the fore the strengths and weaknesses of the competition which the business in turn can use to identify opportunities for differentiation. Relating these insights to the internal corporate analysis should suggest which benefits should be offered to which target segments.

The outcome of integrating these three forms of analysis is called a positioning statement that "articulates the planned position of the organisation in the marketplace" – Lovelock (1996:171).

2.4.7.2 The Positioning Statement

The positioning statement is seen as the "heartbeat of an effective communications plan" (Kanzler, 1999:49), and based on this perspective a positioning statement answers the following six questions:

1. Who the company is
2. What business the company is in
3. Whom they serve
4. What is needed by the market they serve
5. Against whom they compete and
6. What is different about their business

Kanzler (1999:49) commented on how often the positioning statement is confused with a market position. Quoting Harry Beckwith (1997) a market position "is a cold-hearted, no-nonsense statement of how you are perceived in the minds of your prospects. A positioning statement ... states how you wish to be perceived." (1999:49)

2.4.7.3 Successful Positioning

Payne (1993:114) quoted Kosnik (1989) in giving three key characteristics of successful positioning.

- ✓ The positioning should be meaningful – the company must strive to be relevant to its customers and their needs.
- ✓ The positioning must be believable – as many companies claim to be all things to all people companies need to realise that people want truth. Making outrageous statements without the necessary service offering to back up the statements will not get any company anywhere. It has been said that one must under promise and over deliver to succeed in business.

✓ The positioning must be unique – companies have to find a positioning that they can occupy where they consistently outpace the competitors in serving a given market.

Ries & Trout (2001:22, 25) gave a couple of positioning ideas to aid marketers in finding a successful position:

- It's better to be first than to be better than the competition. People remember the first man on the moon or the first Black president in South Africa. "The most powerful concept in marketing today is owning a word in the mind" (Ries, 1992:6) – and that comes from being first through the open window of the customer's mind.
- If you cannot be first in a category, then set up a new category that you can be first in. FedEx weren't the first in the delivery/courier category so they set up a new one, that of overnight delivery.

Universities are thought to "first have to unpack all (their) products and understand what (they) have, before (they) can repackage them and give (students) focus." (Van der Walt, 1999:46). This is an important issue when creating specialised programmes to equip the students – the University needs to find what niche they can develop and thereafter become a leader in that field.

In the same breath marketers have to realise that even though they need to be establishing their own categories to establish their place in the customer's mind, they cannot lose focus and be a 'jack-of-all-trade' company. Ries & Trout (2001:222) highlighted the importance of narrowing the focus of expertise because to be all things to all people you wind up with nothing.

In his book "Marketing Strategies for Competitive Advantage" Adcock (2000:14) quotes Peter Drucker (1985) in suggesting further strategies for successful entrepreneurs that link in with Ries & Trout's (2001:22, 25) thoughts.

- Being the 'firstest with the mostest' – this is similar to Ries & Trout's suggestion of being first is better than being better (2001:22).
- 'Hitting them where they ain't' – again this is comparable to Ries & Trout's statements of setting up a new category so that you could be first (2001:25).
- Finding and occupying a specialised ecological niche, and
- Changing the economic characteristics of a product, a market or an industry.

Adcock (2000:14)

These ideas are built on the premise of avoiding head on competition. Referring to Figure 2 (the positioning map) it was seen how the hotels formed clusters of points that were not statistically significant distances apart from each other. Hence the customer would perceive them as being similar. In being perceived as being similar the companies have lost most of their competitive edge to the blur of competition.

Ries & Trout (2001:38) said, "In today's marketplace the competitors position is just as important as your own". It is exceptionally vital that businesses study their competition's position, tactics etc. in order to maintain significant differences. This introduces the concept of segmentation as it is through the strategy of segmentation that businesses avoid head-on competition (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000:34)

A contributing factor to successful positioning is the extent to which the company identifies and fulfils the customer's needs.

2.4.8 Marketing/Societal Concept

An important facet to marketing effectively for a business is being aware of the needs of your customers. A business needs to be acutely aware of the changing needs and requirements of the internal customers as well as the external customers to ensure, not only success, but also a successful positioning in the minds of its customers. These concepts will be discussed as part of the evolution of marketing.

When speaking about the marketing concept it must be in contrast to another concept in the evolution of marketing – this concept is the **production concept**. This concept held that the customer would buy the product if it was affordable and available and so the business should just work on its production and distribution efficiency (Armstrong, Kotler, Saunders & Wong, 1996:14). Likewise the **product concept** focused totally on producing the best product, not taking into account the needs of customer.

With the **selling concept** emphasis was placed on selling the product no matter what the customer needed/wanted, because a selling approach takes an 'inside-out' approach (Kotler & Armstrong, 2001:18). In other words the company's starting point is internal, whether it be in the factory, sales people or the existing products instead of external (looking at the needs of customers).

The **marketing concept** holds that "achieving organisational goals depends on determining the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than competitors do" (Armstrong *et al*: 1996:15). In other words these needs are satisfied through the "design, communication, pricing and delivery of appropriate and competitively viable programs and services" better than the competition – Kotler & Fox (1995:8).

The essence of the marketing concept is:

- Focus on the customer (internal and external customers) through customer orientation and customer satisfaction,
- Systems approach – integrated marketing, getting everyone to work together,
- Profit Orientation – i.e. profits through customer satisfaction, and
- Social responsibility

(Kotler & Armstrong, 2001:19)

Irons (1994:91) quoted Adam Smith (1777) in saying: "consumption is the sole end [purpose] of all production and the interest of the producer should be attended to only as far as it may be necessary for promoting that of the consumer". A common denominator in all successful services is the belief that "a customer is someone who is more, much more, than simply a target".

In his book entitled "Marketing Strategies for Competitive advantage" Adcock (2000:7) spoke of the critical contact between the business and the customer. He said, "The application of the marketing concept requires a number of specialist functional activities to take place... The most critical areas are all the contacts that take place between suppliers and customers." In a nutshell the marketing orientation insists that universities research their customers' needs and wants, instead of concentrating on their existing programmes that are on offer ("marketing myopia") – Kotler & Fox (1995:9).

Many institutions regard themselves as adopting a marketing orientation due to their inclusion of a marketing department (Kotler & Fox, 1995:8–9). The inclusion of activities such as public relations, publicity, and even using some other marketing tools has fooled many an organisation into thinking they are marketing orientated. However as has been mentioned, an institution with a marketing orientation focuses on serving the needs of its constituencies (parents of students, alumni, donors, etc.).

Societal marketing is when the business meets the customer's needs more effectively and efficiently than competitors while improving the customer's *and the society's* well being (Armstrong *et al,* 1996:18). This concept is more concerned with what is best for the consumers and society in the long run.

The requirement for a societal company is to put into balance the following considerations when setting marketing policies (Armstrong *et al* 1996:19):

- Company profits
- Consumers (want satisfaction)
- Society's interests – discussed further in Chapter 5.

A 'societal marketing' focus would greatly benefit the positioning of any company because they could easily use that as a differentiating factor over its competitors. A company that has the interest of the society as its focus, that is concerned about its customers and their well-being, is a company that owns a valuable word in the mind of a customer.

It is from this basis (i.e. a customer orientation) that the company needs to define and segment the market and position itself.

2.4.9 Positioning, Segmenting and Defining the Market

Having dealt with positioning, other key issues remain – *defining* and *segmenting* the market. Both these issues are essential to the solid foundation any business should be building on. Defining and segmenting the market are keys in the University's marketer's hands, keys to unlocking a successful positioning strategy. Only once these elements have been identified and addressed can a positioning strategy be implemented.

<u>Defining the market</u>

Weinstein (1998:3) began his book with a quote taken from B.C. Forbes: "If you do not drive your business, you will be driven out of business". This quote deftly lays out the absolute importance of defining the market that you are targeting. Without knowing who your market is, everybody becomes your market.

When defining markets one of the successful companies to look at is Merck, a pharmaceutical company in America. Their success comes from understanding and defining themselves as being in the health care management business – not *just* a

pharmaceuticals company (Weinstein, 1998:36). They have defined their activities in such a manner that employee and customer alike know what the company is about.

A sound conceptual framework for formulating management strategy is set up with a solid market definition. More and more managers are realising that establishing their business/market definition is one of the most important strategic decisions that need to be made.

Weinstein (1998:110) continued by saying that many firms base their definitions on unconfirmed assumptions, a prescription for disaster. These firms base their beliefs on thoughts regarding what the market trends are, what the customers want, and that they understand competitive forces.

Segmenting the market

A market segment is defined by Assael (1985:6) as a "group of customers with similar needs". He went on to state that only once a market has been segmented (which is done through identifying needs and characteristics of a segment) could a service be positioned to meet the needs of the people.

Successful market segmentation happens when "segments are described one variable at a time, or at most, two at a time." – Moran (1990:10). He said that the consequence of simplifying segmentation helps both marketers and consumers grasp the brand's positioning. In addition to this the design and communications objectives can be measured – a vital stage in the process of segmentation.

To segment effectively the company has to define and identify precisely what market they are to compete in. Concerning segmentation, Weinstein (1998:110) stated that: "markets should be partitioned by finding similarities in customer characteristics or customer purchase behaviour". He gave the example of Dell – their marketing strategy is to target sophisticated buyers and large accounts that do not need much technical support or "hand-holding".

This introduces three important benefits of segmentation: the business can spot market opportunities better when it is aware of different segments and their needs; the business can make finer adjustments to its offerings to match the desires of the market; and the institution can make finer adjustments to its prices, distribution channels and promotional mix (Kotler & Fox, 1995:212).

Assael (1985:715) mentioned that the initial basis for segmentation should be customer benefits, thereafter their lifestyle and demographic characteristics can be determined. Berkowitz *et al* (1992:196) added to this definition by explaining that market segmentation involves aggregating prospective buyers into groups that have "common needs and will respond similarly to a marketing action".

Weinstein (1998:16) found that positioning and segmenting is best carried out at the "program" level or the functional level of the organisational levels as opposed to the corporate and business levels. In other words the lower-middle level marketing management take care of the segmenting and positioning decisions because they are closer to the market. Segmentation is founded on matching company offerings to the needs of the target market – management closer to the ground can do this with greater ease.

Positioning in the market

Mercer (1992:263) believed that answering the questions of where to position your product/service, what segments to choose, and the choice of the target market are crucial to the rest of that product's/service's life span. He said that from these questions most other decisions would emerge. The intellectual effort that should be given to these decisions should therefore not be underestimated.

Figure 5 – Segmenting and Targeting Markets (Berkowitz *et al* 1992:201)

In Figure 5 Berkowitz *et al* (1992:201) give a summarised account of the process of targeting and segmenting markets. This then leads to a connection with the firm's marketing action to identify and meet the target market's needs through effective segmentation. In doing so the business can implement a clear positioning strategy based on the specific needs of the customers.

2.4.10 Repositioning

Repositioning, as has already been said, is needed when the original positioning strategy has failed to portray the image of the company (when customers have the wrong perception of the business) as well as the fact that it is not impacting the right target market. The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, would need to consider repositioning if their original strategy was failing – here is a brief glance at *repositioning*.

Palmer & Cole (1995:334) suggested three reasons for repositioning in an organisation:

- The original positioning strategy may have been inappropriate in that the target market the strategy was intended for was either lost or misguided. An overestimation of the segment size, or mistaking the company's competitive advantage are examples of problems that would lead to repositioning.

- The nature of the customer demand may have changed. Preferences can easily change over time. With regard to students the general population is young and looking for the latest fad or fashion. In the youth segment of any market, demand is continually unstable and fluctuating as the youth themselves are rather fickle.

- Service providers try to build on their growing strengths to reposition themselves to meet a more profitable market or subsegment. Palmer & Cole (1995:334) use the wheel of retailing (dating back to McNair, 1958) to illustrate this point. Many service industries begin operations as low-price, no-frills service providers yet as the life cycle matures they "trade up". This means that they improve their display, move to more prestigious premises, increase advertising, and other services that finally push expenses, prices, and margins up. As these businesses mature in the market they create a vacuum which is filled by the next generation of no-frills, low-cost services.

Image repositioning is also an option – i.e. when the product is repositioned according to its image and not its physical attributes or target market. It is very easy for a good to fail because it does not have the required image for its target customers, even if it is acceptable in functional terms (Jobber, 1995:227).

The underlying concept of positioning is perceptions – the picture that is created in the mind of the customer. Through numerous external factors (e.g. a company's 4P's) as well as internal factors (e.g. past experiences, reference groups, culture) perceptions are created which then determines consumer behaviour.

A marketer cannot solely rely on intelligent pricing, good placement, and flashy packaging to create a positive perception in the minds of its customers and potential customers. However on the other hand incorporating brilliant advertising alone will be insufficient to create and maintain positive perceptions as well as clearly define a company's position.

As has been mentioned Palmer & Cole (1995:380) – positioning is about developing a marketing mix that will influence customers' perceptions and give an organisation a competitive advantage. It is the positioning strategy that underpins much of the businesses strategy, making this topic one of utmost importance in a business.

Positioning becomes more challenging for a service provider mainly due to the intangible nature of services. Hence the following chapter looks at services and the positioning of services in more depth.

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Chapter 3

Positioning of The University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) as a Service

In the preceding chapter the fundamentals of perceptions and broad components of positioning were investigated. It was also emphasised that the elements of the marketing mix need to work hand in hand with one another for the position of the company to be communicated to its customers and potential customers.

This next section will focus on services and the positioning of services with specific regard to the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. As a preface to the positioning of services, the basic theoretical concepts regarding services will be investigated.

3.1 Defining Services

Payne (1993:6) gave a particularly accurate and applicable definition of a service given:
"A service is an activity which has some element of intangibility associated with it, which involves some interaction with customers or with property in their possession, and does not result in a transfer of ownership. A change in condition may occur and production of the service may or may not be closely associated with a physical product." Examples of service providers include travel agents, lawyers, hairdressers, educators etc.

Services are not things according to McLuhan (1964), cited by Shostack (1987:34). It is rather the *process* that is the product... so we say 'movies' when we really mean 'entertainment services', we say 'hotel' when we mean 'lodging rental'. In this way the use of nouns has obscured the fundamental nature of services, i.e. they are processes and not objects (1987:34).

3.1.1 Characteristics of Services

Amongst the first to ponder the different implications of services on marketing (as opposed to products) were authors like Judd (1964), Rathmell (1974), Bateson (1977), Shostack (1977), and Sasser, Olsen, and Wyckoff (1978) – Shostack (1987:34).

Below, Irons (1994:11) gives some of the elements that distinguish services from products.

- Services are transient (temporary/brief) – they are consumed there and then with no lasting material remaining (for example a back massage).
- People mainly represent services – they are inseparable from the person who provides the service (for example an insurance agent).
- Services are perishable – one cannot have a production run and store services up for later usage (for example a hairdresser).
- Services are a series of 'once-off' production runs i.e. they are homogenous. No one service will be the same because people are different (for example a doctor).

3.1.2 Classification of Services

Just as goods are classified into categories (convenience, shopping, specialty, unsought, durable and non-durable goods) services can also be classified to offer insights to marketers – Lovelock (1996:27).

The following four-way classification scheme from Lovelock (1996:27) is based on tangible/intangible actions as well as to whom or what the activity is directed at (people or possessions).

i. People Processing – these include tangible actions aimed at people's bodies. Customers need to be physically present throughout the service delivery, they cannot deal with the service provider at an arm's length. Examples of such services include passenger transportation, beauty salons, restaurants, funeral services, and health care. In this category the customer must be willing to spend time actively cooperating with the service operation.

- Looking at the service process itself helps to identify what non-financial costs are incurred by the customer in receiving the benefits of the service. Non-financial costs would include time, mental and physical effort, and perhaps even fear and pain. (Lovelock, 1996:30)

iii. Possession processing – this involves tangible actions to people's goods and other physical possessions, for example lawn mowing, cleaning services, freight transportation, refuelling, retail distribution. Here the customer is less involved with little or no need for their physical presence.

iv. Mental stimulus processing – it comprises intangible actions directed at people's minds. In this instance customers must be present mentally but not necessarily physically at the service facility. Examples would include education, advertising/broadcasting, concerts, arts, and entertainment. In receiving these services the customer must invest time but not necessarily by being there physically (like in a concert situation).

v. Information processing – these are intangible actions directed at intangible assets, such as insurance, banking, research, and consulting. Information is the most intangible form of service output but it is often transformed into a tangible, physical form such as letters, reports, books, and tapes. Although physical contact is not required, most customers believe that the face-to-face contact is the beginning of a successful, trusting partnership.

Lovelock (1996:28 – 32)

According to this classification the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg (hereafter referred to as 'the University'), would be regarded as a mental stimulus processing service because lectures are aimed at educating students and students need to be present mentally but not necessarily physically (distance education) to receive the service.

Just as a movie house loses revenue from empty seats the University is also faced with that dilemma. The marketing of the University must therefore make an effort to attract students to fill up the seats. This has become more of a challenge because of the influx of private institutions and smaller pool of potential students. As a service provider the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, needs to position itself as a unique, differentiated service provider in an attempt to attract students.

3.2 Positioning Services

Positioning a service is "the process of establishing and keeping a distinctive place in the market for a company and its products (or services)" – Jobber (1995:673). He said that the most successful companies differentiate themselves from competition on attributes that the target customers value greatly.

Another definition of service positioning (with the emphasis on competitor offerings) is offered by Zeithaml & Bitner (1996:286–287): "the way it is perceived by consumers, particularly in relation to competitor offerings." Their definition of a successful service positioning is that of a company that has established and maintained a desirable and distinctive place for itself in the mind of the customer relative to the competition.

3.2.1 Using the 7 P's in Positioning

In a marketing mix there are a number of elements which need to combine together to create a masterpiece which still follows the strategies and structures of the firm at the same time. It is like baking a cake: there are a number of ingredients that need to be added for a cake – i.e. the marketing mix. The right ingredients, added in the right quantity and baked for the right time – this relates to following the strategies and structures of the firm and in so doing will result in a wonderful masterpiece.

This is particularly relevant to the University as they develop an effective marketing mix in today's competitive tertiary education market. It is important to realise the importance of the marketing mix but at the same time adhere to the policies and structures of the University.

Perreault & McCarthy (1999:87) said that it is useful to think of positioning as part of the broader strategy planning process. They went on to explain that the whole purpose of positioning is to "ensure that the whole marketing mix is positioned for competitive advantage". The entire organisation, from structure to strategy to implementation, has to reflect their intended position and maintain it.

There are four variables which control the company/market interface as explained by Irons (1994:101). These are known as the four P's. They constitute the marketing mix variables for a *goods provider* including **P**rice, **P**roduct, **P**lace, and **P**romotion. For a *service industry* the four P's are replaced with the seven P's, this includes the above four variables but also includes these variables: **P**hysical evidence, **P**rocess, and **P**eople (Kotler, 2000:434).

A law firm cannot position itself as a professional organisation with dirty floors and casually dressed employees. The positioning strategy must be backed by the entire marketing mix. Every company, not just the service companies, should practise the seven P's instead of the usual four to ensure the essential backing of the strategy.

The seven P's described by Kotler (2000:434) follow:

3.2.1.1 Place (i.e. location/distribution)

The location and accessibility of any service are important issues in services marketing. Accessibility here not only refers to physical accessibility but also with other means of communication and contact (Cowell, 1991:72). Distribution channels also affect the market position (Shostack, 1987:42). The merge of Edgewood Training College with the University of Natal has changed their position in that market.

How has that change affected the position of UNP in the minds of the customers though? Firstly, when there is life there is growth – when grass is alive and healthy it grows. The merge spoken of above could represent the growth, health and life of UNP to prospective customers. Secondly the acquisition of Edgewood (which is situated in Pinetown) means that there is a campus in Pinetown as well as Pietermaritzburg and Durban. This would reflect the image of an institution which is accessible and not in isolation within one city.

3.2.1.2 Promotion

This includes the various forms of communication with the markets. It includes advertising, personal selling, publicity, and indirect forms of communication like public relations. A piece of advice offered by Levison & Kotler (cited by Kahn & Shapiro, 2001) about publicity is this: "determine exactly what sets you (your product/service) apart from that of your competitors. The media seeks the unusual, not the humdrum". This features as an important link between positioning and promotion – emphasising the need for every function of the business to flow on one course.

Stanton *et al* (1993:15) spoke of promotion as an ingredient in the mix that is used to inform and persuade the market regarding the company's service offerings.

It has been said that customers will not buy goods that they do not know exist. The University of Natal needs to consider its communication tools to effectively impact on the target market and communicate those courses not readily known about.

Promotion plays such a vital role in the perceptions created by customers as well as potential customers. For example: the cinema adverts (which can be found at http://www.nu.ac.za/) make use of a number of techniques to reflect prestige, quality and accomplishment. This is done through the use of colour, music, the writing used etc. Through this advertisement the University is attempting to portray a prestigious image with the objective of creating the perception that studying at the University of Natal will translate into a quality, prestigious education that will open doors to employment once completed.

3.2.1.2.1 Keys to Effective Promotions Programmes

Trout & Rivkin (1996:19–23, 101) explained that there are areas with regards to promotions that need attention so that an effective promotions programme can be created. The customer is bombarded with so many advertisements that most of them become noise – the job of the marketer is to effectively create promotions that attract attention, stir up interest and desire and will eventually lead to action (Etzel, Walker & Stanton, 2001:527).

These are guidelines that are offered by Trout & Rivkin (1996):

Keep it Simple

The human mind hates confusion: "Complexity has even overwhelmed people who should know better" (Trout & Rivkin, 1996:19). In their extensive research on the brain they have found that people have a wonderful way of solving problems – by having *more*. Traffic congestion? Build more roads. Classrooms overcrowded? Build more classrooms. Now we have even worse traffic jams because with more roads came more cars. Hence, more of something does not necessarily solve the problem.

How does this relate to positioning? Trout & Rivkin (1996:23) recommended "focus on one powerful attribute and drive it into the mind". They stated that oversimplification is a powerful weapon, and as has been mentioned earlier "the most powerful concept in marketing today is owning a word in the mind" (Ries, 1992:6). It was suggested that in positioning a product/service, the message should be put to the customer very simply – even too simply.

Verbal is Effective

Disagreeing with an age-old saying "a picture is worth a thousand words", Trout & Rivkin (1996:101) believe that a picture is not worth a thousand words. It has often been taken for granted that the eye is more powerful than the ear but in their research of analysing effective positioning programs, they found that not one programme was exclusively visual. It is by the ear that the mind works, not the eye.

It must be reiterated here that very little changes the mind of the customer. Customers see what they expect to see, hear what they expect to hear, and taste what they expect to taste (Ries & Trout, 2001:34).

It can be argued that the customer will expect to see what they see, taste what they expect to taste etc. based on past experiences or through interaction with other users of the product/service. Someone who is tasting a product for the first time but has been told by a friend that it does not taste good will already be prejudiced towards that product and almost expect it to taste bad. Using another example, a customer at the University could tell a friend about a pleasant encounter while trying to solve a finance problem. Through interaction with the customer the friend could have a similar positive experience purely because they were expecting a positive experience.

This would seem to negate the importance of perceptions and positioning considering customers experience what they expect to experience and there's not much a marketer can do to change their mind. However this places more emphasis on getting into the mind of the customer first – and also getting to the opinion leaders first. Opinion leaders are those people that informally influence the actions or attitudes of others (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2002:395). Using a push strategy (discussed below) targeted at opinion leaders would do well for any business.

3.2.1.2.2 Promotions: Pushing or Pulling?

Pulling refers to getting the customers to ask the middlemen for the product. They (the customers) initiate the demand process. *Pushing* a product refers to the normal promotional tools used by a business to sell a good/service (for example personal selling and sales promotion) – McCarthy & Perreault (1993:428–430).

The emphasis lies with the business to initiate the demand process, it involves "pushing" the product through the distribution channels. For example the University will use school counsellors to "push" the courses offered by the University. The difference lies herewith – the focus of the promotions. For a push strategy, promotions are geared towards the intermediaries whereas for a pull strategy, promotions are geared at the end-user.

3.2.1.3 Product

Managing the product element in the mix involves planning and developing the right goods/services to be marketed by the company. Cowell (1991:71) said that the service product requires consideration of the range of services provided, quality of services provided and the level of services provided.

Product quality directly relates to positioning in that the quality of a product will immediately draw a perception of the product (or service). If the product is of an inferior quality the customers' perception will follow in the same way. Likewise if the level of service provided by a university is inefficient or inferior when compared to other institutions the perception towards that university will be negative. It goes without saying that the positioning of the product/service will be severely hampered by inferior service quality.

The range of services also offered by the University would determine the customer's perceptions – if they offered the basic degree choices customers would have the perception of the University being a run-of-the-mill tertiary institution. However if they offered a range of specialised courses the University could have the perception of being experts in those fields through their specialisation.

3.2.1.4 Price

Levels of prices, discounts, allowances and commissions, terms of payment and credit are issues addressed under this consideration. Price can also be used to differentiate one service from another – this means that quality of the service and price will be important considerations for the customer.

The price charged by the business also affects perceptions and subsequently the positioning of the business. Price and quality have a direct correlation – if the price is high customers perceive the product to be a quality product, the opposite is also true. An important factor here though is that all the elements of the marketing mix need to be in synchronisation for the perception to be communicated to the customer.

Referring to Figure 4 as an example, the Grand Hotel has to reinforce its intended high quality/high price position through the other P's. A high price charged for inferior service delivered by inefficient staff would mean that the Grand would lose its prestigious position to one that says they are just expensive.

3.2.1.5 People (the selection, training, and motivation of employees)

Davidson (1978; cited by Cowell (1991:73)) believed that: "in a service industry the secret of success is recognition that customer contact personnel are the key people in the organisation." This goes to show the importance of personnel in any service organisation. Furthermore in high-contact intensive professional services (like a university) the composition of the workforce can make or break a company (Du Plessis, Rosseau, Blem, 1990:262). Here marketing management should have an interest in the selection, training, motivation, and control of personnel.

Staff are the face of the business. Going beyond that their efficiency and effectiveness will have an immediate bearing on the perceptions created in the minds of the customers. As in the example of the Grand Hotel used above it is the people that carry out the service that will justify, in part, the prices charged. Furthermore as the face of the business, it is their dealings with the customers that will result in the perceptions that are created. The importance of personnel cannot be over emphasised – the positioning strategy hinges on their actions.

In a study conducted at the University of the North, a comment made by one of the staff captured opinions from most of the staff: "I do not work with students, so I am not interested in them" Ruth (2000:186). It is worth noting that a finding from the study indicated that administrative staff are the first contact that students have with the university, and "endless queuing at registration is the major complaint." (Ruth, 2000:192). These staff would have created the students' first impressions and their experiences would have played a large role in positioning this institution in their own minds. This position may have been very different to that planned by the marketing staff.

3.2.1.6 Physical Evidence and Presentation

Physical evidence includes elements like

- The physical environment: furnishings, colour, layout and noise;
- Facilitating goods that enable the service to be provided: for example the cars used by a car rental company; and
- Other tangible cues like labels used by an airline.

(Cowell, 1991:73)

Payne (1993:131) added that physical evidence includes where the service is created, where the service provider and customer interact, and any other intangible element used in the communication with the customer.

Physical evidence is like the ribbon around a present – if it is missing it does not detract from the present but the absence of it is immediately noticed. In other words, people could still frequent a fast food outlet that has spelling mistakes in its menu, or is in need of a paint job but it is immediately noticed when that element of professionalism is lacking.

The tangible cues of a service (for example its building exterior, brochures etc.) have a direct bearing on the perceptions of a customer. Once again, if the Grand Hotel had to have mismatched colour schemes and broken furniture their positioning would be affected immediately.

3.2.1.7 Process (The service delivery process)

This element is the "how" of service delivery. The attitude and friendliness of the staff make a huge impact on any customer, however they do not compensate entirely for poor service production.

Once again poor service delivery would lead to numerous complaints and negative encounters with the customer – this means that the customer would have a negative perception of the business. The service delivery process links in with the personnel element of the marketing mix – the interface between the company and the customer.

To summarise, the company has a number of elements at its disposal – all of these elements have a direct connection to the perceptions created in the minds of the business's customers and hence the position of the business. One can almost be guaranteed that as a

customer experiences bad service (even being charged a high price for inferior service) the customer is comparing the businesses that are in direct competition and the service offered to them from that company.

The key for management is to know how to blend all these elements to produce a masterful marketing campaign but in addition to that management must know when and how to reposition the company when the original positioning fails or the market changes.

3.2.2 The Marketing Mix and Customer Perceptions

The quality of a service is often a difficult characteristic to measure, especially considering the importance of service quality as a means of gaining competitive advantage. The quality of a service, which is deemed to be high when the consumers' expectations of the service are confirmed (or even exceeded) and low when consumer expectations are not met, is affected by all elements of the marketing mix (Palmer, 2001:231).

This is of huge significance to the marketer as all aspects of the mix can affect the level of customer expectations and the perceived standard of service delivery. A case in point is the price charged for a service which, when all other factors are equal, is a major indicator of quality. Promotions have the effect of developing consumers' expectations of service quality – expectations which invariably most companies struggle to meet. Even front-line contact personnel are important elements of consumers' perceptions of functional quality (Palmer, 2001:231–233).

Palmer (2001: 230–231) also speaks of ensuring that the gap between customer expectations and the perceived service delivery is kept as small as possible. He suggested that the gap is minimalised through:

i. Formulating a marketing mix that is as realistic as possible – exaggerated claims lead to higher customer expectations that the company cannot always deliver. The service could then be perceived as being of a poor quality.

ii. Non-marketer dominated factors such as word-of-mouth information and traditions need to be considered – their presence may have the effect of increasing expectations.

iii. Marketers must recognise that the relationship between customer perceptions and expectations is dynamic. Marketers cannot merely maintain a customers' level of perceived quality if their expectations have been raised over time.

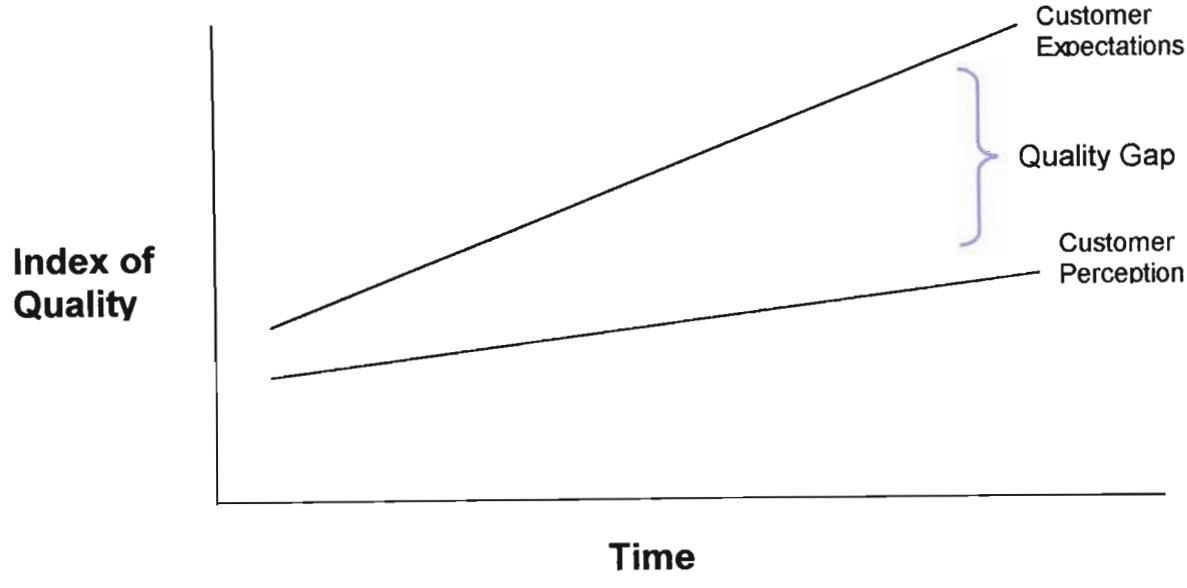


Figure 6 – The Changing Quality Gap Over Time (Palmer, 2001:232)

3.2.3 Difficulties in Positioning Services

So how does service positioning differ from product positioning? Palmer & Cole (1995:333) said that "positioning for a service industry differs from the manufacturing industry in that the method of producing the service is an important element of the positioning process". In essence, service delivery is vital in ensuring the right message is sent to the customer.

Service marketers face various unique challenges. As mentioned earlier just one of the challenges is that a service is intangible. Due to its intangibility, marketers have to create an image to differentiate it from other services. Schiffman & Kanuk (2000:142) held that the marketing objective in this case is to enable the consumer to link a specific image with a specific brand name. Their strategies should "provide customers with visual images and tangible reminders of their service offerings" (2000:142).

Assael (1985:716) acknowledged the difficulties in positioning a service. He said that in addition to the intangibility of the service, the marketer has to communicate a vague message of benefits because the customer cannot see the benefits before buying the service. He also stated that the service must be positioned through symbols, imagery, and

association (associating good reputation with education). Due to these difficulties an important feature to any service is the service environment.

The design of a service environment is imperative as it sharply influences customer impressions as well as customer and employee behaviour (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000:143). The reasoning behind the importance of the physical environment is because there so few criteria whereby the customer can actually judge the quality of the services they receive.

This factor has important considerations for the University. Due to the intangibility of education students will rely on other criteria to base their perceptions on. In other words the staff need to be acutely aware of the potential effect their treatment of the customers can have on the perceptions created towards the University as well as their affect on the University's positioning. The pricing policy of the University would be another area that has a direct bearing on the perceptions of students towards the University. In addition to that the physical evidence of the University (it's physical environment, letterheads etc.) plays a valuable role in providing cues to the quality of service provided by the University. This places far more importance on the marketing mix elements – emphasising how the elements need to be interwoven to achieve a common goal.

Service failures do not necessarily or automatically lead to dissatisfied customers (Bateson, 1995:123). As mentioned earlier, when service failures (which include unavailable or slow services) are handled properly it could result in customer satisfaction. This uncovers a 'secret weapon' in using people as a differentiating factor for the business.

3.2.4 Positioning by Adding Value to the Customer

Payne (1993:96) found that positioning is heavily dependent on the ability of the firm to differentiate itself from its competitors effectively. Offering superior value to its customers differentiates it effectively. He defined superior delivered value as being the total value offered to the customer less the total cost borne by the customer.

He suggested that the positioning of a service includes establishing a value for the service in the mind of the customer. It must be distinguishable by an attribute that is important to the customer. These attributes should be the important criteria that the customer will use in a purchase decision. For example Standard Bank's marketing campaign focused on doing things better, faster and simpler for the customer – criteria that will affect his/her purchase decision when the time comes.

The University has adopted "The Power to Succeed" as its slogan. This slogan speaks of a University that is in the business of not only sharing knowledge with students in the form of teaching, but also preparing them for success by equipping them for the 'real' world. The University seeks to offer superior value to the customer (as spoken about by Payne 1993:96) by meeting more than just the students' educational needs. By adopting this slogan the University has also attempted to facilitate visualisation of the "Power to Succeed" when related to the University (see Appendix G).

However, positioning a service goes beyond image making (Kotler & Fox, 1995:11). If we look at the positioning of a university as a service, it can be seen that positioning is an attempt to be distinguished from competitors based on real dimensions that add value to the students. Positioning would then help students in matching themselves to the degree or department that can best satisfy their needs.

There are important insights a service marketer must have (Cowell, 1991:60). One is that the purchaser of a professional service buys the capabilities of the seller. It can therefore be expected that the purchaser will evaluate the behaviour and characteristics of the service firm's manager or its employees when making a purchasing decision. This will include evaluation of the business itself, its location, reputation, and appearance.

It is fundamentally important for businesses to be breeding a service culture, i.e. a culture that focuses on serving and satisfying the customer first and foremost. The area that most businesses lack in is that of breeding a service culture outside of the marketing department. This culture needs to start with top management and flow down throughout the organisation (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 1999:41)

3.3 Types of Marketing in a Service Industry

According to Kotler (2000:435), one finds three types of marketing in a service industry: external marketing, interactive marketing, and internal marketing. These forms of marketing should be found in any business that takes marketing seriously.

These marketing forms will now be clearly laid out in the way that it should ideally work in the work place.

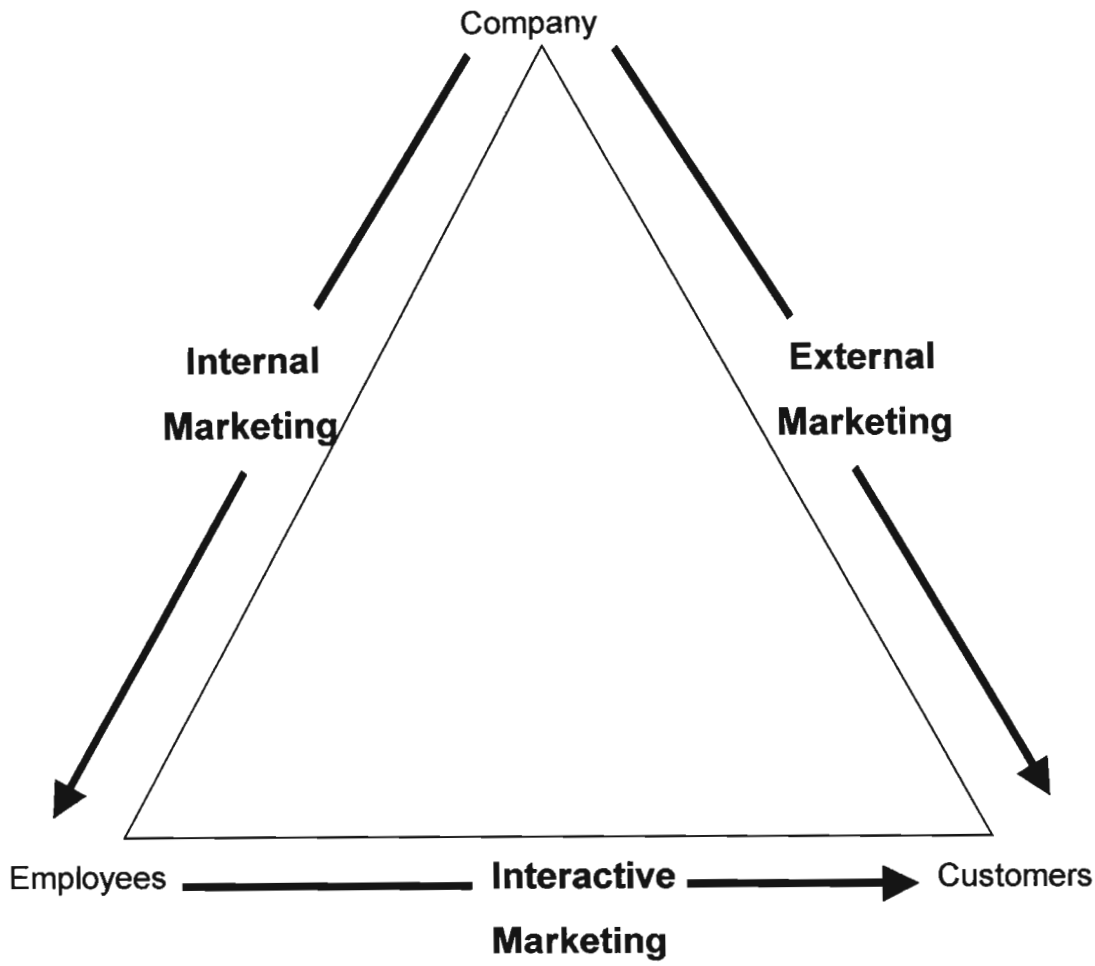


Figure 7 – Marketing Within an Organisation (Adapted from Kotler, 2000:435)

3.3.1 Interactive Marketing

Interactive marketing is seen as the employee's skill in serving the customer (Kotler 2000:436). It is how the employee works/serves/interacts with the customer in everyday business. This form of marketing will determine the perception/opinion the customer gets of the business, as the employees are the face of the business.

3.3.2 External Marketing

This is the usual form of marketing: "the normal work to prepare, price, distribute, and promote the services to the customers" (Kotler, 2000:435).

3.3.3 Internal Marketing

Internal marketing is part of the "promotion blend" as mentioned by McCarthy & Perreault (1993:428 – 430). They said that one of the important objectives of internal marketing is to "inform employees about important elements of the marketing strategy – so they'll work together as a team to implement it".

For a company to realise its potential in services marketing it must realise its potential in internal marketing, i.e. the attraction, development, motivation and retention of qualified staff to meet customers' needs as well as meeting their own job needs. As Berry & Parasuraman (1992:34) postulated, "With services, internal marketing paves the way for external marketing".

An idea held by Kornfeld (1983:241) is that a company/institution does not *have* customers, rather they *get* customers. This implies the need for companies to realise that they need to get into the market and get their customers, instead of waiting for them to find the company.

Getting the employees to realise the importance of their role in the service/product so that they will work as a team and sell the product as best they can is the basis of internal marketing. Kotler (2000:435) described this form of marketing as the work to train and motivate the employees to serve the customers better – it is a skill that needs to be taught to the employees.

To deal with the changing market place, especially in dealing with a dynamic market like students, businesses have to change the way they think and the way they do things. One way of doing just that is to motivate every employee to be customer oriented (Kotler, 2003:29). Leading on from that is the Wits marketing campaign which is to "turn everyone at Wits into a marketer" – Pretorious (2001).

In research conducted by Parasuraman & Grewal (2000:13) it was found that customers value the human dimension within a service more than the tangibles of a service. This is the perspective of customers who see the people performing the service as the

company. The question was asked of managers why they allow "wrong people to carry the company flag in front of the customers?" The reason offered was that most managers do not think like marketers when it comes to Human Resource issues.

The quality of service offered by a firm will be determined by the quality of listening to three types of customers according to Berry & Parasuraman. These three types of customers are as follows:

- External customers – those who have experienced the firm's service,
- Competitors' customers – those customers that the firm would like to make its own,
- Internal customers – who depend on internal services to provide their own services

Berry & Parasuraman (1997:65)

Marketing research is seen "as important in internal marketing as in external marketing" by Berry & Parasuraman (1992:32). Through systematic listening the decision makers within the firm can be educated about the changing needs, wants, and priorities of the three customer groups surrounding the firm.

An illustration is given by Kuzwayo (2000:63) for an advert for Iwisa (South African maize meal). The advert showed two men negotiating about the *lobolo* to be paid for the bride: money was put on the table but flatly refused. The negotiators tried again with furniture and even a television but still received no response. The bride-to-be whispered something in a child's ear and the groom's party brought a bag of Iwisa. Finally the deadlock was broken and all parties were satisfied.

The point of the advert was to humour the market however it backfired, it was found to be insulting of the people who eat Iwisa – most were horrified at the notion of R10 being paid for *lobolo*! Kuzwayo's point was that listening to the customer would have saved Iwisa many headaches, as he said, "99 per cent of communication is listening" (2000:64). Had Iwisa asked their internal customers for their opinions towards the advert they could have saved a lot of time and money.

3.4 Universities as Service Providers

Robert Woodbury (Chancellor of the University of Maine System) proposed: "Why not run a business like a good university" – Kotler & Fox (1995:3). Much discussion revolves around universities being run like businesses. However with the reputation, established strength

and professionalism some universities display it would be worthwhile for the private sector to learn a few lessons from us.

The Education White Paper 3 (A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education) outlines the role of higher education in a knowledge-driven world:

1. Human resource development – mobilising human talent and potential through life long learning with the aim of contributing to the social, economic, cultural and intellectual life of society.

2. High-level skills training – the training and provision of people to strengthen the country's enterprises, services and infrastructure. This requires the training and development of professionals and knowledge workers with globally equivalent skills to compete in the global arena.

3. Production, acquisition and application of new knowledge – national growth and competitiveness depends on continual technological improvement and innovation, which is driven by the vibrant research and development system initiated by well-organised higher education institutions.

(Asmal, 2001)

The South African government's perspective on higher education is this: "The overall well-being of nations is vitally dependent on the contribution of higher education to the social, cultural, political and economic development of its citizens." (Asmal, 2001)

This emphasises that a good university providing a quality, globally competitive education in this information revolution is important not only to the students but also to the government and the country. Castells (1993; cited by Asmal, 2001) said, "If knowledge is the electricity of the new informational international economy, then institutions of higher education are the power sources on which a new development process must rely".

Vil-Nkomo (2000:93) says that as South African universities play the global game they need to be establishing a niche for themselves in the market. He says that their survival and reputations depend on the contributions of the universities to the generation and development of "usable knowledge and research, fully accepted and recognised by other international institutions of higher learning."

Thus South African Universities need to become globally, as well as locally, competitive. They need to see themselves as service businesses with customers who have needs to satisfy, and they need to find ways to differentiate their service offering so that it appeals more to the target markets than similar offerings by competing tertiary educational institutions.

Van der Walt (1999:41) expanded on the university-as-a-business concept. In the interview with the University of the Free State (UFS) Rector, Professor Stef Coetzee, the professor said that the university needed to be a business concerned with higher education – this includes treating the students as clients.

He said that the UFS should "adapt quickly to changes in the business environment", and "should acquire a new flexibility and adaptability." This emphasises the necessity of taking up a business-orientated approach – indicating the importance of competition in the field. More and more students are choosing to study at other tertiary institutions (such as Damelin, Boston Campus, Technikons etc.) and the University of Natal therefore needs to be on the front foot – being fiercely competitive in all aspects to counter that strong competition.

3.4.1 The Evolution of Marketing at Universities

When looking at the history of marketing in tertiary institutions it can be seen that there has always been some marketing, in some shape or form (Kotler & Fox, 1995:10). Marketing now though has reached a level of greater importance as competition increases, the need to attract financial resources, enhance the institutions image amongst other reasons.

Kotler & Fox present six stages of marketing evolution specifically regarding enrolment of students (1995:11 – 12):

- *Marketing is unnecessary* – it was assumed that everyone knew the importance of an education and therefore institutions didn't need to market because the students would beat a path to their door.
- *Marketing is promotion* – it was found that there weren't students enrolling, or there weren't enough of the students they most wanted to attract, so institutions began actively seeking out students. Admissions offices (operating sales people) were set up to function primarily as a sales department.
- *Marketing is segmentation and marketing research* – the realisation occurred that the institution's resources were used most effectively if they were directed at the most attractive and likely prospects. Through research it was discovered that knowing what these likely candidates needed to know at what time assisted the admissions staff in doing a better job.
- *Marketing is positioning* – some institutions began to comprehend the value in differentiation, occupying a distinct position in the constellation of educational institutions. This stage came as a result of understanding that they could not offer all things to all students.
- *Marketing is strategic planning* – institutions extended their planning efforts to try and identify major trends (through external changes) that were affecting the schools image, programmes, positioning etc. After identifying the trends they were then able to evaluate the institution's performance and make the necessary adjustments.
- *Marketing is enrolment management* – in realising their job as part of the 'bigger picture' of things they realised that the relationship with the students couldn't be transactionally based, rather it had to be viewed as a long-term relationship. This stage revolves around everybody responding to the student's needs.

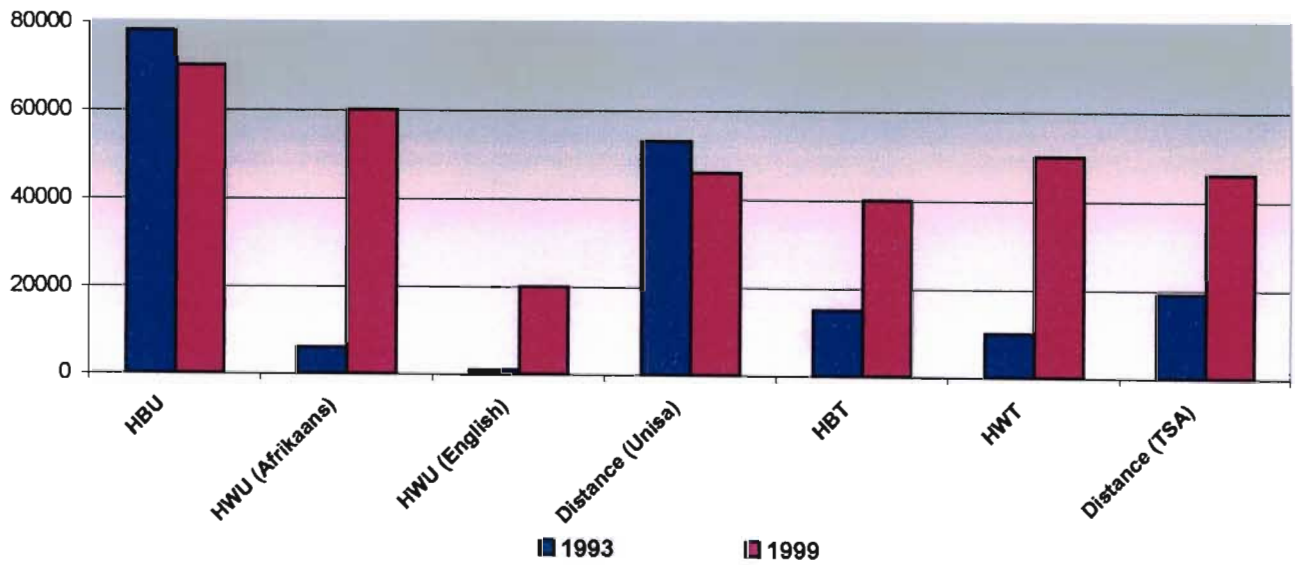
It is important for any educational institution to identify where it is in terms of the evolution of marketing. The University, as with many institutions, had to realise that their reputation and academic achievements through their students didn't guarantee that potential students would seek the institution out. Marketing programmes had to be put into place so that eligible customers could be sought out. As competition has intensified, marketing has become a necessity for survival.

"Marketing is positioning" – this is possibly where UNP is at present. It must be realised that the University cannot be all things to all people – hence a distinct yet valuable differentiation is still to be found so that the University can occupy a distinct position in the constellation of educational institutions.

3.4.2 Competition in South Africa's Higher Education Market

A steady drop in student numbers at universities in South Africa has been noted over the past number of years. Makhanya (2001) says that this drop in numbers is caused by: "perceptions about the inferiority of the university's programmes, declining government subsidies, and a shrinking pool of matriculants with university exemption".

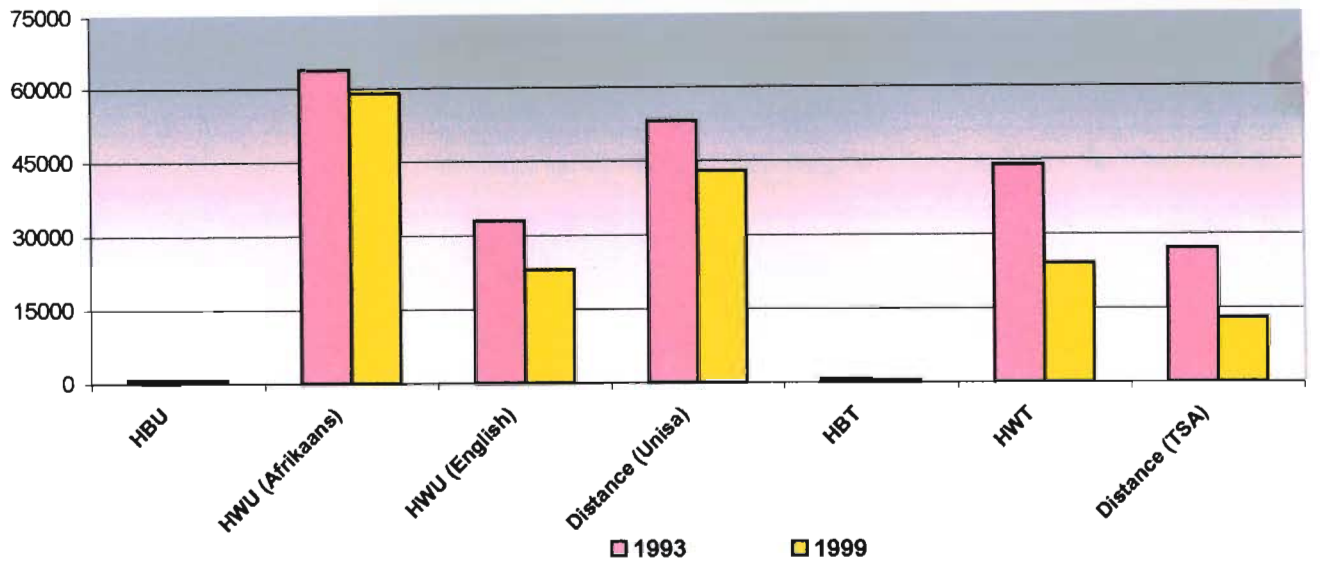
There has been a drop of 42 000 students from the white sector over the past six years whilst the numbers of black students has increased dramatically (Van der Walt 1999:42). Graph 1 indicates this phenomenon (in the graph, HWU refers to Historically White Universities, HBU refers to Historically Black Universities, HWT refers to Historically White Technikons, HBT refers to Historically Black Technikons, and TSA refers to Technikon SA).



<u>Graph 1</u> – African Head Count Enrolments by Institution Type

(University of the Western Cape, 2001)

Graph 2 indicates the decrease in White students at Tertiary institutions across the board.



<u>Graph 2</u> – White Head Count Enrolments by Institution Type

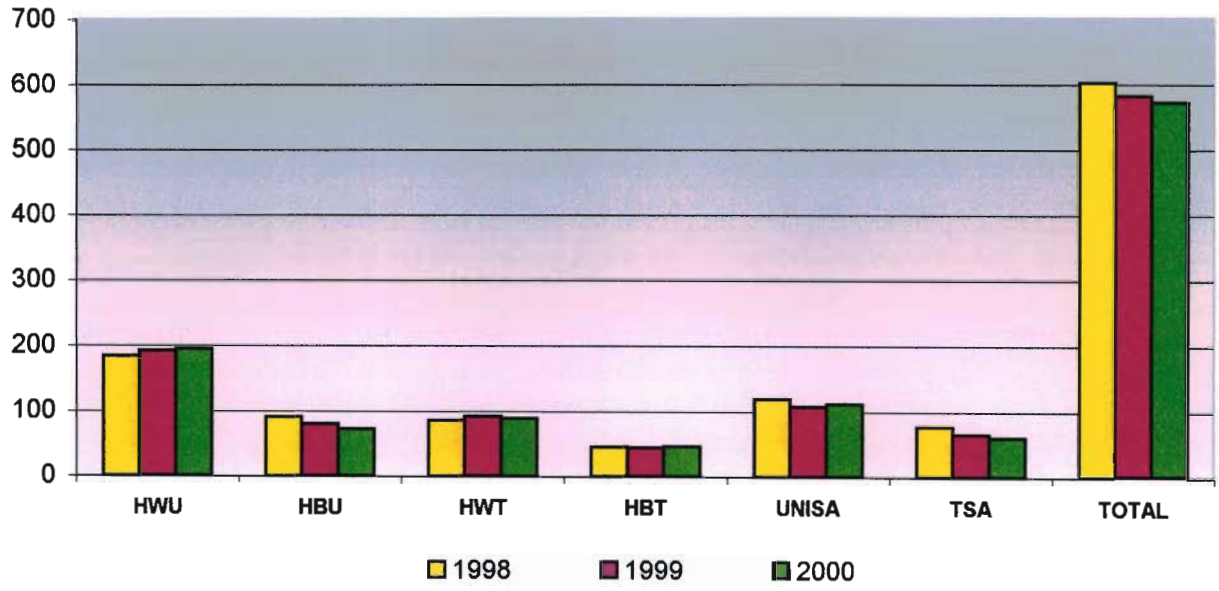
(University of the Western Cape, 2001)

It has been postulated that this decline is indicative of the increased competition between universities of late. Take for example the fact that Technikons can now offer degrees (Jones, 2001) – this causes an overlap between the various institution types which makes it even more difficult for an institution to differentiate based on products/services offered. The lines that were once drawn around the various institutions are being pushed wider.

Over and above the number of matriculants (potential customers) who qualify for university shrinking, the number of private institutions in South Africa has also grown (Pretorious, 2000). Both these factors have been making in-roads into the student market. This has meant that each university in South Africa has become a player (either active participants or passive onlookers) in the domestic competition. Add to this the fact that polls show 63 percent of young Whites and 59 percent of young Indians expect to emigrate (Johnson, 2001). Compounding the concern is the reality of South African institutions facing increased competition from international distance programmes. South African tertiary educational institutions are losing potential customers, "students are no longer something to be taken for granted", Gourley 2001.

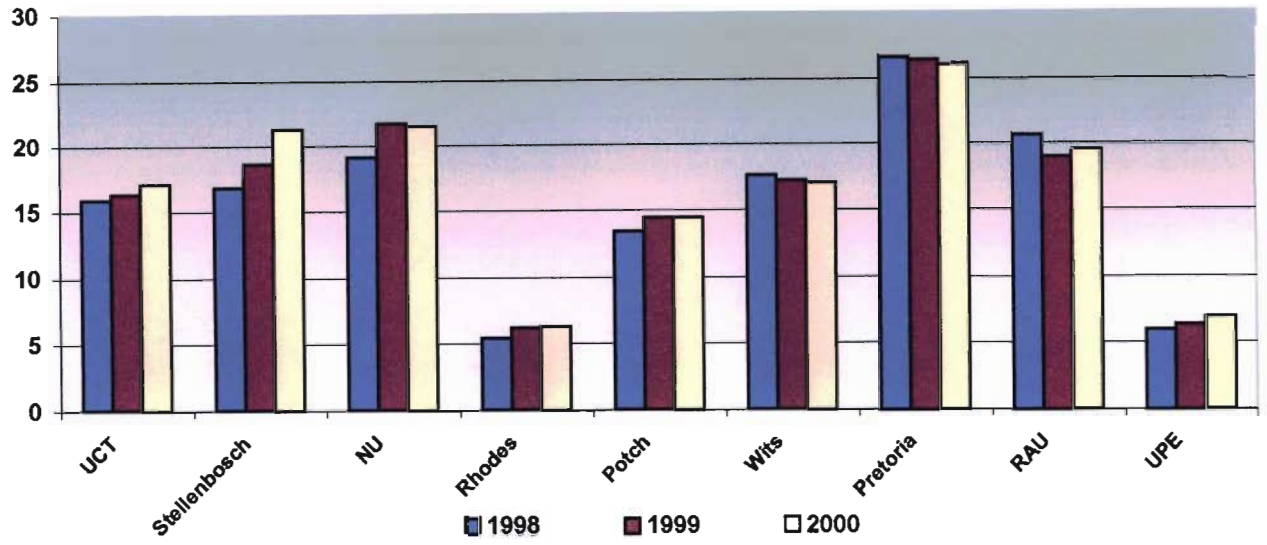
3.4.2.1 Statistics Within South Africa's Higher Education Market

Figures show that the head count enrolments by various tertiary educational institutions have dropped over the last 3 years (University of the Western Cape, Graph 3).



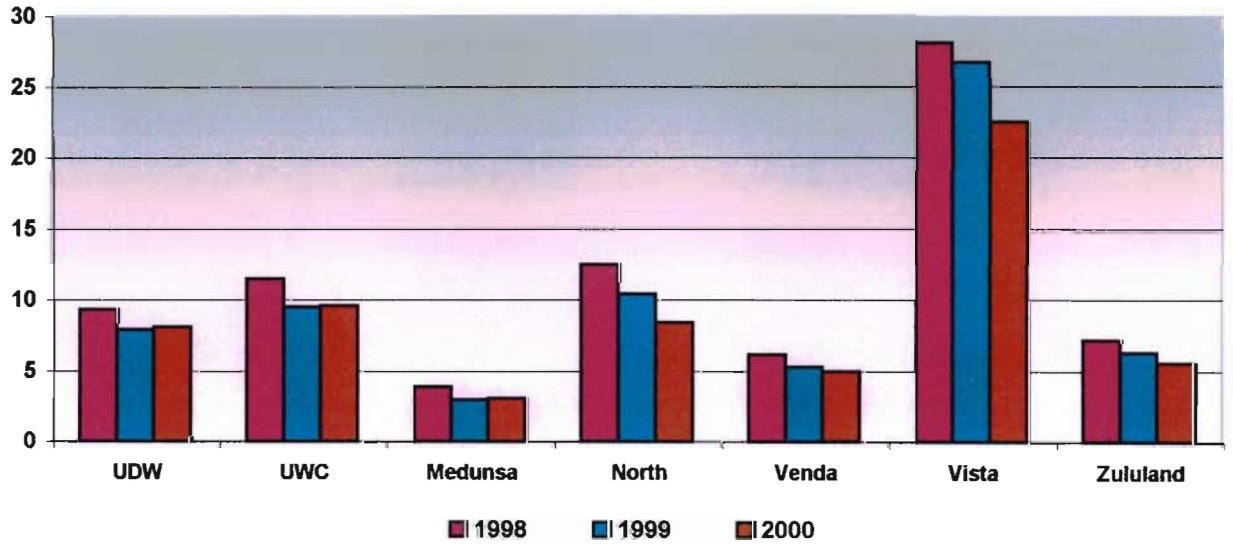
Graph 3 – Head Count Enrolments by Institution Type (thousands)
(University of the Western Cape, 2001)

Comparing universities, it can be seen from Graphs 4 and 5 that individual institutions are showing increases in recent years (University of the Western Cape, 2001) despite market trends. These graphs can also assist the University of Natal in determining their primary and direct competition.



Graph 4 – Head Count Enrolments at HWU

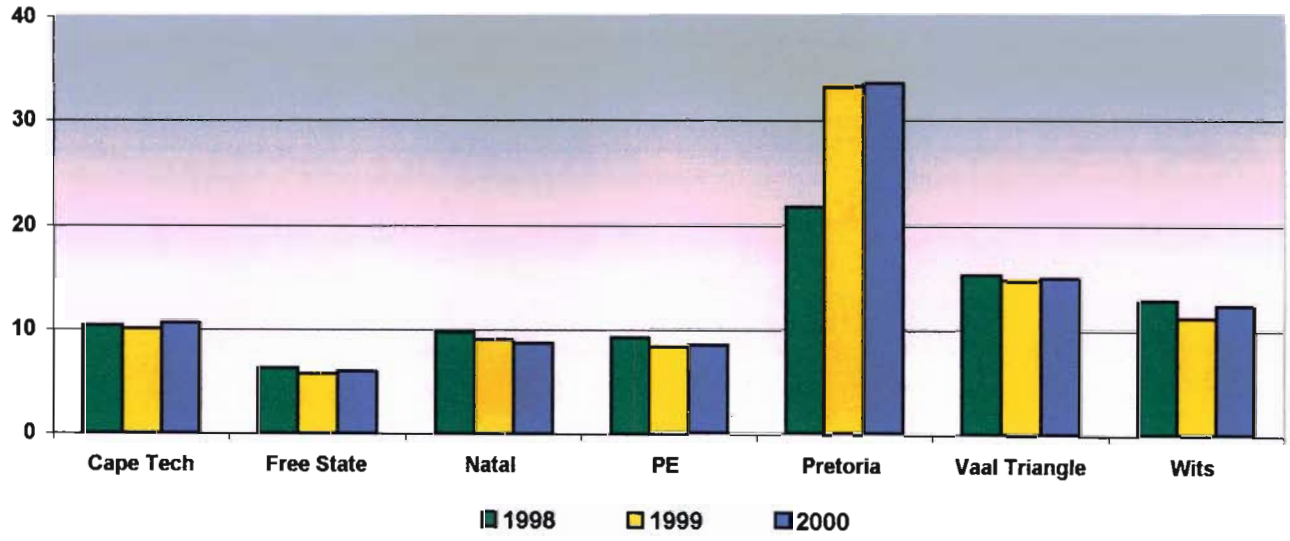
(University of the Western Cape, 2001)



Graph 5 – Head Count Enrolments at HBU

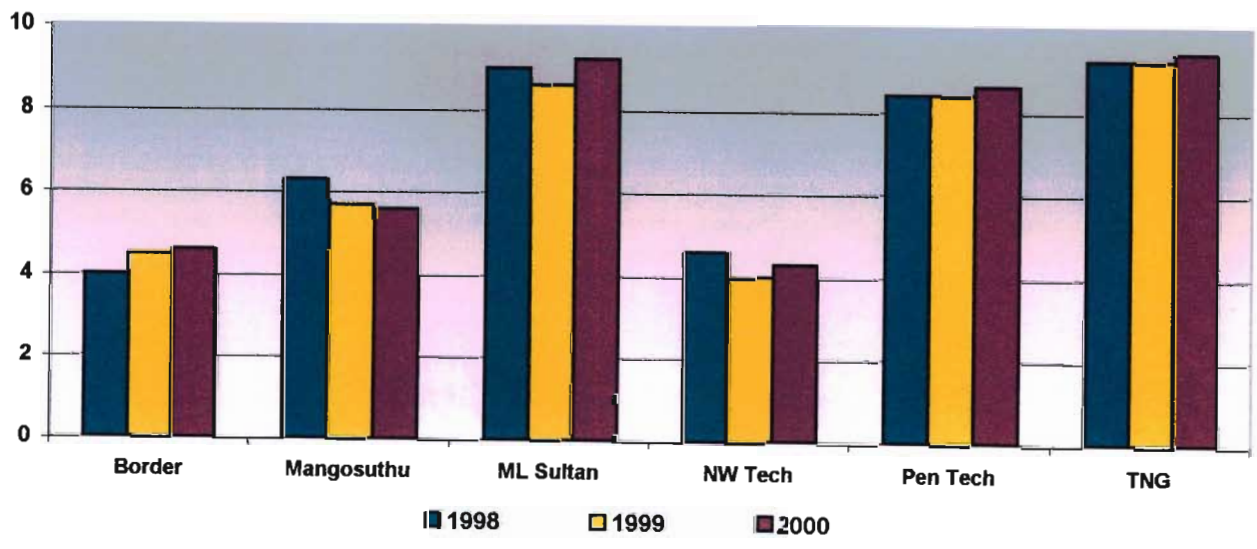
(University of the Western Cape, 2001)

Looking at Technikons, (in Graphs 6 and 7) that individual institutions are showing increases in recent years (University of the Western Cape, 2001) despite market trends.



Graph 6 – Head Count Enrolment at HWT

(University of the Western Cape, 2001)



Graph 7 – Head Count Enrolments at HBT

(University of the Western Cape, 2001)

In Graph 7, TNG refers to Technikon Northern Gauteng.

Table 3.1 reflects the head count enrolments at universities and technikons while Table 3.2 shows the head count enrolments at the University of Natal specifically. These figures confirm the dropping number of students at all tertiary institutions, pointing towards the extremity of the situation of dropping student numbers.

Table 3.1 – Head Count Enrolments in Universities and Technikons, 1993 – 1999

Head Count Enrolments in Universities and Technikons, 1993 - 1999					
	1993	**1995**	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**
Universities	340000	384000	394000	397000	372000
Technikons	133000	185000	202000	208000	192000
Total	473000	569000	596000	605000	564000

(University of the Western Cape, 2001)

Table 3.2 – Headcount Registrations at the University of Natal, 1995 – 2000

		Headcount per year						Change between years				
PMB Campus	**Faculty**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**	**95-96**	**96-97**	**97-98**	**98-99**	**99-00**
	Education	461	491	883	1807	2364	2490	6.5	79.8	104.6	30.8	5.3
	Engineering	64	97	75	87	60	67	51.6	-22.7	16.0	-31.0	11.7
	Human Sciences	3264	3353	3334	3241	2879	2818	2.7	-0.6	-2.8	-11.2	-2.1
	Law	336	387	392	411	407	360	15.2	1.3	4.8	-1.0	-11.5
	Science & Agriculture	1620	1695	1698	1766	1712	1659	4.6	0.2	4.0	-3.1	-3.1
Pietermaritzburg Total		**5745**	**6023**	**6382**	**7312**	**7422**	**7401**	**4.8**	**6.0**	**14.6**	**1.5**	**-0.3**

(Division of Management Information, 2001).

3.5 Factors Influencing Student's Selection Of Universities

Limited research has been conducted in an attempt to isolate factors affecting students' choice of tertiary institution. One study by Clayton (1999) relates to research conducted at a university in Canada, the findings of which are discussed below.

3.5.1 Overseas Students

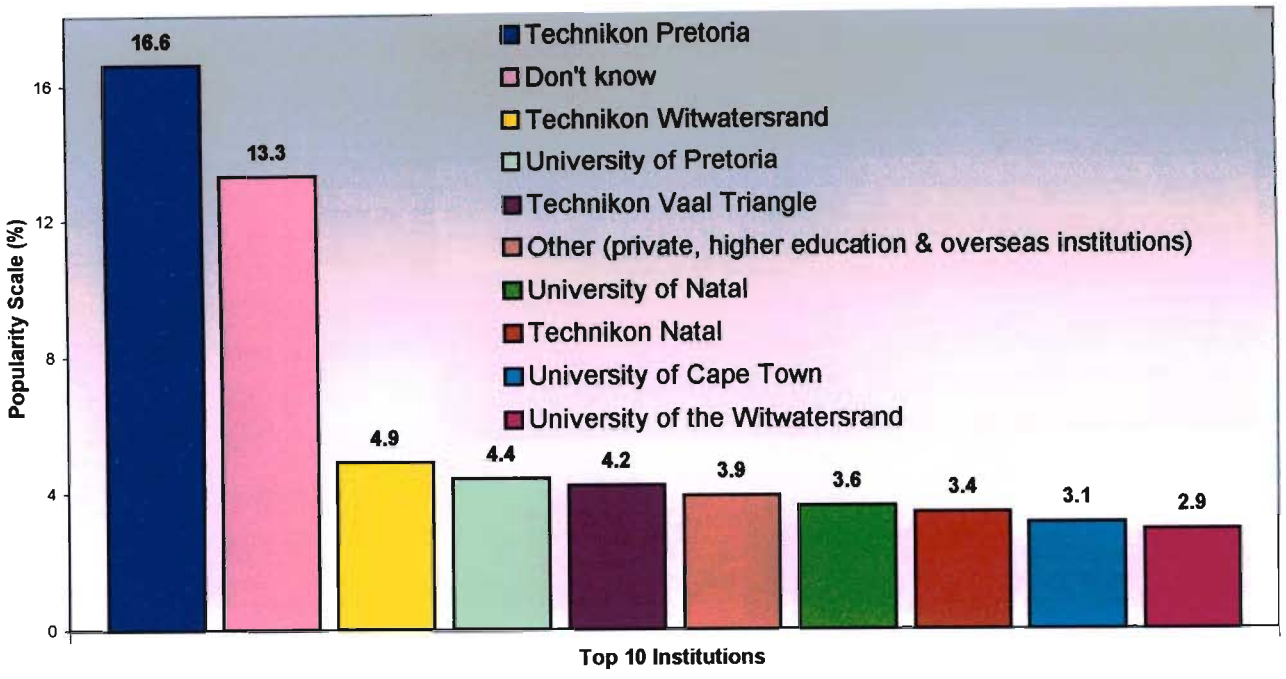
Clayton (1999:13) conducted a study as to why Americans chose to study at Canadian universities and discovered a number of theories that are relevant to the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. In trying to understand why Americans would travel 600 miles across the border just to attend university they saw two main factors at work. One was **cost** and the other one **safety**.

The Canadian dollar had a weak standing against the American dollar, this meant that studying in Canada would cost one-third of the original price. Canada's tough gun laws and low crime rates make for safer cities and campuses an obvious draw card in today's society.

Future aspirations to find a good job was also an important consideration – American university applicants obviously felt that Canadian university students would perform better in finding jobs because they attended a Canadian university.

3.5.2 South African Students

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) conducted research looking at whether Grade 12's plan to study after school, where they wanted to study and the field in which they wanted to qualify (Pretorious, 2002). The results of this study indicated that 73% of scholars wanted to study after school (out of a sample of 12 204 scholars from 288 schools), the scholars preferred Technikon Pretoria as their first choice of where to study, and commerce and management were the most popular fields of study.



<u>Graph 8</u> – Scholar's Most Popular Choice of Higher Education Institutions (Pretorious, 2002)

Graph 8 shows the most popular institutions according to the scholars. Something worth noting is that Rhodes University and the University of the North West were last on the list of 36 institutions.

The study also found that reputation of the institution, a desire to study away from home, to stay in residence, sporting facilities, and lower fees were the top factors influencing scholars (Pretorious, 2002). This somewhat contradicts another finding which as reported on: the province in which the scholar went to school was the most significant predictor of where the pupil would choose to study. The scholar's desire to study away from home and stay in residence could indicate that they would want to get out of that province as well.

In addition to this, the report makes no mention of which geographical locations the research was conducted in. Most of the institutions named are concentrated in the Gauteng province – it should thus be concluded that the research was limited to one geographical area and this is believed to be a bias in this research.

After thorough investigation it was established that there has been no research published in South Africa relating to:

- Student's perceptions of various tertiary institutions, and
- The positioning strategies of various tertiary institutions

3.6 Research Conducted at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

A study was thus conducted at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg (UNP) investigating the perceptions of students at UNP in relation to its positioning strategy (Garden, 2000). The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. What is the University's positioning strategy?
2. What are the factors that have influenced the students into choosing to study at a university as opposed to any other tertiary institution?
3. What are the factors that have influenced the students into choosing to study at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg?
4. What are the students' perceptions of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg?

The purposes of the research were to benefit the University's marketing because by knowing how the students see the University the perceptions students held regarding the University could be uncovered and either fortified or eliminated, and the marketers could evaluate their strategy. The research was also conducted on the premise that the first main step in strategy formation is to know how the University is positioned in the eyes of its customers.

The following discussion highlights some areas with regards to the research (Garden, 2000)

3.6.1 Research Design

3.6.1.1 Focus Group Interviews

Four first year Management tutorial classes were used as focus groups to identify factors to be addressed in the questionnaire as well as to pilot test the questionnaire. Management tutorials were used as Management students were considered to be representative of the various faculties of Arts, Commerce, Science, as well as Social Science. Initially the focus groups were used to identify factors affecting their choices for studying at the University – these factors were then used in finalising the questionnaire.

Through these groups the researcher attained more insightful data about each factor and student opinions of what should be done. These were expanded on in the recommendations. In-depth questions were asked and true feelings, attitudes, and preferences came to the fore in these groups.

3.6.1.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used as the basis for all primary research and provided a quick means of obtaining large amounts of data. As questionnaires tend to be done in a hurry (not facilitating long, in-depth answers) focus group interviews were conducted to complement the questionnaire. Likert scales were used in the questionnaire – this is an attitude scale used to measure and interpret attitudes (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000:37).

3.6.2 The Sample

Using stratified random sampling the researcher was able to ensure a representative sample. The participants were in their first, third and fourth years of study. Emphasis was placed on the year of study to clearly differentiate between the different years and potentially different marketing and advertising focuses and results. It was done so that a distinction could be drawn between the importance of various factors to first year and senior students.

The sample size used was 226.

3.6.3 Questionnaire Design

Anonymity was protected by not asking for the respondent's name/student number. This was also done to ensure confidentiality (increasing the likelihood of honest answers) and high response rate.

Appendix A contains the questionnaire that was used in the study.

3.6.4 Piloting

The first draft of the questionnaire was piloted at a couple of first year tutorials. This was done to ensure correction of any ambiguities and confusion regarding the questions.

For instance it was suggested that the year of study be put on the first page in the top right hand corner for ease of categorising (it was initially on the last page). Questions about age, race, and gender were put near the end to ensure people were not offended before they answered some questions.

3.6.5 Questionnaire Distribution

Questionnaires were distributed at various lectures and students were randomly taken from any class at any faculty. The availability of the lecturer and whether they were still busy with the course material determined whether or not the questionnaire could be administered. The sample was therefore collected over a week based on convenience on the part of the researcher and the lecturer.

3.6.6 Methodology Limitations

The limitations regarding the methodology that were encountered included financial as well as time constraints, non-responses, a small sample size when compared to the number of students on the Pietermaritzburg campus, manipulation and peer pressure in focus groups and questionnaires, focus group limitations (focus groups were limited to first-years) and possible ambiguity and confusion with some of the questions asked.

3.6.7 Demographic Results

At the end of collection there were 226 completed questionnaires made up as follows:

- Gender: Females – 56% Males – 44%
- Year of study: Seniors – 46% First years – 54%
- Racial: Black – 29% White – 48%
  Coloured – 3% Indian – 18%
  Asian – 2%
- Degree choices: BSc – 44.7% BCom – 30.1%
  BSocSci – 19.5% BA – 5.8%
- With an average age of 20

3.6.8 Factors Influencing Student's Choices Between a University and Another Tertiary Institution

The key factors that made students choose to study at a university as opposed to any other tertiary institution were identified and are discussed below.

3.6.8.1 Top Choice of Universities

The results are represented in Table 3.3 below (with no difference between years). It is understood that there would be a bias towards the University being the best institution as they had made the choice to study there, however the findings still give valuable information about the competition UNP is faced with.

Table 3.3 – Top Choice of University

University	Chosen by (%)
University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg	58.8%
Other**	13.7%
University of Cape Town	11.5%
University of Natal, Westville	6.6%
Wits	4.0%
Rhodes	3.5%
International universities	1.3%

** Rand Afrikaans University (RAU), University of Zululand and University of Stellenbosch were among the options entered under "other".

3.6.8.2 Influencing Factors (University vs. Other Institution)

This question intended to find which of the factors listed had the strongest influence when the students chose to study at a university as opposed to another tertiary institution. The results are found in Table 3.4 below:

Table 3.4 – Strength of influencing factors

Factor	None	No / little	Neutral	Strong
Bursary or scholarship offered	**51.3%**	11.5%	9.7%	27.4%
Bursar recommended	**58.0%**	12.4%	6.2%	23.4%
Location	15.5%	11.0%	13.7%	**59.7%**
Get away from home	**58.0%**	9.3%	11.5%	23.2%
Res. life	**64.6%**	6.7%	7.5%	23.2%
Campus life	30.5%	14.6%	18.1%	**36.7%**
Courses offered in English	11.5%	9.8%	11.9%	**66.8%**
Courses offered	6.2%	4.8%	14.6%	**74.4%**
A university is best	7.5%	5.3%	14.2%	**72.5%**
International recognition	10.6%	5.7%	4.4%	**74.3%**

If students felt that the courses offered by a university (highlighted block) were an important influencing factor when deciding to study at a university as opposed to another tertiary institution they would have given it a *strong* rating (4 or 5). If they felt that the factor had little or no influence they would have given it a *no / little* rating (1 or 2). If they felt it had no influence, *none* would be allocated (0). *Neutral* would be in-between little to strong (3).

Table 3.4 shows the factors that had the most influence on the respondents – i.e. Courses offered, International Recognition, and A University is Best.

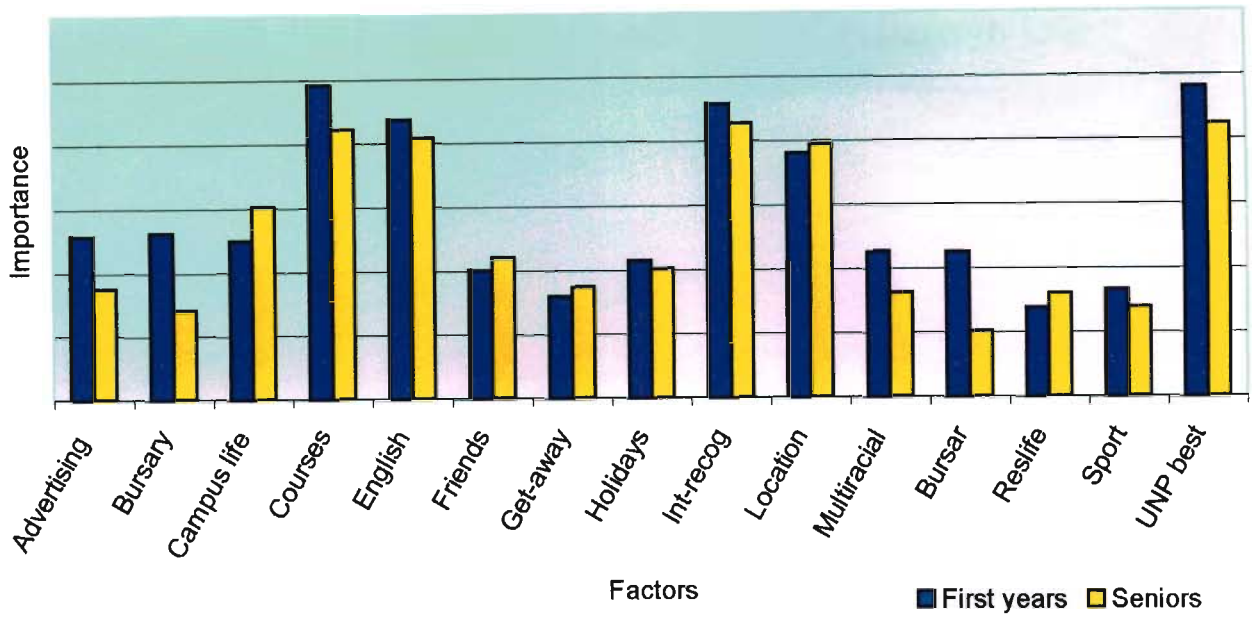
3.6.9 Factors Influencing Students' Choice to Study at The University Of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

The research determined what factors the students have placed emphasis on when choosing to study at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. In other words the research determined what is important to the customer when choosing a particular good/service over another one. This question involves identifying the key factors that made students choose to study at UNP as opposed to any other tertiary institution. Table 5 represents the strength of the influence of various factors listed below:

Table 3.5 – Strength of Factors Influencing Student Choice of UNP

Factor	None	No / little	Neutral	Strong
Bursary or scholarship offered	**54.4%**	11.9%	6.6%	26.5%
Bursars	**61.9%**	10.2%	8.8%	19.0%
Location	13.7%	9.3%	13.3%	**63.3%**
Get away from home	**59.7%**	6.7%	11.1%	22.1%
Res. life	**65.9%**	6.2%	9.3%	18.6%
Campus life	33.2%	15.3%	15.0%	**34.1%**
Courses offered in English	14.2%	6.7%	12.4%	**66.8%**
University was well advertised	**40.3%**	20.4%	12.4%	27.0%
UNP the best	11.1%	9.3%	17.7%	**61.9%**
Courses offered	8.8%	3.1%	15.9%	**72.2%**
International recognition	15.9%	4.8%	13.7%	**65.1%**

3.6.9.1 Influencing Factors (UNP)



Graph 9 – Influencing Factors

Graph 9 shows various factors that were listed as influencing factors (specifically with regards to UNP). It can be seen from this graph that generally the influencing factors that were important to the seniors were important to the first years, and vice versa. The graph shows the importance of factors similar to the findings in Table 3.5.

The factors that influenced students in choosing University of Natal over another university are summarised briefly: in order of importance as rated by the students.

1. Courses offered by the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
2. Courses offered in English
3. International recognition
4. Location
5. University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, is the best

Identifying the University's strengths and opportunities is essential to discover what they are doing right in the eyes of its customers. Possible strengths and weaknesses included the following:

- The most prominent strength is the *reputation* of the University. Many students are drawn to it merely by its name. This is a potent strength that must be utilised to its fullest – it is an invisible weapon that can be used very effectively in a campaign. Besides all this it is an asset to the University, which must be maintained and marketed to those who need to hear it.

This strength creates many opportunities for the University as the reputation it has is something that other tertiary institutions will take many years to develop. Opportunities arising from this reputation are things like market development: if the University enters a market of its own those following it will battle against the formidable weapon of reputation.

- The *courses* on offer from the University are a major strength in competing against the other universities in the country – perhaps in the world. These courses are unique as has been identified by the students, it being the most influential factor in choosing a university.

- *Location* has played a pivotal role in the students' choice of university – it has been one of the biggest draw-cards for the University.

- *Advertising* could be a weakness for the University. The University has been slow in grasping the importance of advertising and marketing – evidenced by the employment of a PRO only in the early part of 1999 for the Humanities Faculty. It has been a misconception that the University (or any university for that matter) does not need to advertise due to their strong reputations.

3.6.10 Student Perceptions Of The University Of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

How do the students see the University according to the factors above? What is the University doing well? These questions were asked in an attempt to look at the University's strengths and weaknesses. The statements that are in Italics were the questions as they appeared in the questionnaires.

3.6.10.1 Recommending the University

Would you recommend the University of Natal (PMB) to your friends?

When asked this question 95.2% of the respondents replied positively. There is obvious bias here once again as the students would recommend any institution that they were attending. Attending an institution that they wouldn't recommend would reflect poorly on them and their choice to study there.

This is however still evidence of a positive perception/attitude created in potential students' minds – positive feedback from students is indicative of positive perceptions being in place. Added to this is the fact that dissatisfied customers wouldn't recommend the University, hence they must be satisfied to want to recommend it. Also, not all potential students make the ultimate decision of where to study so a positive score reflects satisfaction and not just self-fulfilment.

3.6.10.2 Computer Facilities

Computer facilities at the University (PMB) are exceptional (in terms of latest technology)

Computer facilities were rated as being exceptional *sometimes* by 38.9% of the sample, the responses were quite evenly spread between the four options (*Agree, Sometimes, Not really and Disagree*). The seniors found the facilities to be slightly worse than the first years. This would be indicative of the fact that senior students have been using the computer facilities more than the first years have – seniors have been faced with a lack of computer facilities around campus because there are more students than there are computers.

3.6.10.3 UNP Social Life

The University of Natal (PMB) has a good social life

46.9% of the sample agreed that this University has a good social life. This would indicate that social life is one of the by-products of studying, as it wasn't a major influencing factor when choosing the University. In other words the social life does not have a great influence on their decision to study at the University, but it does add to the enjoyment. Some institutions, confident in their ability to satisfy the needs of their customers, have used the desire for a vibrant social life as a differentiating factor. These institutions have realised that students are looking for more than just an education; they want enjoyment, memories, and experiences.

3.6.10.4 Library Facilities

The University of Natal (PMB) has good library facilities

When asked whether the University has good library facilities 66.8% of the sample agreed (both first and senior year groups), with only 5.3% disagreeing with the statement.

3.6.10.5 Politically Progressive

The University of Natal (PMB) is a politically progressive campus

36.7% respondents said sometimes, 29.6% agreed and 28.3% said not really. The first years agreed with the statement (33.6%) and 25.2% of the seniors agreed but there was no significant association between the two groups.

3.6.10.6 Laboratory Facilities

The University of Natal (PMB) has the appropriate laboratory equipment for experiments and research

Of the 226 respondents, 32.7% have never used the laboratory equipment but 53.1% of the sample said that the laboratory facilities were good.

3.6.10.7 An Excellent Academic Institution

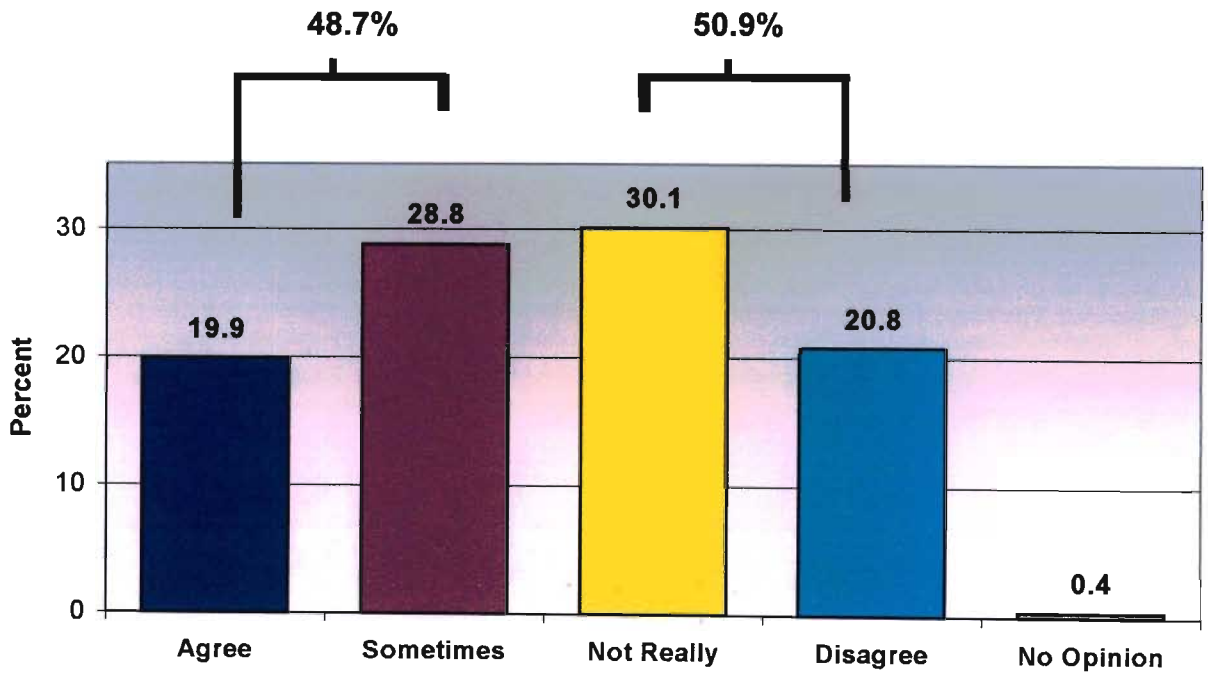
The University of Natal (PMB) is an excellent academic institution

A large proportion of the sample saw the University as being an excellent academic institution with 62.8% of the sample agreeing with the statement. There is a significant degree of association between the two groups with a chi-squared of 0.039.

There is an association between year of study and how the student sees the institution. It appears as though the seniors rate the University as being slightly worse than an excellent institution. Once again it is important to highlight the possible bias with regards to this question. Students have chosen to study at this University – they wouldn't readily say that it isn't an excellent academic institution, thereby nullifying their decision to study there.

3.6.10.8 The Importance of Social Life

The social life at University of Natal (PMB) – e.g. Rag race day, drinking clubs, Dynamics – is what University is about



Graph 10 – Social Life at UNP

In response to the afore-mentioned statement, only 30.1% respondents said "not really" and 28.8% saying "sometimes". The majority from both groups therefore thought that it wasn't all about the social side of university (see Graph 10).

It is believed that the social life of the University had a strong influence but it was not an influencing factor in deciding to study at the University (as mentioned earlier). Instead it is concluded that the students appreciate the social side of university more as a by-product than an influencing factor in deciding to study at the University (as was discussed earlier).

3.6.10.9 Lecturers are Approachable

At the University of Natal (PMB) the lecturers are approachable

Most students (50%) found that the lecturers were approachable only sometimes, a further 40.5% agreed with the statement.

The outright majority thought that lecturers were approachable – this leads to the fact that it is up to the students themselves to make the effort to approach the lecturer in the first place. Once the students make the effort to speak to the lecturer it sends clear signals that the student is serious about their progress in the subject. A lecturer can only help those that want to be helped.

Lecturers need to also make it clear to the students that they are available to answer queries, offer assistance and work on solving problems. It is sometimes felt that lecturers (and other staff) forget they are being paid to assist, help, and equip students in the best way they can and that leads to the impersonal nature of some employees of the University. This re-emphasises the need for internal marketing – selling the University's employees on the importance of marketing and treating the students like customers. Internal marketing refers to the selling of the service/product to the employees before it is sold to the customer – it is believed that once the employees are sold on an idea they in turn will sell it better to the customers.

3.6.10.10 Personal Attention

I get no personal attention to my queries/problems in my lectures

Most (33.6%) disagreed that they get no personal attention, however 31% of the sample felt that they sometimes get no personal attention. There was no significant association but

it does approach significance with the chi-squared at 0.06 i.e. there was no significant relationship between year of study and personal attention but it was approaching significance.

3.6.10.11 Only a Student Number

I feel like I am nothing more than a student number to the staff at the University of Natal (PMB)

32.3% agreed that they sometimes felt like a student number and nothing more. There was no significant degree of association between this variable and year of study.

Although there was no association between year of study and feeling just like a student number 22.6% of the sample said that they agreed with the statement and 32.3% of the sample said sometimes. As was discussed in the above factor students are treated like an interruption to the days' routine rather than clients, the life-blood of a business.

There is still a contradiction here though: the lecturers are approachable and the students feel as though they get personal attention in lectures yet they still feel as though they are merely another number to the University – when and where have they picked up that perception?

The common link between the above two factors? Lecturers. The lecturers are approachable and the students feel as though they get personal attention in lectures from their lecturers. The missing link must therefore be related to the rest of the University: the other staff members? The security guards? The fact that the University only refers to you by name once they have your student number?

The issue regarding service has often been commented on – especially during registration. The emphasis for a customer-orientated business is the customer. The University has to see itself as a business and management therefore has to implement changes to bring in the marketing orientation. This change involves the shift from production orientation to the marketing orientation – in essence this means total commitment to customer satisfaction (Armstrong, Kotler, Saunders & Wong 1996:14).

This brings us to the marketing concept. It was discussed how the evolution of marketing began with a production orientation – it focussed on producing and distributing the good to the best of the firm's ability. The University is past this stage but has not reached the marketing orientation stage, evidenced by lack of customer orientation.

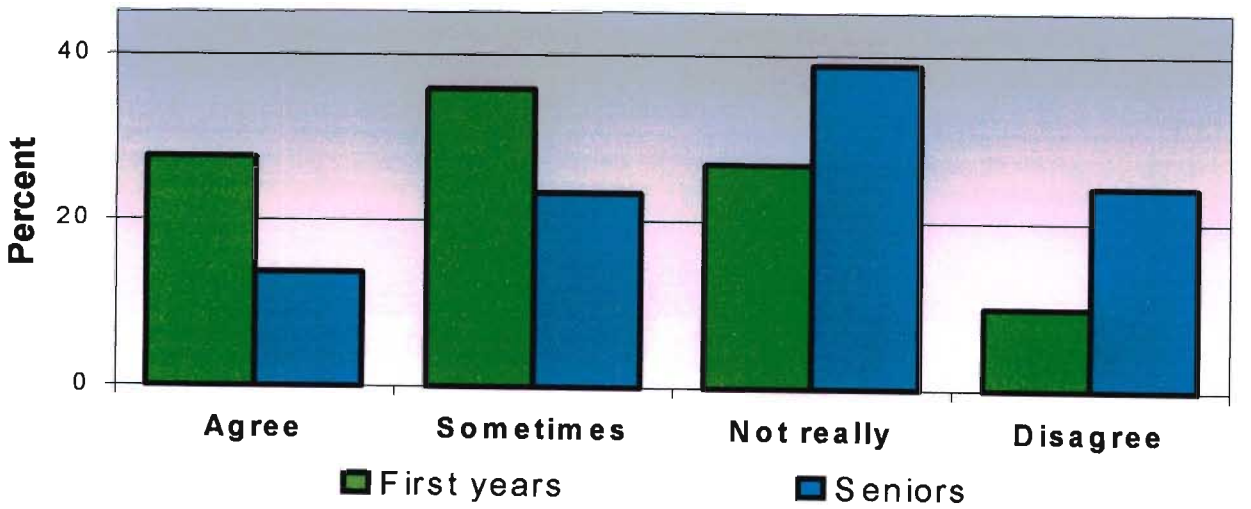
To reiterate – the University has to pay attention to the marketing orientation because it has to be operating as a business in all its activities. They have to stay in business, which means that they must compete with other tertiary institutions in all aspects – service especially (according to the marketing orientation).

3.6.10.12 Facilitates ONLY Large Classes

The University of Natal (PMB) only facilitates large classes (i.e. mass education)

A slightly higher percentage of 32.3% respondents felt that the University does not only facilitate large classes. However 30.1% thought that this was true some of the time, combining the positive responses (agree and sometimes) it seems that the majority, 51.3%, felt that the University practises mass education. This is opposed to smaller, personal, one-to-one contact between the student and teacher (like at school).

There is a significant degree of association found between year of study and the response towards mass education – this is indicated in Graph 11 below.



Graph 11 – Mass Education

From this graph it can be seen that the seniors are less likely to agree with the statement regarding mass education, the first years agreeing with the statement more (28%). This finding is directly related to the fact that first year class sizes are much larger than senior class sizes. At first year level there are a number of compulsory courses for all first years, in addition to that the first year students are required to take mainstream courses before they can specialise in later years. The specialisation of courses in later years (seniors) means that the classes are smaller – hence senior students wouldn't find that UNP facilitates large classes only.

When broken down, the majority of senior students felt that they sometimes get personal attention *but* the senior students felt that the classes are smaller. How come they feel that they get less personal attention yet they have smaller classes? How can first years (with larger classes) believe that they are getting more personal attention?

A possible reason for this finding is that of "spoon feeding". This is where lecturers help to feed the students (they do the majority of the work) without the students having to do much of the work for themselves. As first years are usually straight out of school they are used to being helped (spoon-fed) by their teachers and so lecturers have to help them more than the senior students.

The lecturers have to help the first years to integrate into university life – to think for themselves and to work independently. As one can imagine this process would take time! The senior students are expected to do the work by themselves with little intervention from the lecturers. Here would be the reason for less personal attention for the seniors even though they have smaller classes.

3.6.10.13 Upgrade in Security

The upgrade in security at the University of Natal (PMB) is a waste of money

Most disagreed that the security upgrade was a waste of money (55.3%), with only 8.8% agreeing that it was wasteful.

This finding invalidates many suggestions made in passing that the money spent on security could have been better spent on upgrading other facilities. Even though these suggestions are valid there is a dire need for stringent security on campus – the University has to ensure that their students (clients) are safe at all times. This is a crucial area of concern, but not

only in a country like South Africa. Canadian students also indicated that security was a major influencing factor when choosing a university (Clayton, 1999)

3.6.10.14 Safety at Night

I feel safe at night on the University of Natal (PMB) campus

The results were evenly spread amongst the two groups (Male and Female). When looking at the opinions of females in contrast to males the result was a very significant degree of association meaning that there was a strong degree of association was between women and feeling safe at night on campus.

34.1% and 31% of the females answered "not really" and "disagree" respectively. This is in contrast with the males who responded in almost the same percentage but on the other side of the coin – they answered "agree" and "sometimes".

The majority was split evenly between "sometimes" and "not really". This would indicate that students are not feeling completely safe on the campus, even male students were indicating their uneasiness on campus at night. The majority of women felt that they were not really safe on campus at night. Thirty one percent of the women disagreed with the statement.

This would mean that even though the University has gone to great costs to upgrade security, the students (women in particular) are not feeling safe. From the University's point of view it is almost impossible to make the University 100% secure. In addition when ensuring that the wrong people cannot get in with much ease it means the victims cannot get out to make a quick getaway without much difficulty either.

3.6.10.15 Safety During the Day

I feel safe on the University of Natal (PMB) campus during the day

Out of the sample, 80% agreed that they felt safe on the campus during the day. There was no student who felt unsafe on campus during the day. The majority felt that the campus was very safe during the day. What then is the difference between safety during the day or at night? A profound suggestion is – light.

During the day students can see what is happening around them – they can see approaching danger. It has been noted (from the focus groups) that at night the campus is badly lit, this leads to insecurities and adds to fears about safety. Drawing conclusions from this we can say that the upgrade was a good thing but has not alleviated the students' concerns about safety.

3.6.10.16 Better Education

I will get a better education than students at Damelin/Varsity College/Technikon

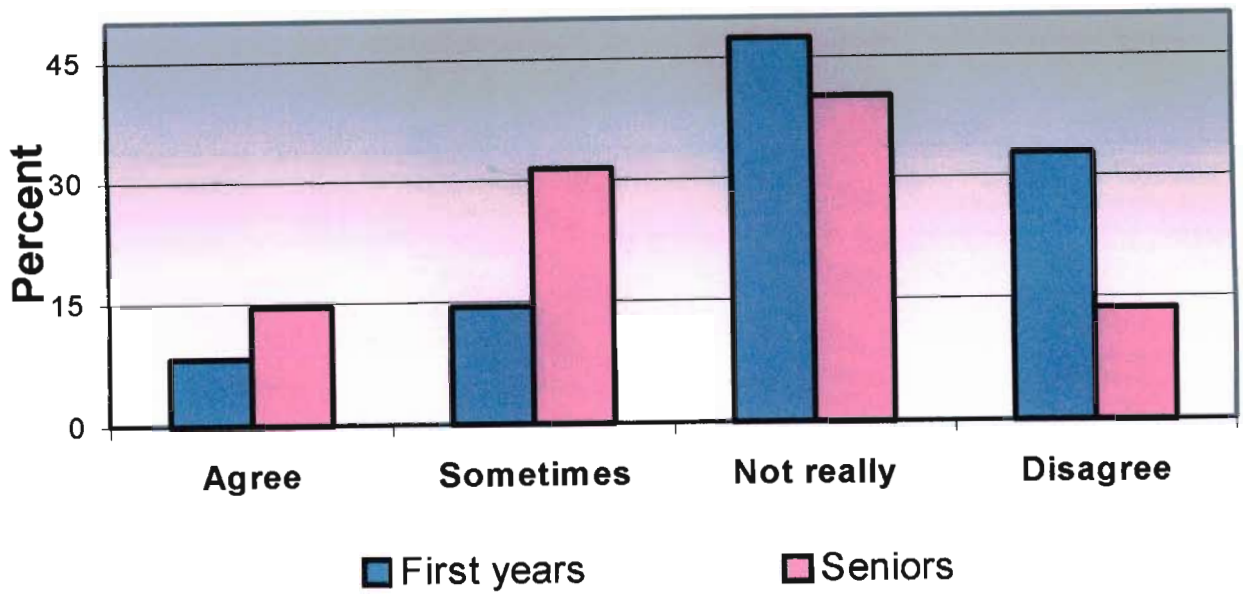
61.1% of the sample felt that they were getting a better education than those studying at another tertiary institution.

The sense of high standards and a good education could be related to the fact that a certain amount of points (entrance requirements) is needed in each faculty for a student to be allowed to study his/her choice of subjects. Other institutions have not been as strict in terms of their entrance requirements and so it could create the perception of higher standards, a better quality of lecture content and a better option of employment opportunities at the end

3.6.10.17 Political Issues

The University of Natal, PMB has dealt with a lot of political issues since I have been here (e.g. Affirmative action, racism etc.)

Most students (43.8%) said that the University hasn't really dealt with a lot of political issues, 23.9% of the sample disagreed with the statement. When looking at the two groups separately Graph 16 illustrates the comparison.



<u>Graph 12</u> – Political Issues

As can be seen in Graph 12, the views of the various years differ slightly. 47.5% of the first years said "not really" compared with 40.2% of the seniors and interestingly 31.8% of the seniors said "sometimes" as opposed to 11.5% of the first years. The explanation for this finding is simply that the senior students have been around for longer and have presumably seen more change as opposed to the first years.

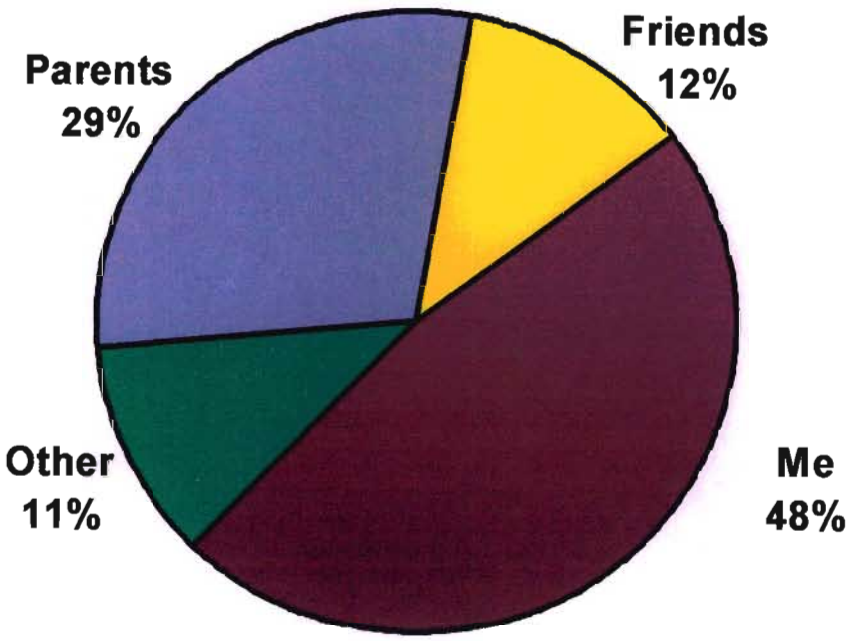
3.6.10.18 <u>The Decision-Making Process</u>

*In the **decision making process** (i.e. gathering information about the University of Natal PMB) who played the biggest role in helping you decide which University to choose?*

Students were asked to allocate a percentage to each person that assisted them when gathering data about the University. In Graph 13 the sum percentages given by the respondents are shown. The students themselves are shown as the major participants in the search for a university.

This is important to know because the marketers need to know if they are reaching the right people – the students. It would also assist to see if there are any additional markets that they need to cater for. We can tell from the diagram that parents play a major role – it could be worth considering directing some advertising towards them.

In the decision making process the students responded that they played the biggest part during the decision process – followed by parents (see Graph 13). The 'Other' category included other family members (brothers and sisters that were previous students) and teachers/counsellors at school.

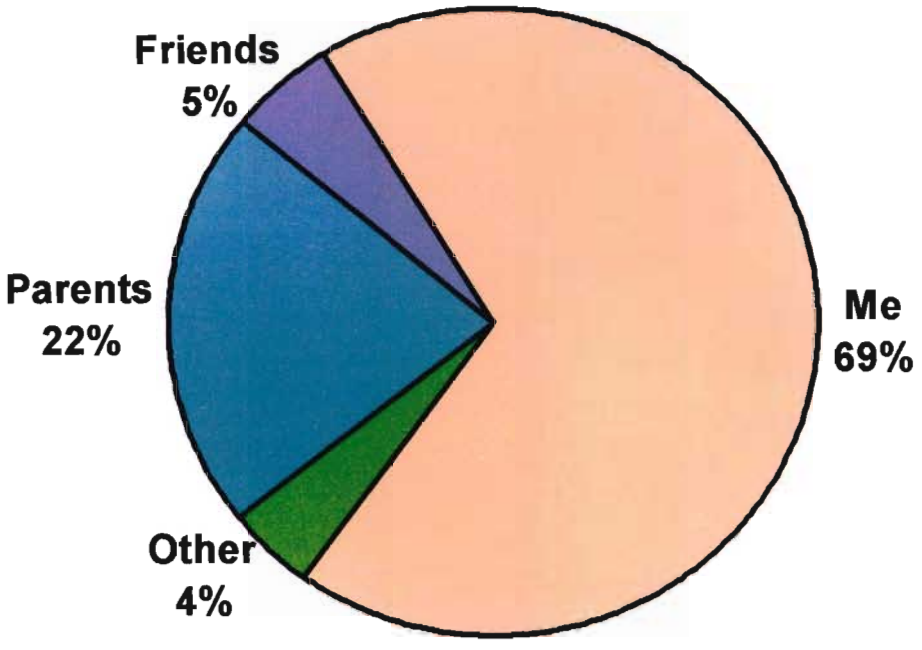


Graph 13 – Gathering of Information

3.6.10.19 Final Decision Maker

When the final choice was made to study at the University of Natal PMB – who made that choice?

When asked about the final decision the students again stated that they play the biggest part in the decision, with parents following (see Graph 14).



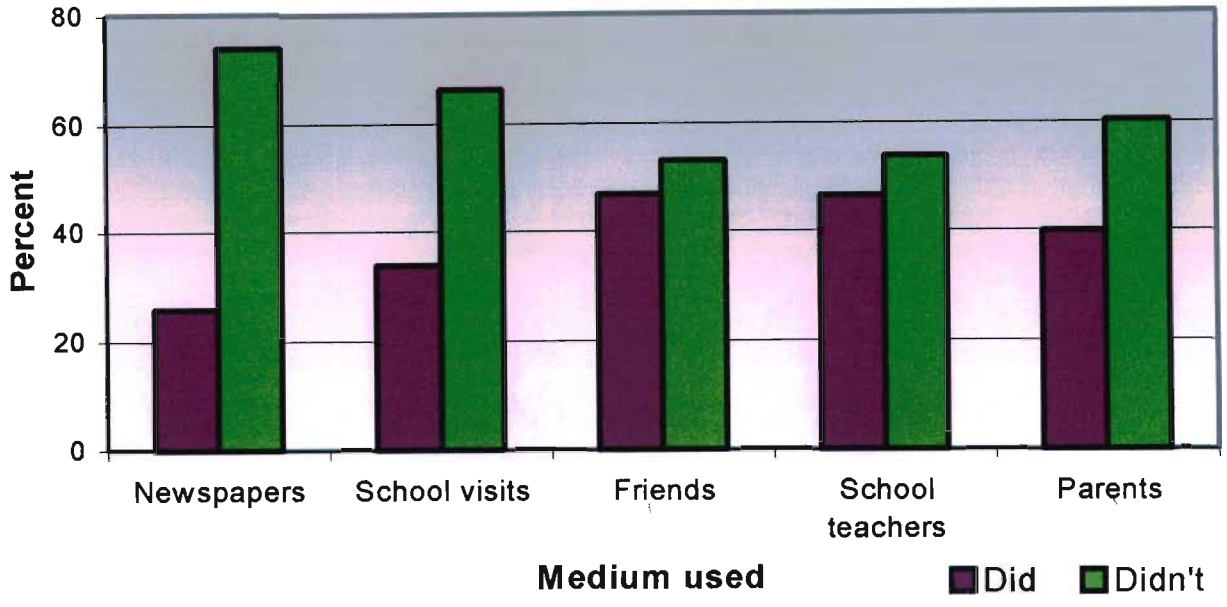
Graph 14 – Final Decision-Maker(s)

Even though parents do not constitute the largest contributors in the final decision, they do play a rather significant role to some students. However we can say that parents do not play a major influence on the students' choice of education as the majority of students listed themselves as primary decision-makers.

3.6.10.20 Advertising

How did you hear about the University of Natal PMB campus?

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had any contact with the medium listed in the questionnaire. The responses are in Graph 15 below.



Graph 15 – Advertising

With the aid of Graph 15 it was seen how many of the respondents had heard about the University through various mediums. Due to the high response rate to two-way communication in the University's marketing, it can be concluded that the University must pay more attention to those mediums of promotion. The University web page, school visits, orientation weeks, open days, and even leadership seminars for school counsellors are some two-way communication strategies to be focussed on.

3.7.11 Present Perceptions

There were a couple of perceived ideas that came to the fore which the University have not incorporated into their positioning strategy.

- "I will get a better education than students at Damelin/Varsity College/Technikon." –

The majority (61.1%) answered that this statement was true. A strong majority saw the University as being a better tertiary institution than other institutions however (according to research gathered) this has not been a major positioning strategy for the University.

- Along the same vein students agreed strongly (81.9%) to the concept of being better equipped after studying than friends who hadn't. Once again the University has not positioned itself in such a way, yet according to the students perception on the topic it is important to them.

3.6.12 Comparison of the Positioning Strategy

Having seen the primary factors students have placed importance on when choosing to study at the University, the positioning of the University can now be compared.

It can be said though that the students have perceived the University as being a top University, with a strong academic reputation. This would be an example of **benefit positioning** (a certain benefit is used to differentiate the product). In addition to this the emphasis placed on a career once studies are complete would position the University according to **Use/application positioning** i.e. positioning the product according to its application/use.

From discussions with Marais (2000) it is apparent that the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) has positioned itself as being a highly accredited academic institution. Statements like "The power to succeed", "Giving you the edge", and "Take control of your future" are used in the advertising for the University on brochures, posters and "postcards" Appendix F – H. These statements result in a successful positioning strategy, as Kotler said: the end result of positioning should be that of a "simple clear statement of why the target market should buy the product." (1997:295).

3.6.13 Key Recommendations

Garden (2000) made the following recommendations to the University (they are based on key concepts that the research has dealt with).

Perceptions

- Many students said that they would get a better education at a university than students at Damelin/Varsity College/Technikon. This has not been a major positioning strategy for the University and so the University should consider emphasising a **better education**.

- It was found by Clayton (1999:13) that in Canada future aspirations to find **employment** were important. The University should highlight the aspect of finding a job by placing more emphasis on "Giving you the edge" and "Become Someone" (The University's cinema campaign, which can be found at http://www.nu.ac.za/). Many young South Africans are despondent about finding employment, hence the need to increase the employment opportunities that the University creates.

Positioning

- **The University as a business.** The University should see itself as a Multi National Corporation as it deals with foreign students as well as competes with other international universities. This would entail operating every aspect like a professional service provider – from training staff to advertising.

  To reiterate the University needs to recruit staff, train and motivate, and retain staff that delivers the desired service. Every element of the mix must be built to develop a creative platform for the promotional program to make the business' position crystal clear to both employees and customers.

- It is also recommended that the University actively decide to become **fiercely competitive** in the area of tertiary instruction. One of the ways the University has to become competitive is in their ability to adapt quickly to changes in the business environment. This would also include training staff to be customer-orientated, motivating them to treat students like clients (Van der Walt 1999:41) – the lifeblood of the University. Dealing with students is not easy and so it would be something that has to be taught and

emphasised by management if the University is to operate as a business.

It was discussed how the University should treat the staff as the key people in the organisation. It should be established that the employees of the University will be their key to success in today's business, they are the key element in the positioning process – Palmer 1995:333).

Van der Walt (1999:41) expanded on the University-as-a-business concept. In the interview with the University of the Free State (UFS) Rector, Professor Stef Coetzee, the professor said that the university needed to be a business concerned with higher education – this includes treating the students as clients.

- With regards to **competition** the University must ascertain what position they are in at the moment, where they want to be, and what actions are needed to attain that position (Payne 1993:120). This will allow market opportunities to be identified by considering positions that are not being met by the competitors.

  This is also important to allow the University to consider possible moves of other universities and their responses so that appropriate action can be taken. Giving the target market the reason to buy the goods is another importance of positioning; it thus underpins the entire marketing strategy.

Differentiation

- The University must **differentiate** itself. Zeithaml and Bitner (1996:286 & 287) defined service positioning as "the way it is perceived by consumers, particularly in relation to competitor offerings." There are many tertiary institutions springing up everywhere and the University must emphasise its differences.

  The University has to position itself – shouting "vive la différence", as Kornfeld (1983:250) would say – as being better than the competition. Berkowitz *et al* (1992:216) supports this sentiment. According to his definition the University must emphasise important attributes they have relative to what the competition offers. For example aspects like the internationally recognised degrees available, the safety of the campus, the social life on offer at the University, etc.

  The ability of the firm to differentiate itself from its competitors effectively is the essence of successful positioning – Payne (1993:96). To differentiate itself the University can

offer superior value to its customers, thereby creating value in the mind of the customer which will be used when making purchasing decisions regarding the University.

Success in positioning the University will come if the positioning is unique – it has to find a position that it can occupy where it consistently outpaces the competitors in serving their given market.

Defining the Market

- **Defining the market** in which the University operates is vital to their operations and positioning. As discussed Weinstein (1998:3) quoted B.C. Forbes in saying "If you don't drive your business, you will be driven out of business". The sheer importance of defining the market in which you are operating cannot be put more bluntly. Without knowing how the customer thinks it is hard to differentiate the product against the other products and services in the market.

  In defining the market the example of Merck, a pharmaceutical company in America, must be remembered. The University cannot be seen as *just* a university, just as the employees and customers cannot see it as *just* a university – the customer does not just want a university just as a bank is not there *just* to keep money safe.

  The University must build on the sound conceptual framework for formulating management strategy which is done through a solid market definition. From this research alone it cannot be said whether the University has defined its market, however the nature of the customer has changed dramatically over the past years that the definition could be outdated. Research into the defined target market is recommended.

Segmentation

- Another step the University should consider is that of **segmenting** the market. As Assael (1985:6) said only once a market has been segmented (which is done through identifying needs and characteristics of a segment) can a service be positioned to meet the needs of the people.

  The University, therefore, has to decide what needs they are meeting, who the people are whose needs they are meeting as well as their characteristics. The initial basis for segmentation should be customer benefits. Berkowitz *et al* (1992:196) suggested targeting customers with common needs because they will respond similarly to a marketing action. From this point the University can define precisely what market they are competing in – this will also assist in determining competitors and differentiating product features so as to compete effectively.

  For example **foreign students** offer an avenue of research, and a possible segmentation basis. Why would such a student want to study in Pietermaritzburg? It was assumed that the combination of courses offered, language used, fees, and location all contributed to their decision to study at the Pietermaritzburg campus. It would be of great benefit to the University to determine what the influencing factors were that brought them here – the results could show a distinct competitive advantage for the University and could be used to segment the market further.

Repositioning

- The University's positioning strategy is not seen to need changing. When looking at **repositioning**, however, one of the reasons Palmer *et al* (1995:334) gives for repositioning does lend itself to consider the possibility of repositioning. The reason is the nature of the customer demand may have changed as preferences, lifestyles and habits can easily change over time.

  Image repositioning is also an option – i.e. when the product is repositioned according to its image and not its physical attributes or target market (Jobber 1995:227). This is a very viable option as the image of the University is its main strength. The repositioning would come into effect as repositioning the image of the University in the eyes of the students/clients.

Customer Orientation

- The University has to operate as a business following the **marketing orientation**. This can be done through improving its customer service – The University has to restructure itself to make the entire organisation customer-orientated, systems orientated and socially responsible. The University as a business will fail if it continues to neglect the importance of its customers (the students).

- Perhaps one of the things the University can look into is that of **reducing class sizes**. It has been shown that the students appreciate and enjoy personal attention, but at the same time they also feel that they are part of a mass education system. Reducing class sizes will mean that other issues like additional staff, extra facilities and extending lecturing time will have to be attended to though.

- An **internal marketing campaign** should be developed to inform existing students of the courses, subject's etc. on offer to them. Marais (2000) said that there was a definite lack of communication to existing students. It has already been established that the students will not study what they do not know exists (Van der Walt *et al*, 1996:133).

Advertising

- Students have not been the recipients of the University's **advertising** campaign – it is recommended that the University research what mediums will be most relevant to them. The advertising mediums must be targeted at potential students – placing more emphasis on one-on-one communication and two-way communication. Appropriate funding needs to support the medium that is hitting the target market, funding should not be spread around to cover all mediums possible.

  Leading on from this then the University should sponsor parents/school teachers/ school guidance teachers as guests at the institution for a day. This should be done because it would be more beneficial to incorporate the school counsellors and teachers into the advertising campaigns as the results have proven the word of mouth medium is more advantageous.

- As Trout *et al* (1996:23) said: "focus on one powerful attribute and drive it into the mind", emphasising that **oversimplification** is a powerful weapon. The University has succeeded in simplifying its message to the customers with slogans like "Giving you the edge" and "The power to succeed" (see Appendices G & H). By stating very simply that the University draws out powerful attributes and drives it into the customer's minds.

  In combining both these concepts it is essential that the University provide a service that is worth buying (which is done through adding value to the basic product), and telling the buyer in a statement saying why it's a good service and why customers should buy it.

3.6.14 Conclusions From Past Research

The following conclusions were made (Garden, 2000), answering the questions:
What is the University's positioning strategy? and
What are the students' perceptions of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg?

- The University has positioned itself as an internationally recognised institution.
  - The students have perceived the University as such. International recognition was one of the factors students ranked as being most important to them.

- As a reputable tertiary institution the University offers students the unique, specialised courses (in addition the lectures are given in English).
  - Students see the University as offering unique, specialised courses. This was the main reason why students chose to come to University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

- The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, has a reputation for being one of the best universities.
  - Student perception is that this statement is true. This was another major deciding factor for students when choosing to study at this University.

- The University markets itself as giving students the edge in life, as equipping them for their future.
  - An overwhelming percentage of the students found that the University would equip them more than their friends who hadn't studied.

- The University has positioned itself with a differentiated advantage. They have attempted to position the organisation's products and services as superior and distinctive to those of its competitors in the mind of its target customers.
  - The perceptions of the students reflect that the University has done this – they have stated why they did not choose a tertiary institution over the University of Natal. The students have said that the reputation of the University, its courses and services were main reasons for this choice. This indicates the superiority and distinctive nature of the services offered.

One of the aims of the study was to find out if the positioning strategy of the University was reaching their target market. This was determined through the students' perceptions. It can be concluded that the University has positioned itself according to what the students see as important.

It can be seen from the discussions above that the marketing of a service is a real challenge to any marketer. Services incorporate so many intangible components which, when compared to marketing products, make the marketing of services complicated. One of the most difficult elements to master is that of people – people come and go, people's needs change, and at the end of the day people serve people.

At any stage of a service process perceptions can be created, altered, or destroyed by any encounter between the customer and the service provider. It is the delicate task of making sure the service providers give everything of themselves for the customer while still keeping the staff motivated enough to perform in that way that creates the challenge for service providers.

This section has looked at what current students at the University found to be factors that determined where they would study. The perceptions of these students are incredibly important as these students talk to other potential students and so many other perceptions are created based on what the current students perceive about UNP. There would be a natural tendency for these students to be favourably biased in many aspects regarding the University, hence the need to look at impartial perceptions. The following sections will uncover the perceptions held by potential customers of the University – perceptions that are the basis for future actions.

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Chapter 4

Research Methodology

4.1 Statement of Problem

The objective of this research is to build on the previous research, which established the perceptions held by current students at the University. Taking into consideration the fact that current students had already chosen UNP as their university and would hence have positive perceptions towards it, it was felt that potential customers (students) would reflect the actual picture of the University's positioning. Looking at the positioning of the University in the minds of potential customers would emphasise the real areas that the University needs to deal with and at the same time would highlight any negative perceptions regarding the University. This is a critical element for the University because behaviour is determined by perceptions.

Schiffman & Kanuk (1994:186) said that the image a customer has of a product/service could be more important than its actual characteristics. In effect this means that the image the customer has of the University is in fact more important than the services themselves. Furthermore, as was discussed in Chapter 2, how a person acts is influenced by their perceptions (Kotler & Armstrong, 2001:186).

In other words, the way the customer perceives the University (and the benefits offered by the University) will determine their future behaviour towards the University. The attitudes held by the customers towards the University will also determine their behaviour towards the University. What attitudes have the scholars formed towards the University? It is crucial for the University to unearth these attitudes, especially when they influence future purchasing decisions.

Besides looking at the scholars one would also have to look at how the University has differentiated itself. In other words – who is the University trying to attract and secondly how is the University selling itself (what competitive advantage/differentiating factor is it selling itself on?). The core of this research therefore is investigating how the University is positioned in the eyes of scholars (potential customers). Leading on from that, it is essential to evaluate the University's position according to how they want to be perceived and comparing it to how the scholars actually perceive them to be.

After extensive literature research there are five questions left to answer:

1. What are important attributes that influence scholars when considering studying at a tertiary learning institution?
2. How do the various universities fare on each of the important attributes?
3. What are the factors that influence the scholars to study elsewhere as opposed to the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg?
4. What is the University's positioning strategy?
5. What are the scholars' perceptions of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg?

This research should benefit the University's marketing greatly because by knowing how the scholars see the University, the marketers can evaluate their strategy in the face of stiff competition. It will also assist the University in operating as a business because the first main step in strategy formation is to know how the University is positioned in the eyes of its customers.

The University will also benefit from the research by understanding the effect of: relevant courses and topics of interest offered by the University, the reputation of the University, the University's advertising campaign (for example school visits, newspaper advertisements, friends, teachers, parents etc.), finances, the general security on campus, and the social life of the University on scholars.

4.2 Operational Definitions Of Variables

The area that was focussed on was schools in and surrounding Pietermaritzburg.

4.2.1 The Participants

In the various schools Grade 11's (or Standard 9's) and Grade 12's (or Standard 10's) were the participants in the study. Grade 11's were included in the sample firstly because they are part of the target market (Marais, 2000) and secondly as it is believed that the decision to study (or any other activity after school) was not always made in Matric. In other words scholars in Grade 11 should be thinking or deciding – or at least in the beginning stages of deciding – what to do after school.

4.2.2 Definition of the Target Market to be Researched

Nine schools were identified as key feeder schools (within Pietermaritzburg) for UNP with the help of MarieAnna Marais (PR Officer for the Faculty of Human and Management Studies). The schools chosen were as follows:

Private Schools	St John's Diocesan (hereafter **St Johns**)
	The Wykeham Collegiate (hereafter **TWC**)
	Hilton College (hereafter **Hilton**)
Ex Model C Schools	Alexandra High School (hereafter **Alex**)
	Pietermaritzburg Girls High School (hereafter **GHS**)
	Maritzburg Boys College (hereafter **College**)
Other	Heritage Academy (hereafter **Heritage**)
	Georgetown High School (hereafter **Georgetown**)
(Top feeder School)	Raisethorpe Secondary School (hereafter **Raisethorpe**)

This "other" category can loosely be defined as ex-model D schools and township schools as they often are very different in terms of management, success, facilities, staff problems and so on. Raisethorpe was selected based on the fact that they are UNP's top feeder school. Georgetown and Heritage, while located in Pietermaritzburg, are not considered as feeder schools to UNP and were used to help identify weaknesses in UNP's positioning.

The University undoubtedly attracts students from further afield (outside of Pietermaritzburg) and it is possible that they hold different perceptions regarding the University. For the purposes of this study though, the schools in Pietermaritzburg will be focused on as they are scholars that have the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg as one of their first choices of tertiary educational institutions.

4.3 Research Methodology

The objective of this research was to identify the perceptions held by potential customers of the University based on the assumption that behaviour is determined by perceptions. By identifying these perceptions the University could then evaluate whether its intended positioning strategy was being accepted as intended. After comparing its intended position with its actual position the University would be able to either reposition itself or re-emphasise strengths.

4.3.1 Research Design

4.3.1.1 Exploratory Research

Due to the nature of the research (i.e. no previous research having been conducted in this specific area) exploratory research was undertaken. This involved conducting primary research in the form of questionnaires to uncover perceptions and attitudes towards the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

4.3.1.2 Questionnaires

Due to the large sample number, questionnaires were used to best facilitate the communication of scholar's opinions and attitudes. Likert scales were used in the questionnaire – this is an attitude scale used to measure and interpret attitudes (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994:37).

4.3.2 Sampling Methods

When choosing a sample the following five steps can be followed (Martins, Loubser & de J van Wyk, 1996:251 – 252).

Firstly **defining the population**, in this case the population of respondents is all scholars (in Grade 11 and 12) at schools in and around Pietermaritzburg in 2001. Secondly the **sample frame** must be identified – this translates into a record of all the sample units available for selection at any stage of the sampling process. For the purposes of this research the frame is a list of various schools (considered to be top feeder schools) in and around Pietermaritzburg.

The third step is selecting the **sampling method**. Probability methods were used so that all participants at the various schools had an equal chance of being asked questions. The sample was then further defined by using stratified sampling. Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (1997:137) described stratified sampling as being the method used when attributes are used to define the respondents you want. Once the population has been divided into segments (Grade 11 or 12) the drawing of respondents is done by simple random sampling. This means that all respondents still have an equal chance of being asked questions (Martins *et al*, 1996:259).

Choosing the **sample size** is the next step. Burns & Bush (2000:422 – 423) say that there is no relationship between sample size and representativeness, i.e. a sample does not have to be big to be representative. Representativeness is determined by the sample plan – who is included in the sample. Sample size affects the sample accuracy, which is a measure of how closely it reports the true values of the population it represents.

Of the 1981 first year students in 2002 at UNP, 15.3% originated from the nine schools selected (Division of Management Information, 2002). It must be understood that these nine schools could never totally represent the student population at UNP, as there are many students from neighbouring provinces and countries studying at the University. The only other top feeder schools not featured in the top ten and which were not included in the study (Carter High School and Heather Secondary School) have similar profiles to those included in the study.

The last step is **selecting the sample elements**. Bearing in mind the element is the unit from whom/about which information is needed (Martins *et al*, 1996:251), this step would include selecting the scholars in Grade 11 and 12 from the designated 9 schools.

4.3.3 Questionnaire Design (see Appendix A)

Every attempt was made to keep the questionnaire short (to facilitate school periods as well as to ensure the completion of the questionnaires). Anonymity was protected by not asking for the respondent's name in an attempt to increase the likelihood of honest answers. Gender, race and age were asked at the end of the questionnaire so that if any of the respondents were offended by being asked these personal details and refuse to answer the questions, the rest of the questionnaire would have been answered already.

Question 1& 2: These questions were asked to determine what scholars are planning to do when leaving school and why they would follow that direction. This would give some indication as to the size of the market of potential customers.

Question 3: Asked the scholars to list the top 3 tertiary education institutions – giving the university an idea of who their competition in the market is. It must be understood that even if facts contradict their opinions, perceptions are greater than facts (Ries & Trout, 2001:29).

Question 4: Here an attempt was made to identify what the scholars ranked as being important attributes/benefits/features of a tertiary education institution. By finding out what the customer regards as important the University could design it's product/service offering around their needs and wants. These attributes were mainly drawn from research conducted on the campus with existing students (Garden, 2000).

Question 5: Involved rating various institutions according to the attributes laid out in previous question. In doing this, the scholars indicated their perceptions regarding various institutions even though they may never have been to the institution physically. It must be noted here that initially this question gave the scholar an option of saying that they didn't know anything about the institution regarding the particular attribute (i.e. they had to answer '6'). After piloting the questionnaire it was decided that giving the scholars "an easy way out" meant that even if they did have an opinion if they thought about it they would answer that they didn't know about the institution.

Basically the scholars were "forced" into thinking about their perception regarding the various institutions. The logic behind this was that somewhere along the line the scholar would have heard or seen something with regards to the institution. Based on this notion the scholar would have built an opinion or a perception – consciously or subconsciously.

The theory of perceptions rings loud and true: it is what the scholar *thinks* about a place that is important. To discover/identify what the scholar *thinks* they cannot have an option allowing them to not think. It was vitally important for the purposes of this study to extract the thoughts and perceptions from the students. It must be reiterated that the student's **knowledge of facts** about institution was not the issue under investigation, rather their perceptions regarding the institution.

Even though some scholars showed that they didn't know about the various institutions by leaving the spaces blank, it is believed that had they had they option of saying they had no opinion this number would be drastically higher.

Question 6: This question looked at the scholars proposed method of financing their studies, this would give the University insight with regards to the importance of the Price 'P' in their marketing mix. This question could also be useful for recommendations with regards to payment options.

Question 7: Some scholars choose to study elsewhere, and not at the University of Natal. This question attempted to discover the reasons behind choosing a different university. Knowing what turns potential customers away would help in identifying possible weaknesses in the University's position.

Questions 8 – 24: These questions looked at specific perceptions with regard to the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. By looking at the scholars' perceptions on various issues, the positioning strategy of the University could be evaluated. Only four options were given to the respondents – in an attempt to eliminate the tendency to be neutral in everything. In previous research it has been noticed that one can get through a questionnaire without really answering anything if a neutral answer is given throughout. The four options given were agree, sometimes, not really and disagree.

It was understood that this could have forced respondents to answer something or leave it out. Once again though it must be reiterated that to discover/identify what the scholar *thinks* they cannot be given an option allowing them to not think. It was vitally important for the purposes of this study to extract the thoughts and perceptions from the students

Question 32: In asking who the major decider is with regards to the decision of where to study, the University could determine whether their marketing strategy is targeting the right

group. At the same time this question could identify the role players that aid the potential customer when making his/her choice. In other words by identifying possible group influences the University could be made more aware of the need to target other groups.

Question 33: This last question was included to discover how the scholars heard about the University. By identifying the major mediums of effective communication the University can make more efficient use of its limited resources.

Throughout the questionnaire the participants were given the option of "Other" so that any area/opinion/institution/attribute not covered initially could be included. By using "Other" the options were not limiting in any way as the participants could include their own options at any time.

4.3.4 Piloting

Two pilot studies were conducted, both with different participants from two different schools. The two groups did not participate in the general research after participating in the pilot study.

The pilot studies were carried out using convenience sampling. Both groups contained similar numbers and both groups represented one gender (to have all things equal). Two pilot groups were conducted to test a change to the questionnaire in Question 5 - see Appendix A.

In the first test Question 5 offered the option of answering '6', which meant the participants had no opinion of the institution regarding that attribute. It was found in this test that the majority of the question was filled with '6's'.

The second test was run (using similar participant characteristics) but in this test the option of 'no opinion' was removed. There was a drastic change in response to the question, as all respondents answered positively for the question. It was clear that when given the option to not have to answer that option was taken. Based on the latter test the 'no opinion/6' option was removed in Question 5.

Participants could leave the question out had they really felt that they had no opinion. It was thus felt that the change did not spoil the data.

4.3.5 Questionnaire Distribution

Various school counsellors and teachers were approached and asked to allow time for the researcher/assistants to conduct the questionnaire. The availability of both staff member and scholar was a major factor and in some cases questionnaires were left with the teachers to conduct at their own convenience.

4.4 Methods Of Analysis

The data was analysed on the statistical programme called SPSS. Significance was set at 0.05 and confidence set at 0.95. This means that the results that fall within 95% confidence confirm that what was found wasn't by chance. In other words if a result shows that what was observed is greater than 5%, that finding is significant.

In other words if the result was 0.9 the result was significant. Below 0.05 the result fell into a rejection region and led to a rejection of the statement. There were missing values that had to be dealt with in analysing the data, this was done by entering a special code recognised by the statistical programme so that it would not be used in any analysis.

One of the tests run was the Chi squared test. These are tests that compare the association between two factors. It is a test of association where the result of a formula is checked on a Chi table to determine whether the result is significant and match expectations or whether the distribution of one variable is associated with another (Kotler & Fox, 1995:88).

4.5 Limitations Of Methodology

Throughout the duration of the research the researcher experienced the following limitations.

4.5.1 Time constraints

Understandably the scholars were at a crucial time in their studies as exams came close, this however still posed a limitation to the researcher. It was the intention of the researcher to be present when the participants answered the questionnaire in an attempt to monitor possible misunderstandings of some of the questions as in some cases clarification and emphasis were needed to highlight the fact that it was the scholar's *opinions* that were wanted. However in some schools this wasn't possible and the staff member administered the questionnaires at their convenience.

4.5.2 Peer Pressure While Completing Questionnaires

In terms of peer pressure with respect to the questionnaire the scholars were encouraged to fill out the questionnaires independently so as not to manipulate others' answers and opinions. This potential for error must be acknowledged as results will be biased if the respondents' answers were not their own. When the questionnaires were administered the scholars (and members of staff) were encouraged to work independently.

4.5.3 Ambiguity and Confusion

Some questions caused confusion amongst the participants. There seemed to be a problem with *ranking* attributes in that some attributes were all allocated the same number, possibly indicating ambiguity in the question.

4.5.4 Sample Size

The debate as to what sample size is representative of the population is always prevalent. It could be argued that the predicted sample size of 800 would fall short of representing the entire population of 33351 scholars in Pietermaritzburg (Department of Education, 2002). Although scholars from the main feeder schools were selected for this study it cannot be said that the sample is adequately representative of <u>all</u> the scholars in Pietermaritzburg. Even though there are many UNP students not from Pietermaritzburg, of the top ten feeder schools for the University all of them are located in Pietermaritzburg. However, it would be interesting to investigate the perceptions held by scholars outside Pietermaritzburg. This could be an extension for further research.

4.6 References – Chapter 4

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Chapter 5

Findings and Discussion

Before looking at the findings it would be useful to revisit the objectives of the study looking at the research questions:

1. What are important attributes that influence scholars when considering studying at a tertiary learning institution?
2. How do the various universities fare on each of the important attributes?
3. What are the factors that influence the scholars to study elsewhere as opposed to the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg (henceforth 'the University')?
4. What is the University's positioning strategy?
5. What are the scholars' perceptions of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg?

In obtaining answers to these questions the University can establish the perceptions held by potential customers towards the University. Subsequently the University can evaluate the strength of its positioning strategy based on these perceptions. The research will also show how effective the current positioning strategy has been and possibly even unveil recommendations for possible strategies in the future.

The University's marketing mediums will be elaborated upon before the findings of the research are discussed. Through discussing the findings below it will be determined what attributes scholars consider to be vital in any tertiary education provider. By knowing these attributes the University can focus on strengthening these areas with regards to the marketing of the University, in an attempt to capture potential competitive advantages.

The next section will reveal the scholar's perceptions with reference to various institutions according to the attributes listed. Using the scholar's perceptions of the important attributes, positioning maps will be drawn up to plot the various institutions' positioning compared to one another with respect to the attributes.

The findings with regard to perceptions associated specifically to the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, will also be dealt with. In identifying these perceptions the positioning strategy can be evaluated by matching the University's intended position up against what the scholar's perception of the University's position is.

This chapter will look at the findings of the research as well as provide a brief discussion of each finding. Chapter 6 will deal with conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations will be made to the University in terms of what it differentiates itself on and how it communicates these differences.

5.1 The University as a Service Provider

In defining services Payne (1993:6) said that it was an activity, essentially of an intangible nature, which involves some interaction with customers. Combining this with Irons' (1994:11) elements of services the nature of the University as a service will be seen.

- Services are transient (temporary/brief) – they are consumed there and then with no lasting material remaining. The lecture situation gives the lecturer an opportunity to provide information to the students, however it is up to the student as to whether that information is useful and what they will do with the information.
- People mainly represent services – they are inseparable from the person who provides the service. This is evidenced by the fact that when the lecturer is there, there is a lecture. Therefore in an on-campus university the lecturing staff play a major role in the delivery of the service.
- Services are perishable – one cannot have a production run and store services for later usage. The service a lecturer provides is perishable – if a student misses a lecture it can be repeated but an individual service delivery is unique each time and happens once only.
- Services are a series of 'once-off' production runs i.e. they are heterogeneous. No one service will be the same because people are different. A lecturer is an individual with his/her own creativity, methods and initiatives – not one lecturer will lecture in the same manner. In the same vein not one lecture is delivered in exactly the same way (even if it is exactly the same lecture repeated twice).

The University can, according to these elements, classify itself as a service provider. The University provides tertiary education services – providing information and skills to equip and train young men and women for the real world.

5.2 Marketing at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

The University of Natal's target market is the prospective student, i.e. scholars in grades 11 and 12 (Marais, 2000). The main aim is to create awareness amongst the prospective "customers". This is done in a number of different ways:

- If there are any queries as to University admissions, details are taken down from the enquirer and a follow-up pack is sent to them.
- Online applications for the online generation. This makes application forms more available and access to the University easier.
- The University web page also offers convenience when trying to find out about the University.
- The University often make use of newspapers around the country, some newspapers used are: The Star, The Natal Witness, The Citizen, and Daily News
- School visits, orientation weeks, open days, and even leadership seminars for school counsellors are some personal, two–way communication strategies used.
- There are mail-outs four times a year to 250 schools – giving any updated information about the University or more handouts/prospectus for the pupils.
- The University has also used radio as another medium. East Coast Radio has run advertisements for the University, and according to Marais they were very successful.
- General brochures, pamphlets, and posters (see Appendices G – J) are continually used.

Through all the above methods the University has attempted to position themselves as being a highly reputable learning institution that creates opportunities for students after their studies. They have attempted to inform the student of the potential success they can experience if they study at the University (see Appendix H & I).

An extensive campaign was launched at the University of Natal, initially through print and radio mediums, now also incorporating cinema and outdoor (Saunderson-Meyer, 2001). This campaign sought to highlight the benefits offered to the students studying at the University of Natal, i.e. international recognition for our degrees, high academic exit quality and the University's enormous physical and human resources.

The University of Natal's advertising has won many awards over the years – that however, is not the main reason for advertising. The underlying reason for advertising is the

amount to which sales have increased as a result of the advertising campaign. As has been shown in the literature review the figures for the University of Natal have been steadily increasing over the past years which could be a result of the University's campaign to reinvent itself in the mind of the customer – Saunderson-Meyer (2001).

5.2.1 Findings of the Research

5.2.1.1 Response Rate

At the culmination of the study 550 participants contributed to the study. This translates into a 67% response rate.

5.2.1.2 Demographics of the Sample

The sample offered the following demographics:

Grade

Table 5.1 – Grade Distribution

Grade 11	Grade 12
48.5%	51.5%

Gender

Table 5.2 – Gender Distribution

Male	Female
47.5%	52.5%

Schools

Table 5.3 – School Distribution

Private			Ex Model-C			Other		
St Johns	**TWC**	**Hilton**	**Alex**	**GHS**	**College**	**Heritage**	**George-town**	**Raise-thorpe**
76 (14.3%)	21 (4%)	95 (17.9%)	70 (13.2%)	56 (10.5%)	69 (13%)	11 (2.1%)	94 (17.7%)	32 (6%)

As can be seen TWC, Heritage, and Raisethorpe all have a smaller number of respondents, therefore their perceptions will not carry as much weight. However even though their sample size is small, their responses must be noted as they could highlight potential perceptual weaknesses as well as perceptions amongst potential customers that might not have been reached as part of the study.

Race

Table 5.4 – Racial Distribution

Black	White	Indian	Coloured	Asian
49.7%	30.6%	15.2%	2.7%	1.8%

The category 'Asian' included respondents that were Chinese, Japanese, Singaporean, etc. This category also had a smaller number of respondents (and so their perceptions wouldn't carry as much weight). However, it must be noted again, that their perceptions are vital to the University, as perceptions of any potential customer will influence future purchasing decisions.

5.3 Results and Discussion

When "majority" is stated in the findings it implies that the group of respondents answering in that way had the largest percentage.

5.3.1 Plans for 2002/2003

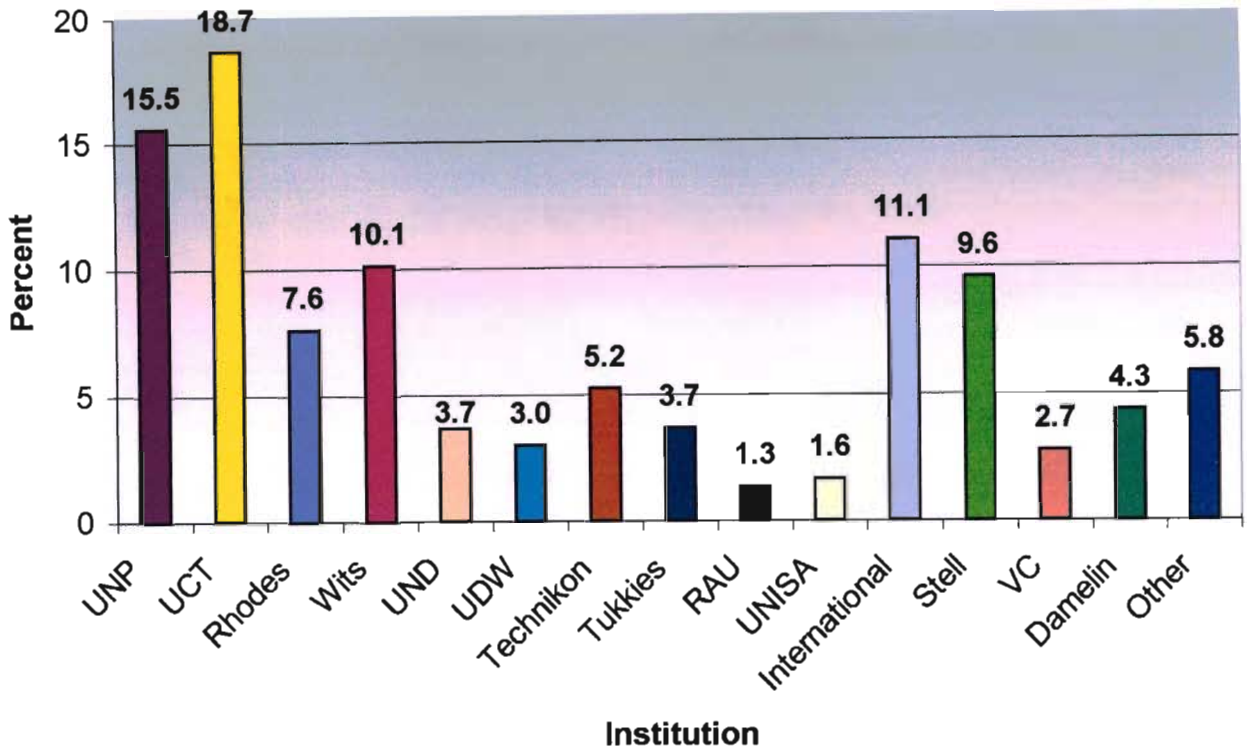
The scholars were asked what their plans are when they finish school. The majority of the respondents said that they would study (79.1%); while 12.3% said that they would take a year off to decide what to do. When looking at the Grade 12's specifically, it was found that 81.3% of them were going to study after they finished school.

This is evidence of the demand for tertiary education, even though student numbers are dropping. It is proposed that 2 things could hinder these students from studying further: Firstly finances (scholars relying on bursaries and scholarships more) and secondly exemptions/points needed as entrance requirements disqualifying potential students. Nonetheless the fact remains that a high percentage of scholars are looking to study – pointing towards the perceived importance and purpose of tertiary educational institutions.

When asked why they wanted to study 40.9% said that they needed to be trained and equipped to operate in their chosen field. A further 33.8% would study because they enjoy or have an interest in that specific field.

This result confirms the need for tertiary education – in other words scholars acknowledge the fact that tertiary education (training and equipping) is essential to future employment. This is important because scholars acknowledge the benefit offered to them by tertiary institutions. From here the key is to help the potential customers to see that the benefits from one institution far outweigh the benefits offered by other institutions.

5.3.2 Top Tertiary Institution



<u>Graph 16</u> – Top Choice of Tertiary Institutions

The University of Natal Medical School, Onderstepoort, AAA Advertising School and others were among the options entered under "Other".

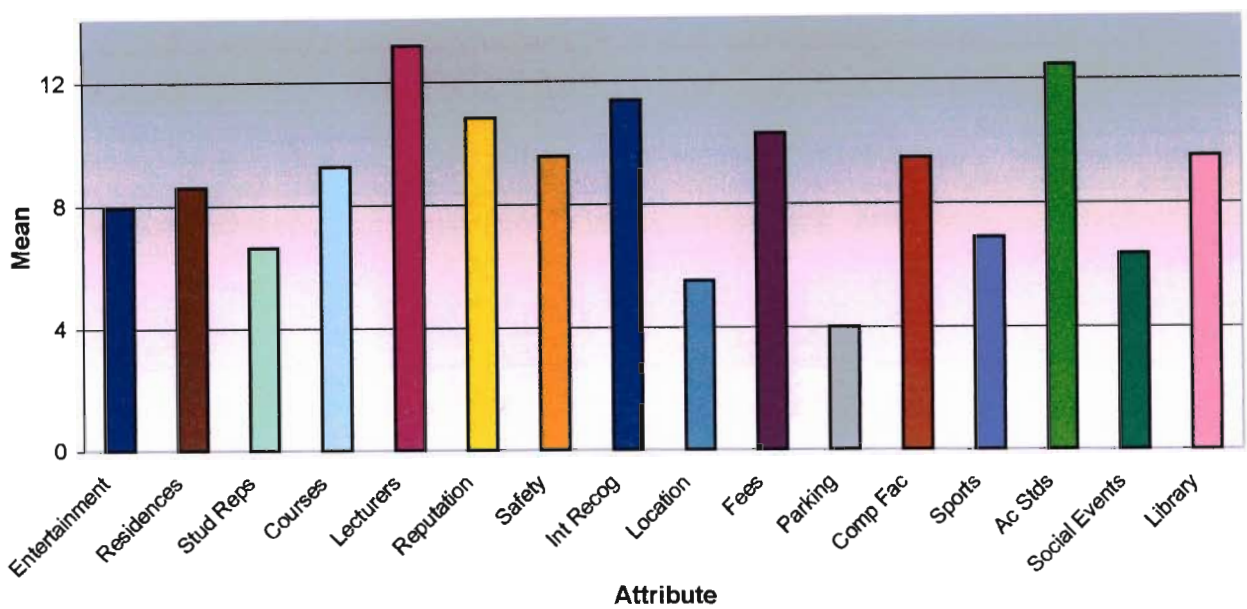
This section asked the scholars their opinion of the top tertiary institutions and they were asked to rank their top three tertiary institutions. Graph 16 shows the average of the top 3 rankings for each institution. This finding contradicts the research conducted by the HSRC (Pretorious, 2002) in that UCT, Stellenbosch, and Rhodes were not included in the top 5 institutions at all. In fact Rhodes was rated last on the list of 36 institutions in the HSRC survey! Perhaps the difference between the two findings is exposure that the sample respondents have had to other university's promotions.

5.3.3 Attributes Favoured by Scholars

The scholars were asked to rank various attributes according to their importance in any tertiary education institution. The attributes listed in the questionnaire were as follows:

Entertainment/social areas
Residences
Student representatives
Specific courses
Highly qualified lecturers
Good reputation
High safety standards (on campus/residences)
International recognition
Central location
Reasonable fees (affordable)
Ample parking
High-tech computer facilities
Sport clubs
High academic standards
Social events
A library
Other

The "other" option was used for attributes like 'good academic environment', 'nutritious food', 'Christian groups', 'good discipline' and 'a friendly atmosphere'.

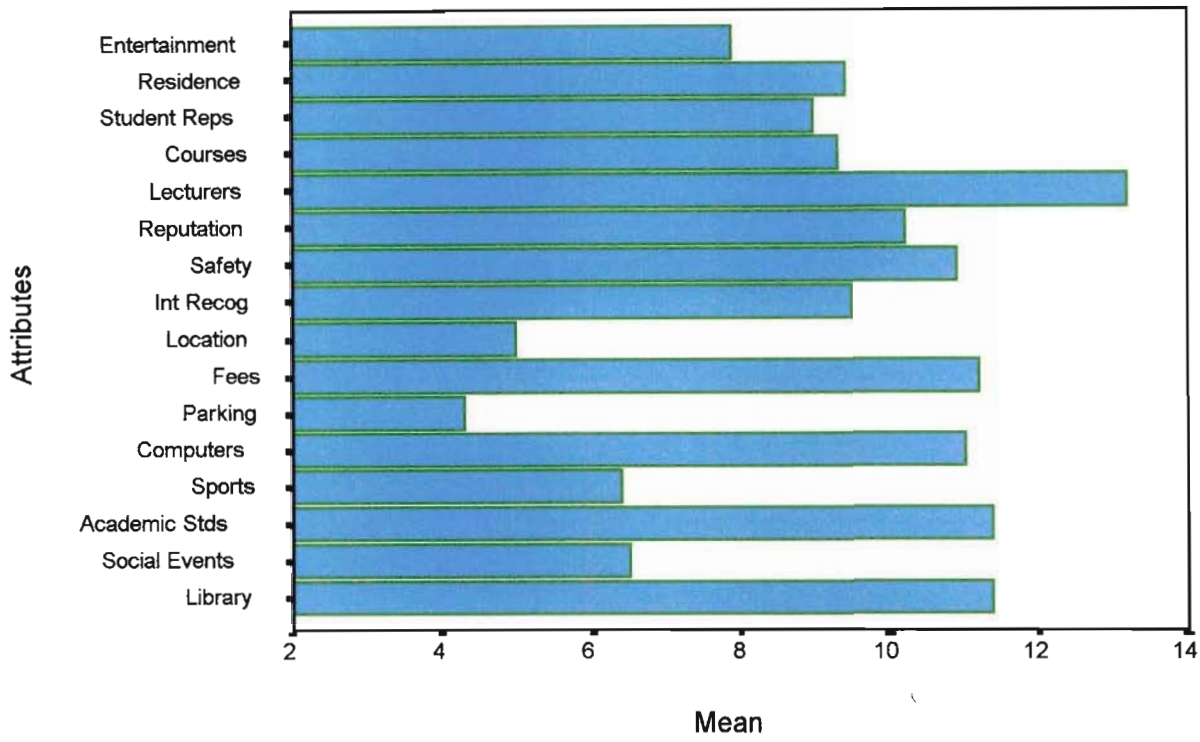


Graph 17 – Attributes Favoured by All

Overall the most important attribute was "highly qualified lecturers" with a mean rating of 13.15 (this means that, when asked to rank these attributes from 1 to 16 with 16 being most important, the average response from respondents was 13.15). Following "highly qualified lecturers" the scholars thought "academic standards" were next important with "international recognition" thereafter.

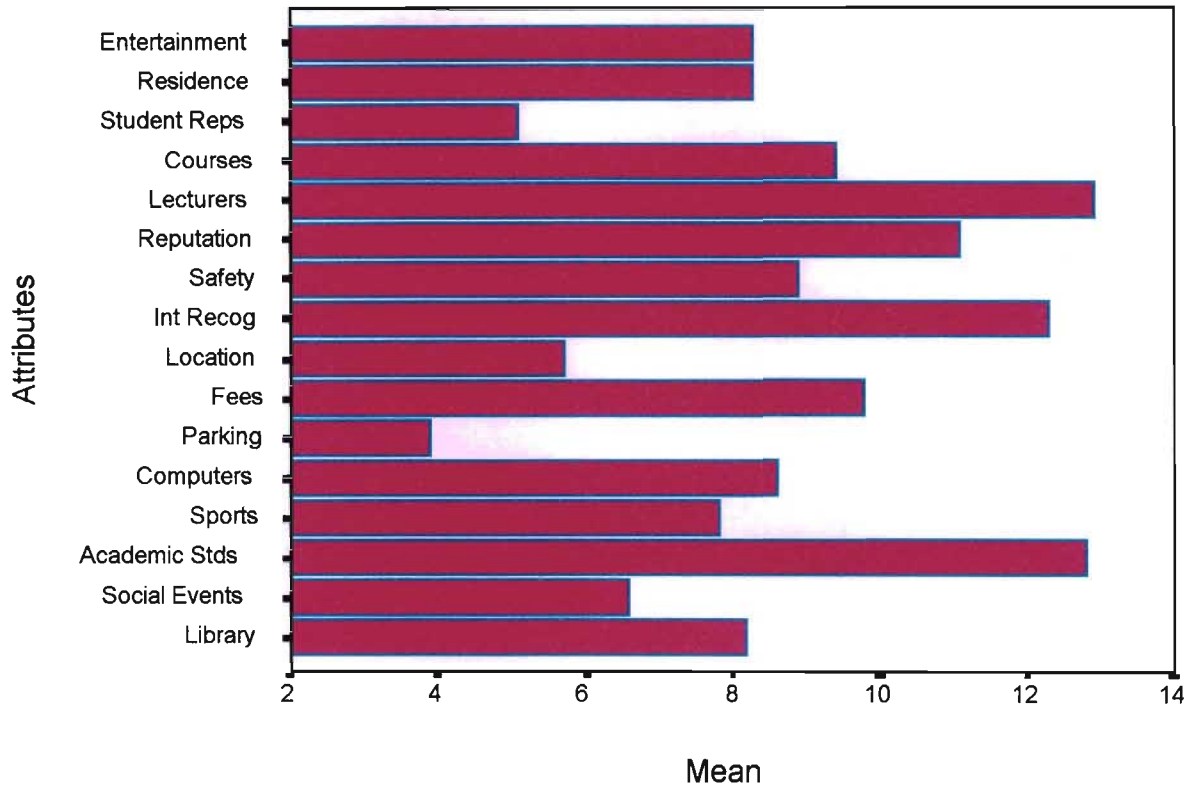
Racial group

When narrowing the focus down to what the different race groups thought, the Black respondents thought the following were important attributes:

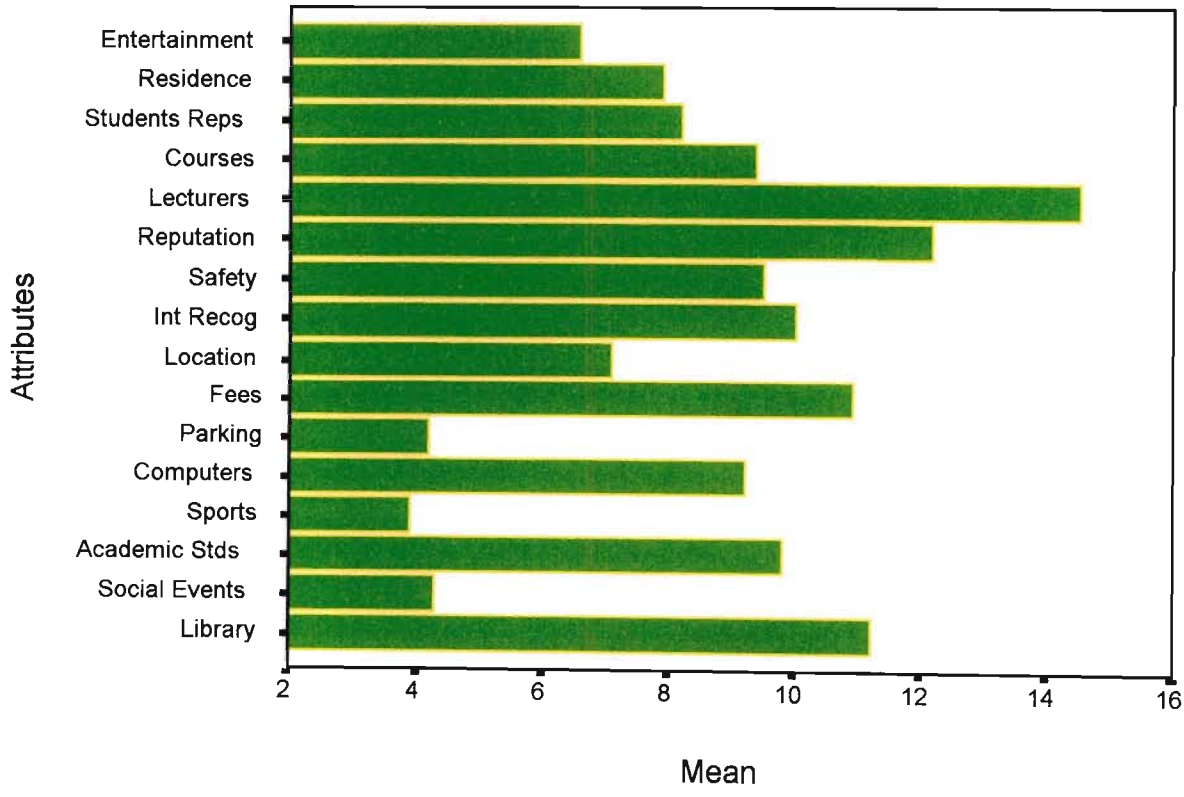


<u>Graph 18</u> – Attributes Favoured by Black Respondents

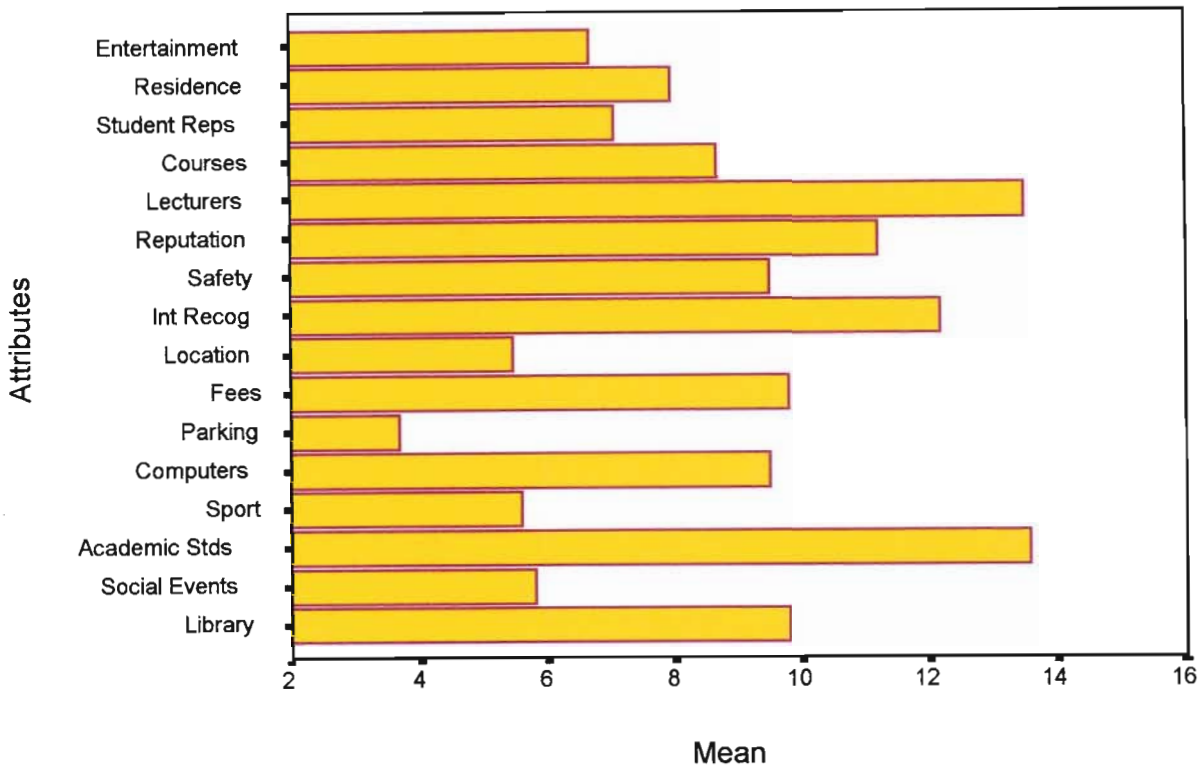
Graph 19 below shows a slight difference in what White respondents say are important attributes. In other words Black respondents consistently answered that attributes like fees, library and computer facilities were more important than the reputation of the institution, academic standards and international recognition.



Graph 19 – Attributes Favoured by White Respondents



Graph 20 – Attributes Favoured by Coloured Respondents



<u>Graph 21</u> – Attributes Favoured by Indian Respondents

Graphs representing the Asian's scholars' perceptions can be found in the appendices.

As can be seen from the above graphs, different racial groups give preference to different attributes. Recent discussions in marketing circles have revolved around excluding questions regarding racial groups from marketing research as it does not offer a meaningful demographic/segmentation variable. From these graphs though it is clearly shown that the different racial groups attach more importance to different attributes. Based on this information the University can create informed strategies to target specific scholars or groups of scholars. This information can be incredibly useful as the University seeks to promote itself to various groups within the tertiary education market.

In other words the University can focus on specific elements when promoting itself. For example in the Indian communities the University can labour on the fact that its academic standards are high, while in the White communities it can emphasise the fact that the degrees offered carry international recognition.

The attributes like academic standards (12.45), international recognition (11.35), and highly qualified lecturers (13.15) clearly play an important role in the mind of the scholars. However what should be mentioned is that even though the scholars do not rate an

attribute as being important in their choice of tertiary institution, the poor quality or absence of it would impact the scholars choice of institution.

Gender

In comparing the results of this question based on gender differences, there is not much deviation from one another. In other words both Males and Females found that highly qualified lecturers were the most important attribute (13.1 and 13.2 respectively). As could be expected safety featured as being more important for Females than Males (10.2 and 8.9 respectively). Overall though, gender does not correlate significantly with the importance of the various factors. The graphs representing the attributes favoured by Male and Female respondents can be found in Appendix B.

Schools

By using the classification of schools on Page 109 the differences between schools will be probed. The full results can be found in graph form in Appendix B and a summary of these results can be found in Table 6.2 (Chapter 6).

Looking at the **Private schools** the following common attributes were found:

Table 5.5 – Attributes in Ranked Importance According to Private Schools

	St Johns	TWC	Hilton
1.	Highly qualified lecturers (13.2)	Highly qualified lecturers (12.2)	Highly qualified lecturers (13.4)
2.	Academic standards (12.4)	International recognition (11.5)	Academic standards (13.8)
3.	International recognition (11.8)	Reputation (10.7)	International recognition (12.7)
4.	Specific courses (10.7)	Academic standards (9.4)	Reputation (11.2)
5.	Affordable fees (10.3)	Entertainment (9.2)	Specific courses (8.9)

These scholars are used to high quality education, as are their parents who pay for their private schooling. Hence any tertiary education institution catering for these potential customers will need to offer so much more than their previous schools (i.e. highly qualified lecturers, reputation etc.) to provide satisfaction as well as to prepare them for endless opportunities when their degrees are completed. The financial backing is there for these scholars to study at any institution of their choice, as well as to choose where to go after their studies – hence the importance of international recognition for these scholars.

Ex Model-C Schools: Over and above the main concerns (highly qualified lecturers, academic standards etc.), these scholars have financial concerns. In other words they want the same things but the cost of these attributes is a problem.

Table 5.6 – Attributes in Ranked Importance According to Ex Model-C Schools

	Alex	GHS	College
1.	Highly qualified lecturers (13.9)	Highly qualified lecturers (13.7)	Highly qualified lecturers (12.9)
2.	Academic standards (13.7)	Academic standards (12.8)	International recognition (12.6)
3.	International recognition (12.3)	International recognition (12.1)	Academic standards (12.1)
4.	Library (11.3)	Reasonable fees (11.9)	Reputation (11.9)
5.	Reputation (11)	Reputation (11.8)	Reasonable fees (11.2)

The **Other** category (i.e. Heritage, Georgetown, and Raisethorpe) rendered slightly different results.

Table 5.7 – Attributes in Ranked Importance According to 'Other' Schools

	Heritage	Georgetown	Raisethorpe
1.	Highly qualified lecturers (13.3)	Highly qualified lecturers (12.6)	Academic standards (13.3)
2.	Computer facilities (11.8)	Library (12)	Highly qualified lecturers (12.6)
3.	International recognition (10.8)	Academic standards (10.9)	International recognition (12)
4.	Library (10.4)	Computer facilities (10.8)	Reputation (11.4)
5.	Affordable fees (10)	Reasonable fees (10.5)	Safety (10.2)

A possible reason for this (i.e. library coming second) could be the inadequacy of the school's own library and perhaps their computer facilities as well. Scholars know when they do not have the necessary resources to reach their educational goals. Fees are also a concern here, and the reliance would be on bursaries and scholarships to study further.

5.3.4 Various Tertiary Institutions Rated According to Various Attributes

In this section various tertiary institutions were listed and the scholars were asked to rate each institution accordingly – a full report on these findings can be found in Appendix C. Appendix D gives a breakdown of UNP's rating per attribute. The findings reported on are based on the most important attributes selected by the scholars as discussed in the previous question. In other words, the top attributes are used as bases for the positioning maps. Highly qualified lecturers is used in all the positioning maps as a means to plot the other attributes against the top attribute.

Key

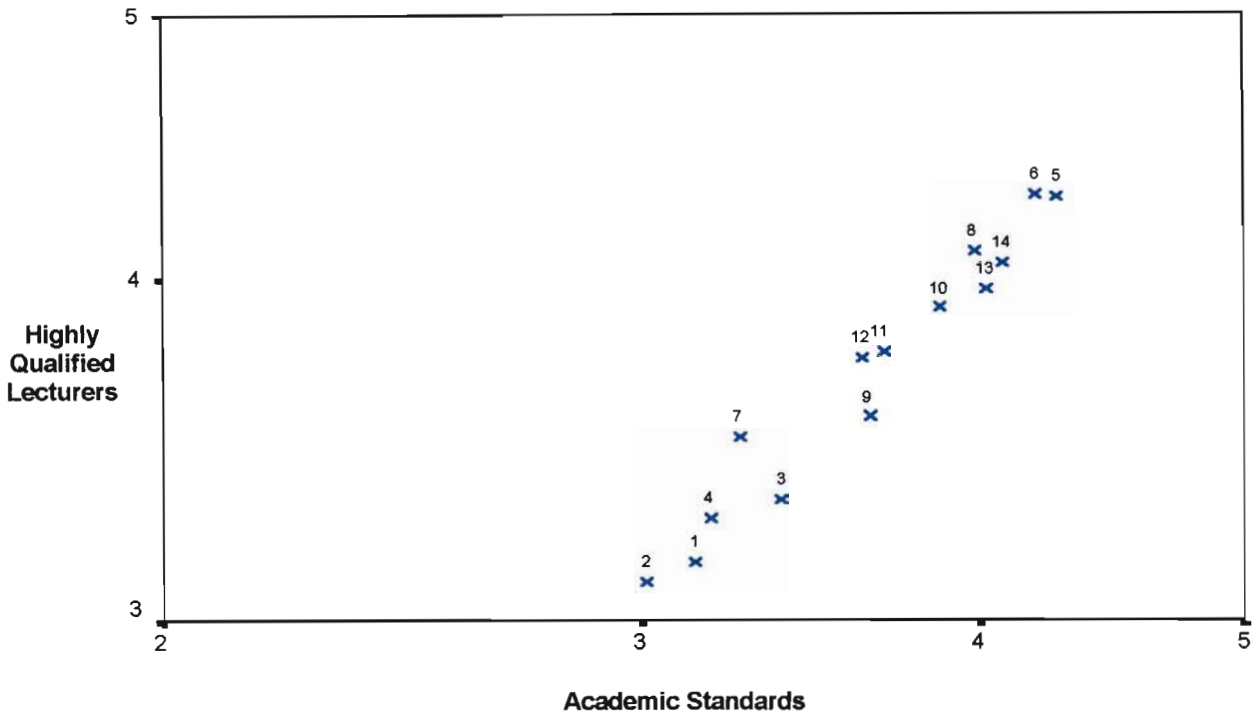
1)	Damelin	8)	Wits
2)	Technikon	9)	RAU
3)	UNISA	10)	Rhodes
4)	Varsity College	11)	UNP
5)	UCT	12)	UND
6)	International	13)	Stellenbosch
7)	UDW	14)	Other**

** University of the Free State, University of Pretoria, University or Port Elizabeth, ICESA and others were among the options scholars entered under "Other".

International institutions were rated highly for all of the attributes (this is possibly due to "the grass is greener on the other side" theory). It was evident that scholars perceive international institutions as offering far more than local universities. This is a common South African perception that 'overseas is better'. For the purposes of this study, however, the focus will be on direct *local* competition.

With regards to the "Other" category it is important to note that even though it is not dealing with one specific institution, the perceptions of the institutions are valuable to this study.

5.3.4.1 Institutions Positioned According to Highly Qualified Lecturers and Academic Standards



Graph 22 – Positioning Map (First Quadrant) Reflecting Institutions Rated According to Highly Qualified Lecturers and Academic Standards

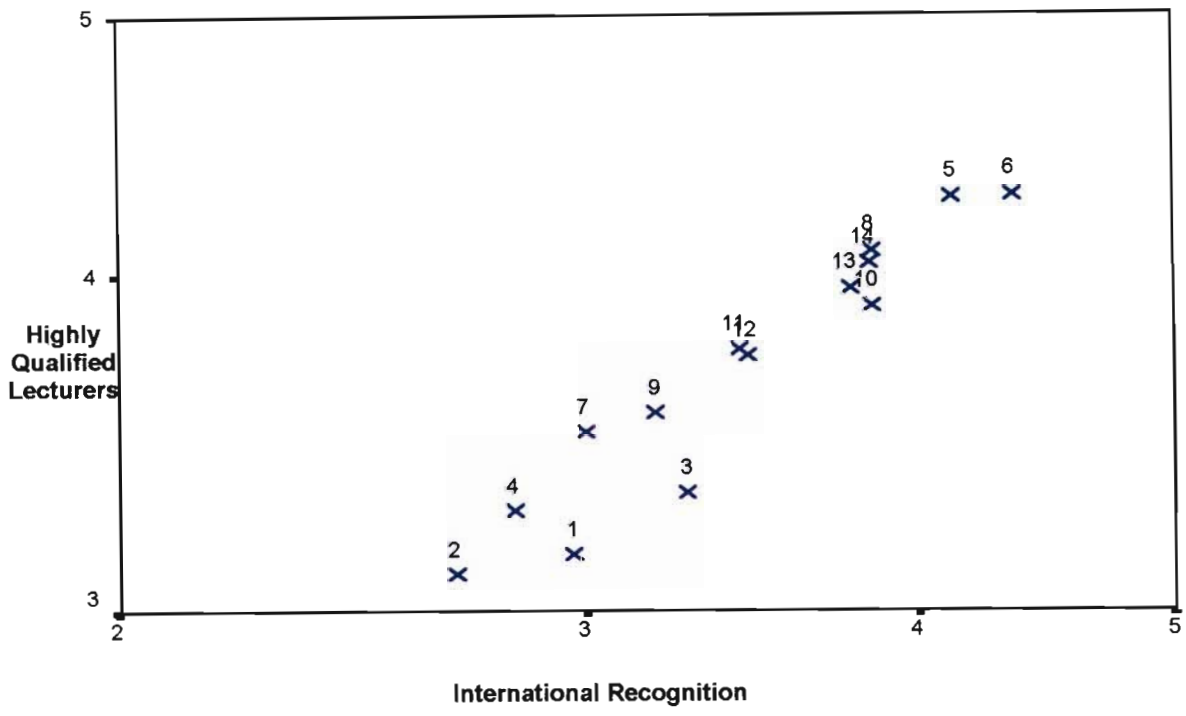
Clusters of institutions are not seen as being significantly different from one another (Kotler, Bowen & Makens – 1999:260). That is to say, competitive differentiating factors lose their differentiating advantage when a number of businesses/products are grouped together on a positioning map.

In Graph 22 above it can be clearly seen that UCT is the favoured local tertiary institution in both highly qualified lecturers and academic standards. A point that is worth highlighting is that UCT are seen on par with International universities. UNP and UND are perceived as similar to one another while Wits, Rhodes, and Stellenbosch are perceived as better than both UNP and UND.

5.3.4.2 Institutions Positioned According to Highly Qualified Lecturers and International Recognition

Key

1) Damelin
2) Technikon
3) UNISA
4) Varsity College
5) UCT
6) International
7) UDW
8) Wits
9) RAU
10) Rhodes
11) UNP
12) UND
13) Stellenbosch
14) Other



Graph 23 – Positioning Map (First Quadrant) Reflecting Institutions Rated According to Highly Qualified Lecturers and International Recognition

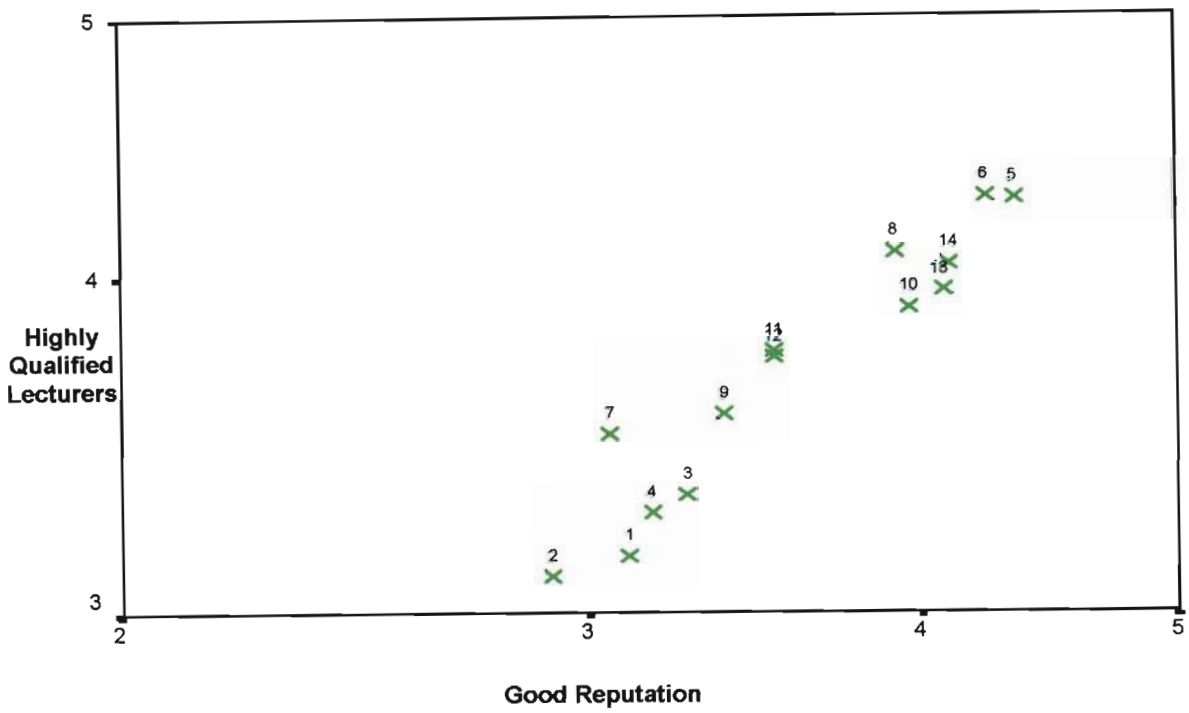
This map shows how UNP is rated as being "average" in this regard. Many students regarded international recognition as being an influential factor in deciding where to study, as well as a motivating factor to study at UNP (Garden, 2000). Many scholars also regarded international recognition as having great importance and hence this perception could present a problem to UNP.

As could be seen in Graph 23 above International universities and UCT lead the field with Wits, Rhodes, and Stellenbosch perceived as slightly worse while UNP and UND are perceived even worse and as similar to one another.

5.3.4.3 Institutions Positioned According to Highly Qualified Lecturers and Good Reputation

Key

1) Damelin
2) Technikon
3) UNISA
4) Varsity College
5) UCT
6) International
7) UDW
8) Wits
9) RAU
10) Rhodes
11) UNP
12) UND
13) Stellenbosch
14) Other



Graph 24 – Positioning Map (First Quadrant) Reflecting Institutions Rated According to Highly Qualified Lecturers and Reputation

Reputation is an important consideration for most potential students as confirmed by Goddard (2001). In that study it was found that potential customers were more likely to attend a more established, reputable institution before any newer establishment that has not built up a good reputation.

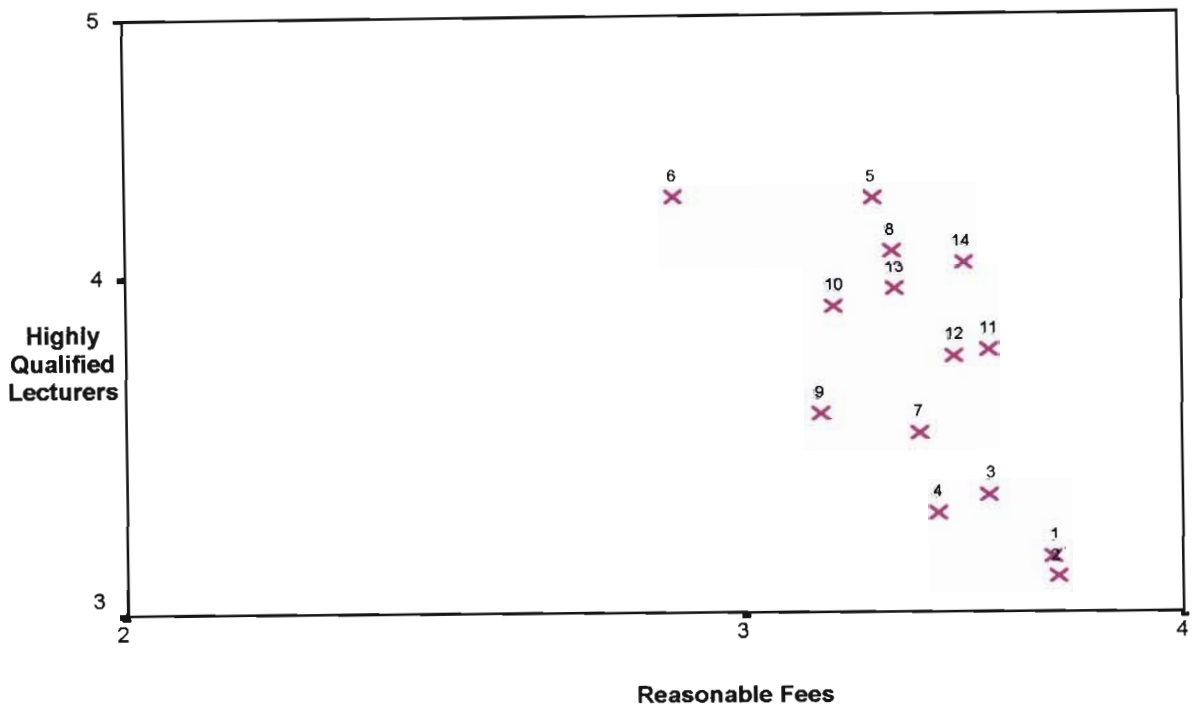
This perception (Graph 24) shows the superiority of UCT as market leaders in tertiary education. It must be reiterated here that these are *perceptions* ... perceptions that form the basis of actions. As Du Plessis, Rosseau & Blem (1990:67) pointed out: "Individuals act and react on the basis of their perceptions..." It goes without saying then that based on their perceptions most scholars would choose UCT. It is obvious that UNP is faced with intense

competition on each factor – even though scholars rated UNP as the second best tertiary institution.

5.3.4.4 Institutions Positioned According to Highly Qualified Lecturers and Reasonable Fees

Key

1) Damelin
2) Technikon
3) UNISA
4) Varsity College
5) UCT
6) International
7) UDW
8) Wits
9) RAU
10) Rhodes
11) UNP
12) UND
13) Stellenbosch
14) Other



Graph 25 – Positioning Map (First Quadrant) Reflecting Institutions Rated According to Highly Qualified Lecturers and Fees

Based on scholar's perceptions, UNP is seen as one of the "cheaper" universities, a good perception for UNP because it is seen as offering the student more 'value for money' considering what the student receives from the University in turn – a degree from a reputable, internationally recognised institution. It is interesting to also see that UNP are perceived as being more reasonable in terms of fees than UND as their fees structures are exactly the same.

Leading on from the discussion of UCT as the preferred choice of university, most scholars cannot afford to study in another town unless they have bursaries (Rajab, 2001). This leads on to further discussion – many potential students are more concerned with finding a bursary/scholarship that if awarded a bursary/scholarship they will study where they have been offered assistance. The question should then be asked – do scholars study where the price is right?

According to Barkers' study of students attending a university or college (Goddard, 2001), they found that a quarter of the respondents would pay more to attend a prestigious institution. Granted, nearly half of Barkers' respondents came from independent (private) schools. This reintroduces a familiar dimension to the entire "price debate": prices can be increased for the rendering of superior services. In other words, if the customer perceives that he/she is receiving a service of value, they will be less reluctant to pay more. This is in opposition to the concept of decreasing price to make sure that more people buy your product/service.

The reality of the situation in South Africa must be understood: a major group of scholars cannot afford to pay for tertiary education, relying on scholarships and bursaries to continue their education. The charging of higher prices for this service would be both irresponsible to the society (denying education to large groups of the population) and financially infeasible to the university. Rajab (2001) even suggested the creation of "free universities" to make education more affordable.

However, the university needs to run like a business and so crucial bottom line decisions cannot be made based on social responsibility alone. The major influencing factor is dependant on who the University is targeting. If they are targeting the majority of scholars that have financial constraints then the pricing structure will need to be revised, however if the University is targeting those potential students who can afford tuition costs the pricing structure will need to be reviewed in a different light. As Kotler puts it, a company must "focus on their most profitable customers, products and channels" (2003:28). One of the main reasons for this is that the price for a service, when all other factors are equal, is a major indicator of quality (Palmer, 2001:232).

From the map above (Graph 25) it can be seen that UCT, Rhodes, RAU, Wits and Stellenbosch are amongst the local institutions that are perceived as being relatively expensive. Perhaps the correlation between price and perceived quality rings true in this

situation? This does not necessarily mean that UNP should raise its fees but perhaps, as in the case of UCT, Rhodes, Wits etc., high fees contribute towards a perception of a better quality education being offered. This could be the approach followed if the bottom-line of the University is to be taken into account, where price is a strong indicator of perceived quality.

Below is a table of tuition fees for various mainstream degrees (first year fees for 2002) offered at some of the major tertiary institutions which forms the basis for a comparison between the various institutions. Information about tuition fees was readily available on the individual university websites, except for Damelin and Varsity College who offered their fees telephonically. The following institutions were looked at in terms of tuition fees:

Damelin (Pmb)
UNISA
Varsity College (Pmb)
University of Cape Town
University of the Witwatersrand
Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit
Rhodes University
University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg
University of Natal, Durban
University of Stellenbosch

Table 5.8 - Tuition Fees According to Institutions (2002)

DEGREE	INSTITUTIONS										
	Damelin**	Unisa** (+/-R540 PM, PS)	VC**	UCT	Wits	RAU (On average)	Rhodes	UNP	UND	Stell	UP
BA	Not available	R10 800 (10 Modules)	R16 700 (R11500 + R520 PM)	R12 600	R11 170	R9 200	R12 480	R11 140	R11 140	R10 500	R11 000
BSc	Not available	R10 800 (10 Modules)	Not available	R12 800	R12 590	R10 488	R8 800	R12 260	R12 260	R12 396	R14 150
BScAgric	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	R10 488	Not available	R12 250	R12 250	R12 396	R14 150
BEd	Not available	R10 800 (10 Modules)	Not available	Not available	Not available	R8 000	R13 500	R11 140	Not available	R10 100	Not available
BCom	Not available	R12 960 (12 Modules)	R18 580 (R12 340 + R520 PM)	R13 650	R12 750	R9 200	R13 660	R10 000-R13 100	R10 000-R13 100	R10 416	R14 000
BRek / BAcct	Not available	R12 960 (12 Modules)	Not available	Not available	Not available	R9 200	R13 660	R10 000-R13 100	R10 000-R13 100	R12 246	R12 350
BBusSc	Not available	Not available	Not available	R14 500	Not available	Not available	R13 660	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
BBusMgt & Mkting	R12 800	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available

(Source: Various Universities' Web Pages)

** Terms of Payment available PM = Per Module PS = Per Semester

The figures above highlight the vast difference between facts and perceptions. RAU was perceived to be one of the most expensive institutions, along with Rhodes and UCT. According to Table 5.8 this is not the case in most instances. RAU (although their fees were quoted on average, depending on the number of courses one took) was on the whole the most reasonably priced in terms of tuition fees.

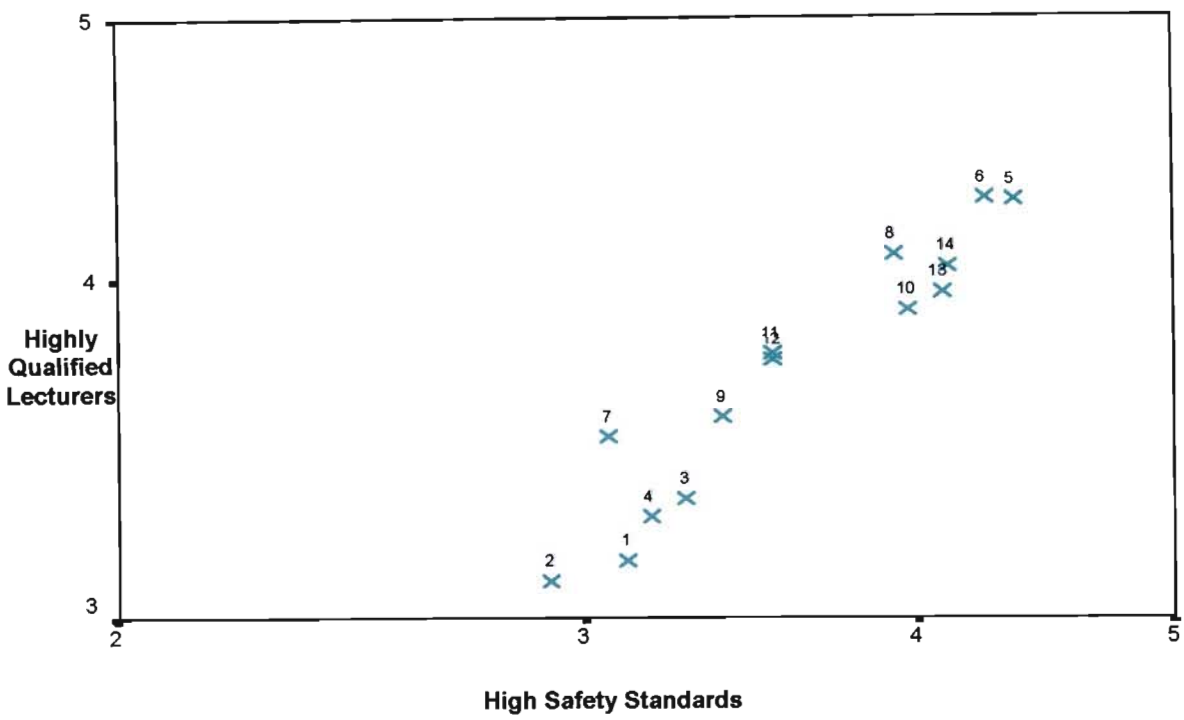
A vital perception is also exposed here when the tuition fees of the University of Natal (Pmb) are compared to its local competitors, particularly Varsity College (Pmb). It was established that Damelin (Pmb) did not offer many degrees and the degree that was offered was quite specialised in its own right, so attention was focused on Varsity College (VC). VC's tuition fees are approximately R5 000 more expensive than UNP's. The concerning factor here is not a monetary concern, Graph 25 reflects the similarity in perceptions between VC and UNP with regard to fees. Scholars perceive VC to be quite similarly priced to UNP. This has numerous marketing implications for the University as VC is such a real, local threat to the University.

On further investigation into VC related to their fees, course components etc. it was revealed that the entrance requirements for VC are significantly different to the University's. Their only requirement for their BCom is a matric exemption (Varsity College Handbook, 2002/2003), where the University requires that certain subjects, such as Mathematics, are completed at a certain level in matric. This again can be considered a real threat to the University and has several implications attached. These implications include the University having to offer different courses that do not have high requirements for entry to students, as well as promoting the new courses to the relevant target markets, and designing a pricing strategy for the courses. These implications however are restricted not merely to marketing (as these potential students are not hindered by price) but rather by issues associated to the University's product offering.

5.3.4.5 Institutions Positioned According to Highly Qualified Lecturers and High Safety Standards

Key

1) Damelin
2) Technikon
3) UNISA
4) Varsity College
5) UCT
6) International
7) UDW
8) Wits
9) RAU
10) Rhodes
11) UNP
12) UND
13) Stellenbosch
14) Other



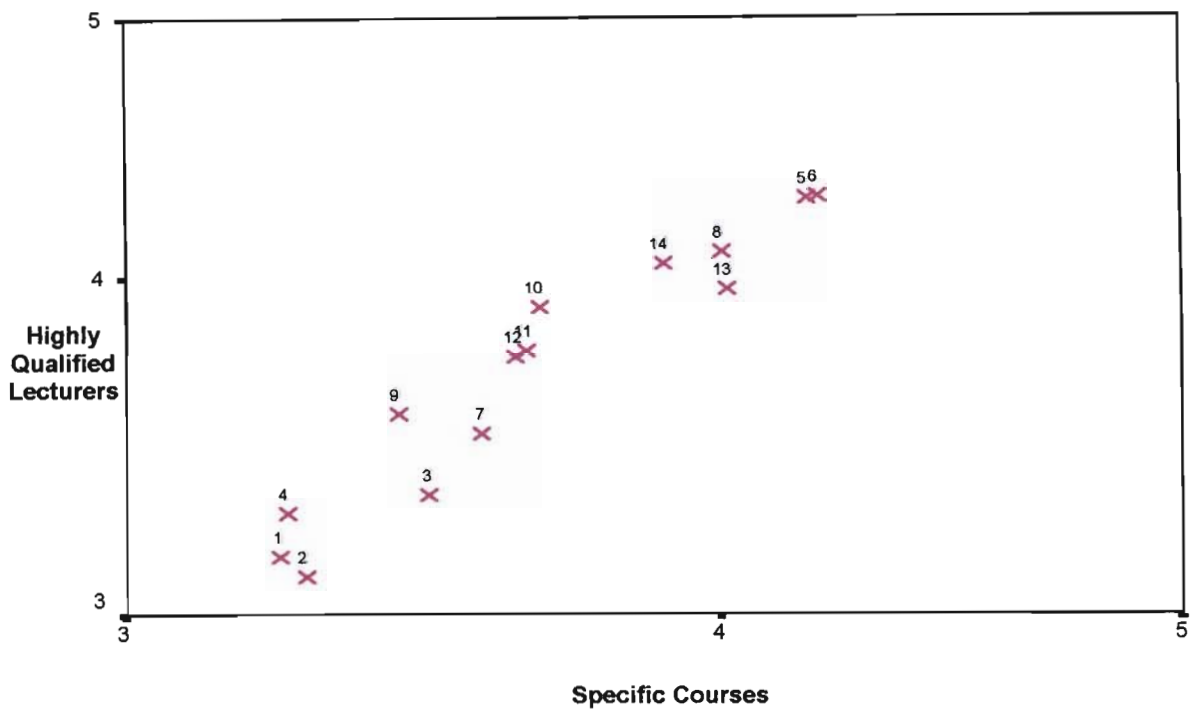
Graph 26 – Positioning Map (First Quadrant) Reflecting Institutions Rated According to Highly Qualified Lecturers and Safety

This map questioned the institutions' safety *standards*, not whether it is a safe or unsafe campus. However, the perception is that if the campus is unsafe their safety standards are not high. The perception of UNP's safety is one of doubt and uncertainty – the scholars clearly do not perceive UNP as a safe campus. However this is in total contrast with the fact of the matter: UNP has a 5-star NOSA rating, the highest in the country and indeed the world (Temple, 2002)! Presumably potential students have been exposed to bad reports and negative publicity of UNP, but they have not been exposed to the positive side of the University's safety in its 5-star NOSA rating.

5.3.4.6 Institutions Positioned According to Highly Qualified Lecturers and Specific Courses Offered

Key

1) Damelin
2) Technikon
3) UNISA
4) Varsity College
5) UCT
6) International
7) UDW
8) Wits
9) RAU
10) Rhodes
11) UNP
12) UND
13) Stellenbosch
14) Other



Graph 27 – Positioning Map (First Quadrant) Reflecting Institutions Rated According to Highly Qualified Lecturers and Specific Courses Offered

Garden (2000) found that the specific courses UNP offered were one of the strengths of UNP in the opinion of current students. Scholars appear less convinced of some of UNP's unique course offerings – demonstrated by some scholars indicating that they will not study at this University because they do not offer the course they want. According to the University's website though, (http://www.nu.ac.za) these courses are on offer. This misperception is indicative of the University's poor communication with regards to their product offerings.

This section also tested the reliability/consistency of one of the previous questions relating to the top tertiary institution according to scholar perceptions. In that question UCT, was found to be the top choice with UNP second, Wits third and Stellenbosch fourth.

A proposed reason for why UNP are rated below institutions like UCT, Rhodes, Wits etc. is found in the logic of Kaydo (2000:114). He said that a company faces two possibilities if it is not **actively differentiating**:

1. The first possibility is that the company will blend in with everyone else in that market and the customers will not see the company as being different.

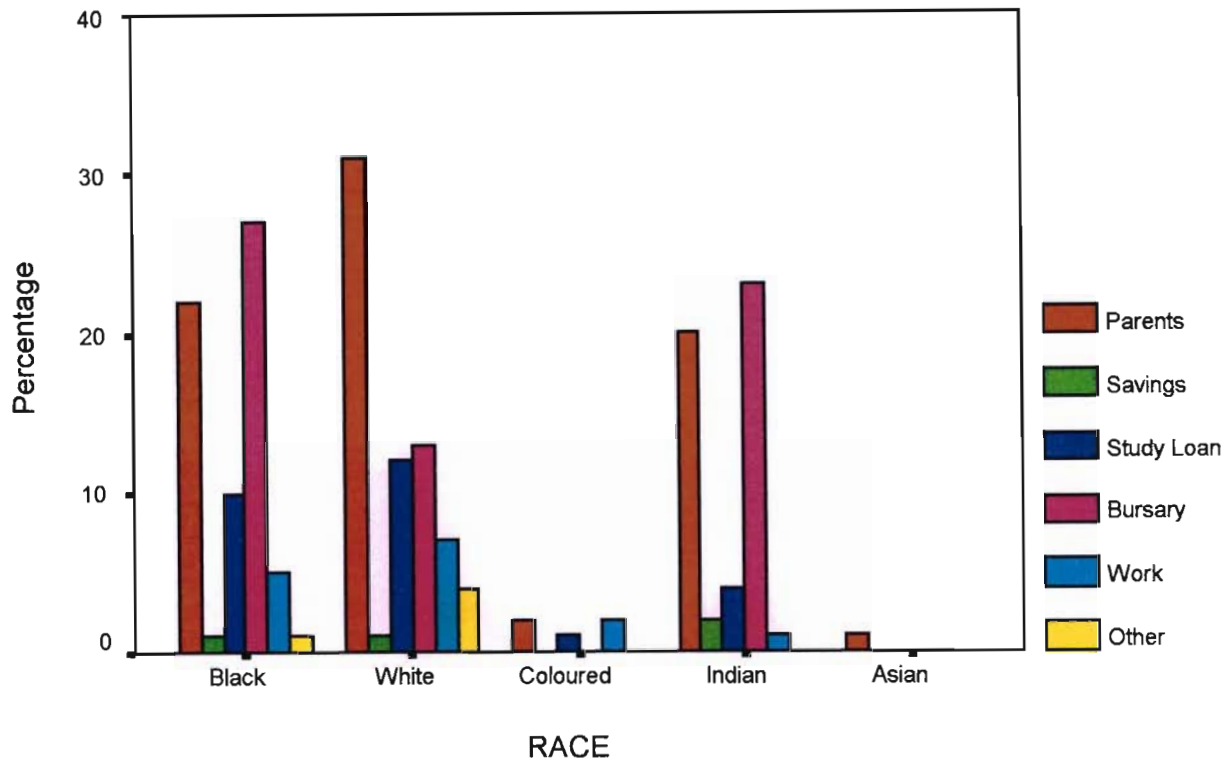
2. The second possibility is that if the company isn't positioning itself, the competitors are positioning the company. In other words UNP isn't positioned in the way that it wants to be positioned because the other institutions positioned UNP while UNP remained silent in using Internationally recognised degrees or their Specific courses as differentiating factors.

It is possible that for most of the factors investigated in this study (i.e. highly qualified lecturers, academic standards, safety standards and specific courses) the underlying issue facing UNP is that the University is not actively seeking to differentiate itself. Moreover, by not actively positioning UNP they have allowed unique and differentiating factors to blend in with other institutions for lack of active differentiation.

In the same way, by UNP not actively differentiating itself they have allowed UCT, Rhodes, Wits and other institutions to position it. In other words, by UNP not differentiating their unique service offerings they have allowed UCT to occupy the "window" in the customer's mind of specialised courses.

5.3.5 Financing Studies

The next question asked how scholars were anticipating to finance their studies. Overall, most respondents said that their Parents would finance the studies (76.8%) with Bursary (63.3%) being the second choice. White scholars said that their parents would finance their studies (31%) but of the Indian (23%) and Black (27.2%) scholars, the majority within those groups said that they would rely more on bursaries offered.



<u>Graph 28</u> – Methods of Financing Studies According to Race Group

(These figures do not add up to 100% as respondents were allowed to choose more than one option, bearing in mind that these options are not mutually exclusive.)

Leading on from the discussion on fees and fee structures earlier it can be seen that there are two broad categories of potential students that are targeted by any institution. On the one hand there are paying students, and on the other hand, there are those students that cannot afford fees and require assistance (either by way of bursaries or scholarships). The implications for the University are not profound. There will always be students who cannot afford tuition costs, it is then up to the University to formulate alternative strategies for those needing assistance.

The main issue arising from this topic is that of which group is being targeted. Therefore in focusing all the marketing mix elements on one specific group, which group does the University target? Regardless of which group the University focuses on, there will still need to be payment options for both groups.

5.3.6 Reasons for NOT Studying at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

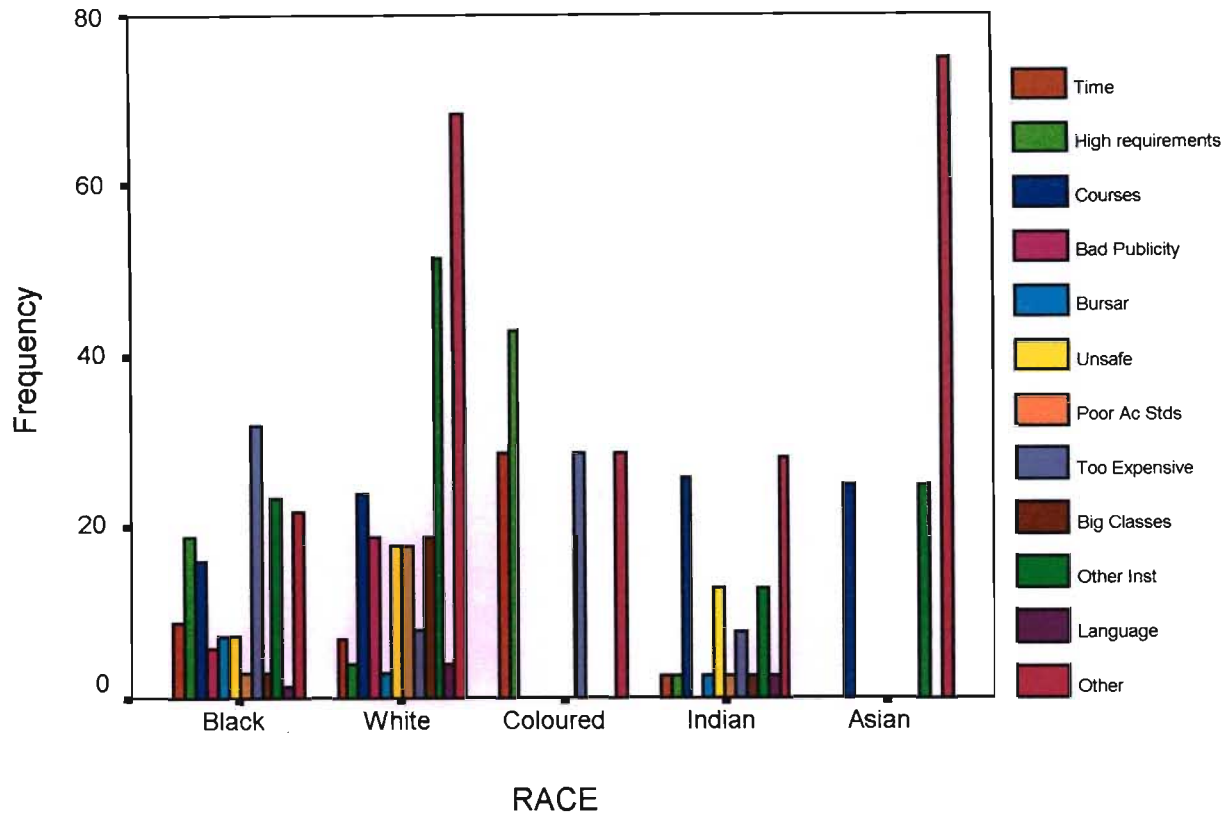
The scholars were asked to indicate whether the options given would be applicable to them (to not study at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg):

Table 5.9 – Reasons for NOT Studying at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

Options	Yes, it is a reason	No, it isn't a reason
Long time span to complete studies	9%	91%
Entrance requirements are too high	11.9%	88.1%
Courses wanted are not offered	**25.5%**	74.5%
I heard/read bad reports about the University	18.6%	81.4%
My bursar requires me to go to another university	7.6%	92.4%
The campus is unsafe	19.7%	80.3%
Poor academic standards	12.7%	87.1%
Fees are too expensive	15.4%	84.6%
Classes are too big	17.2%	82.8%
Other Universities offer more	**44.3%**	55.5%
The course I want isn't offered in my language	**4.6%**	95.3%
Other	**36.1%**	54.3%
*Get out of Pietermaritzburg (An 'Other' comment)	10.5%	

The main comment under "Other'" which made up 10.5% within the "Other" category, was the desire to leave Pietermaritzburg (scholars had done most of their schooling in Pietermaritzburg so they wanted to leave and see new places). The "Other" category is discussed below.

For marketers the mere presence of issues like "the campus is unsafe" and "I heard bad reports" is troubling as they are perceptions believed to be fact.



<u>Graph 29</u> – Reasons for NOT Studying at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, According to Race Group

- *Courses not offered at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg*

Medicine, computer programming, electrical engineering, travel and tourism, business science, vetenary science and philosophy were among those courses scholars wanted to study but which they believed weren't on offer by UNP. On closer inspection though it was discovered that the University offers courses like Philosophy and Computer programming (Innerweb, 2000) – differing from scholars' perceptions.

- *Other Universities Offer More*

44.3% of the respondents felt that other universities offered more than UNP. As the option of "UNP not offering the course they want" was already given it is assumed that the responses to this question were of a more general nature. In other words, the scholars were answering based on the sporting, social, and cultural aspects of UNP – i.e. various aspects of UNP's non-academic offerings were found to be lacking when compared to other universities.

It is also believed that a major draw card for UNP for scholars from Gauteng is the fact that it is far enough away from home but yet not too far (as opposed to UCT) from places like Gauteng. Logically one of the benefits other universities offer to Pietermaritzburg scholars is the fact that they can get away from PMB itself and their parents, but not too far. Garden (2000) found that the location of UNP was the fourth major influencing factor for students who were already studying here (63%). Looking at accommodation the majority of the first year's stayed at home (43.9%) or in a residence (42.3%). Accommodation for seniors was split into mainly digs (39.8%) and home (37%). From these figures it can be said that a reasonable percentage of the current students were not living in Pietermaritzburg – an indication of the strength the University has in its location.

From Garden's research (2000), it was also found that campus life (for the majority of senior students – 45.2%) had a strong influence on their decision to study at the University. The first year students did not think that this was a major factor however many of the senior students have been at the University long enough to learn about the joys of the social side of university life, whereas the first year students might not yet have been exposed to it.

- *Courses are not offered in their language*

The issue of English as the main teaching language was brought to the fore in an article written by Heugh (2000:27). The article dealt with many debates about the illiteracy level in South Africa and teaching all children in one language (English). Heugh quoted Snow (2000) as saying that "if two percent or more words are unknown, then comprehension breaks down". Clearly then the issue of language of instruction has a great impact on the scholars/students.

In addition to these figures Heugh cites a PANSALB (Pan South African Language Board) survey as stating that only 12 percent of people believe that English should be the main language of education in the country. This survey was a nationwide survey carried out by Markdata who was commissioned by PANSALB. The survey was entitled "A Sociolinguistic survey on: Language Use and Language Interaction in South Africa" and was carried out between November 1999 and March 2000 (Heugh 2000:32).

However, only 4.6% of this sample said that the courses at UNP weren't offered in their language. Although it might not be beneficial for the minority to be taught in English it does not seem as though it is an immediate area of concern.

- *Other*

The responses within the "Other" category are worth taking note of, not only due to the fact that 36.1% of the respondents chose this option but also because of the conclusions we can deduce (this will be covered in Chapter 6). The majority of respondents said that they didn't like Pietermaritzburg or that they want to get out of Pietermaritzburg or they wanted to get away from home (9.02%). Along the same lines some respondents indicated that UNP was too close to home (1.5%) and others said that it was too far from home (0.94%).

There were other opinions offered as well, such as:

> It has a negative/average reputation,
>
> Not highly recognised internationally,
>
> Too much drinking – "I want a degree," said one respondent. However some customers choose UNP for that exact reason ... a balanced social and academic life.

5.3.7 Scholar's Perceptions of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

How do the scholars see the University according to the factors above? What is the University doing well? This section, in essence, looks at the strengths and weaknesses of the University as seen by scholars in the Pietermaritzburg region. A few of the findings are dealt with here (those factors that carried some weight in the earlier questions), the full list of findings can be found in Appendix E. The question asked for an opinion of the University in various regards, asking for a response of *Agree, Sometimes, Not Really* and *Disagree* to the statement.

5.3.7.1 Computer Facilities

Computer facilities at the University (PMB) are of a high standard

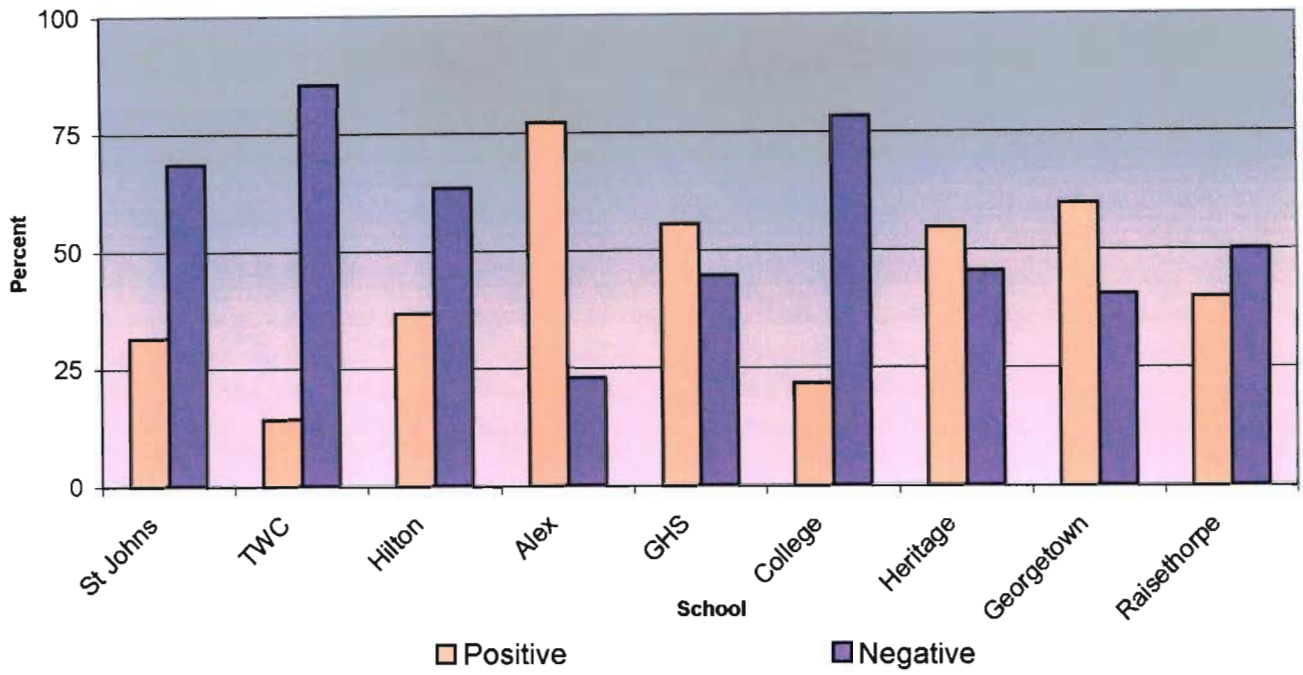
Computer facilities were rated as being of a high standard *Sometimes* by 39.5% of the sample, closely followed by 38.4% who *Agreed* with the statements. There was no correlation between the variables and demographic factors (Gender, Race, and Schools).

As computers were considered to be one of the important factors by some respondents, this perception highlights a strength of the University.

5.3.7.2 Campus Safety

I think the University (PMB) campus is safe at night

The various school's perceptions are reflected in Graph 30 below:



<u>Graph 30</u> – UNP Campus is Safe at Night – Perceptions According to School (combined percentages)

The graph above combines Agree and Sometimes to form *Positive*, and Not really and Disagree to form *Negative*. This perspective is used to give an overall picture of how UNP is perceived in this aspect. Generally, the majority (between schools, race and gender) felt that the campus wasn't really safe at night with 34.6% of the respondents in agreement.

Graph 34 reflects that the two Girls-only schools thought the University was not safe at night (35.5% from St Johns and 47.6% from TWC saying *Not Really*). It is understandable that the girls would be more concerned about safety but is also evident from the two boys-only schools that the same perception is evident as respondents from Hilton (43.2%) and College (44.9%) both said *Not Really* as well. In addition to that respondents from Raisethorpe were also not convinced of the safety and security at UNP as 40.6% said *Not Really*.

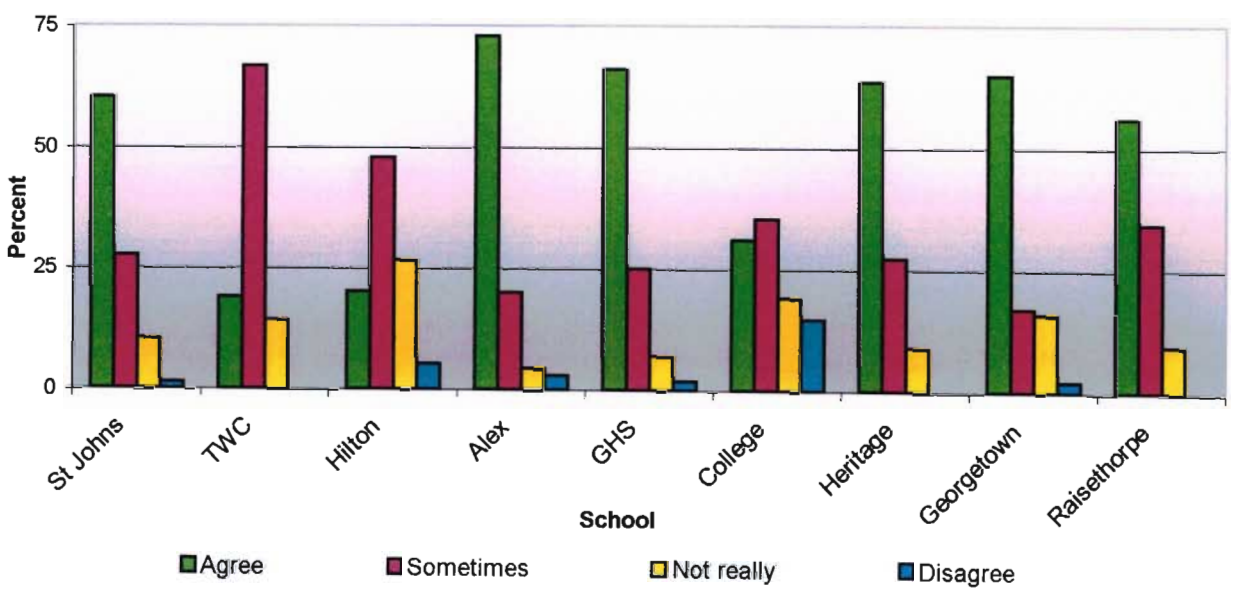
There were differences as to what the different race groups thought though: the majority Black and White scholars *Agreed* with the statement (34.4% and 42.1% respectively) – saying it is a safe campus at night. The Coloured and Indian scholars were less convinced and felt that the campus is safe at night only *Sometimes* (42.9% and 44.9% respectively).

A fact to consider is that of the level of security offered by the University's Risk Management Services. According to the Director of Risk Management Services, Mr Temple, the Pietermaritzburg campus has retained a 5 star NOSA (National Occupational Safety Association) rating after an audit was conducted on the campus during 2002 (Temple, 2002). He continues to say that this campus is the only campus in the world to have attained such a rating.

This factor can be considered as a potential strength given the situation we are faced with in South Africa – that of increasing crime rates. It is therefore important to emphasise the University's safety to potential customers. More importantly the University should communicate to the present customers the high safety standards in comparison to the other universities, which would seek to satisfy safety and security needs for the present students as well as dispel any misleading reports about the University's safety. Informing the present students (and staff) of high safety standards at the University will act as a means of internal marketing – promoting the University to its employees so that they in turn will sell the University to others. In other words the present customers (staff and students) will communicate good stories about the University to other potential students, thus acting as marketers of the University.

5.3.7.3 Library Facilities

The University of Natal (PMB) has good library facilities



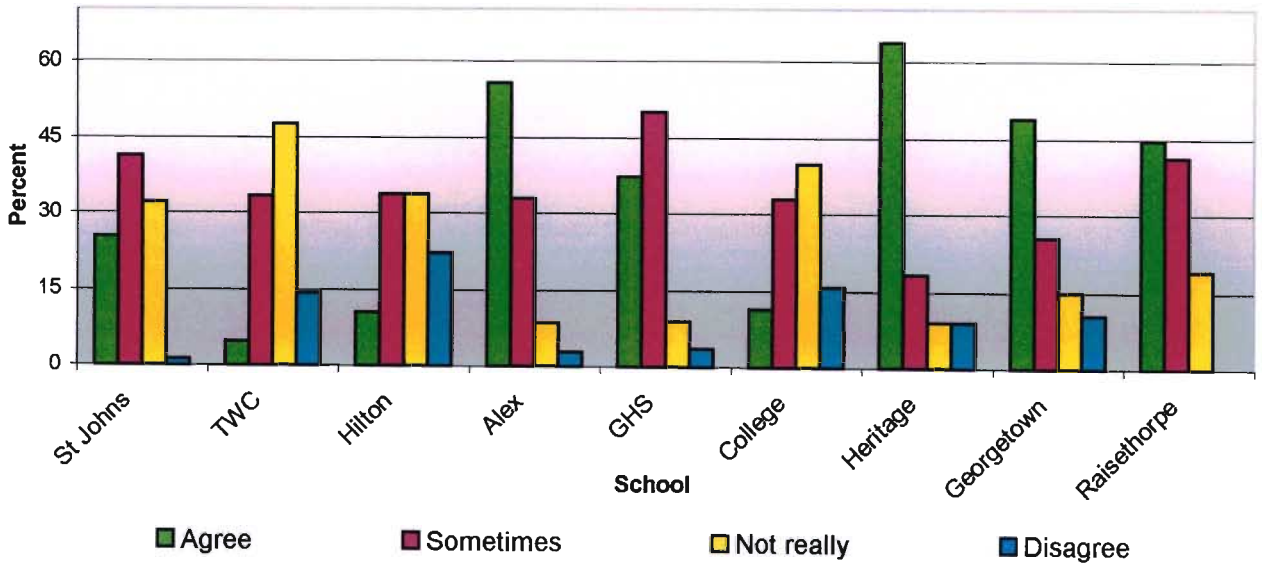
Graph 31 – The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg has Good Library Facilities Perceptions According to School

When asked whether the University has good library facilities 50.8% of the sample *Agreed* while 30.9% said *Sometimes*. There were only two schools to say that the library facilities are *Sometimes* good (TWC – 66.7% and Hilton – 47.9%).

This result has important implications because of the importance some respondents placed on library facilities (Library had a mean of 11.4 – it was the second most important factor to Black respondents after highly qualified lecturers). A possible reason for the importance placed on library facilities is the lack of these facilities at present in their schools. The Private schools and most of the White respondents did not find Library to be an important attribute at all (see Appendix B) as it is probably taken for granted that such facilities will be present. The fact that most of the schools perceived UNP to have good library facilities could be used as a differentiating factor when competing against smaller rivals within Pietermaritzburg that do not have library facilities. Even though other universities and technikons have access to our library facilities through interlibrary exchanges, the local direct competition does not have this facility on their own campuses. The University's library facilities can thus be considered a differentiating factor.

5.3.7.4 Excellent Academic Institution

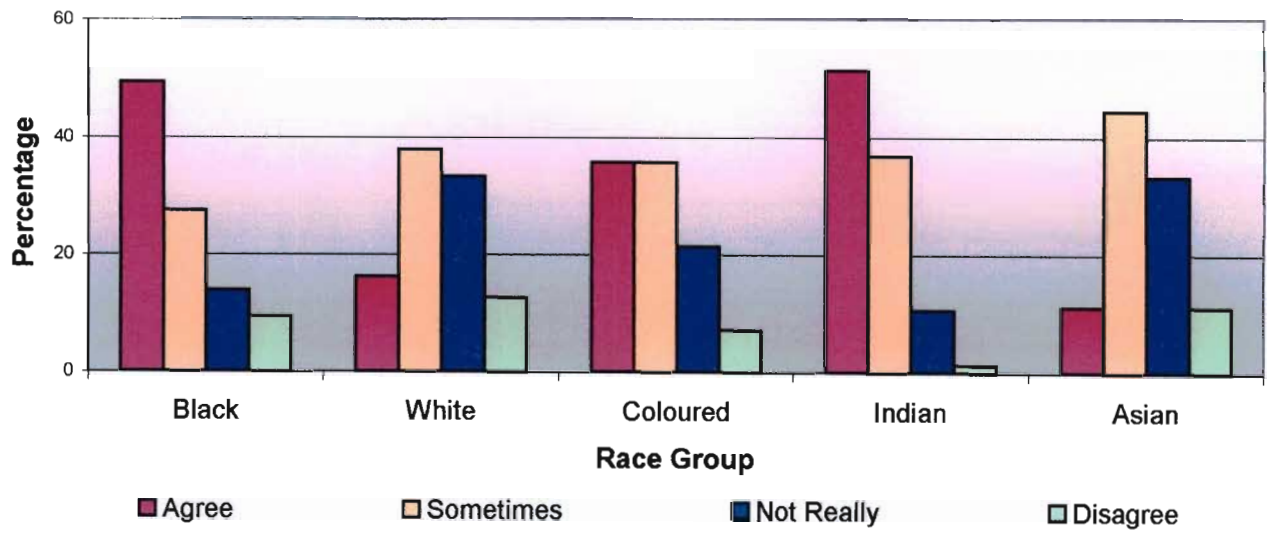
I see the University of Natal (PMB) as being an excellent academic institution



Graph 32 – The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus is an Excellent Academic Institution – Perceptions According to School

GHS (50%), College (40%) and Hilton College (33.7%) were doubtful as to the academic standards with their majorities answering *Not Really*. The other schools' responses were either *Sometimes* or *Agree*. Scholars at Raisethorpe said that academic standards were the Number 1 attribute for any tertiary education institution and the majority *Agreed* that UNP was an excellent academic institution (44.8%). This perception is worth protecting at Raisethorpe and simultaneously actively enforcing at the other schools.

The differences of some of the perceptions held by various schools should be concerning to the University, especially when considering who their target market is. Knowing that schools like TWC, GHS, College, Hilton and St Johns doubt whether the University is an excellent academic institution means that the marketing targeted at these schools will need to be re-evaluated to reflect the true essence of the University.



<u>Graph 33</u> – The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus is an Excellent Academic Institution – Perceptions According to Race Group

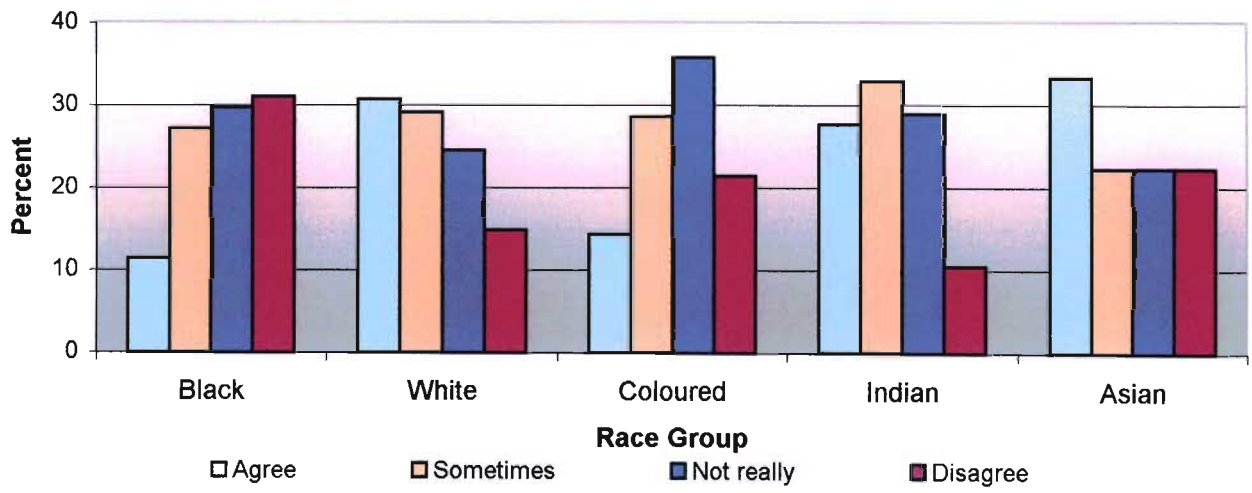
Overall, 34.8% of the sample answered *Sometimes* to this statement, 31.7% of the sample *Agreed* with the statement. There was no significant difference between genders but, as reflected in Graph 32 above, White respondents were less convinced of this statement, with 37.9% saying *Sometimes* whereas all the other race groups *Agreed* with the statement.

5.3.7.5 Social Life

The social life at University of Natal (PMB) – e.g. Rag race day, drinking clubs, Dynamics – is what University is about

Only 29% respondents said *Not Really* with 27.1% saying *Sometimes*. The majorities from both College (50.7%) and TWC (33.3) *Agreed* with the statement while on the other side of the spectrum Heritage (45.4%) and Georgetown (39.4%) *Disagreed* with the statement. The majority of the Black respondents (31%) *Disagreed* with the statement as well. Once again there was no significant difference between the genders.

It is evident that TWC has a poor perception of UNP as a whole, and even though they constitute a small percentage of the sample, their perceptions expose flaws in the armour of UNP. College also seems to have a poor perception of UNP and its academic standards when rating UNP's social life higher than its academic standards.



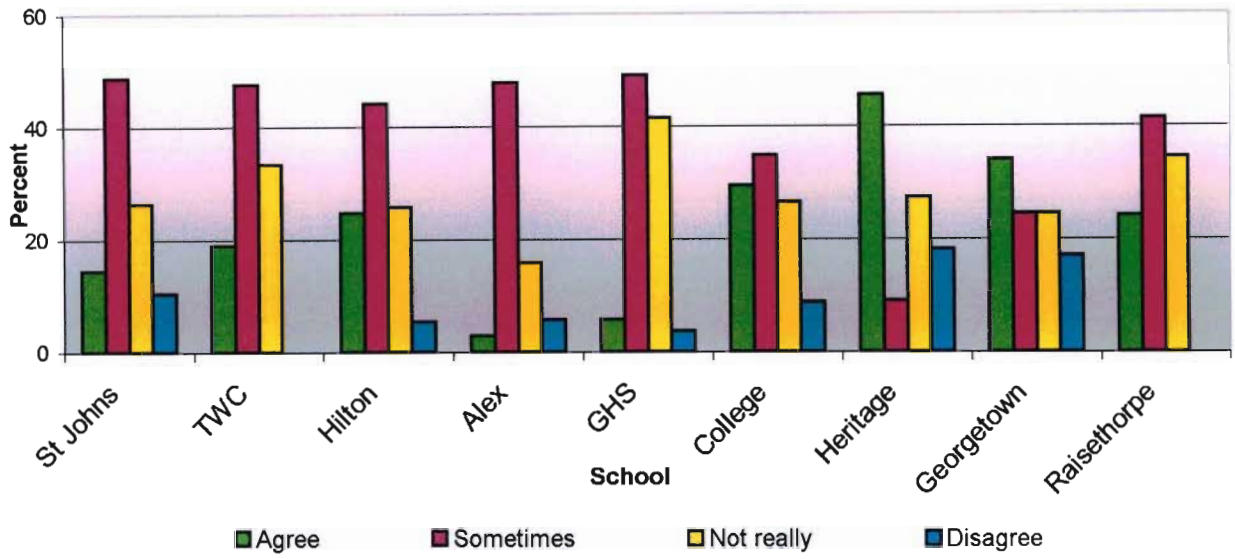
Graph 34 – The Social Life at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg is what University is About – Perceptions According to Race Group

Graph 34 shows how the majority Black respondents *Disagreed* with the statement (31%). The majority White (30.7%) and Asian (33.3%) respondents *Agreed* while most Coloured respondents said *Not Really* (35.7%), and Indian respondents said *Sometimes* (32.9%)

5.3.7.6 Facilitates Only Large Classes

The University of Natal (PMB) only facilitates large classes (i.e. mass education)

Most of the respondents answered that they feel the University *Sometimes* facilitates only large classes. This opinion was carried throughout the spectrum – covering gender, race and schools.

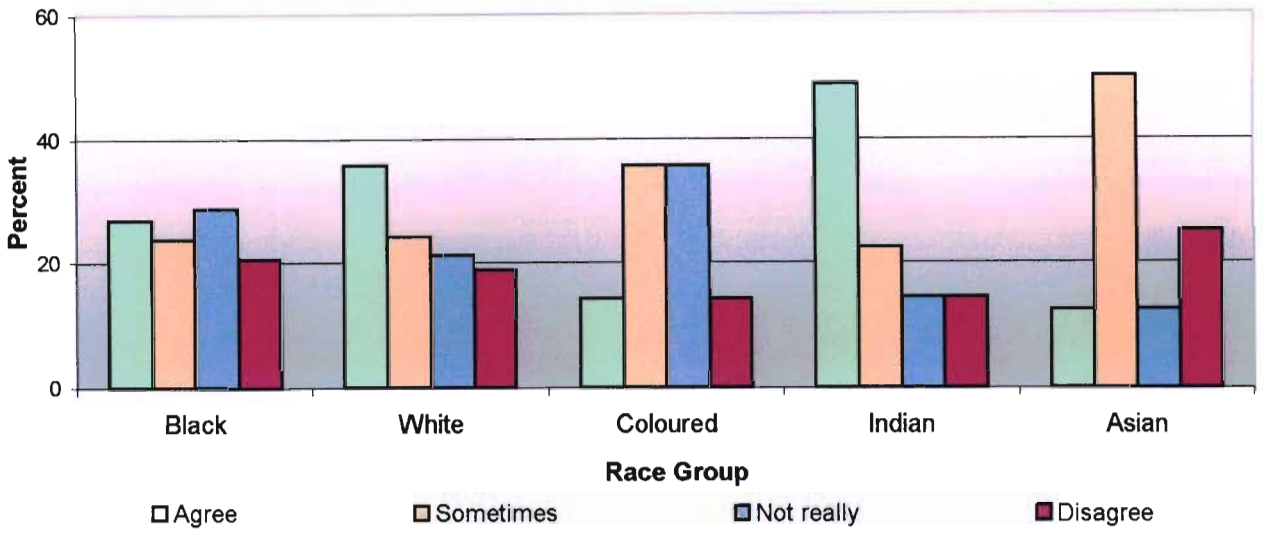


Graph 35 – The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg Facilitates Only Large Classes – Perceptions According to School

Graph 35 shows that most schools thought that UNP facilitates large classes *Sometimes* with St Johns (48.7%), TWC (47.6%), Hilton (44.1%), Alex (47.8%), GHS (49.1%), College (34.8%) and Raisethorpe (41.4%). This could show that the respondents are not too certain of the class sizes at UNP or that they are aware of the reality of large classes in first year classes while having smaller classes as the students progress through the years.

5.3.7.7 Better Education at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

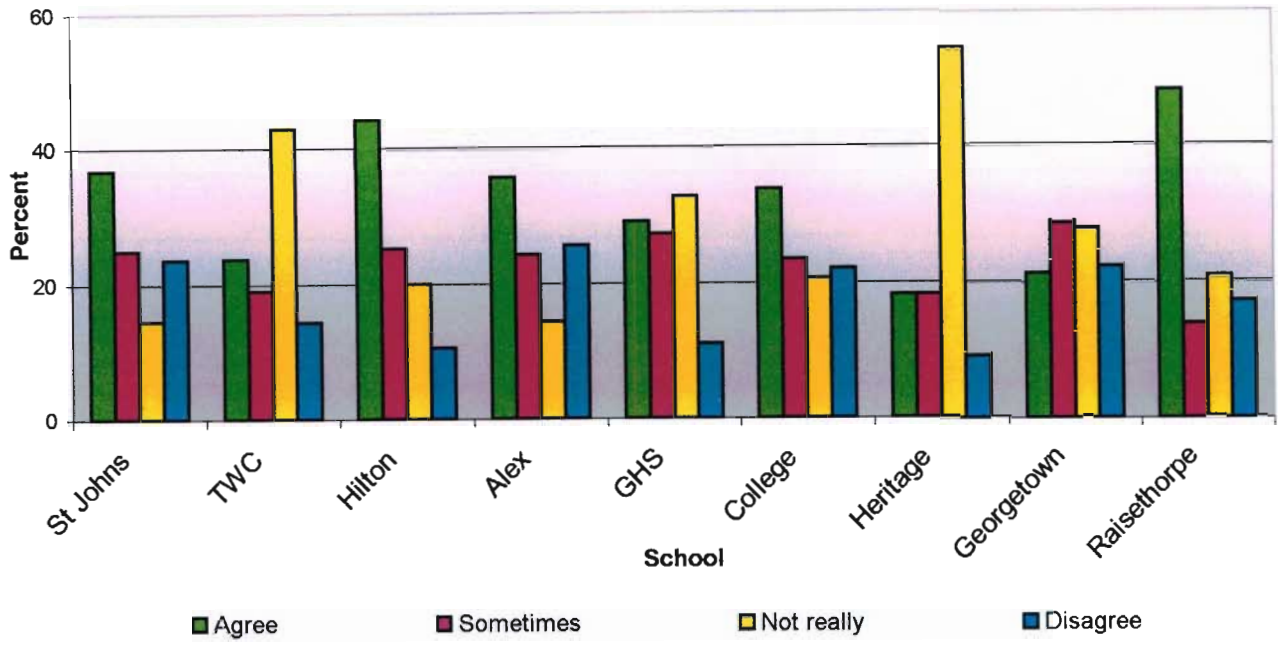
Students will get a better education at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, than students at Damelin, Varsity College/Technikon



Graph 36 – Better Education at The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg – Perceptions According to Race Group

Overall, 33.8% of the respondents across the categories said that they *Agreed* with this statement. Once again there was no real difference of opinion between the genders. The majority Indian and White respondents were convinced that this statement was true, with 48.7% and 35.8% respectively *Agreeing* with the statement. 28.8% of the Black respondents answered *Not Really*, as well as 35.7% of the Coloured respondents.

Indian respondents have shown that they are certain UNP offers a better education. Grouped with their high opinion of UNP's academic standards as well as UNP being an excellent academic institution, this points towards UNP's favourability among the Indian scholars, an advantageous strength.



<u>Graph 37</u> – Better Education at The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg – Perceptions According to School

As can be seen on Graph 37, Raisethorpe are convinced that studying at UNP will provide a better education for them (48.3% *Agreed* with the statement). Respondents from TWC (42.9%), GHS (32.7%) and Heritage (54.5%) were not sure of the importance to studying at UNP as opposed to other tertiary institutions. The perceptions held at Heritage should be of concern to the University even though they are a relatively small percentage of the overall sample size. A possible reason for this perception is that the scholars genuinely believe that the education they could get from a private institution (e.g. ICESA, Damelin) would be similar to the education from this University. When contrasted to Raisethorpe, UNP's top feeder school, the importance placed on a university education can be clearly seen and the theory of "perceptions are acted on" rings true.

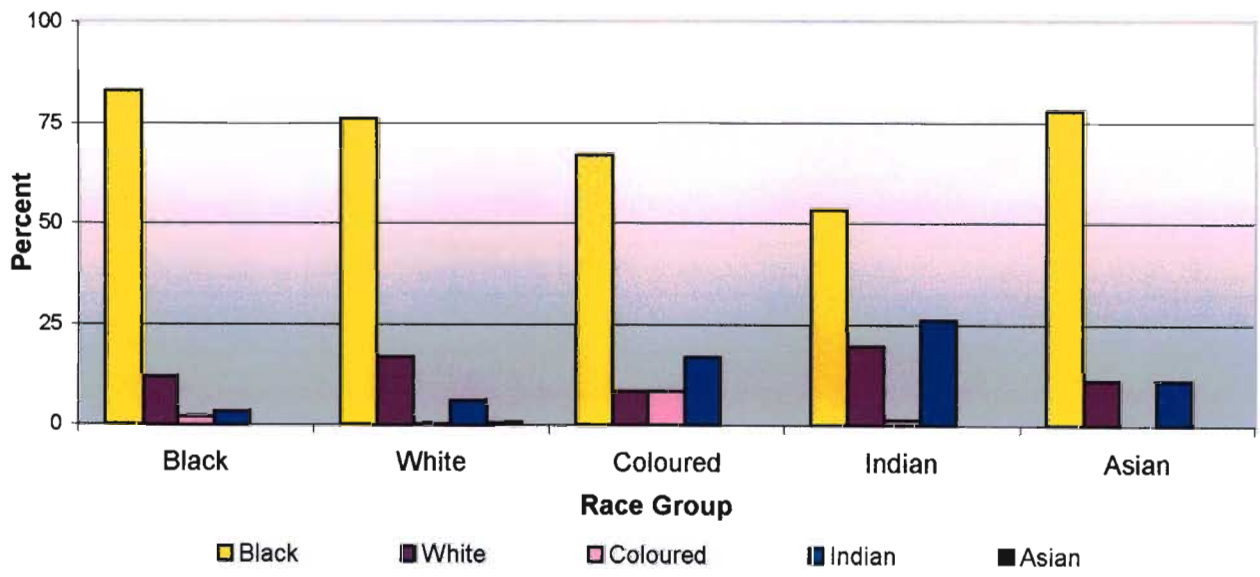
This opinion is in contrast to previous years when a university education meant that students were ensured of employment and no other tertiary education meant much. Now the tables have turned and potential students view educations from colleges, technikons, and universities on an equal footing.

If potential customers do not see the benefit a product/service offers them they will not buy it. Likewise, UNP is in a similar situation as not many scholars see UNP as being superior in their service offerings as opposed to other tertiary institutions.

5.3.7.8 Racial Majority on The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus

What racial group do you think represents the majority of students at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg?

An overwhelming 74.5% said that the majority of students at UNP are Black, with only 15.4% saying White and 8.6% saying Indian. This was the general consensus across the gender, racial, and school divides.



Graph 38 – Predominant Racial Group at The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg – Perceptions According to Race Group

In Graph 38 above the respondent's race group is listed on the y-axis while the perceived majority's race group is given in the legend. It is clear that scholars perceive UNP to constitute predominantly one race group.

The actual figures regarding UNP's demographics is noted below and is in line with how the University is perceived:

Black	White	Indian	Coloured
3946	1802	1272	164

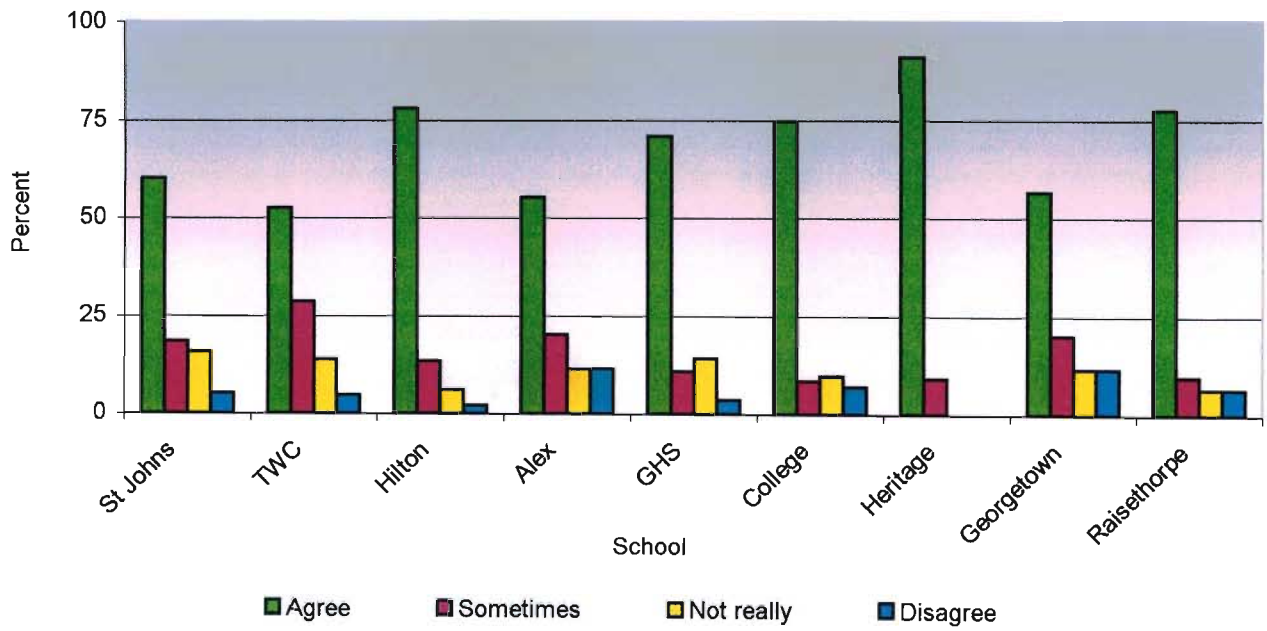
Source: Division of Management Information (2002)

This is not a problem to contend with unless potential students of other colours are intimidated by the idea of studying at an institution that caters for only one race group.

5.3.7.9 Better Equipped After Studying

I would be better equipped to work after studying than friends who won't study after school.

Once again the lion's share of the respondents *Agreed* with this statement (66.2%). Flowing on from that there was no difference once again between gender, race and school.



Graph 39 – Better Equipped After Studying – Perceptions According to School

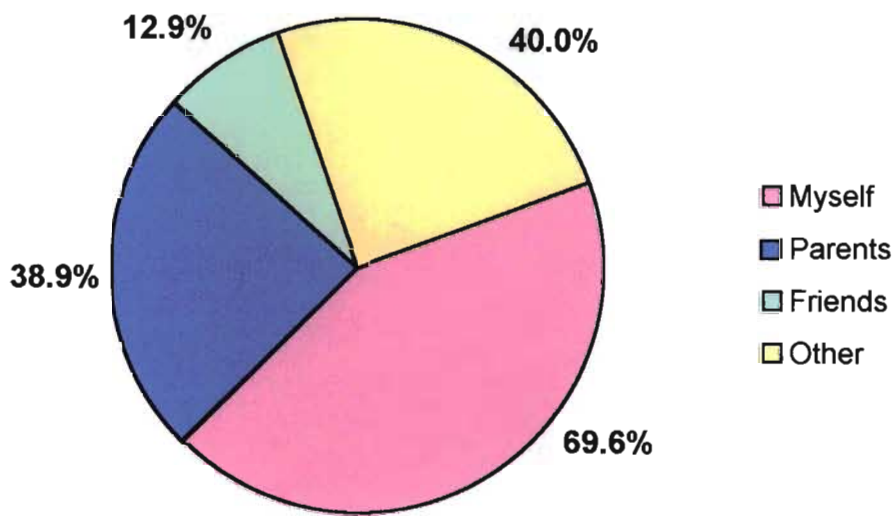
The importance of the potential customer knowing that there is a benefit to studying must be stressed because if they think they will not be better equipped after studying they will

act on that perception. As Graph 43 reflects though, the overwhelming majority (66.2%) see the benefit of studying. It is then a good aspect to continually reinforce in the minds of potential students.

5.3.7.10 The Decision Maker

When deciding about what you will do after school, who plays/played the biggest role in helping you decide what to do after school, for example which University to choose (getting information about various institutions, courses etc.)?

As was found in the students' sample (Garden, 2000) the scholars themselves played the biggest part during the decision process – 66.8%. This was followed by parents with 38.9%.



Graph 40 – Main Decision Makers

Even though parents do not constitute the largest contributors in the final decision, they do play a role to some scholars (38.9%), a role that is not to be discounted. Siblings that had attended this University, teachers and school counsellors made up the 'Other' category.

5.3.7.11 Advertising

How did you hear about the University of Natal, PMB campus?

Table 5.10 reflects the responses of the scholars. As can be seen *Living in Pietermaritzburg* is the main way these scholars had found out about the campus. The same question was asked in the study conducted with students at UNP in 2000 (Garden, 2000) and perhaps not surprisingly, the results didn't differ much. The students indicated that friends and school teachers/counsellors were the medium through which they heard about UNP, as can be seen in the table below.

Table 5.10 – Comparing Advertising Figures for Scholars

Medium	Percentages
Newspaper advertisements	17.5%
School visits	19.5%
Friends	24.7%
School teachers/Guidance teachers	20.9%
Parents	12.7%
I live in PMB	70.4%
Go to School in PMB (An 'Other' comment)	17.6%
Siblings and other relatives (An 'Other' comment)	16.4%
Previous/current students (An 'Other' comment)	5.1%
Other**	17.6%

**Other includes the Internet, Open Days, Radio, etc.

(These figures do not add up to 100% as respondents were allowed to choose more than one option, bearing in mind that these options are not mutually exclusive.)

From these results it is evident that the majority of the respondents heard about the University via an interactive medium (School visits, teachers, family, previous/current students). This shows the importance of using interactive tools to reach potential students

– for example Open days, Roadshows, School visits and so forth. It also highlights the important role of word-of-mouth when dealing with this target market.

To conclude, the University has been identified as just another university while UCT has been identified as the market leaders (and hence UNP's benchmark). Various perceptions regarding UNP have also been uncovered – some of which will need to be rectified (for example the perception that UNP does not have Internal Recognition). The following chapter looks at highlighting possible recommendations for the University with regards to their positioning.

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Rhodes University – http://www.ru.ac.za

University of Cape Town – http://www.uct.ac.za

University of Natal (Durban and Pietermaritzburg) – http://www.nu.ac.za

University of Pretoria – http://www.up.ac.za

University of South Africa – http://www.unisa.ac.za

University of Stellenbosch – http://www.sun.ac.za

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Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

The final stage of this report will look back at the objectives and compare them to the findings of the study. The findings of this study will also be compared in part to the findings of the study that looked at current students in a similar manner.

The objectives included determining the factors or attributes that influence scholars to choose one institution over another, evaluating the University's position in relation to other institutions with regard to these attributes, and discovering the perceptions scholars have towards the University.

6.1 Attributes Favoured by Scholars

The core benefit of a service answers the question "What is the customer really seeking?" – and it is the marketer's task to identify and understand this from the customer's perspective (Kotler & Fox, 1995:278). One of the main objectives of this research was to identify those attributes that are most important to potential students. The benefits of this research for marketers are numerous as marketers can develop specific strategies around these attributes.

This section highlights the top 5 attributes that the scholars indicated were the most important (Graph 17):

1. Highly Qualified Lecturers
2. Academic Standards
3. International Recognition
4. Reputation
5. Affordable Fees

6.1.1 Highly Qualified Lecturers

The most important attribute to the scholars was that of highly qualified lecturers. Potential students seek institutions that boast highly qualified lecturers, as highly qualified lecturers would be seen as an indicator of a quality university and therefore quality education.

A factor like highly qualified lecturing staff is potentially a major differentiating factor. When compared to other local tertiary educational institutions, the University offers a greater competitive edge through the highly qualified lecturers it employs. There are numerous experts in their fields working at the University, producing results that make a valuable contribution to their respective environments.

As mentioned, most of the University's local competition (like Varsity College and Damelin) cannot boast such qualified lecturers, research outputs or teaching standards. This is an ideal opportunity to distinguish the University from other tertiary institutions (especially local competition), however the University has failed to communicate this benefit to the market in an effective manner.

6.1.2 Academic Standards

The next important factor to the scholars was academic standards. Scholars want to know that after their education at the University they will possess a quality education from an institution that is recognised as a top academic institution. Which university does not offer a quality degree though? Therefore to use quality as a differentiating factor is futile (Bateson, 1995:122, and Ries, 1992:8) but at the same time poor quality – or the absence of high quality – will quickly dissatisfy customers.

The question was asked of both scholars and students as to whether they perceive UNP to be an excellent academic institution. The students responded more favourably than the scholars, which can be expected because they chose to study at UNP out of numerous other options – hence their perceptions concerning UNP on the whole are likely to be more favourable (Garden, 2000).

The majority of the students (62.8%) *Agreed* with the statement whereas most of the scholars were not totally convinced of this – 34.8% of the scholars (which was the largest percentage) said *Sometimes*. What is concerning is that approximately 32% of the scholars said either *Not Really* or *Disagreed* with the statement. This indicates that the perception of UNP's academic standards needs to be aggressively addressed.

This seems to indicate that the perception held about UNP is that its academic standards have dropped and are dropping. This is a crucial perception to rectify because of the importance students and potential students place on academic standards.

The use of testimonials from past students is one way of instilling confidence in the quality of the institution as well as the standards within the institution. It is recommended that the University make greater use of testimonials in their advertisements (as was used in the University's "Become Someone" cinema advertisements). This would be especially effective at this time of uncertainty with regard to the merger between the University of Durban-Westville and the University of Natal. The University of Natal must make every attempt to instil confidence in the institution and to overcome doubts in terms of a perceived standard drop.

Academic standards were a particularly important feature to the students from Raisethorpe (UNP's largest national feeder school) – it is hence recommended that UNP's marketing be specialised according to what is regarded as important to key subsegments within the market. This would mean tailoring the promotions mix to highlight the specific area of academic standards (which is regarded as an important benefit) to Raisethorpe. For example, emphasising the strong academic aspects of the University during school visits (e.g. the University's strong Accounting department) to Raisethorpe Secondary.

The University should also emphasise the fact that a university degree takes a person further than a qualification from a less reputable institution would. Hence they should reiterate the importance and need for a degree, perhaps even getting businesses (their future employers) to endorse the importance of a degree for the working environment. The academic standards upheld within a degree should be emphasised over the academic standard and quality of a diploma.

6.1.3 International Recognition

The University faces tough competition from other sectors within the 'potential student' market as more potential students choose to study at private institutions, enrol in international distance courses, immigrate / study abroad. Even though this is a fierce threat it could offer incredible opportunities and possibilities because the University offers students international recognition for their degrees. The University has links with over 260 international tertiary educational institutions. Scholars, however, are not aware that the degrees offered by the University carry International Recognition.

This is a major concern for the University. The fact that the University offers international recognition needs to be emphasised in the University's communication because the scholars do not know the benefits the University offers to its students.

It is vital that at this time of intense competition the University highlights the benefits it offers with international recognition – especially to potential White customers (See Graph 23) as well as private and Ex model-C schools. For example, international recognition is an important attribute to GHS and Hilton College (See Table 6.2). When visiting these schools it would mean emphasising the international recognition of the University, as well as the other benefits offered by the University. Thus, tailoring the communication of the University to specific subsegments within the scholar market.

Finally, it is essential that the University reinforce the international recognition it carries, as it is an important feature to potential customers.

6.1.4 Reputation

This was another important attribute to scholars. It is also another factor that many people regard as essential to any service – and one that is often overlooked. Facts such as the University being an institution that is well established (founded in 1910), that has been present in the market for many years, that produces a vast number of top graduates into industry and has many staff who are highly respected in their fields both locally and nationally need to be communicated to the customer to build a strong reputation.

Reputation is an important consideration for most potential students as confirmed by Goddard (2001). In that study it was found that potential customers were more likely to attend a more established, reputable institution before any newer establishment that has not built up a good reputation.

As the scholars in the sample attended school in Pietermaritzburg they've been exposed to both the strengths and weaknesses of UNP. This means that any publicity about the University would catch their attention because they themselves are geographically situated in Pietermaritzburg. The University should use this to their advantage. One of the main weaknesses of the University is their failure to communicate their strengths and positive elements to the community of Pietermaritzburg.

Even though Ries & Trout (2001:44) maintain that facts cannot beat perceptions it is still a possibility that by not communicating this strength (i.e. the reputation of the University) customers have created false or misinformed perceptions because of the lack of information. UNP needs to communicate their strong reputation in all its aspects to the target market – especially to target markets that regarded it as more important than other attributes (for e.g. to Alex and GHS).

Based on the findings discussed in Chapter 5, marketers at the University need to adopt a more aggressive stance and approach to correct misperceptions. The words of Ries (1992:5) ring true: "Marketing is a game of mental warfare". It is the belief of the researcher that the problem lies more with a lack of communication, mainly between the University and its potential customers. In that case the University could seek to communicate more effectively with its potential customers, highlighting the benefits they offer.

The concept of internal marketing is of vital importance in this instance: sell the University to its employees so that they in turn will sell the product better. The University is one of the largest employers in Pietermaritzburg and if the University could put into effect the advice of Pretorious to "Turn everyone at the University into a marketer" (2001) – there can be no better or bigger sales team! This will require constant communication between the staff at the University – spreading good gossip about its strengths and accomplishments. The University is a valuable contributor to the local and national economy, community and business. The real issue is learning how to get the best-kept secrets communicated to the target market by primarily using internal marketing.

The reputation of the University (a perceived strength according to students – Garden, 2000) must therefore be aggressively emphasised. If marketing is indeed a game of mental warfare, the University needs to assert its strengths in the minds of its customers. By not actively positioning yourself, the competition will do it for you (Kaydo, 2000:114).

6.1.5 Fees

As mentioned earlier – there are two broad categories of customers within the target market in terms of fees. On one hand there are scholars who have resources in the form of parents and the other hand there are scholars who will require bursaries and scholarships to further their studies. Neither group is mutually exclusive, which means that

in choosing to target either category there will always be a contingent of students from the other bracket.

Barkers' study (Goddard, 2001) showed that a quarter of the students attending university or college would pay more to attend a prestigious institution. Granted, nearly half of those respondents came from independent (private) schools. This reintroduces a familiar dimension to the entire "price" debate: increasing the amount charged for the rendering of superior services. This is in opposition to the concept of lowering prices to increase the volume of sales made.

The reality of the situation in South Africa is that a large group of scholars cannot afford to pay for tertiary education, and many students rely on scholarships and bursaries to continue their education. The charging of higher prices for this service would be irresponsible to the society (denying education to large groups of the population), thus the basis for a pricing strategy on social responsibility rather than on the bottom line. This does not mean that the University should seek to make a profit, but they still need to break-even and survive financially. It is recommended that the University seek to maintain a pricing strategy which ensures that, even though they have a social responsibility, they still break-even.

6.1.6 The Gap Between Reality and Perceptions

When scholars were asked to rank their perception of UNP's international recognition it was evident that there is still a gap between perceptions and reality. As was discussed previously, Palmer said that companies must ensure that the gap between customer expectations and the perceived service delivery is kept as small as possible (2001: 230 – 231). His suggestions can be related to UNP's specific situation:

i. Formulating a marketing mix that is as realistic as possible – claiming that the student is an individual and that they will be treated with a personal touch are examples of exaggerated claims. The reason for this is that, for an institution of this size, looking after individual customers is unrealistic and will lead to unrealistic expectations that will be unmet, which will ultimately lead to dissatisfied customers. The individual care is something the University should be working towards at all times, but to claim it (and design a marketing mix strategy as well as design a

positioning strategy based on that claim) would only do more damage than good. On the other hand though, emphasising a reputable institution / international recognition (which the University as a whole has) can easily be justified through testimonials from overseas institutions.

ii. Non-marketer dominated factors such as word-of-mouth information needs to be considered. 18.6% of the scholars in the study said that bad / negative reports were the reason why they would not study at UNP. The presence of these reports would then have the effect of decreasing expectations as well as fostering negative perceptions that would be acted on. In addition to this, word-of-mouth played a major part in the 'advertising' of the University (Table 5.10).

It is a well-known fact that dissatisfied customers tell a greater number of people about a bad service encounter than a good service encounter. In essence then the figure quoted above should be multiplied numerous times to account for the actual damage those negative reports have had on the University.

The University needs to be looking after the current customers and ensure that they are satisfying them. Pleasing the customers that are already at the University will ensure that positive word-of-mouth is spread about the campus. In previous research, students were asked whether they would recommend UNP to their friends – 95.2% replied positively (Garden, 2000). This shows that the University is looking after its customers, a strength that needs to be maintained and continued. The University can continue this by constantly researching the students' needs as well as whether the University is fulfilling those needs.

It is recommended that the University continues with the "Become Someone" cinema campaign so that scholars can correlate the fact that a university education is key to 'becoming someone' in the world.

The University could also creatively use interactive tools like Open Days to reach their target market. For example, taking various departments' Open Day displays to a centrally situated school and encourage other schools to visit the display. In addition to this the University could use present students to visit their old schools to promote the University. By choosing the right student, the University would be

drawing on the opinion leader status the student carries to convey a positive message about the University.

The University could also take advantage of some schools' bigger sporting events (e.g. when schools from Gauteng visit schools in Pietermaritzburg for a sporting weekend). These displays would not necessarily encourage potential students to sign up but it would create a much needed awareness and presence of the University.

iii. Marketers must recognise that the relationship between customer perceptions and expectations is dynamic. Marketers must keep their finger on the pulse of the market, especially in a market such as this where marketers need to be keenly aware of the latest trends, tastes and preferences. What scholars considered important a couple of years ago could be completely different to what scholars think today. Research in this area (as in this study) should be continued.

UNP must also realise that other local competitors' actions would increase the expectations their students have of them. The University does not operate in isolation and needs to be aware of things like the competition's product offering, promotions, pricing structure etc. More importantly the University should pre-empt strategies that the competition will employ so that they can be proactive instead of reactive.

Conclusion

Payne said that positioning is heavily dependent on the ability of the firm to differentiate itself from its competitors effectively (1993:96). In other words by offering superior value to its customers the University can differentiate itself effectively. It was also suggested that the positioning of a service includes establishing a value for the service in the mind of the customer (Payne, 1993:96). The positioning must be distinguishable by an attribute that is important to the customer. These attributes should be the important criteria that the customer will use in a purchase decision.

Knowledge of the attributes mentioned above gives the University a great advantage when positioning itself and designing marketing campaigns in the future. It is on these attributes that scholars (potential customers) place value. The literature has spoken of how

important it is for a business to find out what is important to the customer, and match those needs with the offerings of the business. The University can thus communicate effectively to the target market by highlighting its strengths when dealing with the important attributes listed by the scholars.

6.2 Attributes Favoured by Students

The following factors played a major role in student's decisions to study at a university as opposed to any other institution (Garden, 2000):

1. Courses offered by a university,
2. Universities offer international recognition,
3. A university is best; and
4. Courses are offered in English.

When looking at factors that influenced their decision to study at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg specifically (Garden, 2000):

1. Courses offered by the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg,
2. Courses are offered in English,
3. International recognition,
4. Location, and
5. The University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg is best.

There is a slight difference in the type of question asked to the different groups (i.e. students and scholars) in that the students had to identify why they chose where they chose to study, and the scholars had to say what was important in a tertiary educational institution if they chose to study. However the similarity remains in the question: what is important to customers and potential customers?

The factors mentioned above played a big part in the lives of students already at the University. It must be said that once a customer has chosen a product or service, they will rate that product or service highly. Therefore, giving an unbiased response about the University while studying there might have been a difficult task for some respondents.

The study involving the scholars who were at the crossroads, looking at all possible options would probably offer a more unbiased response. It is for this reason then that it is

the perceptions uncovered in this study that carry more weight, and reflect the true thoughts and perceptions of the target market.

6.2.1 Important Attributes: The Differences Between Students and Scholars

In discovering what scholars think of the University, and in comparing them to the findings of previous research with the students, reveals that there are major differences in opinions between what scholars felt are important attributes and what students felt were important attributes.

Given that the scholars were not given the option saying 'The University of Natal is the best', the only other common factor in their responses was international recognition. How can two groups – relatively similar in age and in similar positions (both groups wanting to engage themselves in a useful activity that will take them places) – rate attributes so differently?

Perhaps for the students they feel the need to justify their choice of institution, hence they gave all the strong points of the University, whereas the scholars have a totally unbiased view toward any institution. Another explanation is that both the scholars and students were on different levels of decision-making and hence viewed the information about UNP differently. For example, scholars would be looking at a broader picture of various institutions as they still move along the decision making process. The students on the other hand, after deciding where to study, found other attributes more important (specific courses offered in English). Even though both groups' perceptions are vital, it is the unbiased perceptions of the scholars that carry more weight.

6.3 Scholar's Perceptions of Institutions, Based on the Most Important Attributes

The above section looked at what scholars considered as important attributes when choosing an institution to study at. The question then that has just been answered is – what is the customer really seeking. However, it is the customers' perception of those attributes at each institution that is probably the most important research focus.

Generally the perceptions, which were identified in Chapter 5, should be a cause of great concern to the University.

The literature shows how important perceptions are for the behaviour of potential customers and hence a bleak picture is painted for the situation the University is in at the moment with many negative / misperceptions:

- "How the person acts is influenced by his or her own perception of the situation" – Kotler & Armstrong (2001:186).
- "Marketplace perceptions can be more important than reality and eventually shape reality" – Saunderson-Meyer (2001).
- "Don't fight perceptions with facts. Perceptions always win." – Ries & Trout (2001:44)

Based on the findings it can be seen that UCT is perceived as being the top university – the market leader and can therefore be considered as the benchmark. UNP has been perceived as "average", between institutions such as UCT, Rhodes, Stellenbosch and Wits on one side and Damelin, Varsity College, UNISA on the other side.

According to the literature the University is faced with the daunting task of changing perceptions or changing the customer's mind – something the experts say is a very costly and almost an impossible thing to do (Trout & Ries, 1989:20 and Ries & Trout, 2001:44). The realistic option is to attempt changing perceptions through effective communication.

The next key issue is differentiation. A key to successful differentiation is identifying what makes the business unique in the market (Kaydo, 2000:105). In the study conducted by Garden (2000) at the University, several key attributes were identified and labelled as strengths of UNP, tagged as the attributes that attract potential customers to UNP. These attributes included (as mentioned above): Location, Courses offered (including the fact that they are in English), the fact that the University of Natal is one of the best institutions, and International recognition. However scholars perceived the University poorly on these key attributes even though they rated UNP second behind UCT.

One possible explanation is that the University has positioned itself in a general manner by using the slogan "The Power to Succeed". In doing this scholars could perceive UNP highly compared to other institutions. However, when given specific areas to comment on the scholars find that the University does not perform too well on those specific attributes.

On the other hand, the other universities could have targeted specific areas in their positioning strategies and so, on specific attributes, perform better than UNP.

It is therefore recommended that *attribute positioning* be initiated by focusing on attributes and benefits like highly qualified lecturers, academic standards, etc.

6.4 Perceptions held about UNP

Generally the University has been *positively perceived* as a University with up-to-date facilities (in terms of the laboratory, computers and the library). The other positive perceptions were with regards to the University's

- Social life,
- Multi-racial mix,
- Sports facilities,
- The approachability of lecturers,
- Upgrade in security (that it wasn't a waste of money), and
- Excellence as an academic institution.

These represent the strengths of the University and must be stressed and communicated to potential customers as well as present students who will in turn act as marketers themselves when with friends. In terms of the perceptions regarding facilities that the University offer, they should target specific schools (like Georgetown) who felt that this was one of the top attributes required at an educational institution.

Another positive perception is that most scholars thought that by studying at the University they would get a better education than those studying at Damelin/Varsity College/Technikon. This translates into a perceived superiority in the education provided at the University which the other institutions lack – this perception must be protected and communicated to the necessary markets.

The difficulty for marketers in this respect is that the University cannot blatantly inform the target market of the University's superiority in certain aspects when compared to specific other local direct competitors i.e. in the form of comparative advertising, which is illegal in South Africa. Perhaps the University needs to make a concerted effort of accentuating unique (i.e. unique to the University) features that are important to scholars. For example,

most respondents had positive perceptions regarding the University as an excellent academic institution. The University should then stress that factor in all communications to specific customers (both external and internal). Again the facilities the University can offer are a great strength when considering that many of the local competition cannot offer those facilities.

Scholars also thought that they would be better equipped than other students not studying after school – this represents a realisation scholars have of the benefit of studying after school and, consequently, the importance of tertiary educational institutions. Again this is an important perception to protect and continue projecting.

The *negative perceptions* towards the University were related to:

- Safety on campus at night,
- The idea that the social life at UNP is what attending university is all about,
- The lack of personal attention, and
- Students being treated as nothing more than a student number to staff.

The perception of UNP's safety is one of doubt and uncertainty – the scholars clearly do not perceive UNP as a safe campus. However this is in total contrast with the that UNP has a 5-star NOSA rating, the highest in the country and indeed the world (Temple, 2002)! Presumably potential students have been exposed to bad reports and negative publicity of UNP, but they have not been exposed to the positive side of UNP's safety in its 5-star NOSA rating. It is recommended that the University publicise its high safety record and standards to the public, and perhaps even more importantly to the present students.

In connection with the perceptions about the social life at the University it is important to highlight the balanced approach to studying that the University offers. The University has high academic standards, up to date sporting facilities, and they offer a healthy social life. Most students choose to study here for those reasons. It can be recommended that the University draws attention to these benefits of studying at the University (i.e. a balanced approach to studying) which, in its own way, is unique and different when compared to the quality of education that is being provided by competing tertiary educational institutions.

With regards to the lack of personal attention and students being treated as just student numbers it is important to reiterate the importance of internal marketing. Staff members at

the University must understand their role in making this University the market leader. They also need to realise that as staff they create many perceptions because they are the face of the organisation and they provide a visual for the service the University provides. The University need to train their staff to see students, not as 'only the customer', but rather as 'the only customer'.

Potential students need to know that they are going to be getting a quality education. Perhaps leading on from that is their concern of large classes at the University as well as the perceived lack of individualised, personal attention. It is also worth noting that when scholars and students' perceptions are compared with regards to the issue of personal attention shown in class, the scholars perceive there to be less personal attention as opposed to the students. 37.3% of the scholars (the highest percentage) said that students at the University *Sometimes* do not get any personal attention while the majority of the current students *Disagreed* with the statement (33.6%) – Garden (2000).

Scholars perceive the University to have large classes and give no personal attention to their students. This is to be expected, as they have never been to lectures. It is based on this perception that local competitors have launched their marketing campaigns – they use their small classes and personalised student attention as their unique selling point.

The University needs to communicate the fact that there is personalised attention available to students. It must also be communicated that the University does not only facilitate big classes – especially at senior levels where classes are relatively smaller than first year courses. Even though there are bigger classes, lecturers use tutorials to facilitate learning through small group discussions.

Perhaps the best way to do this is to make an "Open Day" while lectures are in progress so that parents, potential students can see what the University has to offer them as well as to see daily student life first hand.

The possibility also exists that potential customers have been exposed to the University's advertising regarding the major benefits but UNP have failed to differentiate itself from the competition in the customers' minds (in terms of reputation, highly qualified lecturers, etc.) The competition therefore has positioned UNP through their positioning strategies (through UNP's failure to position itself), and they are seen as equal with others. If this has

happened then the option exists for the University to reposition itself, either in the context of target market, pricing strategies, or product offering.

The discussions here are established on the theory which says that customers act on their perceptions (Kotler & Armstrong, 2001:186 and Du Plessis, Rosseau & Blem, 1990:67). Moreover the origin of this research is embedded in this principle: the perceptions of potential customers determine their future behaviour with regards to those perceptions.

To confirm this theory here is a case in point: Raisethorpe have had a consistently better perception of UNP than most of the other schools throughout the survey. Considering the fact that Raisethorpe is the top national feeder school for the University, it would go to support the notion that positive perceptions determine behaviour. In addition to this, looking at TWC's negative perceptions towards the University, it similarly supports the notion that perceptions lead to behaviour, as TWC scholars generally do not continue their tertiary education at this University.

Thus the perceptions discussed in Chapter 5 cannot be ignored. Perceptions reflecting the degree of uncertainty that the University will offer a better education as opposed to other tertiary institutions and the idea that UCT, Wits, Stellenbosch and Rhodes are perceived to be better than UNP in almost every area are perceptions that need to be corrected.

6.5 The University's Positioning

Positioning is founded on perceptions of customers. Perceptions have been covered in detail in the above sections, but how does it all connect to the positioning of the University of Natal? This next section attempts to relate the University's position to the perceptions that were identified.

Positioning has been described as finding a niche in the customers' mind that no other product or service occupies (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994:186). Based on the findings reflected in the positioning maps, it can be seen that the University does not occupy a distinct position in the market. The mere fact that UNP was rated between fifth and eighth (in a cluster) on the most important attributes reflects the poor positioning in the minds of the customers. It is a distinctive nature of positioning that must be sought after. As

Zeithaml & Bitner (1996: 286 – 287) succinctly said, a successful service positioning is one that is distinct from all other competitors.

One thing is known: service organisations have more work to do in positioning a service because of its intangibility (Palmer & Cole, 1995:333). One of the ways to overcome the problem of intangibility is to create an image that differentiates it from other competitors. This is something the University has done well as proven in the research conducted on students (Garden, 2000) indicating that there were in fact many advantages / benefits from studying at UNP. Something that stood out was UNP's reputation, and UNP being seen as a good academic institution.

The issue then is more one of communicating this image to the customers as emphasised by Van der Walt *et al* (1996:133). Assael (1985:716) also spoke of communicating intangible benefits to the customer, saying that services must be positioned through symbols, imagery, and association. One of the most important associations is probably that between businesses and the University – publicising employment opportunities available to students who study at the University. Another important concern for students is safety (not just in South Africa, but internationally as well – Clayton, 1999:13), UNP should communicate their high safety standards to the University's various constituencies.

Positioning a service goes beyond image making though (Kotler & Fox, 1995:11). It must be remembered that positioning is an attempt to distinguish itself from competitors based on real dimensions that add value to the students (Payne, 1993:96). Positioning would then help students in matching themselves to the university that can best satisfy their needs.

Adding value to the students' studies and satisfying their needs is the heart of an organisation that has incorporated the marketing concept, in addition to that the organisation will treat the student as someone who is much more than just a target (Irons, 1994:91). Armstrong *et al* (1996:15) said that this type of organisation achieves organisational goals based on "determining the needs and wants of target market and delivering the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than competitors do".
As Kotler & Armstrong (2001:19) said, the essence of the marketing concept is the following factors, and it is this essence that the University should shadow in pursuing organisational excellence.

- Customer orientation and customer satisfaction (a student's needs being satisfied – social, cultural, emotional educational etc. as well as equip them for future employment)
- Systems approach (having the entire University working together to satisfy the students)
- Profit orientation (profits through customer satisfaction), and
- Social responsibility (in other words incorporating the needs of all the University's constituencies like the business community, local community, faculty / staff, suppliers – Kotler & Fox, 1995:20.)

The University has to follow the market orientation in order to survive. In doing this UNP must avoid marketing myopia at all costs, that is, not concentrating on existing programmes on offer but rather researching the customers' needs and wants (Kotler & Fox 1995:9).

6.5.1 Steps in Positioning

So far, this study has looked at how UNP is positioned based on the perceptions of scholars and students. The following section seeks to guide UNP in developing an effective positioning strategy, using guidelines suggested by Payne (1993:108 – 118).

6.5.1.1 Determine the Levels of Positioning

The decision of whether to position the service industry as a whole (i.e. *industry positioning*), the company as a whole (*organisational positioning*), a range or family of related services / products offered by the organisation (*product sector positioning*), or the positioning of specific products (*individual product or service positioning*) – (Adcock, 2000:18) must be made.

In terms of organisational positioning the University needs to look at positioning itself based on the five most important attributes identified in this research. In other words they should position themselves based on the benefit and value added through highly qualified lecturers, high academic standards, international recognition, reputation and fees relative to the competition.

The University should then also adopt 'individual product positioning' which would position certain aspects of UNP to specific target markets. For example, the University could highlight the benefits of specialised (and unique) courses such as Dietetics, Wildlife

Science, Water MBA, and Supply Chain Management to specific potential customers. These centres of excellence could be advertised in mediums that reach that specific target market.

The University could also emphasise certain attributes (which they found to be important) in targeted communications with that target market. For example, if the University were to run an advertising campaign in a predominantly Indian area they could emphasise academic standards (Table 6.1) over and above the other attributes offered by the University, highlighting facts like high pass rates for UNP's Accounting students at their Board exams. The important attributes that have been highlighted in Table 6.2 could also be used in tailored marketing campaigns aimed at specific schools. To illustrate, international recognition could be emphasised at schools like TWC and College.

6.5.1.2 Identification of Key Attributes of Importance to Selected Segments

Paraphrasing Theodore Levitt, Kotler & Fox (1995:281) said that competition isn't between what educational institutions offer in their classrooms, it is rather between what they add to their standard offerings in the form of services, financing, and other things that students value. The question to answer then is: "What do students value?"

Through this study, the answer to that question was identified – a summary of which appears in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 below.

Table 6.1 – Summary of Top 5 Attributes to Scholars Across the Race Groups

	Overall	Black	White	Coloured	Indian	Asian
1.	Highly qualified lecturers	Highly qualified lecturers	Joint: Highly qualified lecturers Academic standards	Highly qualified lecturers	Academic standards	Academic standards
2.	Academic standards	Joint: Academic standards Library		Reputation	Highly qualified lecturers	Highly qualified lecturers
3.	International recognition		International recognition	Library	International recognition	Computer facilities
4.	Reputation	Affordable fees	Reputation	Affordable fees	Reputation	International recognition
5.	Affordable fees	Computer facilities	Affordable fees	Joint: International recognition Academic standards	Joint: Library Affordable fees	Reputation

Table 6.2 – Summary of Top 5 Attributes According to Scholars Across Schools

	Overall	St Johns	TWC	Hilton	Alex	GHS	College	Heritage	Georgetown	Raisethorpe
1.	Highly qualified lecturers	Highly qualified lecturers	Highly qualified lecturers	Highly qualified lecturers	Highly qualified lecturers	Highly qualified lecturers	Highly qualified lecturers	Highly qualified lecturers	Highly qualified lecturers	Academic standards
2.	Academic standards	Academic standards	International recognition	Academic standards	Academic standards	Academic standards	International recognition	Computer facilities	Library	Highly qualified lecturers
3.	International recognition	International recognition	Reputation	International recognition	International recognition	International recognition	Academic standards	International recognition	Academic standards	International recognition
4.	Reputation	Specific courses	Academic standards	Reputation	Library	Affordable fees	Reputation	Library	Computer facilities	Reputation
5.	Affordable fees	Affordable fees	Entertainment	Specific courses	Joint: Reputation Computer facilities	Reputation	Affordable fees	Affordable fees	Affordable fees	Safety

6.5.1.3 Location of Attributes on a Positioning Map

As was seen in Chapter 5, the University is perceived as average relative to its competition on all of the key attributes. This is mainly due to the University falling into a cluster of institutions, where they were not perceived as different.

As reflected in Graph 22, UCT is the favoured local tertiary institution in both highly qualified lecturers and academic standards, while UND and UNP are perceived similarly. The University needs to communicate its strength with regards to its world-renowned researchers and lecturing staff as well as the high academic standards. These strengths need to be communicated to the scholars who found them to be most important (for example Indian students).

Graph 23 shows how UNP is rated as being "average" in terms of international recognition. Many students regarded international recognition as being an influential factor in deciding where to study, as well as a motivating factor to study at UNP (Garden 2000). The issue here is not that the University does not have international recognition to speak of, rather it is a matter of communicating the fact that it has international recognition to the relevant target markets (such as scholars at TWC and College).

UNP's reputation was also not seen as superior relative to the competition (Graph 24). Once again the University needs to communicate the benefits of studying at a reputable tertiary institution such as UNP, especially in their direct local market. Not many of the other tertiary institutions in Pietermaritzburg can boast of a reputation beginning in 1910. This is an important attribute to potential customers and a strength of the University, yet the perceptions of scholars say that they don't recognise the reputation of UNP. It is this perception that needs to be corrected by communicating the reputation of UNP to the right target market (especially the Coloured market as well as at TWC).

Based on scholar's perceptions, UNP is seen as one of the "cheaper" universities, a good perception for UNP (Graph 25). The University should continue to communicate the value students gain from the University (i.e. an internationally recognised degree from a reputable institution) for the fees that they are paying.

The main issue when looking at the results of UNP's positioning as a whole is that they are not being perceived as originally intended. The University has to look at repositioning

itself or relocating itself in the minds of the customers – discussed below. Furthermore, the University needs to pay more attention to the areas where the competition has positioned UNP through lack of communication.

6.5.1.4 Evaluating Positioning Options

Payne (1993:117 – 118) quotes Ries & Trout (1981) in giving some positioning options:

i. *Strengthening* the current position against competitors (Payne, 1993). This is not a viable option for UNP, as they firstly do not have a position that they can strengthen and the position that they occupy is not really meaningful or adding benefit to the customer.

Over and above this if the company has not positioned itself, the competitors are positioning the company (Kaydo, 2000:114), which is where UNP are situated at present. To resolve this, the University should pay attention to the areas that they have let the competition dictate their positioning. This would mean identifying, out of the top 5 attributes, which important attributes form part of the University's competencies and communicate it to the target market.

ii. *Head to head positioning* – the University is also faced with a decision of whether to go head-to-head against UCT in terms of positioning.

As the perception maps have already shown – the University was perceived to be inferior to the market leader (benchmark) UCT according to the majority of the respondents.

	UNP	UCT
Lecturers	31.1% said *good*	54.4% said *good*
Reputation	26.7% said *good*	61.6% said *good*
Int. recognition	24.9% said *good*	48.3% said *good*
Academic Standards	30.9% said *good*	55.6% said *good*
Fees	29.6% said *good* (i.e. affordable)	29.3% said *average*

Literature shows that head-to-head positioning is futile and ineffective. In Chapter 2 (Figure 4) it was seen how the hotels formed clusters of points that were not statistically significant distances apart from each other. The customers perceive them as being

similar and in being perceived as being similar, the companies have lost most of their competitive edge in the blur of competition.

Ries & Trout (2001:38) said, "In today's marketplace the competitor's position is just as important as your own". It is exceptionally vital that businesses study their competition's position, tactics etc. in order to maintain significant differences. In studying these positioning maps UNP is able to identify their position, evaluate their position, strengths and weaknesses, and implement corrective action where needed.

When the University has come head-to-head with the perceived market leader it is clear that UNP is poorly perceived and falls short in many aspects to UCT. Therefore it is not recommended to the University that they pursue head-to-head positioning, not only because the University is perceived poorly relative to UCT but also because the University should find a unique, differentiated position of its own to hold.

iii. Identifying an *unoccupied market position* (Payne, 1993): the quadrant exhibiting a high quality and less expensive service is unoccupied (Figure 4). By using the positioning map the company can decide whether to enter that niche or not. The University could seek to specialise its offering in order to capture an unoccupied position, however this is not recommended, due to the severe implications surrounding that suggestion in terms of staff, resources, facilities etc.

iv. *Repositioning the competition* (Payne, 1993): this would mean that the company chooses not to enter into head-to-head positioning by differentiating their product / service offering.

The last option is not included in Payne's list but is relevant for where the University is at present.

v. *Identify the University's intended position and communicate it*: The University's perceived position is too broad, too general (by using the slogan "The Power to Succeed", for example) and does not add great value to the customer.

This research has highlighted the position UNP holds based on perceptions scholars hold about UNP. It is evident that the University's weakness lies in the failure to communicate its strengths to the target market.

As a result of this poor communication, present students and staff are unaware of the services offered by different departments within the University. More importantly though, the things that the University is good at – differentiating factors like highly qualified lecturers, reputation etc. – are not effectively communicated to the market (both internal as well as external customers).

It is recommended that the University employ a targeted communications strategy using *attribute positioning* (focusing on attributes and benefits like highly qualified lecturers, academic standards, etc.) in the University's positioning.

Simultaneously the University needs to differentiate. A key to successful differentiation is identifying what makes the business unique in the market (Kaydo, 2000:105). In the study conducted by Garden (2000) at the University, several key attributes were identified and labelled as strengths of UNP, tagged as the attributes that attract potential customers to UNP. These attributes included: Location, Courses offered (including the fact that they are in English), the fact that the University of Natal is one of the best institutions, and International recognition. It is based on these attributes that the University needs to differentiate its service from other institutions. After differentiating the service offering, the *ultimate* positioning strategy would focus on communicating the differentiating factors that are most important to the target market in a relevant way (Kaydo, 2000:108).

Positioning is based on "the concept that communication can only take place at the right time and under the right circumstances." – Ries & Trout (2001:21). The marketing implications of this are relatively simple. Based on these findings the University is made aware of what the customer wants and looks for in a tertiary institution. The next step then is to communicate the University's strengths, based on these attributes, to the customer at the right times.

By differentiating the product on offer another important concept is introduced – that of a market-orientated business. When considering the stages of marketing evolution (Kotler & Fox, 1995:11 – 12) at the University it can be seen that it functions at predominantly the product-oriented stage. An example of this is the courses offered based on the lecturers' preparation and production skills rather than market demands.

It is, however, crucial for the University to mobilise itself into the market-orientated stage to survive because customers are no longer interested in product-orientated businesses. The market-orientated stage is characterised by the business finding the needs of the target market and meeting them.

As a market-oriented business, the University must differentiate their services based on attributes that the target customers value greatly (Jobber, 1995:673). In other words identifying the attributes that the scholars attach great value to when choosing to study. It is these factors that need to be used to position the University superiorly above its competition.

For example, library facilities were important to scholars at Georgetown. The University can then use this information to tailor a promotions strategy targeted specifically at those scholars emphasising the University's efficient libraries. Likewise, the University needs to tailor its marketing mix to suit the markets' changing needs through continuous research into this area.

Based on this discussion it is clear that the University must identify the position it intends to fill, use the important attributes highlighted by the scholars to tailor a communications strategy around it, and communicate it in the right way to the right target market.

6.5.1.5 Implementing positioning

The result of all positioning strategies has to be communicated to the customer (Van der Walt *et al*, 1996:133). In communicating the position of the University it must be remembered that the marketing mix needs to be aligned with the intended position of the business (Palmer & Cole, 1995:333). This is a vital component of the positioning strategy. In other words the staff recruited, the fees charged, etc. all needs to support the intended position of UNP.

6.6 The University's 7P's

The key phrase to remember is from Perreault & McCarthy (1999:87) who said that the purpose of positioning is to: "ensure that the whole marketing mix is positioned for competitive advantage". Hence the University needs to embark on an investigation into its marketing mix elements – ensuring that the elements it has that constitute their marketing mix are exactly in line with the proposed position of the business. The P's will be discussed below in the light of the findings.

6.6.1 **Place** (i.e. location / distribution / accessibility)

The location and accessibility of any service are important issues in services marketing. Accessibility here not only refers to physical accessibility but also with other means of communication and contact (Cowell, 1991:72).

Many of the scholars indicated that they would not attend UNP because it was too close to home or they wanted to get out of Pietermaritzburg and away from home. The students on the other hand cited the location of the University as one of their reasons for attending it. The same motive is evident – to get away from home. Past students from outside of Pietermaritzburg have commented on how UNP was far enough away from home but yet not too far so that they could still travel home for the weekend.

This presents an opportunity to the University in targeting scholars in neighbouring regions. In other words UCT, Rhodes, Wits etc. could appeal to most scholars within Pietermaritzburg for this exact reason (get away from home etc.), however UNP would surely appeal to most scholars outside of Pietermaritzburg for the same reason. It is highly recommended that the University look at expanding their promotions to regions outside of Pietermaritzburg and KwaZulu-Natal.

Based on this thought, a challenge is presented to UNP: how does the University convince scholars in Pietermaritzburg to stay in Pietermaritzburg and study at UNP if the trend is to move away from home? The University should promote its social activities, societies and cultural life outside of varsity time to these scholars. In addition to the campus life of UNP, the University could promote the various residential options (digs, residence) available even to those who stay in Pietermaritzburg but want to move away from home.

Along the same lines, it should be mentioned that Pietermaritzburg schools attract many scholars from surrounding regions. This presents a good opportunity for UNP to encourage these scholars to complete their secondary, as well as their tertiary education, in Pietermaritzburg.

6.6.2 Promotion

Through this research, as well as past research, the strengths and unique points of the University have been identified. It is vital that the University assertively communicates these unique selling points to the target market.

The University could make use of a push strategy in which they target school counsellors in potential feeder schools. The targeting of players in the communication channel (like the school counsellors) is vital due to the interactive nature of this communication and the weight of opinion leaders' thoughts. Through targeted communication, the University can continue to use **school visits** that can be positioned differently for different segments.

In terms of **advertising**, the University should seek to align its advertising throughout the campus. There is a lack of consistency between Faculties and individual schools within the University which complicates and confuses the positioning of the University as a whole. Advertising should be the primary means of establishing the organisation level positioning as well as the product specific positioning done by individual faculties.

Using the important attributes (like highly qualified lecturers – which most scholars rated as the most important attribute) the University should create communication campaigns tailored for individual schools as well as different areas in and around Pietermaritzburg. By doing this, the University creates the right message that needs to be heard. The University should plan an extensive campaign so that the message is conveyed at the right time and in the right circumstances.

For example, the merger between the Universities of Natal and Durban-Westville has triggered off doubts and concern over reputation, recognition and academic standards. Therefore, the time as well as the circumstances would be right to advertise the fact that UNP still carries international recognition, high academic standards etc. These facts can be communicated not only to the local market but also through the national media to attract students from around the country.

Another recommendation is that the University extends its 'Adopt a Light' pole campaign (Appendix I). The campaign used a simple extension of the pole to graphically convey the courses offered by the University. The campaign was effective in the areas it was run, hence the recommendation to extend it, highlighting specific attributes in specific areas.

Open Days present additional opportunities to the University. An interactive tool such as this has many benefits attached to it and the University should seek ways of increasing the appeal of the Open Days by using promotions etc.

With the existence of bad reports and bad publicity, the University could use **public relations** to counteract any damage done to their reputation and image. It is important for the University to keep its finger on the pulse of the market in order to pick up on any negative reports regarding UNP.

A piece of advice offered by Levison & Kotler (cited by Kahn & Shapiro, 2001) about publicity was: "to determine exactly what sets you (your product/service) apart from that of your competitors. The media seeks the unusual, not the humdrum". The University could make better use of the local media to feed positive information about UNP through to its target market. For example, the University could write a press release regarding their 5-Star NOSA rating and distribute it to the local media to keep the target market informed as well as maintain a consistent awareness of the University. The University can also look to extending their local advertising campaign into a national advertising campaign to attract students from across the country.

An indirect method that can be used by the University is **word-of-mouth**. By looking after their current customers (i.e. customer service) the University is generating positive word-of-mouth. A programme in place at present is the CARE initiative which seeks to promote care within the university by using four key elements: Courtesy, Accountability, Respect, and Efficiency. This is a positive step towards fostering healthy customer service within the University and should be continued.

As one of the main criticisms of the University is the communication between the University, its internal customers and external customers, it is exceptionally important that the University seeks to rectify this situation and improve its communications. Hence the promotions of the University need to be developed so as to better match the strengths of the University with the

needs of the customers, as well as emphasise the strengths of the University to its respective target markets.

Finally, it is important for the University to develop various promotional mixes based on the different levels of positioning that are market oriented as well as tailored to the specific markets. For example when dealing with organisational positioning the University will need to promote the important attributes overall (highly qualified lecturers, reputation etc.) but still emphasise the attributes that were important to specific subsegments (e.g. library facilities at Georgetown).

6.6.3 Product

The range of services offered by the University would determine the customer's perceptions – if the University only offered the basic degree choices customers would have the perception of the University being a run-of-the-mill tertiary institution, one that does not offer great added value to the customer. However if the University offered a range of specialised courses customers could have the perception of the University being experts in those fields through their specialisation.

There are obvious resource implications involved with specialising (for e.g. staff, facilities, financial etc.) however the essence of positioning remains – what word does the University own? As Ries said, "The most powerful concept in marketing today is owning a word in the mind" (1992:6) – and that comes from being first through the open window of the customer's mind. It must be remembered that whatever word is owned, the position must still translate into a benefit for the customer. It must still add value to the customer.

The University must carefully consider its current offerings, as well as potential new offerings, to ensure that they are market related, and in so doing can tap into the gaps or 'open windows' that exist.

6.6.4 Price

A strength for the University is the fact that they were perceived to be very reasonable in terms of tuition fees when compared to other institutions, even though (according to Table 5.8) the fact is that the University are not very reasonable in some categories. Therefore the University must utilise this perception to its fullest, and emphasise the value for money they are getting relative to the competitors' offerings. The University can highlight the value they

offer customers, especially when considering what they (the students) gain from a reputable, internationally recognised tertiary institution such as UNP as opposed to other competitors. The danger here is the relationship between perceived quality and the prices charged as charging a lower price is indicative of a lower quality service. The relationship between quality of service and price charged as well as the pricing strategy of the University should also be further investigated.

6.6.5 People

The quality of service offered by a firm will be determined by the quality of listening to three types of customers according to Berry & Parasuraman (1997:65). In other words the needs and wants of these three groups need to be researched so that the quality of service offered will be high. These three types of customers are as follows:

- *Internal customers – University staff who depend on internal services to provide their own services*

Listening to internal customers and communicating the right things to these internal customers is important so that they in turn can communicate the right things to the external customers. If internal customers are being satisfied (and their needs and interests being researched) there will be a greater likelihood of them meeting the external customers' needs better.

- *External customers – those who have experienced the firm's service,*

95.2% of students would recommend the University to others (Garden 2000). From this finding it can be gauged that current students are satisfied with the University on the whole.

- *Competitors' customers – includes those customers that the firm would like to make it's own*

Listening to competitors' customers must be made a priority due to changing priorities and preferences.

It is the systematic listening to the customers listed above that will assist the University to become the market-orientated organisation it needs to be. It is essential that the University continue to measure whether they are successfully meeting the needs of these three groups of customers through continuous research. Furthermore, it is important for the University to track the perceptions and expectations of these three groups of customers.

6.6.5.1 Internal Marketing

Heather Regenass (Wits Marketing Manager) said, her marketing campaign is to "turn everyone at Wits into a marketer" – Pretorious, 2001. This includes using students, past students, staff etc. as marketers. A service culture must be bred within the University – starting first and foremost with a high quality internal service, one that is bred not just within the marketing department. It has to start with management (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 1999:41) and flow down through out the staff before seeing it happen between front-line staff and students.

One of the most important objectives of internal marketing is to "inform employees about important elements of the marketing strategy – so they'll work together as a team to implement it" (McCarthy & Perreault, 1993:430). This is an obligatory feature if the University is seeking to use its staff as a differentiating factor in its positioning. As Berry & Parasuraman said, "with services, internal marketing paves the way for external marketing" (1992:34).

One of the most important elements that can be focussed on is that of internal communication. Staff have mentioned in passing that, even though they work at the University, many of them do not know what happens within the University. Unfortunately this also includes courses on offer, award winning research, groundbreaking community development etc. This lack of internal communication hinders the necessary attempt to turn everyone at UNP into a marketer.

6.6.6 Physical Evidence

The general perception regarding UNP's facilities was positive. What is of far more importance though is the issue of whether the physical evidence of the University aligns with the overall positioning strategy of the University. That is, the physical environment, facilitating goods that enables the service to be provided, and other tangible cues have to be aligned with the overall positioning strategy (Cowell, 1991:73).

Services theory (Palmer, 2001) also suggests that service customers use physical evidence as an indicator of the quality and nature of the service. Due to the intangibility of the service itself physical evidence is one of the cues that a customer can use to determine the level of quality offered by the service company. Thus physical evidence plays a very important role

in perceptions, an importance which should not be neglected or underestimated by the University. The University should therefore continue to maintain the buildings and grounds for which the University is known and to ensure high quality library, computer, residential, and sporting facilities.

6.6.7 Process

The service delivery process links in with the personnel element of the marketing mix – the interface between the company and the customer. This would mean that the attitude and friendliness of the staff make a huge impact on the customers. Once again poor service delivery would lead to numerous complaints and negative encounters with the customer – which means that the customer would have a negative perception of the business.

The University needs to identify crucial customer-contact areas and critical incidents and seek to better meet the needs of the students and potential students in those areas. For example, registration is a cause for much dissatisfaction at many institutions, yet it is one of the first encounters some customers will have with the business. The University needs to train, equip and motivate its staff in those crucial customer-contact areas so that they can provide a differentiable service to the student. It must also be remembered that first impressions count as many perceptions are based on those first impressions.

To summarise, one of the main reasons why the University needs to align the 7P's as discussed above is because there is no guarantee as to what stimulus the customer will choose to interpret. For example: in advertising the fact that UNP has a 5-star NOSA rating (Temple, 2002), there is no guarantee that the potential customer will choose to interpret that information as opposed to stories of student harassment.

Based on that knowledge the University must line the 7P's up with the actual delivery of those standards/services/facilities.

6.7 The Result of Positioning

As Schiffman & Kanuk (1994:187) said, the result of a successful positioning strategy is that it creates a distinctive, favourable image in the mind of the customer – an image that customers rely on when the time comes to choose a product. Based on this thought, the poor perception of the University on the whole points towards a positioning strategy that has not effectively reached its target market, the scholars.

In conclusion, the University occupies an average position in the minds of scholars attending school in Pietermaritzburg. Relative to the competition, UNP does not hold any distinctive place in the minds of the scholars. This research has identified the key attributes for different scholars as well as determined how UNP rates / scores on these relative to the other tertiary institutions. The report also makes recommendations on how the marketing mix should be used to reposition the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

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Chapter 7

Appendices

Appendix A – Questionnaire

→ What grade are you? (11 or 12)____

Questionnaire

There are 6 pages: please answer all the pages

PLEASE ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS REGARDING THE UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG

1) What are you going to do after you have finished school, i.e. what are your plans for 2002 / 2003?

_____

2) Why?

_____

3) In your opinion what are the top 3 tertiary education institutions you would look at if choosing to study further?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

4) Rank (from 1 – 16) each attribute according to how important it is for any tertiary learning institution to have?

1 = The most important

16 = Not important at all

- ☐ Entertainment / social areas
- ☐ Residences
- ☐ Student representatives
- ☐ Specific courses (e.g. soil nutrition, fine arts)
- ☐ Highly qualified lecturers
- ☐ Good reputation
- ☐ A library
- ☐ High safety standards (on campus, in residences etc.)
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ International recognition
- ☐ Reasonable fees (affordable)
- ☐ Ample parking
- ☐ Hi-tech computer facilities
- ☐ Sport clubs
- ☐ High academic standards
- ☐ Social events
- ☐ Central location

5) Rate the different the different tertiary institutions according to the 16 attributes *(IN YOUR OWN OPINION)*

Rate the tertiary institution on a scale FROM **0** TO *5* WHERE:

If, in your opinion, the institution (with regard to the attribute) is **poor = 0**

If, in your opinion, the institution (with regard to the attribute) is *good* = *5*

Please rate ALL the institutions for each attribute. It is your OPINION that we are looking for

	Attribute	Damelin	Technikon	UNISA	Varsity College	Univ. of Cape Town	International universities	Univ. of Durban-Westville
1	Entertainment / social areas							
2	Residences							
3	Student representatives							
4	Specific courses							
5	Highly qualified lecturers							
6	Good reputation							
7	High safety standards							
8	International recognition							
9	Central location							
10	Reasonable fees (affordable)							
11	Ample parking							
12	Hi-tech computer facilities							
13	Sport clubs							
14	High academic standards							
15	Social events							
16	Library							
17	Other _____							

Please rate ALL the institutions for each attribute. It is your OPINION that we are looking for

	Attribute	Wits	R.A.U	Rhodes	Univ. of Natal, Pietermaritzburg	Univ. of Natal, Durban	Univ. of Stellen-bosch	Other _____
1	Entertainment / social areas							
2	Residences							
3	Student representatives							
4	Specific courses							
5	Highly qualified lecturers							
6	Good reputation							
7	High safety standards							
8	International recognition							
9	Central location							
10	Reasonable fees (affordable)							
11	Ample parking							
12	Hi-tech computer facilities							
13	Sport clubs							
14	High academic standards							
15	Social events							
16	Library							
17	Other _____							

6) If you had to study, how would you finance your studies?

- ☐ Parents / Guardian / Family member
- ☐ Private savings
- ☐ Study / student loan
- ☐ Bursary / scholarship
- ☐ Work to pay (study part time)
- ☐ Other_____

Please indicate with a cross: ✗

7) If you decided against studying at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, what would the reasons be?

- ☐ Long time span to complete studies (3-year degrees)
- ☐ Entrance requirements are too high
- ☐ They don't offer the course I want (_____)
- ☐ I have heard / read bad reports about the University
- ☐ My bursar requires me to go to another university
- ☐ It is not a safe campus
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Poor academic standards
- ☐ Fees are too expensive
- ☐ Classes too big
- ☐ Other universities offer more
- ☐ The course I want isn't offered in my language

These questions apply to your *opinion* of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg – even if you have never been to the campus

8) Computer facilities at the University (PMB) are of a high standard

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

9) I think the University of Natal (PMB) campus is safe at night

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

10) In my opinion the University of Natal (PMB) has a good social life

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

11) The University of Natal (PMB) has good library facilities

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

12) I see the University of Natal (PMB) as being a multiracial campus

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

13) I think the University of Natal (PMB) is politically progressive

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

14) Sport facilities at the University of Natal (PMB) are of a high standard

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

15) The University of Natal (PMB) has the appropriate laboratory equipment for experiments and research

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

16) I see the University of Natal (PMB) as being an excellent academic institution

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

17) The social life at University of Natal (PMB) – e.g. Rag Beerfest, Dynamics sports week, Rag race day, and drinking clubs – is what University is about

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

18) The University of Natal (PMB) only facilitates large classes (i.e. mass education)

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

19) I think the lecturers at the University of Natal (PMB) are approachable

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

20) I think that students get no personal attention to queries / problems in lectures

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

21) Students are nothing more than a student number to the staff at the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg)

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

22) The upgrade in security at the University of Natal (PMB) is a waste of money

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

23) Students will get a better education at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, than students at Damelin / Varsity College / Technikon

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

24) What racial group do you think represents the majority of students at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg?

Black	White	Coloured	Indian	Asian

25) I would be better equipped to work after studying than friends who won't study after school

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

26) University is for those people who don't know what to do with their lives

☐ Agree ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not really ☐ Disagree

27) If you choose to study after school, what degree / course would you study?

_____

28) What school do you attend? _____

29) Gender:

Male	Female

30) Age: _____

31) Race: (**B**lack, **W**hite, **C**oloured, **I**ndian, **A**sian)

B	W	C	I	A

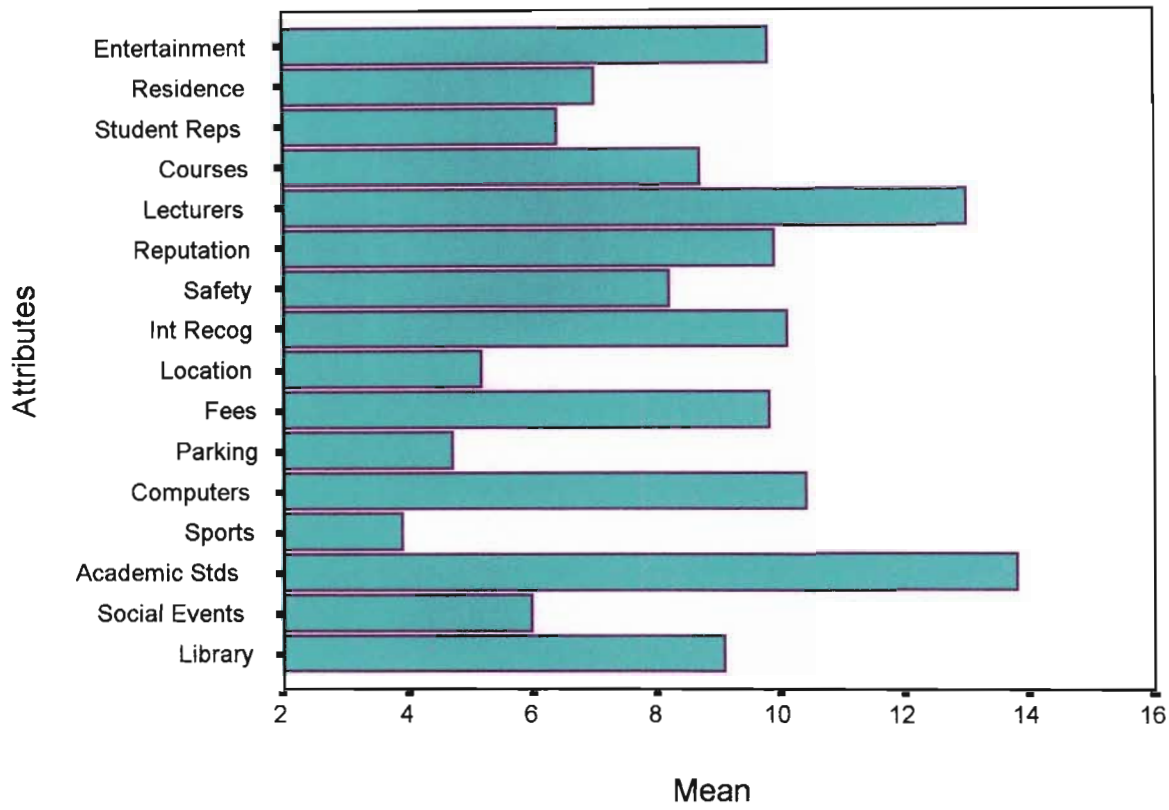
32) When deciding about what you will do after school, who plays / played the biggest role in helping you decide what to do after school, for example which University to choose (getting information about various institutions, courses etc.)?

☐ Myself
☐ Parents / Guardian
☐ Friends
☐ Other (please specify who)_____

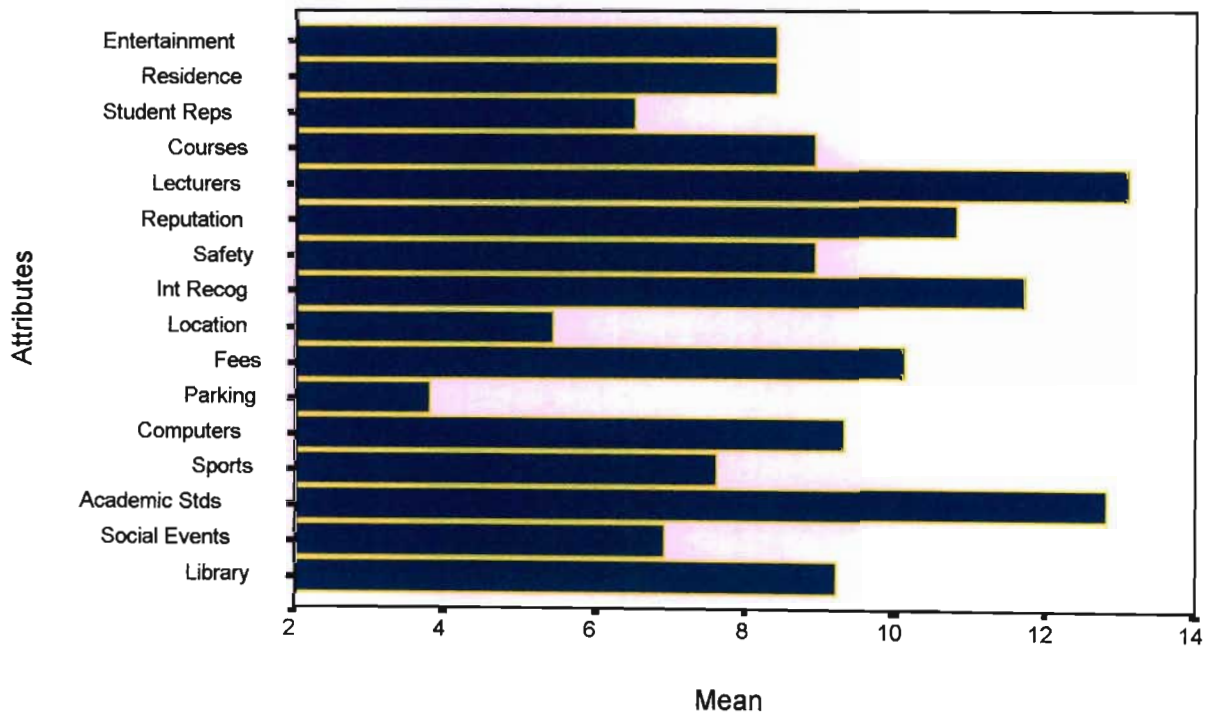
33) How did you hear about the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus?

☐ Newspaper advertisements
☐ School visits
☐ Friends
☐ School teachers / Guidance teachers
☐ Parents / Guardian
☐ I live in Pietermaritzburg
☐ Other (please specify)_____

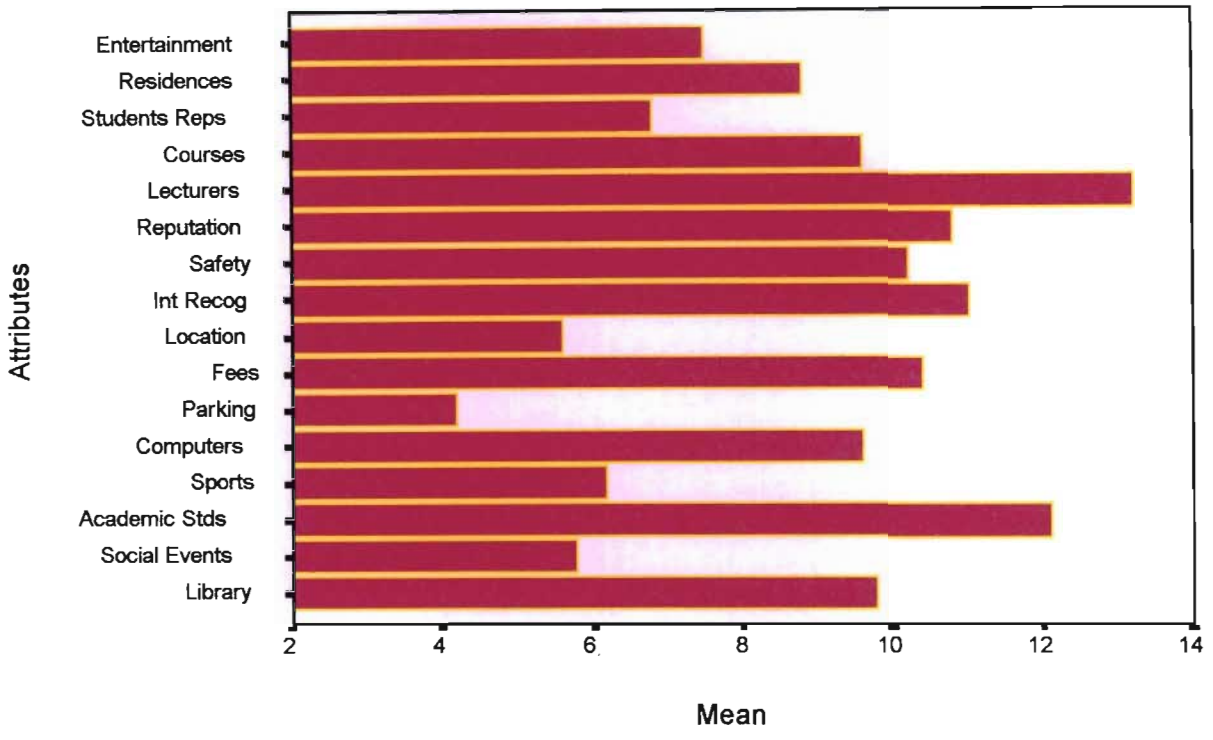
Appendix B – Attributes Favoured by Respondents



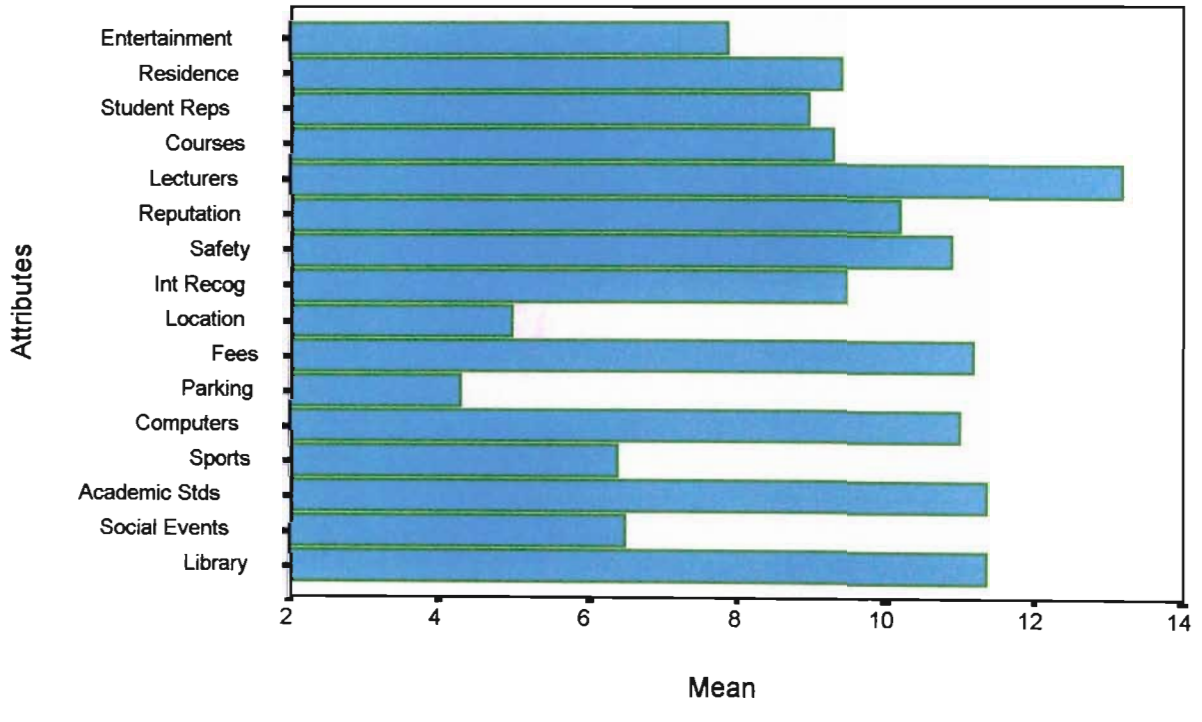
Graph 41 – Attributes Favoured by Asian Respondents



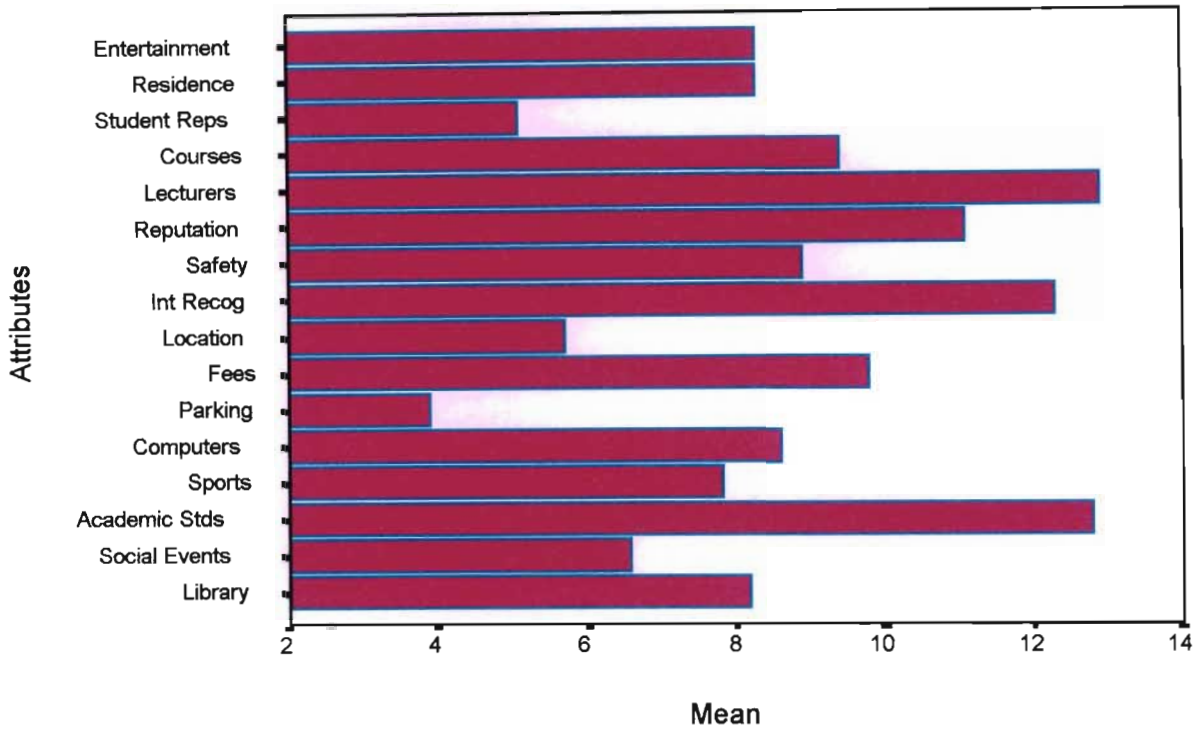
Graph 42 – Attributes Favoured by Male Respondents



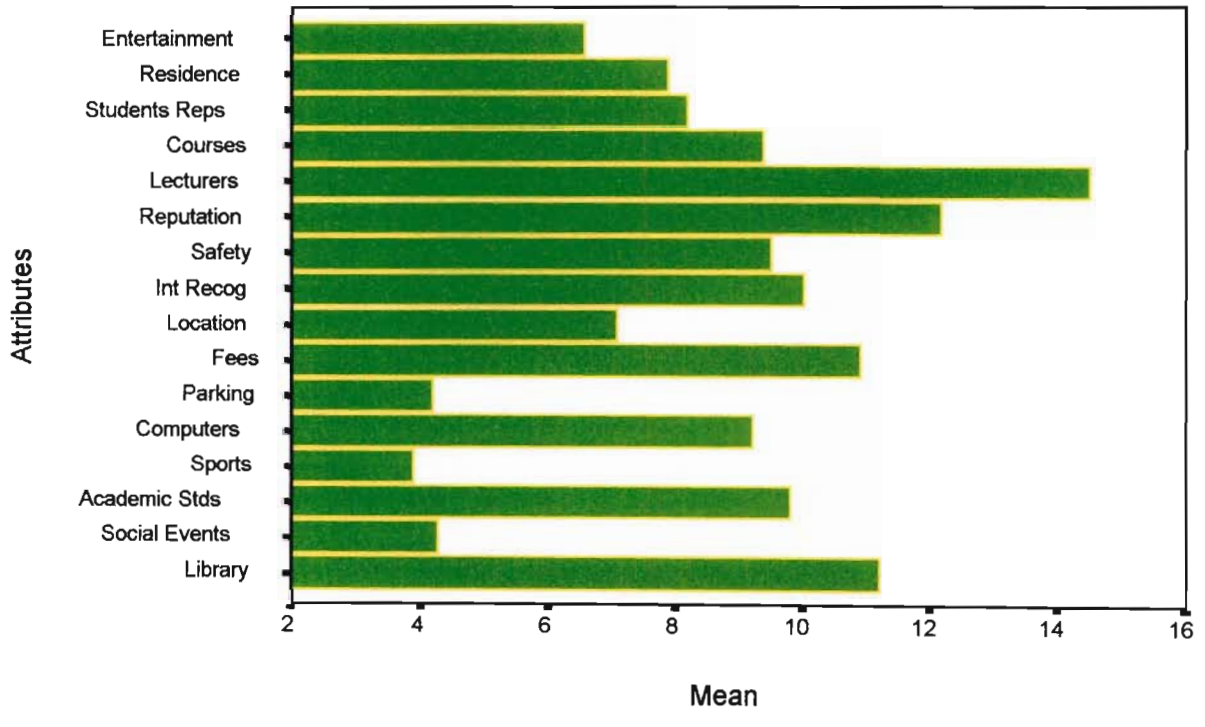
Graph 43 – Attributes Favoured by Female Respondents



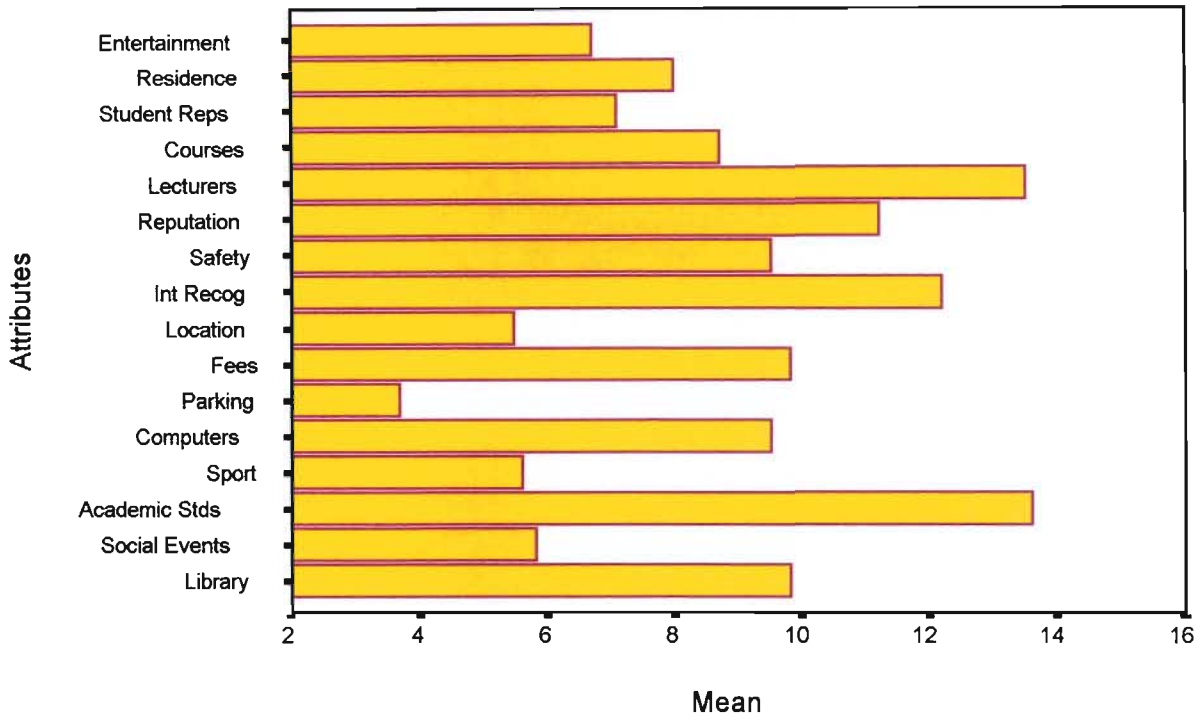
Graph 44 – Attributes Favoured by Black Respondents



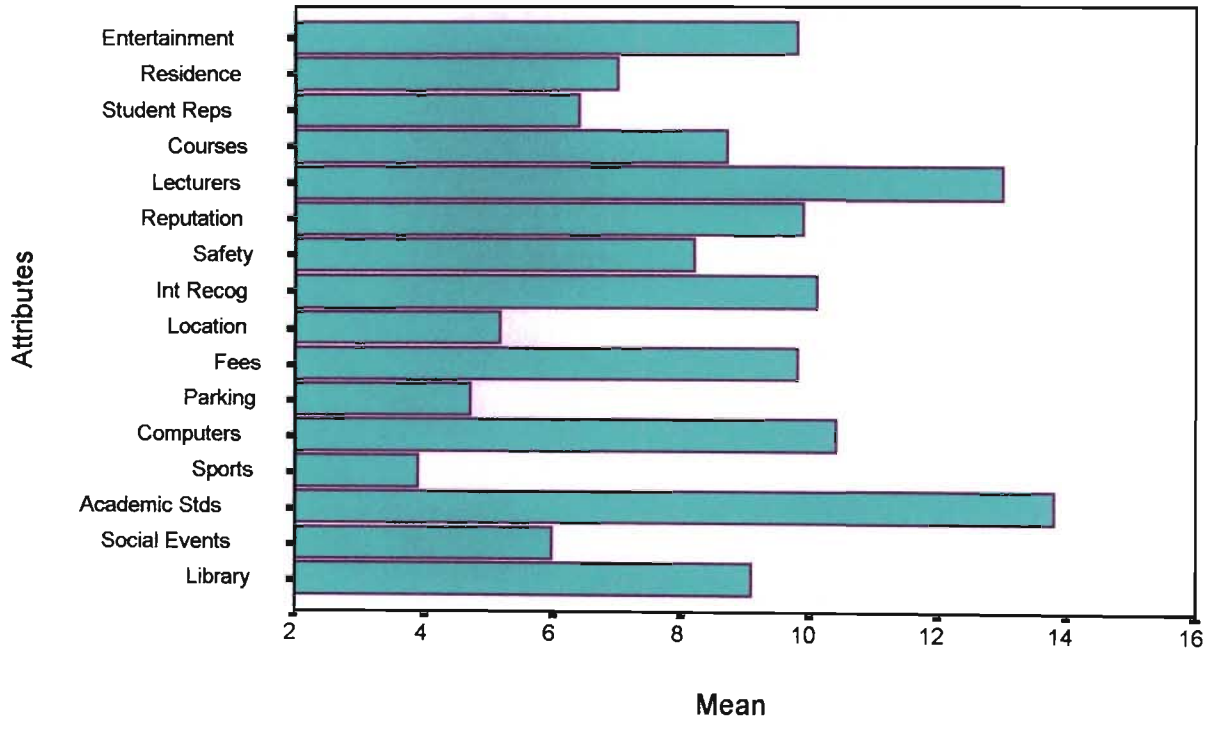
Graph 45 – Attributes Favoured by White Respondents



Graph 46 – Attributes Favoured by Coloured Respondents

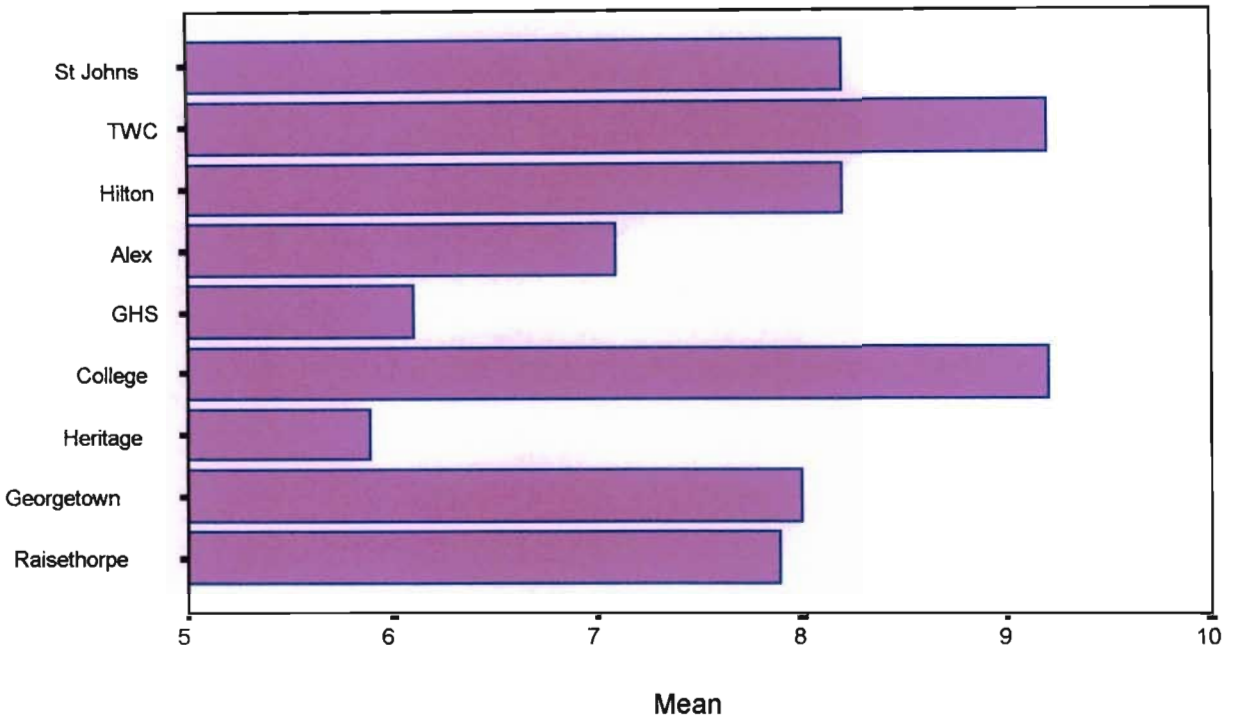


Graph 47 – Attributes Favoured by Indian Respondents

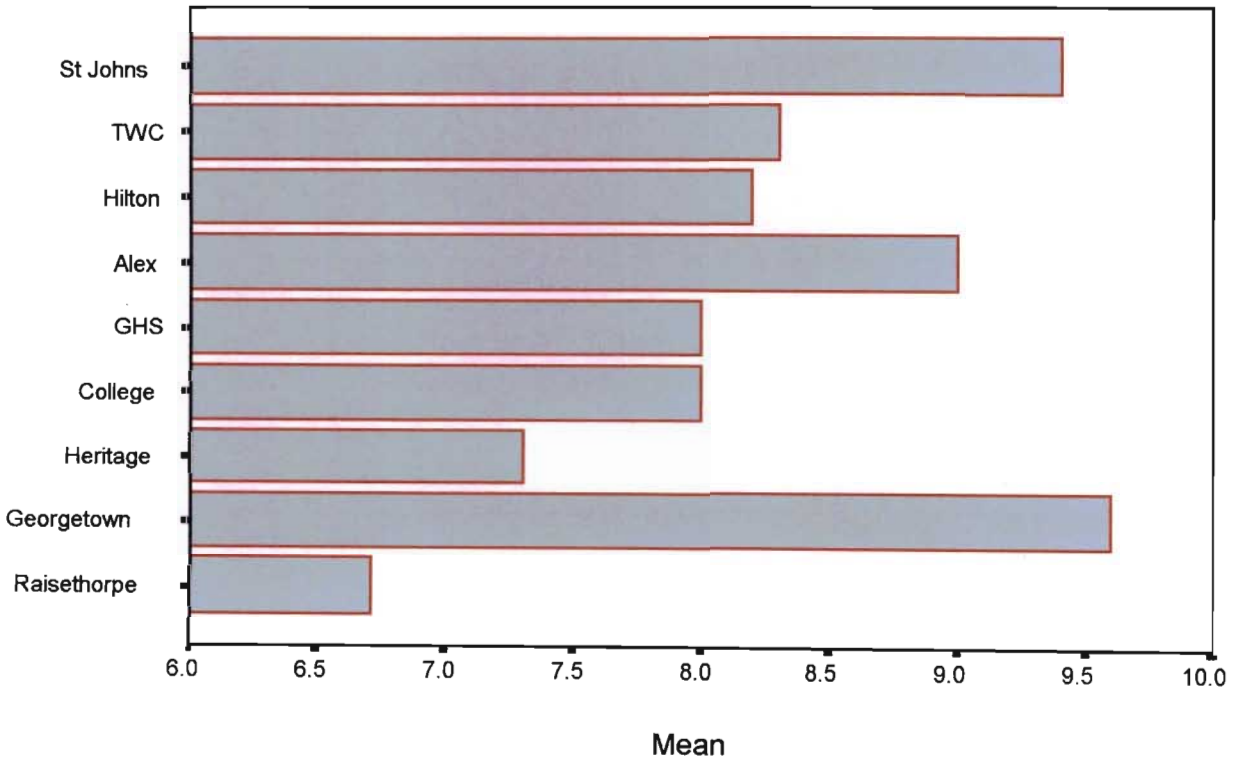


Graph 48 – Attributes Favoured by Asian Respondents

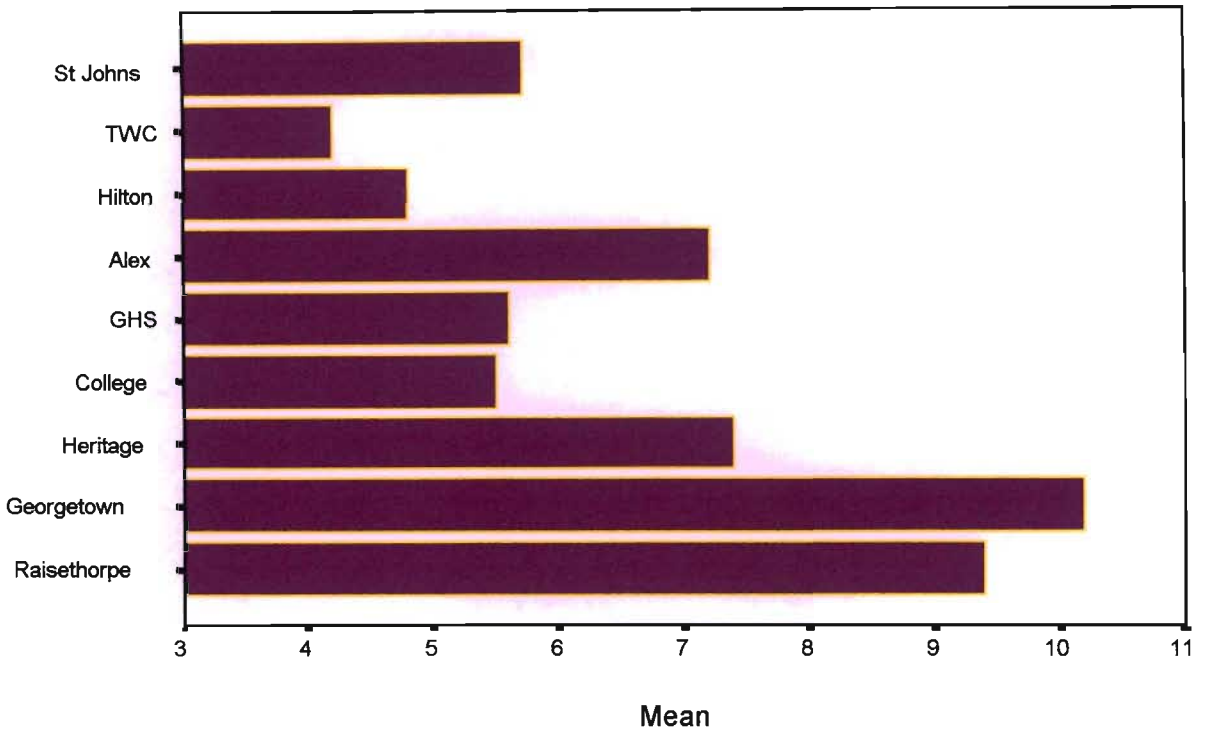
Attributes According to Schools



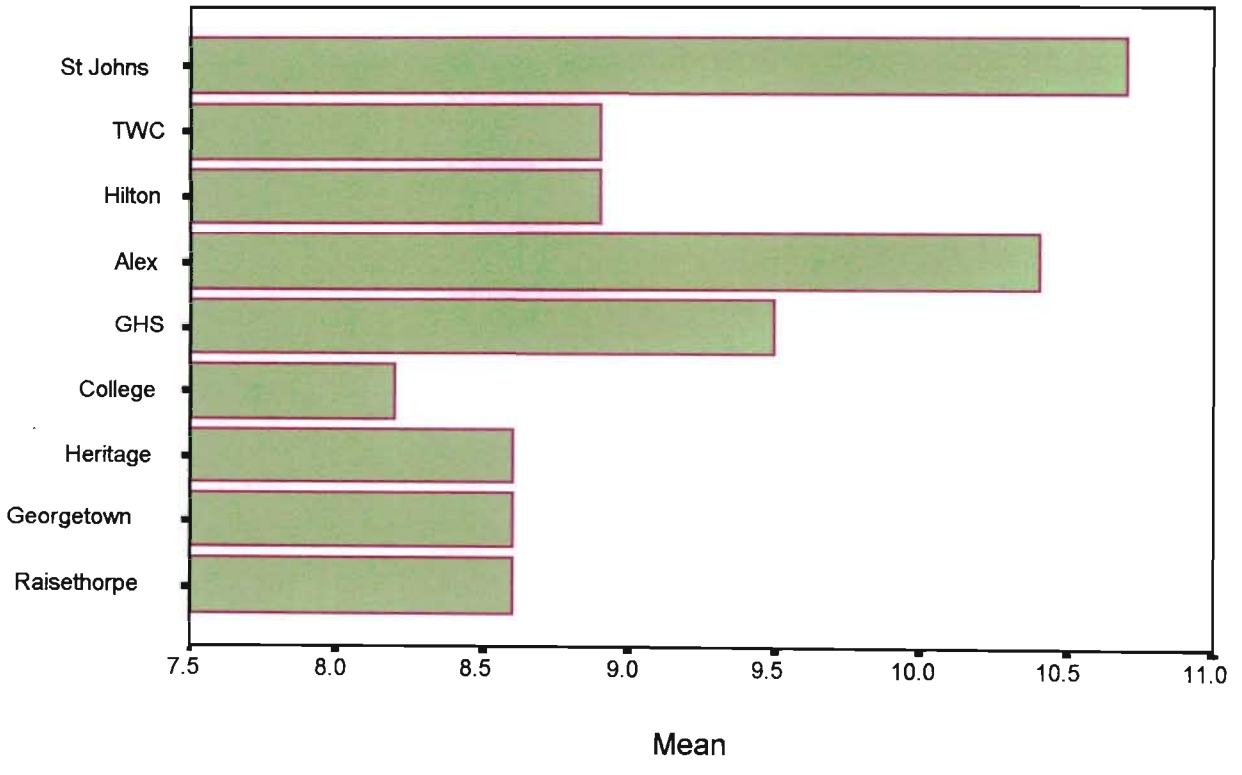
Graph 49 – Importance of Entertainment According to School



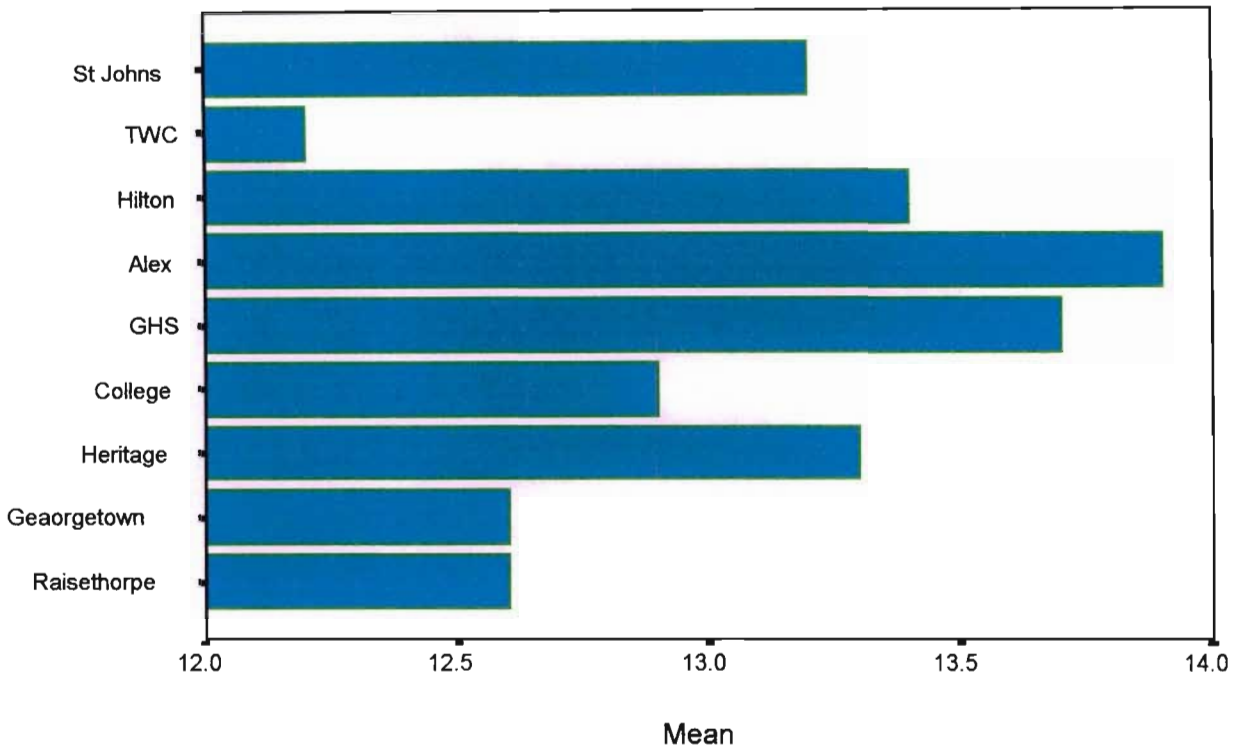
Graph 50 – Importance of Residence According to School



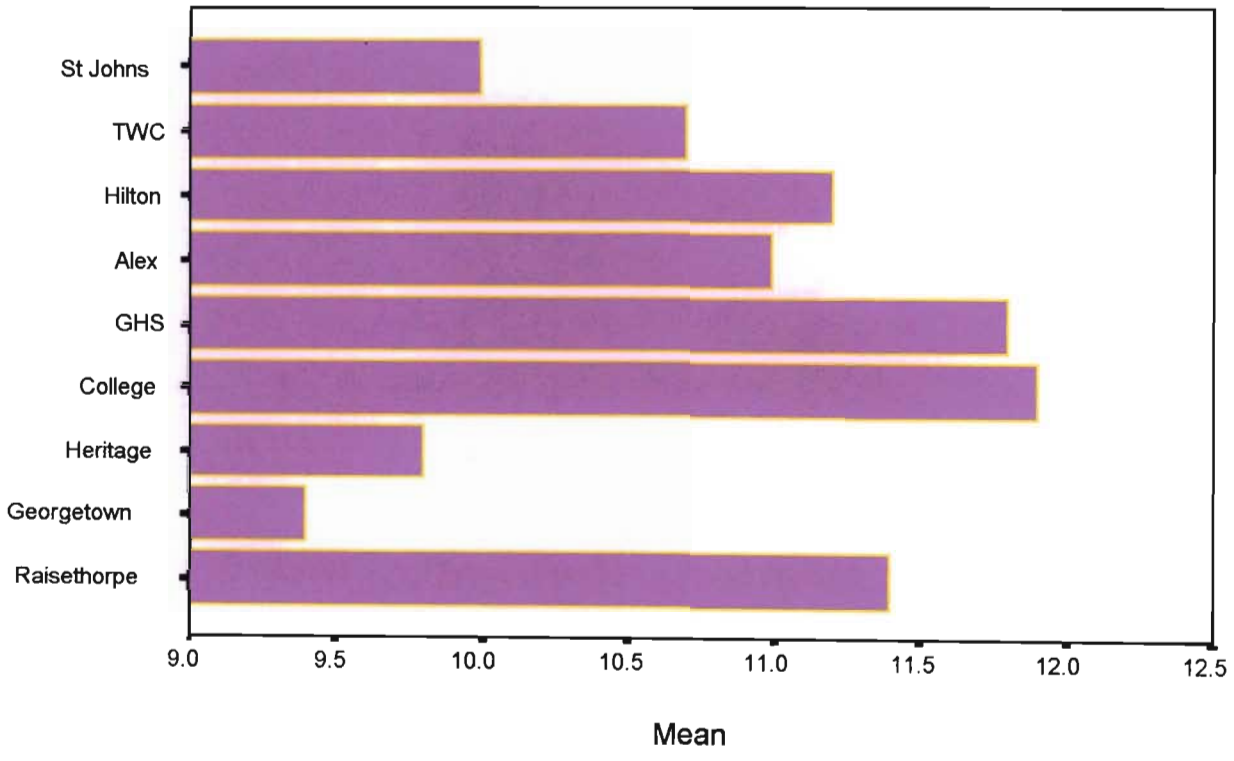
Graph 51 – Importance of Student Representatives According to School



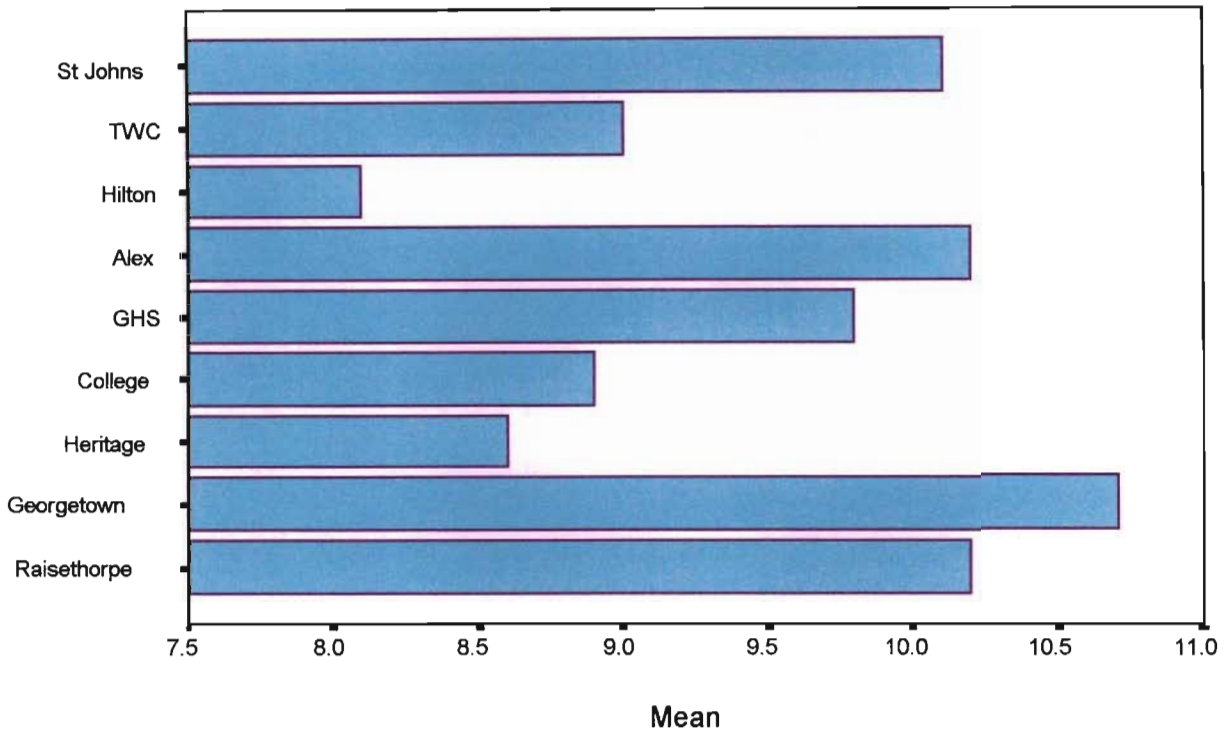
Graph 52 – Importance of Specific Courses According to School



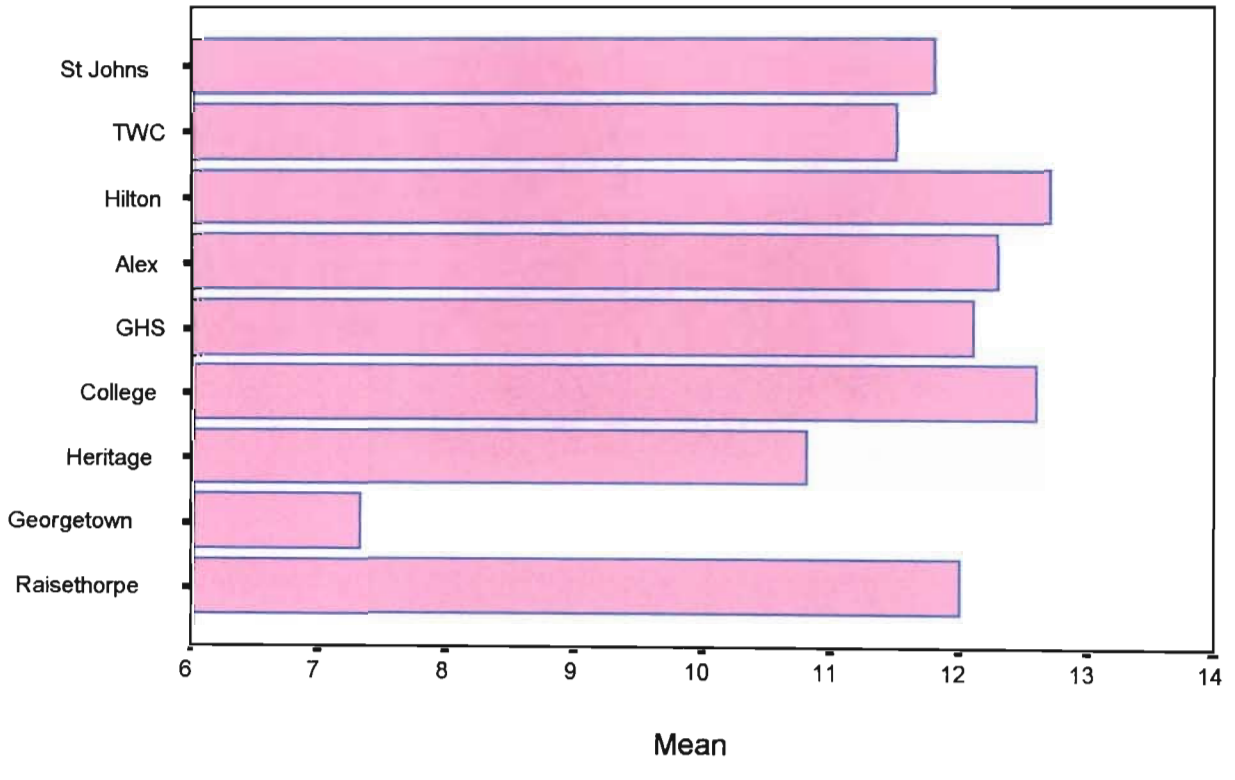
Graph 53 – Importance of Highly Qualified Lecturers According to School



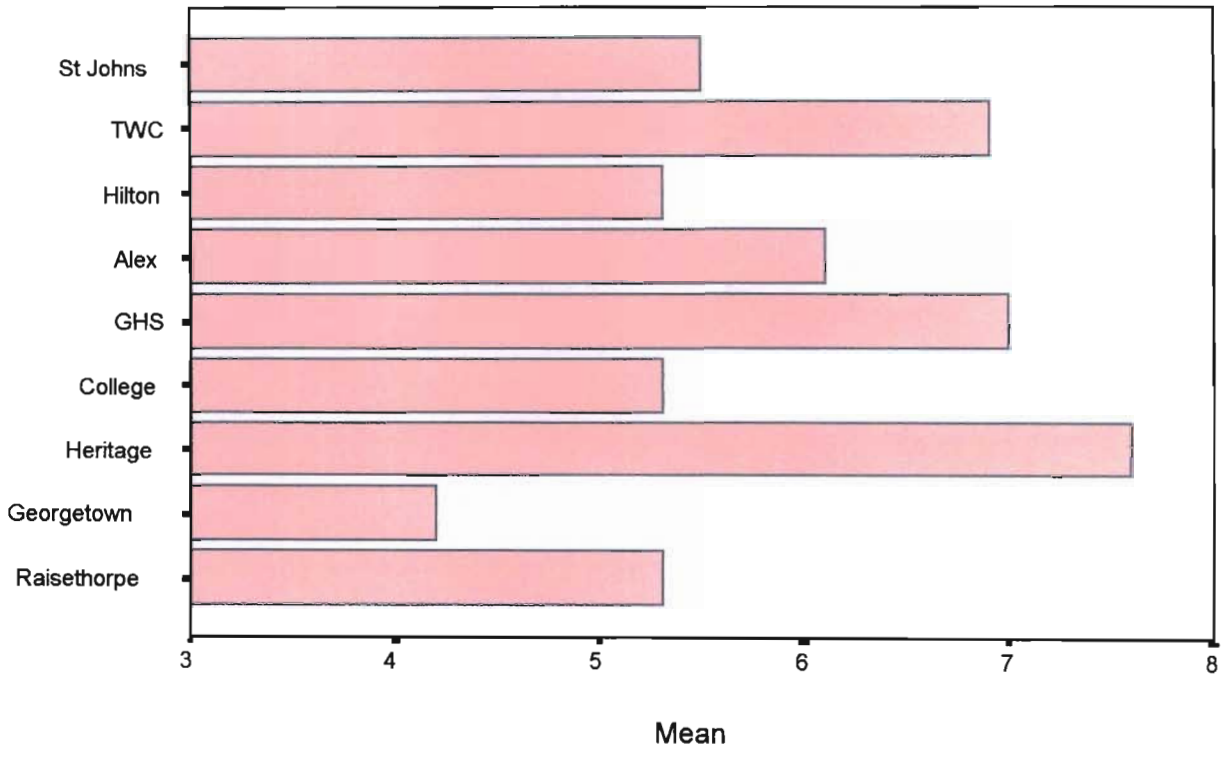
Graph 54 – Importance of Reputation According to School



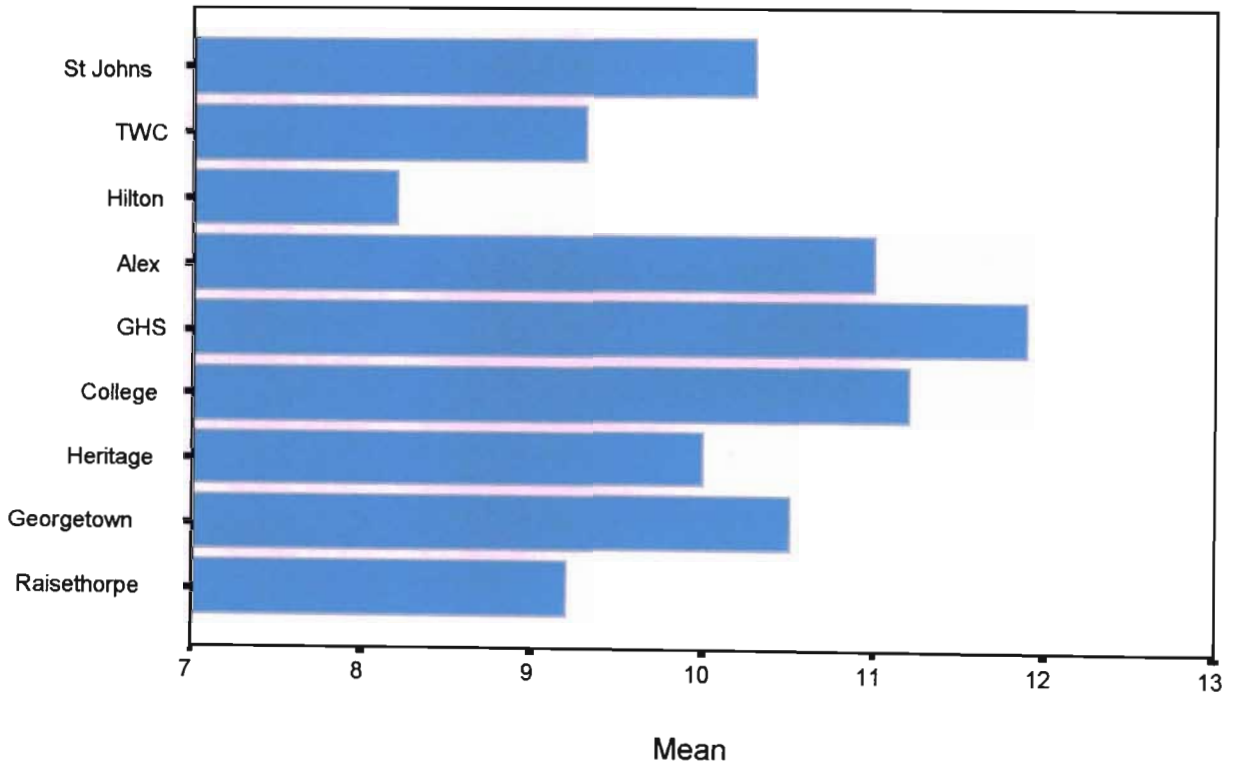
Graph 55 – Importance of Safety According to School



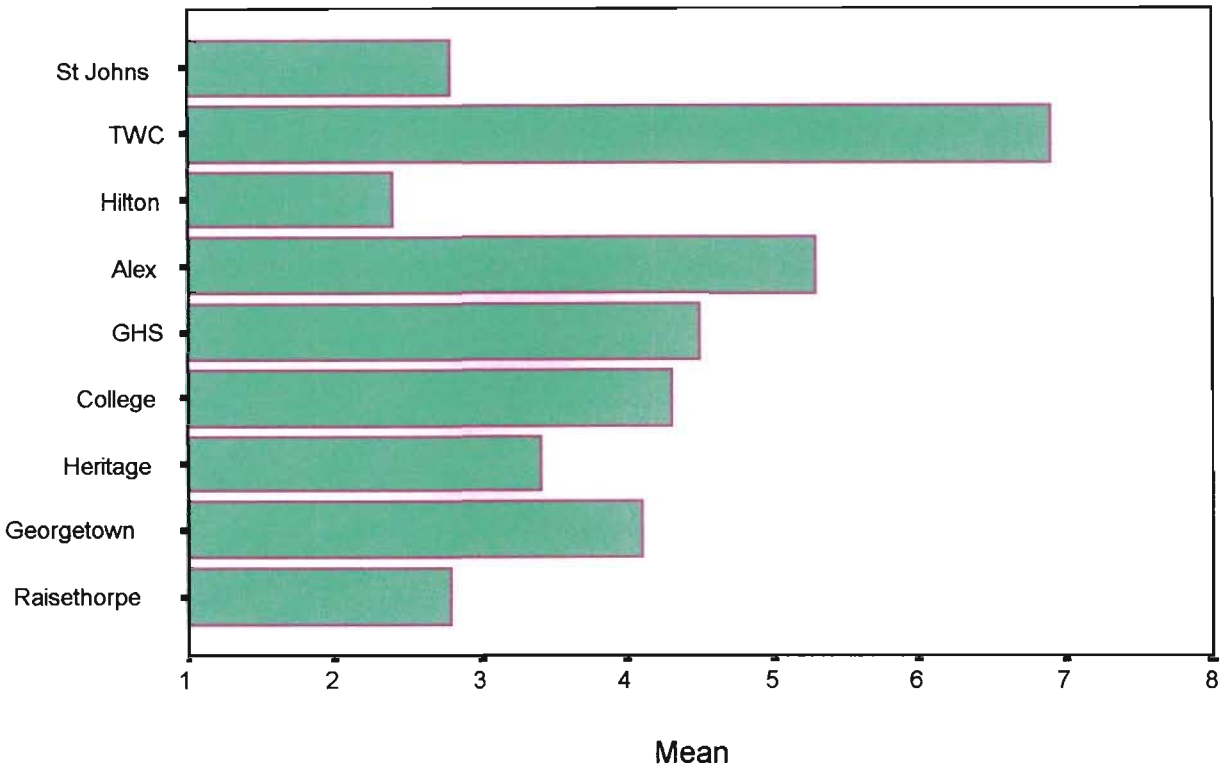
Graph 56 – Importance of International Recognition According to School



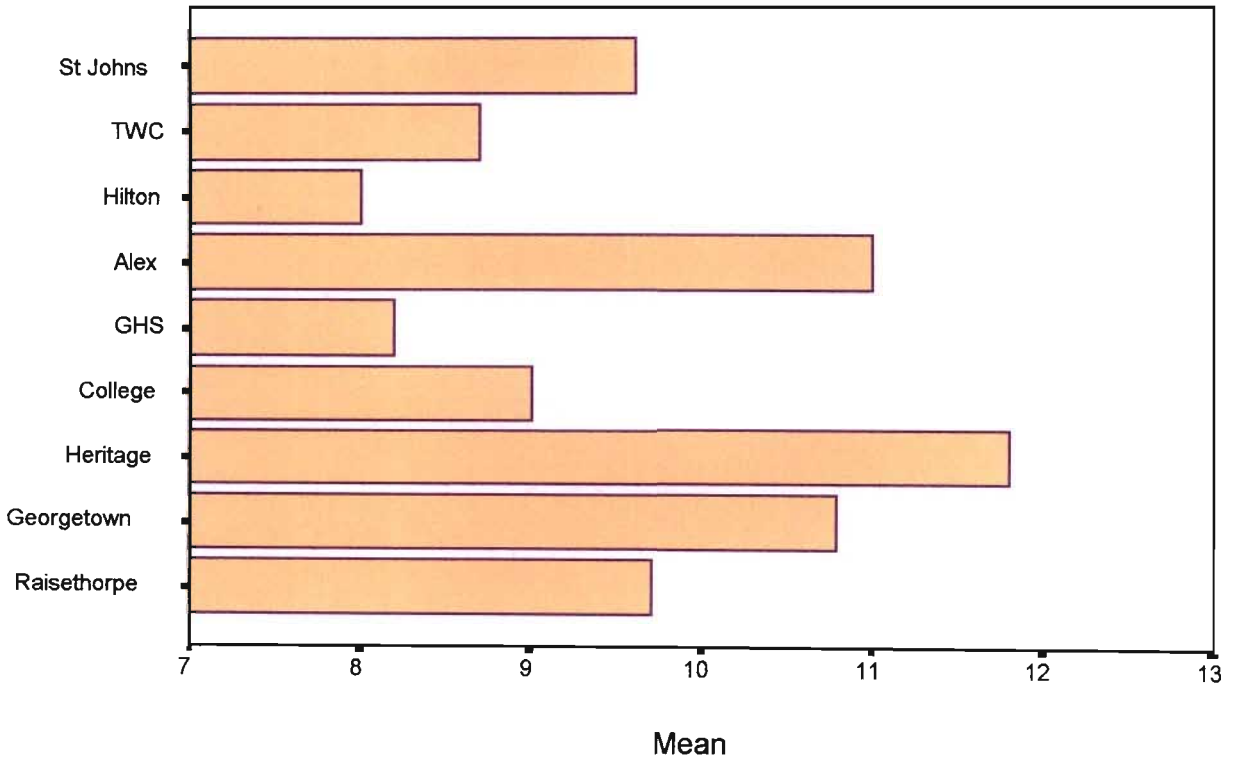
Graph 57 – Importance of Central Location According to School



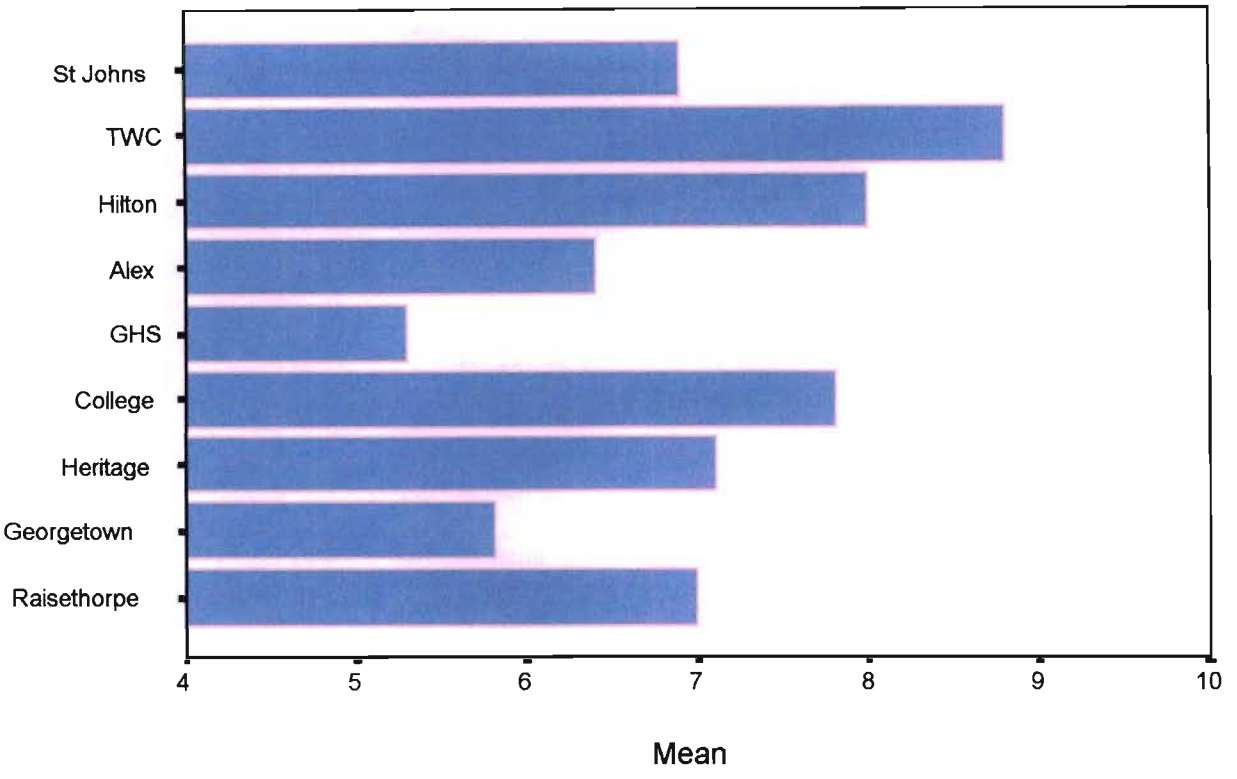
Graph 58 – Importance of Reasonable Fees According to School



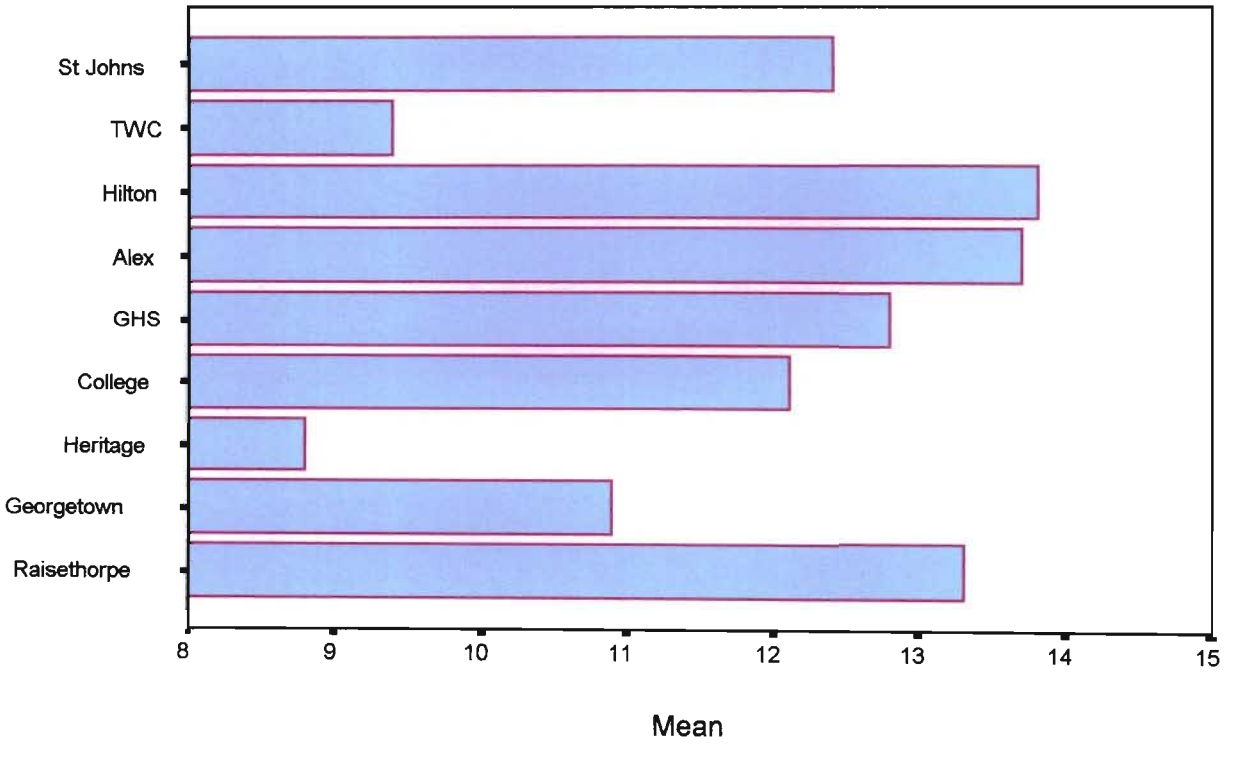
Graph 59 – Importance of Ample Parking According to School



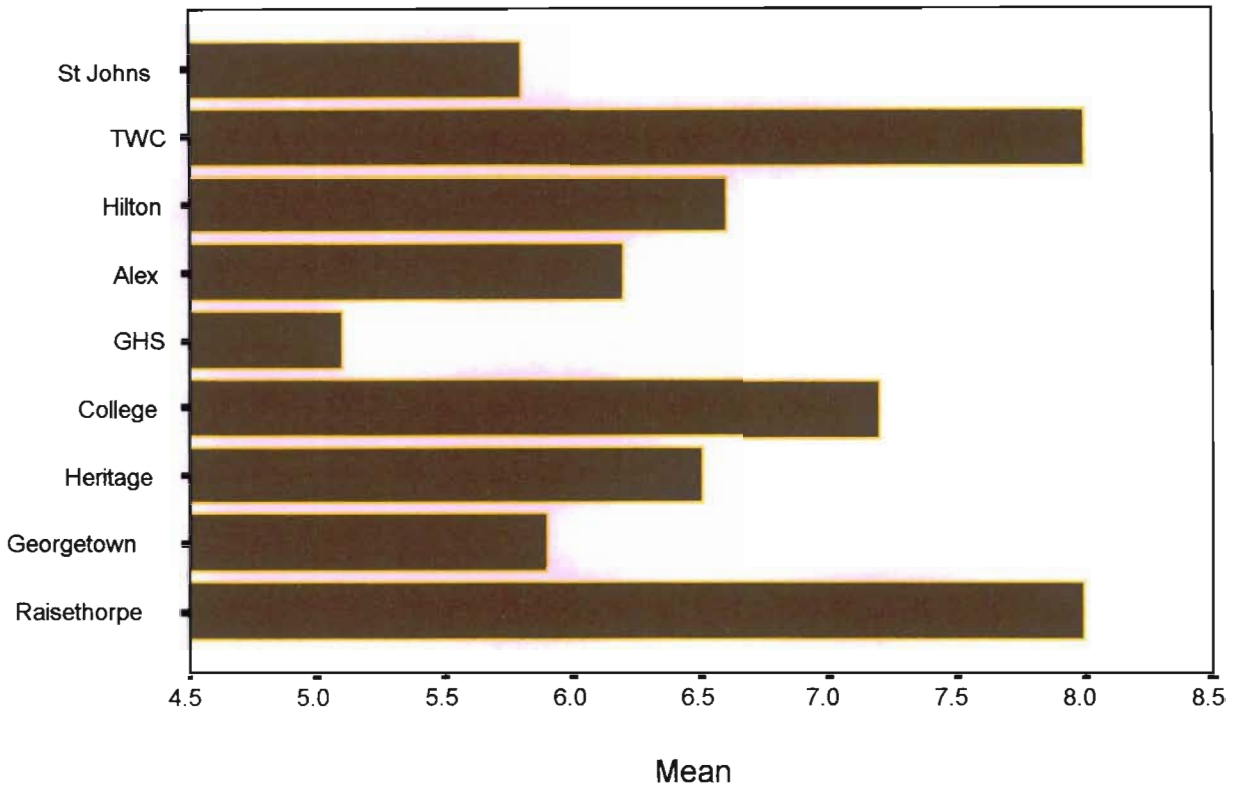
Graph 60 – Importance of Computer Facilities According to School



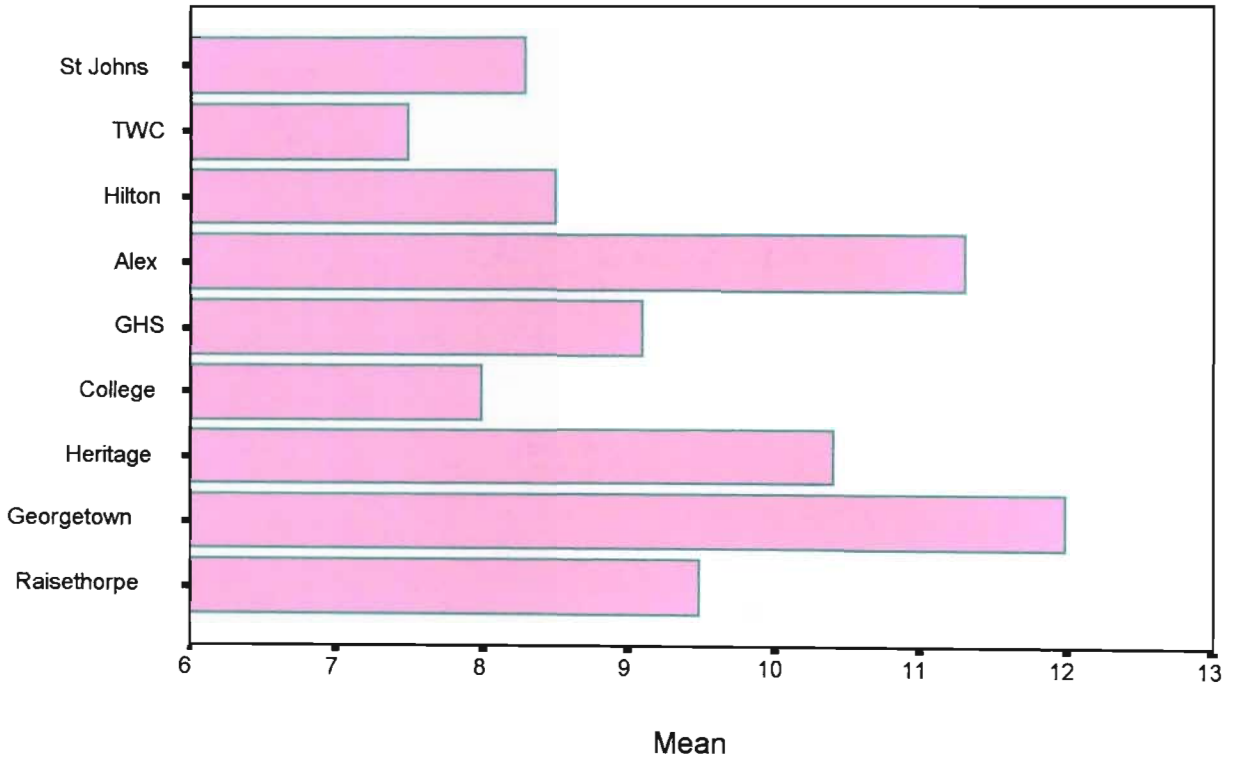
Graph 61 – Importance of Sport Clubs According to School



Graph 62 – Importance of Academic Standards According to School



Graph 63 – Importance of Social Events According to School



Graph 64 – Importance of Library According to School

Appendix C – Institutions' Rating By Attribute According to Scholars

	Ent / Social Areas	Res	Student Reps	Specific Courses	Highly Qualified Lecturers	Rep	High Safety Stds	Int Recog	Central Location	Fees	Ample Parking	Comp Fac	Sport Clubs	Ac Stds	Social Events	Library
Damelin	2.8	2.49	2.69	3.23	3.15	3.11	3.11	2.97	3.27	3.68	3.3	3.46	2.88	3.14	2.85	3.05
Technikon	2.97	2.65	2.78	3.27	3.1	2.91	2.91	2.68	3.04	3.69	3.18	3.27	2.96	3.01	2.99	3.1
UNISA	2.79	2.81	3.02	3.47	3.32	3.27	3.27	3.28	3.14	3.53	3.26	3.45	3.02	3.38	2.92	4.14
Varsity College	3.27	2.87	2.99	3.24	3.27	3.17	3.17	2.82	3.17	3.41	3.29	3.35	3.2	3.18	3.27	3.32
UCT	4.21	4.07	3.87	4.17	4.28	4.35	4.35	4.13	3.92	3.27	3.76	4.27	4.22	4.27	4.13	4.26
International Universities	4.06	4.11	3.89	4.19	4.29	4.24	4.24	4.35	3.56	2.87	3.66	4.33	3.96	4.19	3.83	4.11
UDW	3.42	3.12	3.21	3.56	3.5	3.06	3.06	3	3.29	3.37	3.46	3.46	3.37	3.26	3.38	3.45
Wits	3.95	3.67	3.59	4	4.09	3.92	3.92	3.85	3.76	3.31	4	3.92	3.87	3.98	3.66	3.88
RAU	3.32	3.18	3.16	3.42	3.56	3.38	3.38	3.19	3.24	3.16	3.34	3.56	3.44	3.64	3.22	2.43
Rhodes	3.83	3.76	3.49	3.66	3.9	3.97	3.97	3.85	3.24	3.19	3.39	3.7	3.67	3.87	3.61	3.75
UNP	3.65	3.36	3.42	3.64	3.76	3.53	3.53	3.43	3.76	3.53	3.54	3.6	3.55	3.68	3.63	3.76
UND	3.64	3.4	3.42	3.62	3.74	3.53	3.53	3.46	3.55	3.45	3.5	3.58	3.62	3.62	3.56	3.66
Univ of Stellenbosch	3.9	3.93	3.69	4.01	3.96	4.09	4.09	3.78	3.49	3.32	3.53	3.83	3.88	4.02	3.71	3.94
Other	3.98	4.16	3.92	3.89	4.05	4.11	4.11	3.84	3.89	3.47	3.42	3.81	3.89	4.08	3.87	4.16

Appendix D – Ratings of UNP According to each Attribute

0 = Poor

3 = Average

5 = Good

Attribute	Rating	Majority Percentage
Entertainment	5	32.0
Residences	5	25.2
Student Representatives	3	25.6
Specific Courses	3	27.8
Highly Qualified Lecturers	5	31.1
Reputation	5	26.7
Safety Standards	3	25.1
International Recognition	5	24.9
Location	5	34.9
Fees	4	29.6
Parking	4	26.5
Computer Facilities	5	26.9
Sport Clubs	5	27.0
Academic Standards	5	30.9
Social Events	5	28.9
Library	5	36.4

Table – UNP's Ratings for Each Attribute

Appendix E – Question 8 – 25 (Full Results)

Perceptions of Scholars Regarding University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

1. *Computer facilities at the University of Natal (PMB) are of a high standard.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
36.6%	37.7%	16.2%	4.9%

2. *I think the University of Natal (PMB) campus is safe at night.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
16.2%	29.8%	34.6%	19.4%

3. *In my opinion the University of Natal (PMB) has a good social life.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
37.3%	37.3%	17.7%	7.8%

4. *The University of Natal (PMB) has good library facilities.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
50.8%	30.9%	14.3%	4.0%

5. *I see the University of Natal (PMB) as being a multiracial campus.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
66.7%	16.1%	10.3%	6.9%

6. *I think the University of Natal (PMB) is politically progressive.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
26.0%	39.7%	22.2%	12.1%

7. *Sport facilities at the University of Natal (PMB) are of a high standard.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
23.1%	40.0%	28.5%	8.5%

8. *The University of Natal (PMB) has the appropriate laboratory equipment for experiments and research.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
48.6%	35.5%	12.2%	4.1%

9. *I see the University of Natal (PMB) as being an excellent academic institution.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
31.7%	34.8%	23.7%	9.8%

10. *The social life at the University of Natal (PMB) – e.g. Rag race day, drinking clubs, Dynamics week – is what university is about.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
23.8%	29.0%	27.1%	19.6%

11. *The University of Natal (PMB) only facilitates large classes (i.e. mass education).*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
24.2%	40.3%	26.9%	8.3%

12. *I think the lecturers University of Natal (PMB) are approachable.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
27.9%	49.3%	17.2%	5.7%

13. *I think that students get no personal attention to queries / problems in lectures.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
17.5%	37.2%	30.0%	15.4%

14. *Students are nothing more than a student number to the staff at the University of Natal (PMB).*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
24.0%	32.4%	26.4%	17.2%

15. *The upgrade in security at the University of Natal (PMB) is a waste of money.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
10.0%	8.8%	27.1%	54.0%

16. *Students will get a better education at the University of Natal (PMB) than students at Damelin / Varsity College / Technikon.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
33.8%	24.8%	22.8%	18.6%

17. *What racial group represents the majority of students at the University of Natal (PMB)?*

Black	White	Coloured	Indian	Asian
74.5%	15.4%	1.2%	8.6%	0.4%

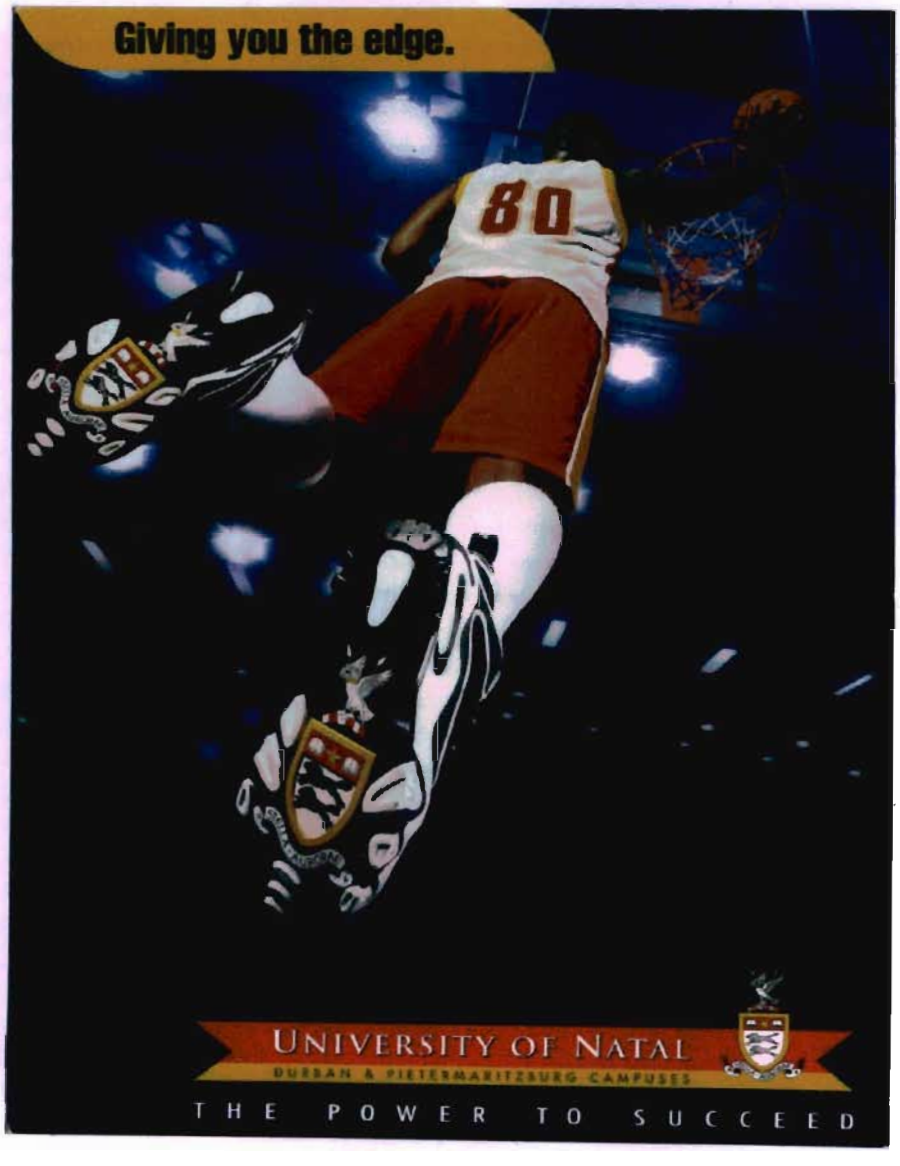
18. *I will be better equipped to work after studying than friends who won't study after school.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
66.2%	15.6%	11.3%	6.9%

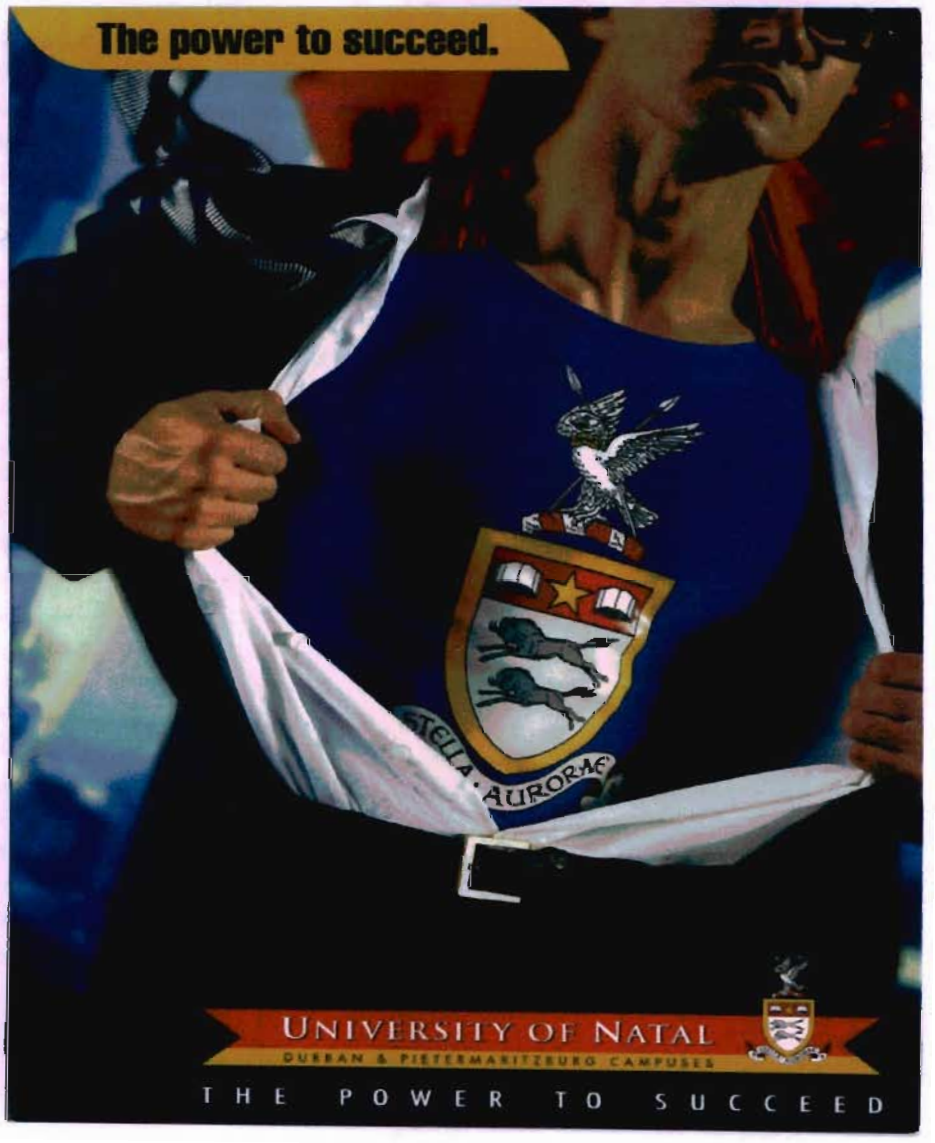
19. *University is for those people who don't know what to do with their lives.*

Agree	Sometimes	Not really	Disagree
2.9%	8.2%	13.5%	75.4%

Appendix F – University of Natal Advert 1

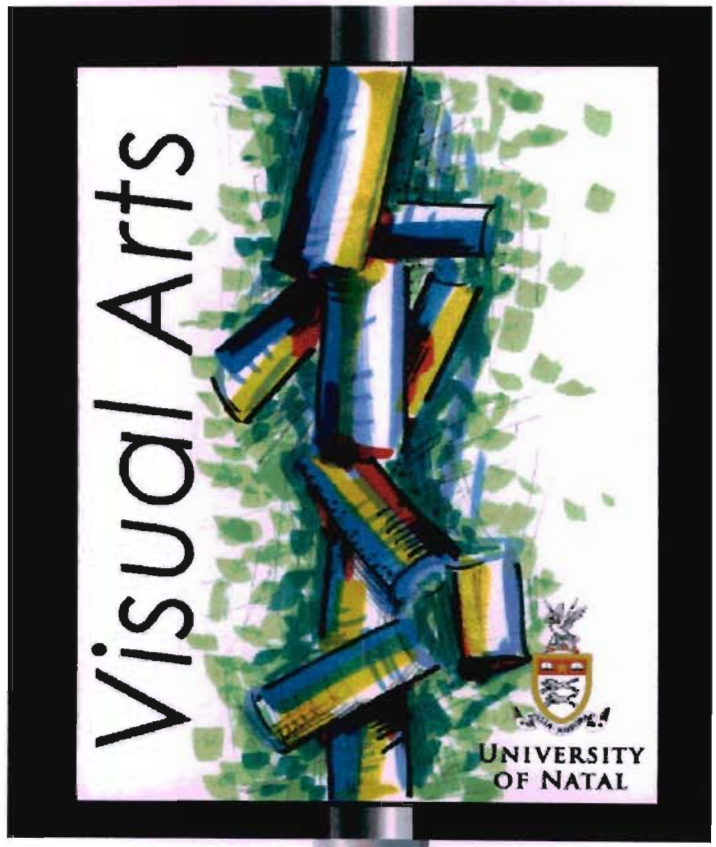


Appendix G – University of Natal Advert 2

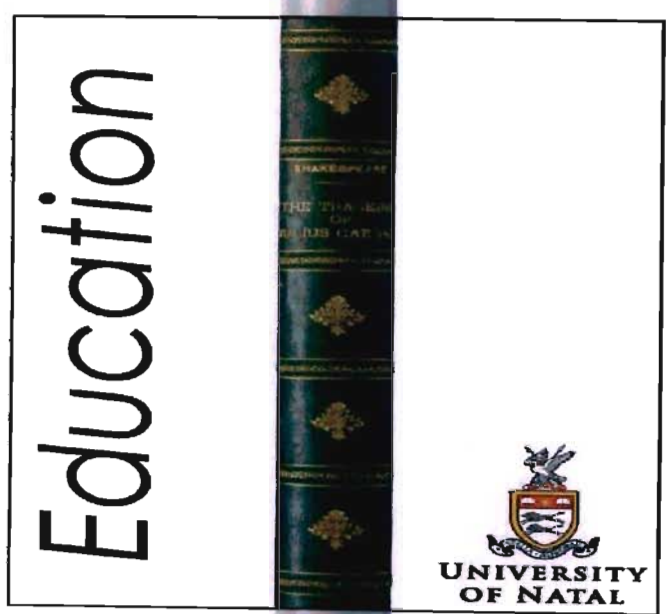


Appendix H – University of Natal Advert 3

Appendix I – University of Natal Pole Campaign



Visual Arts



Education