

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**Positioning planning: Creating a positioning strategy for the post-graduate international students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg)**

**By**

**Chido Christina Mlambo**

**210556066**

**A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Commerce**

**School of Management, IT and Governance**

**College of Law and Management Studies**

**Supervisor: Dr. Sanjay Soni**

**2017**

## DECLARATION

I Chido Christina Mlambo, declare that

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation/thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
- (ii) This dissertation/thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation/thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
- (iv) This dissertation/thesis does not contain other persons' writing unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
  - a) Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced;
  - b) Where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks and referenced.
- (v) Where I have reproduced a publication of which I am an author, co-author or editor, I have indicated in detail which part of the publication was actually written by myself alone and have fully referenced such publications.
- (vi) This dissertation/thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the dissertation/thesis and in the References sections.



Signature:

Date: 06/12/2017

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank God for the courage and determination instilled in me to work towards completing the study.

I would like to thank Dr. Sanjay Soni, my supervisor for the devoted support; exquisite supervision and persistence in helping me complete this Master's thesis. Your assistance was extremely appreciated. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Miss Deborah Cunynghame for the devoted support and advice that has guided me throughout the completion of this thesis.

Sincerest thanks to my parents, Isaiah and Alice, two brothers and sister, Ngoni, Tatenda and Rutendo for all the unlimited love, support and guidance that they have so graciously given to me. Special thanks to my parents for the endless opportunities that they have provided me with that has enabled me to get this far in life and in all things. I would also like to thank my family for always supporting me and sacrificing so much to make my university experience memorable.

My gratitude also goes to all the respondents who participated in this study, without whom it would not have been a success.

Special thanks go to Kudzayi-Nigel who has always known how to motivate and encourage me when I am down and even when I do not think the best of myself. I appreciate everything! Finally, thank you to my friends Patience, Nomathamsanqa, Cynthia, Andrew, Rex, Happiness, Nyasha, Chenai, Nomusa, Owner, Obey, Arnold and Forbes for being amazing individuals.

## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS**

UKZN-	University of KwaZulu-Natal
IBM SPSS-	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SWOT-	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
Etc. -	Et cetera
E.g. -	For example
PhD-	Doctor of Philosophy

## ABSTRACT

University of KwaZulu-Natal is well-known worldwide for educational brilliance, exceptional research output, and African scholarship. It continues to try hard to improve the excellence of its work and student and staff experience through global partnerships. It maintains these partnerships with a couple of universities all over the world. In spite of UKZN's international reputation, there has not been an actual positioning research done on the postgraduate international students market. UKZN loses potential international postgraduate students every year to other universities and one of the main reasons maybe lack of proper positioning. This then brings us to the objectives of this research which were, to establish who the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market, to find out the university's position from an International student's (going into post-grad) perspective, to assess whether the position of UKZN is aligning with their current marketing strategies, vision and mission and to create a positioning strategy to attract more International Students that the University is looking to pull in.

Objectives of this study were achieved by administering questionnaires to international post-graduate students and conducting two focus groups, one consisting of international third/fourth final year students and the other consisting of international masters students. The findings from both research techniques were compared to fulfill the objectives of the investigation.

The findings revealed that in geographical terms most international students come from Zimbabwe and Nigeria making those two countries the primary target market. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents did not believe that UKZN is a Premier University of African Scholarship. Among the success factors of a higher education tertiary institution raised were relationships with other universities with research facilities; research recognition; research facilities; quality of results (standards should not be compromised) and safety. The students also raised the fact that international students are not treated equally with local students, for example in terms of scholarships or bursaries, availability of residences and links for job opportunities.

The key conclusions drawn from the investigation were that though the UKZN seeks to be positioned as the 'Premier University of African Scholarship', in the international student's minds UKZN does not meet this mission statement. However, the international students did raise the fact that UKZN competes locally with local universities and less on an international scale. Furthermore a positioning statement derived from the findings was created which stated:

“University of KwaZulu-Natal: quality research is our priority!” The integrated marketing communications strategy created as the positioning strategy was based on the positioning statement.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	xv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xvi
CHAPTER 1: Introduction .....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of the study .....	2
1.3 Research Problem .....	2
1.4 Research objectives.....	3
1.5 Research questions.....	4
1.6 Theoretical Framework.....	4
1.6.1 Market Analysis .....	5
1.6.2 Internal Analysis .....	5
1.6.3 Competitor analysis .....	5
1.6.4 Selection of differences.....	6
1.6.5 Develop a marketing strategy .....	6
1.7 Significance of the study.....	6
1.8 Justification/Rationale.....	6
1.9 Research Methodology .....	7
1.10 Limitations of the study .....	7
1.11 Delimitations of the study.....	7
1.12 Chapter Overview .....	8

1.13 Conclusion .....	9
CHAPTER 2: Research Required in Developing a Positioning Strategy .....	10
2.1 Introduction.....	10
2.1.1 Growing need for market segmentation.....	10
2.1.2 Brief background of segmentation.....	11
2.2 Purpose of Market segmentation .....	11
2.2.1 The importance of market segmentation.....	11
2.3 International Segmentation .....	12
2.3.1 Definitions of International Market Segmentation .....	12
2.3.2 The purpose of international market segmentation.....	12
2.3.3 Challenges in international market segmentation .....	13
2.4 Criteria for successful segmentation .....	13
2.5 Steps in segmenting a market .....	14
2.6 Identifying the target market.....	15
2.6.1 Target marketing for a University.....	15
2.6.2 Targeting in international markets .....	16
2.6.3 Selection of target markets.....	17
2.6.3.1 Step by step process of selection of Target Markets.....	17
2.6.3.1.1 Choose criteria to measure market attractiveness and competitive position ...	17
2.6.3.1.2 Weigh the factors to reflect their relative importance.....	18
2.6.3.1.3 Measure the existing position of each possible target market on each factor..	18
2.6.3.1.4 Plan the future position of each market based on the assessment done .....	18
2.6.3.1.5 Evaluate implications of possible future changes .....	18
2.7 Competitor analysis .....	19
2.7.1 Purpose of competitor analysis in relation to positioning.....	20

2.7.1.1 Objectives of competitor analysis .....	20
2.7.2 Evaluating competitor’s strengths and weaknesses .....	21
2.7.2.1 Identify key success factors in the industry .....	21
2.7.2.2 Rate the firm and the competitors on each key success factor .....	22
2.7.2.3 Acknowledge the consequences for the competitive strategy .....	22
2.7.3 Competitor Profiling .....	22
2.7.4 Developing Competitive Strategies .....	23
2.7.4.1 Market Leader .....	23
2.7.4.1.1 Expanding total market .....	24
2.7.4.1.2 Defending Market Share .....	24
2.7.4.1.3 Expanding Market Share.....	25
2.7.4.2 Market Challenger .....	25
2.7.4.2.1 Frontal Attack .....	26
2.7.4.2.2 Flank Attack.....	26
2.7.4.2.3 Encirclement “blitz” attack .....	26
2.7.4.2.4 Bypass attack .....	27
2.7.4.2.5 Guerrilla warfare attack .....	27
2.7.4.3 Market Follower.....	27
2.7.4.3.1 Counterfeiters.....	27
2.7.4.3.2 Cloners .....	27
2.7.4.3.3 Imitators .....	27
2.7.4.3.4 Adapters .....	28
2.7.4.4 Market Nicher .....	28
2.8 Assessing UKZN’s current marketing strategy (Internal analysis) .....	28
2.8.1 SWOT Analysis .....	29

2.8.2 Importance of goal setting .....	29
2.8.2.1 Provides Focus .....	30
2.8.2.2 Increases Motivation .....	30
2.8.2.3 Improves Group Cohesion .....	30
2.8.2.4 Increases Employee Worth .....	30
2.8.2.5 Offers Measurability .....	31
2.8.3 UKZN's vision.....	31
2.8.4 UKZN's duty (mission) .....	31
2.8.5 Objectives and strategies.....	31
2.9 Conclusion .....	35
Chapter 3: Theory of positioning and developing a positioning strategy .....	36
3.1 Introduction.....	36
3.2 Theory of positioning.....	36
3.2.1 Market Analysis .....	37
3.2.2 Internal Analysis .....	37
3.2.3 Competitor analysis .....	37
3.2.4 Selection of differences.....	38
3.2.5 Develop a marketing strategy .....	38
3.3 Developing a positioning strategy .....	38
3.3.1 History of Product Positioning.....	39
3.3.2 Identifying a set of differentiating competitive advantages.....	40
3.3.2.1 Product differentiation .....	40
3.3.2.1.1 Features .....	40
3.3.2.1.2 Performance .....	40
3.3.2.1.3 Reliability.....	41

3.3.2.1.4 Style .....	41
3.3.2.1.5 Product range .....	41
3.3.2.2 Services differentiation .....	41
3.3.2.2.1 Delivery.....	41
3.3.2.2.2 Consumer training.....	41
3.3.2.2.3 Consulting service.....	41
3.3.2.2.4 Miscellaneous services.....	41
3.3.2.3 Image differentiation.....	42
3.3.2.3.1 Symbols.....	42
3.3.2.3.2 Visual media .....	42
3.3.2.3.3 Events.....	42
3.3.2.3.4 Atmosphere .....	42
3.3.2.4 Personnel differentiation.....	42
3.3.3 Choosing the right competitive advantages .....	43
3.3.3.1 How to choose the right one .....	43
3.3.4 Choosing an overall positioning strategy.....	43
3.3.4.1 More for more .....	44
3.3.4.2 More for same .....	44
3.3.4.3 The Same for less.....	44
3.3.4.4 Less for much less.....	45
3.3.5 Developing a positioning strategy for a university .....	45
3.3.5.1 Academic Programs .....	46
3.3.5.2 Tuition and Financial Aid .....	47
3.3.5.3 Academic delivery systems.....	47
3.3.5.4 Communication Strategy .....	47

3.4 Conclusion .....	47
Chapter 4: Research Methodology.....	48
4.1 Introduction.....	48
4.2 Purpose of the study.....	48
4.3 Research Objectives.....	49
4.4 Research strategies.....	49
4.5 Research Approaches/Paradigms .....	50
4.6 Study site.....	51
4.7 Target population .....	51
4.8 Sample.....	52
4.8.1 Sampling method .....	52
4.8.2 Sample size .....	53
4.9 Tools used to collect the data.....	54
4.9.1 Quantitative Method .....	54
4.9.1.1 Section A.....	54
4.9.1.2 Section B.....	55
4.9.1.3 Section C.....	55
4.9.1.4 Section D.....	55
4.9.2 Qualitative Method .....	56
4.9.2.1 Focus Groups .....	56
4.9.2.2 The Focus Group Interview Guide .....	56
4.10 Data quality control.....	58
4.10.1 Reliability and Validity.....	58
4.10.2 Data analysis .....	59
4.10.2.1 Qualitative data analysis .....	59

4.10.2.2 Quantitative data analysis .....	60
4.11 Conclusion .....	61
Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion .....	63
5.1 Introduction.....	63
5.2 Findings by objectives .....	64
5.2.1 Objective: To establish who the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market.....	64
5.2.2 Objective: What is the university’s position from an International student (going into post-grad) perspective.....	73
5.2.3 Objective: To assess whether the position of UKZN is aligning with their current marketing strategies, vision and mission .....	80
5.3 Discussion of research objectives .....	82
5.3.1 Objective 1: To establish who the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market.....	82
5.3.1.1 Focus groups .....	82
5.3.1.2 Questionnaires.....	82
5.3.2 Objective Two: What is the university’s position from an International student (going into post-grad) perspective.....	84
5.3.2.1 Perception of other universities compared to UKZN .....	84
5.3.2.1.1 Focus groups .....	84
5.3.2.1.2 Questionnaires.....	84
5.3.2.2 Perception on UKZN facilities.....	86
5.3.2.2.1 Questionnaires.....	86
5.3.2.2.2 Focus groups .....	86
5.3.3 Objective Three: To assess whether the position of UKZN is aligning with their current marketing strategies, vision and mission .....	87
5.3.3.1 Questionnaires.....	87

5.3.3.2 Focus groups .....	87
5.3.4 Objective Four: To create a positioning strategy to attract more International Students that the University is looking to pull in .....	91
5.4 Conclusion .....	91
Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations .....	92
6.1 Introduction.....	92
6.2 Conclusion of the study .....	92
6.3 The positioning strategy.....	93
6.3.1 Product Strategy.....	93
6.3.1.1 Branding.....	93
6.3.1.2 Quality control .....	94
6.3.2 Place/ Distribution Strategy .....	94
6.3.3 Pricing strategy .....	94
6.3.4 Promotion Strategy .....	94
6.3.4.1 Build Awareness .....	94
6.3.4.2 Provide Information .....	95
6.3.4.3 Stimulate Demand.....	95
6.3.4.4 Reinforce the position of UKZN.....	95
6.3.4.5 Print media advertising .....	95
6.3.4.6 Social media advertising .....	95
6.3.5 Process .....	96
6.3.6 People.....	96
6.3.6.1 Level of customer orientation .....	96
6.3.7 Physical Evidence .....	96
6.4 Further recommendations .....	97
6.5 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research.....	97

6.5.1 Recommendations for Future Research .....	97
List of References .....	98
APPENDIX A: Needs analysis .....	105
APPENDIX B: Positioning Strategy .....	107
APPENDIX C: UKZN's recommended future International students postgraduate page/branding picture.....	108
APPENDIX D: Questionnaire .....	109
APPENDIX E: Cover letter for Questionnaire .....	114
APPENDIX F: Consent form Questionnaire .....	115
APPENDIX G: Focus Group Discussion with International students.....	116
APPENDIX H: Cover letter for Focus Groups Questions.....	119
APPENDIX I: Consent form for Focus Groups Questions .....	120
APPENDIX J: Ethical Clearance.....	121

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Comparisons of qualitative and quantitative research methods .....	51
Table 4.2: Enrolment statistics for Prospective International students .....	52
Table 4.3: Reliability statistics for questionnaire .....	59
Table 5.1: Key in descending order of means.....	64
Table 5.2: Focus groups responses .....	66
Table 5.3: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects .....	67
Table 5.4: Assessing Segment A (Zimbabwe).....	71
Table 5.5: Assessing Segment B (Nigeria) .....	71
Table 5.6: Assessing Segment C (Tanzania) .....	71
Table 5.7: Assessing Segment D (Zambia).....	72
Table 5.8: Competitive analysis.....	75
Table 5.9: Competitive analysis.....	77
Table 5.10: Key and means in descending order .....	78
Table 5.11: Strengths and Weaknesses .....	79
Table 5.12: Perceptions of the UKZN brand .....	80
Table 5.13: Key and means in descending order .....	81
Table 5.14: One-Sample Test (Test value 4) .....	88
Table 5.15: One-Sample Test (Test value 5) .....	88
Table 5.16: Hypotheses .....	89
Table 5.17: Binomial test.....	89

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Research required in developing a positioning strategy.....	5
Figure 2.1: Market-Attractiveness/Competitive Position Matrix .....	19
Figure 2.2: Market Challenger attack strategies .....	26
Figure 3.1: Research required in developing a positioning strategy.....	37
Figure 3.2: Choosing an overall positioning strategy .....	44
Figure 4.1: Snapshot of the sample size results .....	53
Figure 5.1: Needs Analysis .....	65
Figure 5.2: Geographic demographics .....	68
Figure 5.3: Homogenous segments.....	69
Figure 5.4: Market-Attractiveness/Competitive Position Matrix .....	72
Figure 5.5: Competitive Analysis .....	76
Figure 5.6: Perception of UKZN .....	78
Figure 5.7: Perception of UKZN goals .....	80
Figure 5.8: Perception of other universities compared to UKZN (Discussion).....	85
Figure 5.9: Perception on UKZN facilities (Discussion).....	86
Figure 5.10: Perception on UKZN goals (Discussion) .....	87

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

Several marketing scholars have explained positioning in different ways but all the explanations are mutual. The place that an organisation occupies in the minds of consumers relative to its competition is known as positioning (Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff, Terblanche, Elliot and Klopper, 2015). Positioning is “the performance of planning an organisation’s offering and image to dwell in a unique place in the minds of the target market” according to Kotler and Keller (2012:167). On the other hand, positioning also refers to creating a particular marketing mix to influence possible consumers’ overall opinion of a company, product or brand (Lamb et al., 2015). Whereas Jobber (1995:224) concluded that, “positioning is the selection of where the organisation wants to compete (which is the target market) and how it wishes to compete (differential advantage).”

The reason why is it imperative for an organisation or brand to have a good positioning strategy is to develop lucrative relationships with consumers, by gaining more knowledge on customer needs than its competition, and offer customers more value. This will help a brand gain a competitive advantage (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). Furthermore, a satisfactory value proposition aids a marketing strategy by describing the brand’s essence, establishing which consumer objectives will be achieved, and presenting how it does so in a distinct way. As competition intensifies in the tertiary industry, the extent to which it is important for service companies to differentiate themselves in meaningful ways has increased (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011).

The industry of higher education has become progressively competitive and institutions have to compete for students in the recruitment markets. Moreover, bearing in mind that the basis of this research is post-graduate international students, who already know what their needs are from an institution (in comparison to first-time undergraduate students), it even becomes more competitive for universities. This is because there are quite a lot of needs that students will find out only after having had an experience at a certain university, including the facilities, accommodation and service of the lecturers. Therefore it becomes slightly less of a challenge to create a competitive strategy for first-time undergraduate students as compared to post-graduate students. A valuable means to gain knowledge of these recruitment markets is to comprehend the decision-making processes of intending applicants well (Maringe, 2006).

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

According to the UKZN (2015), in 2004, UKZN was formed through the merger of the Universities of Durban-Westville and Natal. The union ushered by these institutions brought about a major renovation of the national Higher Education system. UKZN stands out as living proof of a success of this new system. This brought about an opportunity to develop a university that is really South African and global.

UKZN is well known worldwide for educational brilliance, exceptional research output, and African scholarship. It continues to try hard to improve the excellence of its work and student and staff experience through global partnerships. It maintains these partnerships with some universities all over the world. UKZN has proven to be quite a common destination for international students whose needs include being in an institution where technology, is being advanced to respond to some of the world's greatest demanding problems such as HIV, water and food security (UKZN, 2015).

The University of KwaZulu-Natal has nearly 61 exchange treaties with universities in 22 different countries. The exchange package offers international students a chance to cooperate on a social, cultural and academic level with local students. The package allows students to embrace a new ethos and diverse way of life (UKZN, 2015).

According to the university's research records, there has not been a research done on creating a positioning strategy for the international post-graduate students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus (UKZN, 2015). UKZN loses potential international postgraduate students every year to other universities and one of the main reasons may be a lack of proper positioning. UKZN needs to be able to provide the needs required by the international market. Hence, the focus of this study was to create a positioning strategy based on those findings (UKZN, 2015).

## **1.3 Research Problem**

The means by which a service or product is described by customers based on significant features, is what is known as a service or product's position (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). Kotler and Armstrong (2012) further concluded that products are prepared in factories, but brands develop in the minds of customers. Therefore, it is important that the perception that consumers have of the university be in line with the positioning strategy of the university. In order to achieve alignment between the positioning of the university and the perception that

students have of it, the university would have to start with the students and understand their needs. That way, the university would be able to position itself based on what the students really want. With that said, the primary objective (also the title of this study) of this study is creating a positioning strategy for the post-graduate international students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg).

Research on international students and positioning at UKZN has been done as two stand-alone topics, however, a unified study of the two subject areas has never been done. Therefore, this research will contribute to the better understanding of this particular market also a better understanding of positioning.

## **1.4 Research Objectives**

**This study endeavours to address the following research objectives:**

**a. To establish whom the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market.**

- What are the needs of international students going into postgraduate studies?
- What are the current segments and what characteristics are used to define them in the international post-graduate market?
- Among the segments identified, which ones are the most attractive?

**b. What is the university's position from an International student (going into post-grad) perspective?**

- What is the students' perception of other universities in comparison to UKZN?
- What is UKZN's position currently from a student's perspective?

**c. To assess whether the position of UKZN is aligning with their current marketing strategies, vision and mission?**

- From a student's perspective, how do they feel currently about the university's mission and goals?

**d. To create a positioning strategy to attract more International Students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.**

## **1.5 Research Questions**

The research questions underpinning this study are:

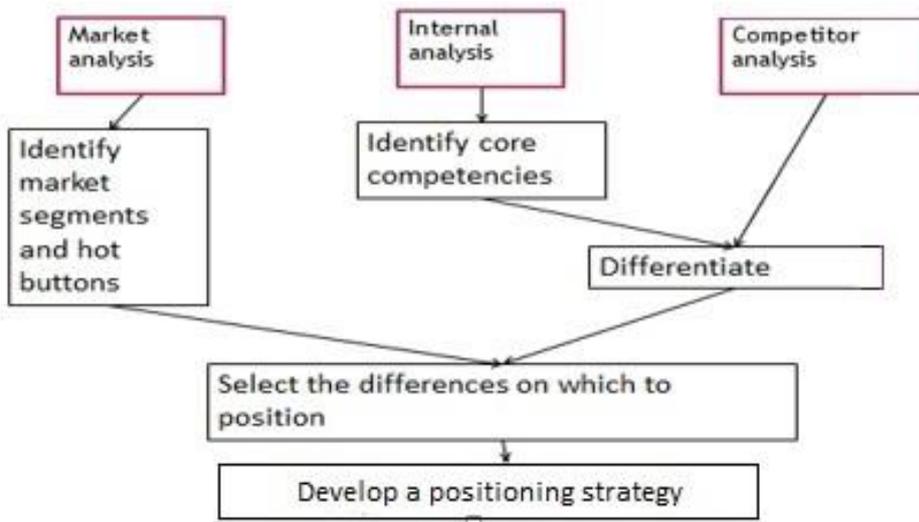
- What are the needs of international students going into postgraduate studies?
- What are the current segments and what characteristics are used to define them in the international post-graduate market?
- Among the segments identified, which ones are the most attractive?
- What is the students' perception of other universities in comparison to UKZN?
- What is UKZN's position currently from a student's perspective?
- From a student's perspective, how do they feel currently about the university's mission and goals?

## **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

According to Lamb et al. (2015), the idea of positioning dates back to the late 1960s and early 1970's, referred to as the "positioning era", when it was popularised by a series of articles published by Ries and Trout (1981). Positioning was approached from a psychological perspective and their main theme was that "positioning is about what you do to the mind" (Ries and Trout, 1981:2). Hence, the utmost marketing battlefield was understood to be the mind of the consumer. A clear understanding of the way the mind functions will result in a clear understanding of how positioning works.

According to Lamb et al. (2015), positioning presumes that customers correlate services or products based on essential characteristics. Efficient positioning entails evaluating positions chosen by rival brands, defining the essential aspects underlying the positions and identifying a position in the market that will allow a company to utilize all its marketing strategies productively.

**Figure 1.1:** Research required in developing a positioning strategy



(Vigar-Ellis, 2014:2).

The diagram above illustrates the conceptual framework of this research.

### **1.6.1 Market Analysis:**

Based on the concept by Ries and Trout (1981:2) “positioning is about what you do to the mind,” is the reason why it starts from understanding the market or consumers. This stage entails marketers to identify market segments by carrying out a needs analysis, targeting exercise, which will help to identify the determining dimensions also known as “hot buttons” that will be used to differentiate on (Walker and Mullins, 2008).

### **1.6.2 Internal Analysis:**

After gaining insight on who the target market is, and what their needs are, it is important to look at what the firm’s current core competencies in terms of its resources (what it has) and its performance (what it can do). This stage is important in the positioning process because it enables the firm to compare or benchmark itself with the competitors’ core competencies and then make a decision on how to differentiate themselves (Vigar-Ellis, 2014).

### **1.6.3 Competitor analysis:**

Competitor analysis helps enlighten marketers in gaining knowledge of competitors’ strong abilities and flaws which may, in turn, propose a chance for differentiation (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011). A firm needs to understand the competitors’ core competencies to identify how it can differentiate itself from them.

#### ***1.6.4 Selection of differences:***

Selection of the differences which will be used to position the firm is done using the hot buttons (homogenous highly important needs among the different segments chosen) and the differences between the core competencies of the firm and that of the competitors (Vigar-Ellis, 2014). This method is very effective because the firm will be meeting the needs of the consumers and being different from their competitors, which creates a distinct image in the minds of consumers. More so, these differences can be used to create a positioning statement.

#### ***1.6.5 Develop a marketing strategy:***

The marketing strategy entails the marketer to create a marketing mix strategy that will be able to communicate and achieve the positioning that would have been created in the early stages. The strategies should be able to address the needs of the target market and how to best keep the consumers loyal to the firm or organisation.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

It is noteworthy that this is the first study to attempt to create a positioning strategy for the post-graduate international students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg). The study also analysed and determined who the primary and secondary target markets are in the international pool of potential students. Consequently, the study also helped in creating a strategy that will better link the university's positioning with the expectations that the postgraduate international student market has of the institution. Therefore, this research contributed toward a better understanding of the concept of the positioning of the postgraduate and international students markets at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

### **1.8 Justification/Rationale**

A dependable approach to knowing whether there is any link between the two dimensions of positioning 'what the brand or organization wishes to achieve and, what consumers perceive of the organization' is through conducting a study that would examine consumers opinions on an organisation and its offerings. Based on the theoretical concept illustrated in Figure 1.1 and explained in section 1.6, the study seeks to create a positioning strategy for the post-graduate international students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg). Only a limited number of studies have been done to compare the two dimensions of positioning, which are: what the brand or organization wishes to achieve and what consumers perceive of the brand

(Devlin, Ennew and Mirza, 1995) but more specifically no positioning studies have been conducted on the international postgraduate students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This study may help South African universities, more specifically the University of KwaZulu-Natal in ways to be more competitive in the international market. Furthermore, the perception of international postgraduate students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal will remain undetermined without the study.

## **1.9 Research Methodology**

The research methodology used in this study was influenced by the study objectives. This study made use of a survey and case study research strategies, through the use of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. For the purpose of collecting primary data, this study made use of personal administered questionnaires for quantitative data and focus groups for qualitative data. The questionnaires contained a mixture of closed-ended and open ended questions and a focus group guide was used to conduct the session. The quantitative data collected from the questionnaires was analysed using IBM SPSS Version 22 and the qualitative data collected from the focus groups conducted was analysed using thematic analysis.

## **1.10 Limitations of the Study**

The limitation of this study is that there is a shortage of previous research regarding positioning strategies for the postgraduate international students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Citing previous studies helps to create a base for literature review and the research problem. The limitation of this study was addressed to through using descriptive research. Through the use of descriptive research, the researcher was able to apprehend the features of the market in question (international postgraduate students), reason methodically about conditions in a certain situation (for instance, the key success factors in an industry) and help make certain decisions by giving recommendations (such as the positioning strategy that will be created from this study). Furthermore, to address the limitation, though not directly linked to the study, the researcher made use of previous studies that had to do with positioning, perceptions of students and international students. These secondary sources managed to contribute to the theory.

## **1.11 Delimitations of the study**

In order to study international post-graduate students across all University of KwaZulu-Natal campuses would deserve time, and is a challenging job to achieve. This main focus of this study

therefore, was on international post-graduate students enrolled at University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus. The researcher is currently enrolled at this particular campus, and had access to collect data from the chosen sample.

## **1.12 Chapter Overview**

Chapter 2 includes the processes involved in positioning. These procedures would include segmentation, targeting, competitive analysis and internal analysis. It is important to clarify these procedures as positioning involves not just a decision that is made by management on how to position but, involves these four procedures before creating the final positioning strategy and statement. Also covered in this chapter are international segmentation, competitive strategies, and Swot analysis.

Chapter 3 focuses on the theory of positioning and developing a positioning strategy. It is important to cover the theory of positioning as this is the underlying theoretical background, which this study was based on and guided by. It begins by providing an understanding of positioning in the marketing strategy. Also covered in this chapter are the history of product positioning, identifying a set of differentiating competitive advantages, choosing the right competitive advantages and choosing an overall positioning strategy.

Chapter 4 discusses the techniques used to collect data for the study. Features of the target population, sampling methods and data collection tools are discussed in this chapter. This chapter also looks at data analysis was done and how reliability and validity were sustained. It gives more detail of the limitations that were briefly discussed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 5 looks at the presentation of the findings and the discussion of the findings. These findings included both the quantitative findings from questionnaires and qualitative findings from focus groups. These findings are then be discussed by the researcher.

Chapter 6 looks at the conclusion and recommendations of the entire study and presents a positioning strategy for the selected target market within the international postgraduate students market, based on the findings of the research.

Chapter 7 looked at the recommendations for future research. It is in this chapter that the researcher also mentions the limitations faced during the conduction of study.

### **1.13 Conclusion**

In this chapter the background of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, brief theoretical framework, research questions and research objectives have been discussed in relation to the research problem. This study is aimed at creating a positioning strategy for the post-graduate international students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg Campus). Chapter 2 consists of an in-depth discussion on the processes involved in positioning and Chapter 3 in further detail discusses the theory of positioning and developing a positioning strategy.

# **CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH REQUIRED IN DEVELOPING A POSITIONING STRATEGY**

## **2.1 Introduction: Market Segmentation**

A market has a group of people and or organisations with needs or wants and with the ability and willingness to buy. Within a market there is a market segment which is: a subdivision of consumers or firms (in the case of business-to-business) that share a similar characteristic/s which will result in them having very much alike product or service needs (Lamb et al., 2015). The process that enables an organisation to have meaningful market segments is known as market segmentation. Market segmentation is a process, which involves the market being divided into akin identifiable segments. Other scholars such as Clarke and Wilson (2009) say, segmenting a market involves separating buyers into the consumers into groups, such that in each group there is a similarity in characteristics of the people in it but being different from other groups segmented.

For an organization or firm to get to know buyer similarities they have to pay close attention to the amount and frequency of buying specific goods or services, the devotion of consumers to a specific brand, how they use the product and other measures of getting a response (Clarke and Wilson, 2009). Therefore, the first segment of the research required in developing a positioning strategy will look into the ways and processes organisation can use to identify similar needs and segment the market.

With that said, market segmentation in this study will be used for the sole purpose of meeting the first objective which is to establish whom the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market. The process of market segmentation will be explained in full leading to the identification of the primary and secondary target market.

### **2.1.1 Growing need for market segmentation**

As a result of growth and development of the internet, and changing demographics of the users, market segmentation has become more vital. According to Internet Live Stats (2016) internet usage worldwide is about 40 percent (an estimated 3, 4 billion users) of the total world population (estimated at 7, 4 billion). Consequently, there will be a growing number of

marketing opportunities. Since the internet removes geographic boundaries, organisations can interact and reach segments of customers they could not access before.

### **2.1.2 Brief background of segmentation**

Product differentiation and market segmentation are not new ideas or concepts. According to Shaw (1912), who was one of the founders of marketing thought, the strategy of product differentiation involves meeting human wants more accurately than existing and potential competition. Usually, the result of this according to Kerin and Hartley (2017) will be an accumulation of demand for the supplier's service or product and potential for an increase in the price. This marketing scholar highlighted that apart from treating each geographical region separately, economic and social market contours are equally important and should be treated as separate marketing problems as well. Apart from the advice of the separate contour or segment analysis, Shaw (1912) identified that the law of diminishing returns enforces a limit on the practical value to the company of catering to these different markets.

## **2.2 Purpose of Market segmentation**

According to Lamb et al. (2015), market segmentation's purpose is to allow the firm to alter marketing mixes to meet the needs of the particular segments identified. However, Clarke and Wilson (2009) opinion was that the basic objective is that by dividing customers into different subgroups it may be possible to align a firm's offering more closely to the needs of a specific group better than a company that does not identify segmental differences and, therefore, become a preferred supplier. In turn, this may allow the additional value provided to be replicated in higher prices and margins. Furthermore, this would lead to the organisation in question reaching a level of pre-eminence leadership in a segment.

### **2.2.1 The importance of market segmentation**

The reason why market segmentation is imperative is that it plays a vital role in the strategic marketing of virtually all successful organisations. Lamb et al. (2015) see it as an influential marketing tool for several reasons, including the fact that when an organisation identifies segments in a market, it can design a marketing mix for a well-defined target market. It further plays a role in assisting marketers describe needs and wants more accurately. Focusing on one segment could allow the organisation to comprehend it better than competitors could, hence, would meet its needs better (Clarke and Wilson, 2009).

A basis for exceptional performance by a firm is segmentation. In order to create efficient marketing strategies, it is imperative to know how buyers' needs and wants differ. There is a rising need to improve a firm's consumer knowledge because of consumer's demands for uniqueness and the rise in technological change to cater for these products to satisfy these demands.

## **2.3 International Segmentation**

Market segmentation on an international level has become an imperative matter in developing, positioning and exporting products and services to different countries (Wedel and Kamakura, 1999).

### **2.3.1 *Definitions of International Market Segmentation***

Burgess and Bothma (2007:36) defined international market segmentation as “the procedure of describing relatively similar groups, based on shared preferences that relate to purchase and consumption behaviour”. It is conducted in only one country, when looking domestic level and when looking at the international level, segmentation would target establishing segments found in different countries (Burgess and Bothma, 2007). In Hassan, Craft and Kortam (2003) opinion Global market segmentation is the procedure of classifying segments whether they are country groups or individual buyer groups, of prospective consumers with similar characteristics who are likely to display similar buying behaviour patterns.

Regardless of what definition an organisation or business chooses to adopt, all definitions of international market segmentation involve determining homogenous groups of consumers or customers on an international level and not national. This is the concept that this study will adopt.

### **2.3.2 *The purpose of international market segmentation***

Wedel and Kamakura (1999) conclude that successful marketing essentially is determined by lucratively satisfying consumer's needs and wants. Bearing in mind that drivers of consumer behaviour are heterogeneous within, between and beyond cultures, the purpose of segmentation is to recognize and conclusively help distinct consumers with the same needs and behaviours (Wedel and Kamakura, 1999).

Segmentation aids firms to target possible consumers at the international segment level and to attain suitable positioning outside the country. One of the main challenges for firms is to

efficiently cope with the diversity of customer's needs and wants overseas and to target segments of consumers in different nations. These segments would show geographic groups of people and comprise of possible consumers who will possibly display related responses to marketing efforts (Steenkamp and Hofstede, 2002).

### **2.3.3 Challenges in international market segmentation**

Market segmentation is quite more challenging in the international context. This is because many factors that drive purchase and consumption behaviour such as culture, values, attitudes, beliefs, life stage or product knowledge might differ in importance; meaning or influence in a particular purchase and consumption context across cultures (Burgess and Bothma, 2007).

## **2.4 Criteria for successful segmentation**

According to Lamb et al. (2015) below are the basic criteria that segments should meet when they have been identified:

- **Substantially:** - In order, to guarantee a developed and maintained marketing mix the segment must be big enough. However, it is important to note that this criterion does not necessarily mean that a segment must have many potential customers. In most cases, however, to make commercial sense a market segment needs many possible consumers (Lamb et al., 2015).
- **Measurability and Identifiability:** - The groups identified ought to easily be recognisable and measurable. Information on the consumers inside geographic boundaries and the demographic statistics are usually easy to attain. This data relatively provides an accurate measurement of the segment size. Universities have accurate figures of how many pupils matriculate every year, and because they know the size of the market, they can target their market segment(s) accurately (Walker and Mullins, 2014).
- **Accessibility:** - It is important that the organisation be in reach of members of targeted segments. However, some groups of people identified as segments may be hard to reach. An example of this maybe groups of people who do not speak English or the home language of the country in question (Walker and Mullins, 2014).
- **Responsiveness:** - a market segment does not have to be treated individually except if that segment reacts in a different way from other segments identified. In other words,

a market segment must be more or less similar and with similar needs within but significantly different from other market segments (Walker and Mullins, 2014).

## 2.5 Steps in segmenting a market

- a) **Choosing a market.** The first step involves describing the overall market that is to be researched. The market should be either one in which an organisation already competes, a brand new one or new but related to the market it is in. In this study, the market selected is the International Students Postgraduate market (Lamb et al., 2015).
- b) **Establishing what the possible needs are in this market.** This stage would involve coming up with several needs as possible, to classify what motivates consumers to buy the service or products. In order to answer the first research question, the researcher will brainstorm as many needs as possible for the respondents to select which ones are most important to them and will have open-ended questions for the purpose of identifying any needs which the researcher would have missed (Walker and Mullins, 2008). For example Chetty (2012) reported financial assistance and lab facilities as some of the needs identified in the focus groups the researcher conducted.
- c) **Decide on bases for segmenting the market.** At this point, it is important for the marketer to have adequate market information and creativity. Bases for segmentation or variables are used to split an entire market into segments. Consumers may be divided using one variable such as age, gender, personality or lifestyle. However, in this research the basis selected was geographic segmentation, because the research is focused on international students, who are likely to have different needs depending on the region or continent they come from (Lamb et al., 2015).
- d) **Select segmentation descriptors.** After selecting bases for segmentation, the next step was to choose the segmentation descriptors. They help establish the exact segmentation variables to use. For instance, in this study, since the researcher has selected geographic segmentation, the researcher may use descriptors like, world region, market size, market density or climate (Walker and Mullins, 2008)
- e) **Form homogeneous segments.** This step involves grouping the needs together in order to obtain the best fit. Similar needs in terms of their relative importance are used to form segments (Walker and Mullins, 2008).
- f) **Classify the determining dimensions.** A determining dimension is an element that will ultimately govern a consumer's decision to buy or not buy. Furthermore, it is linked

to the supplier's competitive advantage and there is a need for it to be identified in each possible segment (Lamb et al., 2015).

- g) Name the individual segments.** The final step in the segmentation process involves naming the individual segments identified, in order to prepare for the targeting process (Walker and Mullins, 2008).

## **2.6 Identifying the target market**

As defined by Cahill (1997), a “target market” refers to merely a market or group of consumers with similar needs at which an organisation directs its marketing message. He went on to mention that a target market is simply a group of consumers that have been discovered for whom the product/service offered should be “spot on” and to whom the organisation will aim most of its time, resources and attention (Cahill, 1997).

The process of target-marketing, implemented by several manufacturers, retailers and big brands involves three essential steps which include:

- The total market is partitioned into different groups of consumers may react differently to products offered and marketing methods (Peterson, 1991).
- The second step involves the evaluation of each market segment identified to establish their potential and one or more groups may be chosen for penetration.
- The final step involves management formulating a marketing strategy or plan to attract the segment chosen (Kotler and Armstrong, 1990).

### **2.6.1 Target marketing for a University**

Hayes (1993) mentions that having marketing approaches in any higher education institution creates value among its stakeholders (e.g. current, former and potential students, employers of alumni, the community, taxpayers and state legislature).

Henceforth, universities are making an effort to create a variety of strategic plans to draw potential students and one of the fundamental measures to take is to identify a target market (Miller et al. 1990; Pappas and Shaink 1994). There are two options for a university when it comes to marketing: it can decide to pay no attention to the variation among prospective students or deal with them. In the first option, a university would make use of either mass marketing or no marketing at all. Hence, Lewison and Hawes (2007) concludes that the process of targeting is facilitated by identifying the differences among prospective students.

According to studies done by (Cavanagh, 2002; Rindfeish, 2003; Selingo, 1999; Thomas, 2004), individual segments identified in a university market differ in their reactions or attitudes towards educational services. A university can practice three target marketing strategies:

- Differentiated marketing which entails the choice to work with more than one segments in the market or the decision to have scattered target markets (Cavanagh, 2002; Rindfeish, 2003; Selingo, 1999; Thomas, 2004).
- Concentrated marketing involves a great deal of focused effort. There are two forms of concentrated marketing, first being exclusive (which involves an organisation directing its attention and marketing efforts to one market segment, to try to monopolize that particular market through total market penetration) and second being integrative (which simply involves growing one segment to incorporate other homogeneous segments), (Hayes, 1993).
- Orchestrated marketing involves an organization designing a marketing program meant to meet the similar needs of a range of market segments. Bearing in mind that needs may be different within a market segment; orchestrated marketing helps to find the main commonality that different groups share. This main commonality may be used as a basis for the development of a unique strategic plan for the set of market segments (Lewison and Hawes, 2007).

### **2.6.2 Targeting in international markets**

In a multi-domestic approach, targeting strategy may be adapted to different countries. Adaptation may be necessary for a number of reasons:

- The country context may differ in that the size or growth rate of a segment targeted in one country may be different in other countries (Steenkamp and Hofstede, 2002).
- The competitor context may differ, e.g. strong local competitors in a segment in one country may make the segment less attractive than elsewhere.
- The product category context may differ, e.g. it may be declining in one country whilst growing or maturing in others.
- The communication and distribution context may differ between countries making it more difficult to address the same segment in different countries (Steenkamp and Hofstede, 2002).

- The firm's compatibility/competitive capability in the same segment in different countries may differ. This could be, for example, because a firm may be able to draw on different resources and different products and brands in different markets.

In other cases, firms may wish to keep brand proposition in the same everywhere and this could mean targeting different segments in different countries (depending on how the segments are defined) (Steenkamp and Hofstede, 2002).

### **2.6.3 Selection of Target Markets**

According to Clarke and Wilson (2009), firms which choose to target one or several segments need a set of criteria to help decide which to select and which to reject. The scholars (Clarke and Wilson, 2009) also mentioned that it should not be assumed that targeting the largest segment is always the best option. Small firms, for example, may choose what they perceive to be smaller less competitive segments. In addition to rating the attractiveness of each segment, according to Walker and Mullins (2008), it is important to rate the firm's ability to exploit the segment. Weighing the importance of each criterion and multiplying by the firm's score for each criterion provides a simple method for ranking the overall worth of each segment (Walker and Mullins, 2008). In many ways, this is the crux of marketing and corresponds to the view of marketing as a process that matches the competencies and resources of a firm with the needs of particular segments. This is one (of many) situations where marketers need to demonstrate their understanding of the overall organisation's sources of competitive advantage.

A list of possible attractiveness criteria might include size, growth rate and stability (e.g. resistance to seasonal, cyclical or fashion fluctuations) of segments. Other possible attractiveness criteria includes price levels achievable, strength of competition, degree of concentration of customers (i.e. a segment with a small number of large customers may offer economies of marketing effort but may also be risky), and degree of consistency with the overall competitive positioning of the firm (Clarke and Wilson, 2009).

#### ***2.6.3.1 Step by step process of selection of Target Markets***

##### ***2.6.3.1.1 Choose criteria to measure market attractiveness and competitive position***

In this stage, the researcher chose the different factors that make a segment very attractive and factors that make a business competitive. For this particular study, the research made use of

market size, market growth rate and amount of competition as factors for segment attractiveness, and made use of price competitiveness, service quality and geographic advantages as factors for business strength (Lamb et al., 2015).

#### *2.6.3.1.2 Weigh the factors to reflect their relative importance*

This step involves the researcher weighing the factors selected in step one in percentages to rank the most important factor to the least important factor.

#### *2.6.3.1.3 Measure the existing position of each possible target market on each factor.*

The researcher will score the factors using a scale from 1 to 10 to determine how attractive each segment is on each selected factor.

#### *2.6.3.1.4 Plan the future position of each market based on the assessment done*

Step 4 involves the researcher conducting a Market-Attractiveness/Competitive Position matrix using the added scores of the factors selected. Below is a sample of the matrix that was conducted by the researcher. The letters stand for segments, therefore, in this sample segment A would be the primary target market because it is highly attractive and the business will be more competitive in this segment. Segment B and C have potential for improvement; however, segment D is unattractive (Lamb et al., 2015).

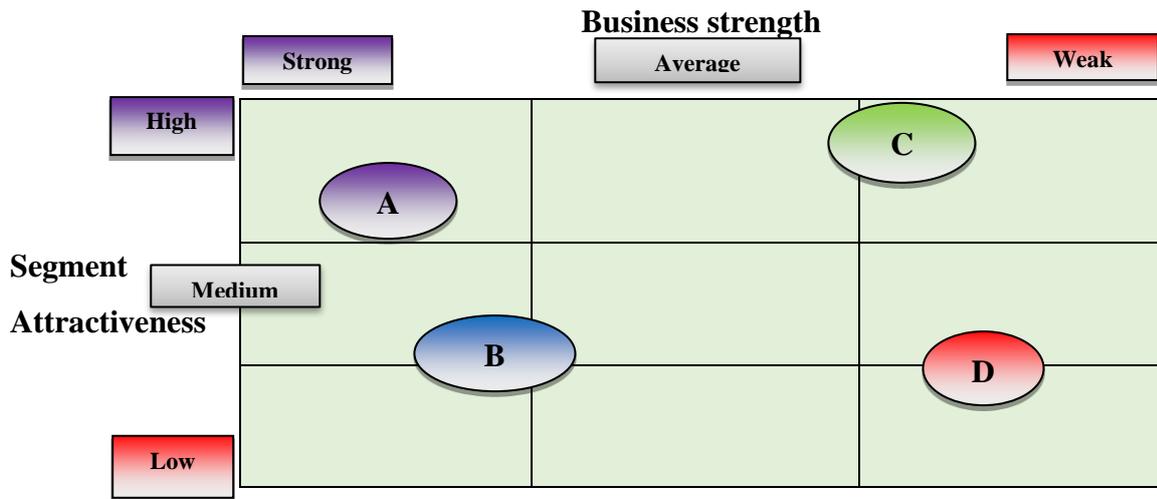
#### *2.6.3.1.5 Evaluate implications of possible future changes for business strategies and resource requirements*

Managers should also consider a market segment to be a desirable target only if it is strongly positive on at least one of the two dimensions of market attractiveness and potential competitive position and at least moderately positive on the other.

However, with reference to **Figure 2.1**, a business may decide to tap into a market that will fall into one of the middle cells under these conditions:

- Managers believe that the market's attractiveness or their competitive strength is likely to improve over the next few years;
- They see such markets as stepping-stones to entering larger, more attractive segments in the future;
- Or shared costs or synergies are present, thereby benefiting another entry (Walker and Mullins, 2011).

**Figure 2.1:** Market-Attractiveness/Competitive Position Matrix



Source: (Lamb et al., 2015:222).

It is important to acknowledge that the main purpose of market analysis (which involves needs analysis, market segmentation and target marketing) in the research required in developing a positioning strategy is to identify the determining dimensions (also known as the hot buttons as illustrated in **Figure 1.1**). Most scholars including (Lamb et al., 2015; Kotler and Keller, 2016; Walker and Mullins, 2011) have summarised determining dimensions as the exact features or characteristics that will make consumers choose a brand’s products or services. Therefore without carrying out the processes for market segmentation and targeting it is difficult to be able to identify those “hot buttons.”

Market analysis in this study also works on the purpose of being able to identify the primary and secondary target markets. These two international students markets will be the two markets the study recommends for UKZN to target.

## 2.7 Competitor analysis

Understanding consumers is not enough for an organization to excel because today’s markets are more competitive. It is imperative for organizations to also closely observe their completion. In order to strategize on its competitive advantage, a company needs to always compare its marketing mix to that of the competition (Cuellar-Healey and Gomez, 2013). Among the important aspects in strategic planning is an evaluation of the strategies of competitors. As proposed by the business policy literature, competitive analysis is divided into two sets of questions, the first question being, who are the firms’ current as well as

probable future competitors, and the second being what strategies they use to compete?, (Abell and Hammond, 1979; Hofer and Schendel, 1978; Amit, Domowitz and Fershtman, 1988).

Scholars such as Abell and Hammond (1979) suggest that analysing competitors is useful for discovering strengths and weaknesses and possible analysis market opportunities. Furthermore, competitor analysis may also propose responses or reactions that competitors may have if threatened or if an opportunity arises (Amit et al., 1988). Bergen and Peteraf (2002) suggested that a management team that has an interest in observing their competitive arena, formulating strategies to defend the brand against potential threats and competitive attack strategies, has to first identify the competitors (Bergen and Peteraf, 2002).

Cuellar-Healey and Gomez (2013) suggest that the benefits of competitor analysis include a firm being able to defend itself from any threats posed by rivals and offering offensive strategies that allow a firm to explore its opportunities.

### **2.7.1 Purpose of competitor analysis in relation to positioning**

Strategic marketers gain knowledge of competitors' strong abilities and flaws which may, in turn, propose a chance for differentiation, from competitor analysis (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011). One of the main threats of a firm is its competitors. Therefore, firms need to continually assess the likelihood of new competitive forces emerging in their industry and markets that can threaten their profitability and survival.

#### ***2.7.1.1 Objectives of competitor analysis***

The critical aim of competitor analysis is to understand competitors adequately to be able to reason like that competitor. The organisation's competitive strategy will then be designed such that they consider possible responses or actions competitors are likely to take. Czepiel and Kerin (2012:1) suggest that "a strategist needs to be able to live in the competitors' strategic shoes". Furthermore, strategists need be able to:

- Assess the nature and expected victory of the possible strategy changes available to a competitor;
- Forecast each rival's possible reactions to key strategic changes on the part of the other competitors; and
- Apprehend rivals' probable responses to moves in the fundamental industry and environmental parameters (Czepiel and Kerin, 2012).

## **2.7.2 Evaluating competitor's strengths and weaknesses**

Organisations or companies need use both an industry and market approach so as to find out who their current and potential competitors are. Cuellar-Healey and Gomez (2013:7) agree that “the industry approach will yield insights into the structure of the industry and the products offered by all market participants”. Their study also concluded that “the market approach, on the other hand, focuses on the customer need and the firms attempting to satisfy those needs, which will provide the firm with a wider view of current and potential competitors” (Cuellar-Healey and Gomez, 2013:8).

Potential competitors could comprise of firms who compete in similar products, make use of similar technologies, have the same target market with or without similar products, are working in the same locations with similar products and start-ups usually organised by employees previously employed by the company (Lamb et al., 2015).

An imperative requirement for formulating a competitive strategy is a good understanding of a competitor's weaknesses and strengths. A company needs to know the competitors' core competencies to identify how it can differentiate itself from them. There are steps established by Lamb et al. (2015) to evaluate competitors' strengths and weaknesses:

### ***2.7.2.1 Identify key success factors in the industry***

Key success factors are features or circumstances in a specific industry that have an important effect on the performance of the firm in that industry (Wilson and Gilligan, 2005). These success factors translate into particular assets, skills or competencies required in order to succeed in the industry, for example in the industry this research is based on, the factors could include highly qualified professors, availability of reading and research material, etc. Furthermore, to be more precise these same factors that are used in the Market-Attractiveness/Competitive Position Matrix process (Wilson and Gilligan, 2005).

After the factors have been identified it is important to weigh the factors to reflect their relative importance. The researcher will weigh the factors selected in percentages to rank the most important factor to the least important factor. The factors will also be scored or rated using a

scale from 1 to 10, determining how well the competitors and the firm itself are doing on each key factor (Lamb et al., 2015).

#### ***2.7.2.2 Rate the firm and competitors on each key success factor.***

After the weights have been assigned, the researcher will rate the organisation (or in this study's case, the institution) and decide on the most threatening competitors on each of the key success factors. This exercise was able to determine the market leader (Wilson and Gilligan, 2005). A prior study done by Garden (2003), institutions were ranked on highly qualified lecturers and good reputation and University of Cape Town was ranked number 5 and Stellenbosch out as number 13.

#### ***2.7.2.3 Acknowledge the consequences for the competitive strategy***

After considering the exercise that was done in step 1 and 2, it was evident that this kind of assessment will indicate the relative importance of the key success factors and the relative strength of each competitor based on these factors. These competitive profiles can be used at this stage to identify possible differentiation strategies in which a firm can use to position itself (Lamb et al., 2015).

All steps mentioned above that lead to a successful competitive analysis are all vital in this study because they help to know the university's position from an International student (going into post-grad) perspective. They help assess the current perspective that international post graduate students have of the university itself and also in comparison to other universities.

### **2.7.3 Competitor Profiling**

It is imperative for firms who would have identified their major competitors, to evaluate and study their strengths, objectives, weaknesses, competitive reactions and strategies. Some of the objectives that competitors might have may relate to revenue, market share, liquidity and market growth. Based on Culler-Healey and Gomez (2013) their strategies usually incorporates quality of services/products, products attributes, positioning, communication, marketing mix decisions, research and development (just to mention a few).

In a case where an organisation's strategy is similar to another organisation's strategy, it is likely that these two firms are direct competitors (Bergen and Peteraf, 2002).

Even if a rival achieves its goals and strategies, it relies on its resources and competences. That is why the evaluation of the corresponding strengths and weaknesses comprises of important information for an organisation analysing its rivals. The method usually used to carry out this analysis is called “SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis” (Abell and Hammond, 1979:53). It entails identifying “an objective and evaluating the internal factors (strengths and weaknesses internal to the firm) and the external factors (opportunities and threats presented by the external environment) that are constructive or unconstructive to accomplishing the objective” (Abell and Hammond, 1979:72).

- Internal factors (Weaknesses and Strengths) incorporate issues such as finance, the 4Ps, staff, organisational culture, manufacturing abilities, just to mention a few.
- External factors (Threats and Opportunities) link to the opportunities and threats posed by the micro and macro backgrounds. The macro-environment comprises of social, cultural, technological, legal, demographic, political, and economic factors. Whereas, the microenvironment involves distributors, suppliers, competitors, and the customers (Bergen and Peteraf, 2002).

## **2.7.4 Developing Competitive Strategies**

There are four roles that can be played by companies in an industry and these can be categorized into market nicher, challenger, leader or follower. A company can be more aware of its rivals and develop more efficient competitive strategies through classifying its role and that of its competitors.

### **2.7.4.1 Market Leader**

“It is common in many industries to have one firm with a dominant market share. This firm is the market leader in terms of prices, new product introductions, distribution coverage, and promotional spending. Competitors typically challenge, imitate or avoid the leader” (Ohmae and Andrews, 1983:11). Examples of market leaders include Procter and Gamble, Coca-Cola and McDonald’s. In a study by Garden (2003) University of Cape Town (UCT) was perceived as being the top university and the market leader.

Market leaders in any industry always want to remain the number one brand or company. Naturally they look for ways to maintain their positions by making an effort to increase their

total market, defend their present market share or grow their market share (Ohmae and Andrews, 1983).

#### *2.7.4.1.1 Expanding total market*

Market leaders usually benefit more when the total market expands. There are three ways in which a market leader can expand the total market (Wilson and Gilligan, 2005). The main approaches to enlarge the market comprise of attracting new users, discovering new uses for their service or product and suggest current consumers to use more of their product (Walker and Mullins, 2011).

- In order to attract new users a market leader would have to pay more attention to customers who have no knowledge of the product or customers resisting to buy the product (Bergen and Peteraf, 2002). An example of a market leader university expanding the total market through targeting new users could be through targeting groups that are not going to university yet such as grade 10 up to grade 12 and offer them tutorials on the weekends and holidays.
- Another method that market leaders can use in expanding its total markets is to find new uses of its product by using its research and development skills. An Example that Ohmae and Andrews (1983) gave in their study was “DuPont’s nylon which was first used to produce parachutes and then the new use discovered was to make women’s stockings with the fibre” (Ohmae and Andrews, 1983:12).
- Firms can persuade their current consumers to use more of its product or services, by developing strategies to persuade its consumers to use the product on other occasions and in larger quantities each time (Wilson and Gilligan, 2005). An example of a market leader university expanding the total market through increasing usage could be communicating to its students that getting an honours or master’s degree would increase chances of a graduate getting a high paying job in reputable companies, they could even partner with these firms to reassure students that extending your studies is beneficial to them.

#### *2.7.4.1.2 Defending Market Share*

Market leaders are often susceptible to attack because of size of market share they own (Czepiel and Kerin, 2012). To protect its market share, the greatest approach for a leader is to constantly

be creative with its products and services through strong market positioning, continuous innovation, advertising, strong customer and distributor relations.

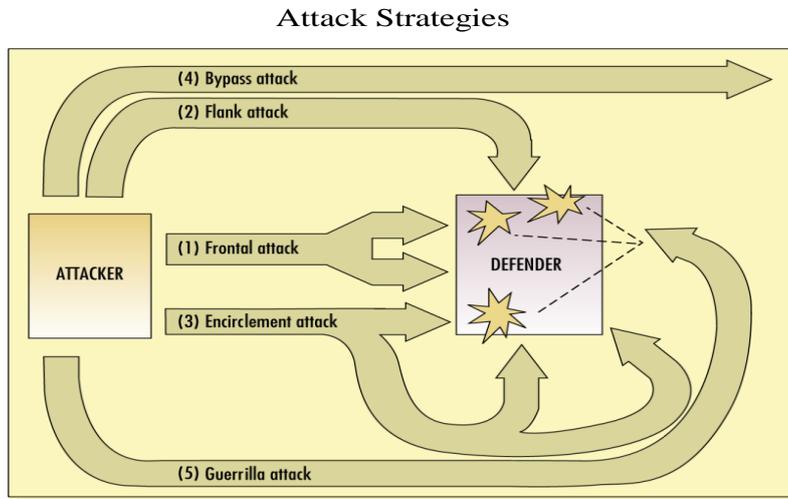
#### *2.7.4.1.3 Expanding Market Share*

In several circumstances, a single market share point has a high value of up to millions of dollars, which means firms (leaders) can considerably increase their market share so as to improve their profitability. However it is important to acknowledge that the price of reaching a market share that is higher could surpass the additional revenue. Therefore the impact that a higher market share has on profitability rests on the approach used to gain the extra market share. In addition, other market leaders have to be careful regarding infuriating “antitrust actions, of investing more money than the higher market share is worth or of pursuing the wrong marketing strategies” (Lamb et al., 2015:178).

#### *2.7.4.2 Market Challenger*

“Companies that track the market leader can be either a market challenger or a market follower. A market challenger assertively tries to increase its market share by attacking the leader, other similar companies, or smaller rivals” (Lamb et al., 2015:179). On the other hand, prior to initiating the attack, market challengers have to outline their objectives and firms they will attack. Attacking a market leader could be quite rewarding for a market challenger if the market leader is not serving its target market well. However this task is considered to be quite risky. On the other hand, challengers are likely to choose to go up against companies that are underperforming which are of the same size or alternatively they may acquire smaller firms in order to grow their market share (Walker and Mullins, 2011). **Figure 2.2** summarises the most familiar attack approaches used by market challengers including bypass, encirclement “blitz”, frontal, guerilla warfare, and flank attack.

**Figure 2.2:** Market Challenger attack strategies



Prof. D. Vigar

12

(Vigar-Ellis, 2014:3).

#### 2.7.4.2.1 *Frontal Attack*

When it comes to frontal attack the challenger needs to match the rival's "marketing mix (product, price, promotion and distribution). In general, the firm with the bigger resources wins" (Ohmae and Andrews, 1983:12).

#### 2.7.4.2.2 *Flank attack*

A market challenger concentrates on finding any market gaps produced by either a failing opponent or by ever-changing market trends. Once known, the challenger hurries in to fill the gaps and comes up with a set of robust market segments. "Flank attacks have a higher potential of success than frontal attacks and are particularly attractive to challengers with fewer resources" (Hooley et al., 2004:112).

#### 2.7.4.2.3 *Encirclement "blitz" attack*

This kind of attack strategy involves a challenger attacking the rival firm from many different angles simultaneously with a goal occupying its opponent's territory. However this strategy is more appropriate when the challenger has enough resources and is quite certain that the strategy will break the rival firm's willpower (Hooley et al., 2004).

#### 2.7.4.2.4 *Bypass attack*

This attack is about avoiding the rival firm and taking on weaker markets to extend the base of the challenger such as branching out into products that are unrelated, geographical locations that are new and using new technology to replace existing products (Ohmae and Andrews, 1983).

#### 2.7.4.2.5 *Guerrilla warfare attack*

The guerrilla attack is all about making small but effective changes which puts the challenger's brand in the forefront and slowly gaining a good reputation. In order for the challenger to beat the opponent the tactics need to be supported by a stouter attack (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012).

#### **2.7.4.3 Market Follower**

Several scholars such as (Ohmae and Andrews, 1983; Kotler and Armstrong, 2012; Lamb et al., 2015) describe a market follower as a brand or firm that chooses not to wage any war against the market leader or its competitors. Such a decision is usually made as a safety measure because the firm would be afraid that the gain might be smaller than the loss it incurs (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). Market followers are more common in industries which have little opportunity for product differentiation, high price sensitivity and stable market shares.

“Market followers are often broadly classified into counterfeiters, cloners, imitators or adapters” (Vigar-Ellis, 2014:3).

##### 2.7.4.3.1 *Counterfeiters*

Counterfeiters are firms that make a replica of the leader's product, package and sell it in the black market.

##### 2.7.4.3.2 *Cloners*

This type of market followers copies the market leader's products and marketing mix strategies (Czepiel and Kerin, 2012).

##### 2.7.4.3.3 *Imitators*

When a market follower decides to imitate certain things of the market leader but however maintaining differences in pricing, packaging and advertising, it will be known as an imitator (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

#### 2.7.4.3.4 *Adapters*

These followers either develop or adapt the market leader's products and usually sell them in different markets (Bergen and Peteraf, 2002).

#### 2.7.4.4 *Market Nicher*

In order to be a successful market nicher, a firm needs to focus on specialization. Companies who choose to become market nichers do so because there is great potential for them to be leaders in a small market and this usually does not attract larger firms. (Hooley et al., 2004). Their strategies usually pay attention to the end-user by offering their product to one specific final consumer and to the geographical area by offering their product in specific locations (Cuellar-Healey and Gomez, 2013).

Market nichers can better understand their consumers to the extent of meeting their needs much more effectively than their rivals whilst making huge profits. But, to augment their survival ability, market nichers have to have a competitive advantage in more than one market niche (Ohmae and Andrews, 1983).

As illustrated in **Figure 1.1** the main purpose of competitor analysis in the research required in developing a positioning strategy is to identify the competitors' core competencies so as to know how to differentiate the positioning strategy from that of the competitors'. In order to identify these core competencies, marketers need to go through an analytical process where they identify key success factors in the industry as mentioned above. These success factors have to be similar to consumer needs or benefits and features of a product or service. Therefore it is important to align all processes so that they link and the firm can easily come to a conclusion on what they choose to differentiate on (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

## 2.8 **Assessing UKZN's current marketing strategy (Internal analysis)**

In order to determine whether the position of a university has changed, focus groups can be used by making use of the same survey instrument used to initially define the university's image. "The semantic differential can be used to determine whether a school's position relevant to each of its competitors has been altered" (Lowry and Owens, 2001:32).

Some of the ways to prove that a university has effectively positioned itself include a rise in the number of new students and also when parents and potential students understand what the university represents. Universities that fail to provide the needs of students usually find it hard

to survive in the tertiary industry whilst those that are able to position themselves to cater to students needs will be successful in the industry (Dyson, 2002).

### **2.8.1 SWOT Analysis**

SWOT analysis has its origins in the 1960s. In 1990, Ulrich and Lake (1990:207) cited two studies by Wenerfelt (1984:173) and Grant (1991:116) who agreed that recently “SWOT analysis has been seen as somewhat outdated and super-ceded by resource-based planning and competency-based planning”. The resource-based view’s major focus is on the internal resources, capabilities and core competencies of the organisation, and advocates building strategies on these (Ulrich and Lake, 1990). This view supports the internal analysis section of the theoretical framework as illustrated in **Figure 1.1**. the main purpose of internal analysis being identifying the firm or brand’s core competencies. Similarly, the competency-based analysis recognises a company’s competencies as the basis for strategy. Regardless of the view the firm decides to adopt, it all boils down to identifying the strengths that the firm has in order to know how to differentiate itself from other competitors in the industry (Walker and Mullins, 2011).

To begin with, it is imperative to start with determining and analysing strategic factors that contribute or prohibit the firm from reaching its full potential, in the process of strategic planning (Houben et al., 1999). The acknowledgment of the internal strengths and weaknesses, plus external opportunities and threats, takes place on the basis of a study, also called a SWOT-analysis. Here SWOT stands for “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats” (Houben et al., 1999:125). Opportunities and threats are usually found in the external environment, whereas internal analysis helps identify the strengths and weaknesses (Lamb et al., 2015).

In order for a firm to have success in this respect, the firm should focus its goals on its core competencies (which are also the firms strengths), at the same time avoiding the weaknesses is has (Walker and Mullins, 2011). “No standard list of crucial factors which apply to all companies exists because of the specificity of this set. Within the framework of this study, however, we chose to concentrate solely on the internal business environment” (Houben et al., 1999:126).

### **2.8.2 Importance of goal setting**

A goal can be defined as “a specific desired accomplishment over a defined period of time” (McKenzie, Neiger and Thackeray, 2016:82). “All business organizations should have written

goals that are part of their business plan. These goals can describe what the company plans to accomplish in terms of market share, growth, and profitability” (Anthony, 2016: paragraph 3). Organisations should look to have goals that are timely, specific, relevant, attainable and measurable. Advantages to setting goals are plenty.

#### ***2.8.2.1 Provides Focus***

When firms establish objectives for their staff it determines the firm’s priorities. Goals help employees determine what’s more important to prioritize and what’s not threw weighing how their work will impact those goals. Focus is also provided for management in making decisions on important projects and how to split the work among the staff (Dyson, 2002).

#### ***2.8.2.2 Increases Motivation***

Organizational objectives provide workers with something to strive for in their everyday routines. For example, “instead of merely aiming for general profitability, employees can work to improve profitability 10 percent by year-end. Most people strive to be successful, but having a specific standard that constitutes success will especially motivate them to strive for excellence” (Anthony, 2016: paragraph 4). If objectives are fixed to other external awards, such as group recognition or rewards, it can further pick up the motivation level.

#### ***2.8.2.3 Improves Group Cohesion***

One of the most important tools in achieving organisational goals is team work. Employees from every department in a firm need to work together in order to achieve the firm’s goals. Goals can help improve the union among a firm’s staff and collaboration. Managers can further implement this through group rewards provided when the company meets its goals (McKenzie et al., 2016).

#### ***2.8.2.4 Increases Employee Worth***

“Including employees in the goal-setting process will increase their buy-in for the project and the business as a whole. It tells them their input is valued and important, thus giving them a sense of ownership. Consequently, the goals are no longer only management’s; they are the goals of everyone in the organization” (Anthony, 2016: paragraph 6).

### **2.8.2.5 Offers Measurability**

Objectives or goals can be used as a measurement for success and as a way to correct failure (Bower, 2006). In a situation where a firm starts getting off track, goals can be used to adjust the failures and getting the firm back on track. It is important to set the organizations goals using the SMART principle: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely. This is because employees will be able to determine their performance towards the goals and the time frame required in order to reach the objectives (Bower, 2006).

### **2.8.3 UKZN's vision**

“To be the best University that offers African Scholarship.” (Corporate Relations, 2013).

### **2.8.4 UKZN's duty (mission)**

“A truly South African university that is educationally exceptional, ground-breaking in research, and critically involved with the community.” (Corporate Relations, 2013).

### **2.8.5 Objectives and strategies**

*Goal One- AFRICAN-LED GLOBALISATION: the goal is to encourage African-led globalisation through African scholarship by positioning the institution, through its training, learning, scholarship, research and innovation, to go in the global knowledge structure on its personal conditions, getting knowledge production systems connecting to its indigenous background into the international field (Corporate Relations Division University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2013).*

In order to achieve this goal, UKZN's strategy is to:

Forefront local and original know-how and knowledge structures in the academic enterprise, encourage internationalisation and nurture strategic partnerships.

Currently, in terms of performance UKZN is graded amidst the best 300 universities in the world in accordance with QS grading and it has fundamental tactical partnerships around leading programmes and enterprises (Corporate Relations, 2013).

*Goal Two- RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: the goal is to contribute through knowledge to the success and endurance of its region, and to state-building, by relating to and*

*compelling themselves to the societies they help in a way that improves value and earns their respect, admiration and confidence.*

To achieve this goal, UKZN's strategy is to:

Identify, encourage and compensate accountable society engagement that enhances value, improve proper training for Human Capital Development outside of UKZN, support and increase learning and teaching activities and opportunities for its students outside the School and influence tactical partnerships that boost the significance and effect of its academic actions, particularly with government bodies.

During the past years, UKZN has had an increase in the fraction of workers reporting considerable Responsible Community Engagement in their conduct.

*Goal Three- PRE-EMINENCE IN RESEARCH: the objective is to form a research culture that supports the obligation of the academic team to encourage its postgraduate students, and to be a distinguished creator of current information that is both indigenous and international, and describes UKZN as the leading university of African scholarship (Corporate Relations, 2013).*

UKZN's strategy in to achieve this goal is to:

Come up with a crew of research people that improve African scholarship, be a centre for the distribution of African scholarship, raise co-operative partnerships in research and novelty, promote and grow research capability and appeal to postgraduate students in niche areas, developing them to grow into productive researchers.

According to the Strategic Plan compiled by the Corporate Relations (2013) there has been a hundred percent increase in the amount of research outcomes and inventions effectively designed into communally beneficial and appropriate products and the number of successful spin-off companies.

*Goal Four- EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING: Objective four is to support perfection in training and learning through inspired and creative syllabus layout and progress, educational plans, and valuation methods in accordance with top quality controlling ideologies (Corporate Relations, 2013).*

In order to achieve this goal, UKZN's strategy is to:

- Offer outstanding training and learning packages in a broad dimension of undergraduate and postgraduate packages.
- Make sure that curriculums are rooted in African scholarship and meet the requirements of society.
- Analyse and develop its teaching styles and valuation methods in accordance with student learning requirements, scholarship and the top quality controlling ideologies.
- Inspire and reward brilliance, novelty, originality and scholarship in coaching and learning and offer a helpful educational setting that endorses a strong work ethic and an ethos of deep learning amongst students (Corporate Relations, 2013).

So far UKZN has achieved a ninety percent increase of alumni in full-time employment within six months of finishing. It has also achieved a ninety-five percent increase in academics that manage to finish the University Education Induction Programme (Corporate Relations, 2013).

*Goal Five- INSTITUTION OF CHOICE FOR STUDENTS: the aim is to institute the University as an institution of choice that puts great value in diverse students and has a student-centred culture, offering students' infrastructure and support services planned around their needs and creating knowledgeable, proficient, desirable graduates (Corporate Relations, 2013).*

UKZN's strategy in to achieve this goal is to:

Satisfy the desires and anticipations of students both pre-enrolment and post-enrolment, interact purposely with students and generate favourable learning and social environments for students.

UKZN has over the past years improved Matric average point scores and increased the accessibility of capacity-building opportunities for student leaders in the numerous student structures.

*Goal Six- INSTITUTION OF CHOICE FOR STAFF: the objective is to institute the University as an institution of choice. It should appeal to and keep academic and support staff of the highest quality by making a creative setting that nurtures and inspires academic life. Furthermore, it should create an environment of organisational residency in which all employees know and understand their duty in guaranteeing the success of the University (Corporate Relations, 2013).*

To meet this goal UKZN's strategy is to:

Develop an ethos of collegiality, responsibility, organisational citizenship and social unity; portray itself as a desired employer by offering the best working environment, discover, identify and reward quality and improve the full capability of employees and advertise the university as a premier institution.

UKZN has been able to retain most of its PhD-credentialed staff over the years (Corporate Relations, 2013).

*Goal Seven- EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT: The aim of the last objective is to institute and sustain well-organized, adequate management systems and procedures that offer a helpful and receptive service to meet internal and external requirements in a practical and supple way (Corporate Relations, 2013).*

UKZN's strategy to achieve it is to:

- Transfer obligation and liability totally in terms of the organisational structure, rationalise administrative and decision-making procedures, establish service brilliance, make sure that the values of good corporate law reinforce its operations and implement an efficient and clear development and budgeting cycle.
- Assure the effective improvement and application of fundamental IT systems to address operational competence and provide self-help access to information (Corporate Relations, 2013).

The success of appropriate service level arrangements between support, academic sector, several segments of the School and students, has been one of the success indicators for achieving this goal (Corporate Relations, 2013).

In summary, internal analysis is very vital in the research required in developing a positioning strategy because it helps identify core competencies that will be used to compare with that of the competitors. It also helps select the differences on which to position the brand. Apart from core competencies (which are also the firm's strengths) internal analysis helps in identifying the firm's weaknesses.

## 2.9 Conclusion

Procedures that are involved in developing a positioning strategy were explained in detail in this chapter. Starting with, market segmentation that would lead to target-marketing, followed by competitor analysis done to evaluate the competition's core competencies and internal analysis used to evaluate the organisation's core competencies.

As discussed in this chapter, the result of growth and development of the internet, and changing demographics of the users, has led to an increase in the importance of market segmentation (Internet Live Stats, 2016). Furthermore, Lamb et al. (2015) proposed that market segmentation is important because it plays a vital role in the strategic marketing of virtually all successful organisations. Challenges of international market segmentation such as the drivers of purchase and consumption behaviour like culture, values, attitudes, beliefs, life stage, were also outlined in this chapter. Steps on how to segment a market and on how to select a target market were explained in detail. This part of the chapter has provided information required to meet the first research objective of establishing who the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market.

The purpose of competitive analysis in positioning has been explained as to gain knowledge of competitors' strong abilities and flaws which may, in turn, propose a chance for differentiation (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011). Steps on how to conduct a competitive analysis were also discussed in this chapter. Furthermore, the internal analysis outlined goals and the mission of the university provided by the Corporate Relations (2013). This part of the chapter also provided information required to meet the objectives of investigating the university's position from an International student (going into post-grad) perspective and assessing whether the position of UKZN is aligning with their current marketing strategies, vision and mission.

The following chapter, chapter 3 discusses the literature on positioning and how to develop a positioning strategy.

# **CHAPTER 3: THEORY OF DEVELOPING A POSITIONING STRATEGY**

## **3.1 Introduction**

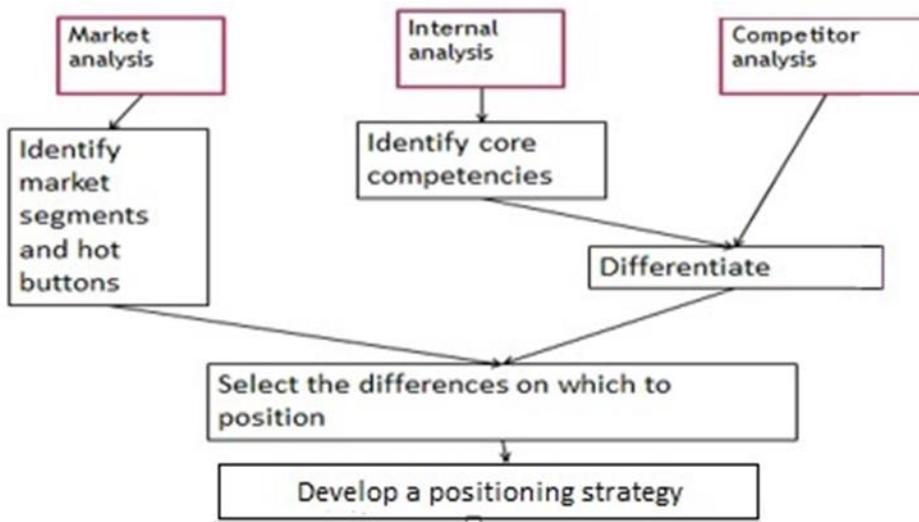
In the academic community, positioning and competition have always been common. However, technologies for universities, the development and use of performance indicator systems are ever-changing for governing universities and its facilities (Bourdieu, 1988). The increase in both international and local competition has resulted in universities undertaking marketing campaigns (Bourdieu, 1988). This renewed interest in branding and strategy has also triggered researchers to study universities as brands. Chapter 3 will have a thorough look at the concept of positioning and on how to develop a positioning strategy for a university (Bourdieu, 1988).

## **3.2 Theory of positioning**

The notion of positioning started in the late 1960s and early 1970s, referred to as the “positioning era” (Ries and Trout, 1981:2). Positioning was approached from a psychological perspective and their main theme was that “positioning is about what you do to the mind” (Ries and Trout, 1981:2). Hence, the utmost marketing battlefield was understood to be the mind of the consumer. A clear understanding of the way the mind functions will result in a clear understanding of how positioning works.

Positioning presumes that customers correlate services or products based on essential characteristics (Lamb et al., 2015). Efficient positioning entails evaluating positions chosen by rival brands, defining the essential aspects underlying the positions and identifying a position in the market that will allow a company utilize all its marketing strategies productively (Walker and Mullins, 2011).

**Figure 3.1:** Research required in developing a positioning strategy



(Vigar-Ellis, 2014:2).

The diagram above illustrates the conceptual framework of this research.

### **3.2.1 Market Analysis:**

Based on the concept by Ries and Trout (1981:2) “positioning is about what you do to the mind,” is the reason why it starts from understanding the market or consumers. This stage entails marketers to identify market segments by carrying out a needs analysis, targeting exercise, which will help to identify the determining dimensions also known as “hot buttons” that will be used to differentiate on (Walker and Mullins, 2008). Chapter 2 has elaborated fully on this stage of the research required in developing a positioning strategy.

### **3.2.2 Internal Analysis:**

After gaining insight on who the target market is, and what their needs are, it is important to look at what the firm’s current core competencies in terms of its resources (what it has) and its performance (what it can do). This stage is important in the positioning process because it enables the firm to compare or benchmark itself with the competitors’ core competencies and then make a decision on how to differentiate themselves (Vigar-Ellis, 2014).

### **3.2.3 Competitor analysis:**

Competitor analysis helps enlighten marketers gain knowledge of competitors’ strong abilities and flaws which may, in turn, propose a chance for differentiation (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011).

A firm needs to understand the competitors' core competencies to identify how it can differentiate itself from them.

#### **3.2.4 Selection of differences:**

Selection of the differences which will be used to position the firm is done using the hot buttons (homogenous highly important needs among the different segments chosen) and the differences between the core competencies of the firm and that of the competitors (Vigar-Ellis, 2014). This method is very effective because the firm will be meeting the needs of the consumers and being different from their competitors, which creates a distinct image in the minds of consumers. More so, these differences can be used to create a positioning statement.

#### **3.2.5 Develop a marketing strategy:**

The marketing strategy entails the marketer to create a marketing mix strategy that will be able to communicate and achieve the positioning that would have been created in the early stages. The strategies should be able to address the needs of the target market and how to best keep the consumers loyal to the firm or organisation (Walker and Mullins, 2008). This stage was used for the recommendations given to UKZN by the researcher.

After analysing most positioning views from the different scholars including (Lamb et. al., 2015; Walker and Mullins, 2011; Trout, 1981; Lovelock and Wirtz, 2001), it is clear that the steps in the research required in developing a positioning strategy are very vital in order to have a successful strategy. Chapter 2 explains how important each step is in being able to reach the final decision of selecting the differences on which to position. Therefore, based on this secondary data found, the researcher carried out the survey using these imperative steps.

### **3.3 Developing a positioning strategy**

Positioning is the final phase in the targeting process and it entails establishing and communicating the offering's distinctive benefit to each target segment (Kotler and Keller, 2012). The purpose of positioning is to identify, and take control of, a strong purchasing rationale that gives the consumer a real or perceived advantage. Therefore, positioning is a crucial matter in brand management.

First, a firm should indicate to what "competitive set" the brand should be associated and compared to (Kapferer, 2012). The competitive set involves products or services that compete with the brand in question and those that are close substitutes.

The decision made by brands of the target market and the competitive advantage they have compared to other competitors and the place a service or product occupies in a given market is known as a “position” (Hooley et al., 2001). This definition shows that positioning itself is a process.

The procedure of creating, developing the firm’s offer and image and also discussing the brand’s main advantages in the market so that it occupies a unique and valued place in the minds of the target consumers is known as positioning (e.g. Kotler, 1996; Kotler and Keller, 2009). Aaker and McLoughlin (2007) agree that positioning shows how the brand wishes to be seen by the stakeholders relative to the rivals and the marketplace.

Positioning has also been defined as the concept of choosing the desired opinion or association of a firm or brand by the selected target consumers and designing a marketing strategy with the objective to meet or exceed the expectations of the target consumers (Cravens and Piercy, 2009). Positioning also shows “the place where existing or to be issued products are put in the marketplace by the customers. Positioning is the development of the image of a product directly against to the competitor products and other products produced by the company's own” (Karadeniz, 2009:99).

Regardless of the definition that a brand chooses to adopt, all definitions of positioning have similar meaning and are in support of the fact that positioning itself is a process that needs to be followed so as to plan the correct marketing strategy to use and how to execute it. The objective of positioning is “to locate the brand/product in the consumers’ minds so that organization can secure maximize potential benefits” (Kotler and Keller, 2009:150). Therefore this study will combine all definitions whilst focusing more on all the steps that need to be done (with reference to **Fig 3.1**) before actually formulating a positioning strategy.

### **3.3.1 History of Product Positioning**

Positioning is perceived by some researchers as the last stage, after product and image stages, in the historical development of marketing communications. Looking back in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, the primary components of the product cycle (which was more dominant then) were being less competitive and every service or product was seen as a discovery (Lowry and Owens, 2001). It is at this stage were a strategy known as the “unique sales proposal” prevailed. This strategy focused more on product characteristics and benefits in designing the communication themes (Chowdhury, 2013).

Based on an article written by Karadeniz (2009), the idea positioning was appointed to the marketing communication agenda by Ries and Trout (1972-1978). It was in 1972 when Trout and Ries released their articles explaining the concept of positioning in the Advertising era (Karadeniz, 2009).

A brand's value proposition needs to help satisfy the desires and preferences of distinct target markets (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). There are 3 steps, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2012) of differentiating and positioning a brand:

### **3.3.2 Identifying a set of differentiating competitive advantages**

In order to discover ideas of diversity, marketing experts should consider the consumer's total involvement with the business's product or service. Ways to distinguish a brand include:

#### ***3.3.2.1 Product differentiation***

This is a positioning plan that a couple of companies or brands use to differentiate their services or products from their main rival competitors (Lamb et al., 2015). Differentiation will be in terms of product features, performance, style, reliability, or range.

##### ***3.3.2.1.1 Features***

Features or attributes are product individualities that improve the product's elementary function. The key issue is to decide which features are to be standard and which to make optional. This is because the whole point of differentiation is to provide additional buyers with a choice of a product with more than the standard features (Chowdhury, 2013).

##### ***3.3.2.1.2 Performance***

The product's performance involves the stages at which a product's key features to function. When products are produced for the first time a firm can decide on a specific performance level or one of four levels of performance which are: low, average, high and superior. This can serve as a good basis for performance (Walker and Mullins, 2014). There are three performance-moderating approaches that can be adopted by a firm: quality improvement (continuously improving products), quality maintenance (keeping the product at the same quality level) and quality adulteration (reducing product quality over time) (Walker and Mullins, 2014).

#### *3.3.2.1.3 Reliability*

The extent of the chance that a product will not breakdown or collapse within a quantified time frame is known as reliability. Many consumers are prepared to offer extra for a product that has established a status of reliability (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

#### *3.3.2.1.4 Style*

Style is a particular measure that defines in what way the product appears and feels to the consumer. Outstanding styling has the benefit of producing product uniqueness that will make it tougher for competitors to imitate (Chowdhury, 2013).

#### *3.3.2.1.5 Product range*

Range is the variety offered by a brand in terms of that product (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

### ***3.3.2.2 Services differentiation***

Services that go together with a product could similarly be used to distinguish the product offering (Lamb et al., 2015). Differentiation, in this case, will be in terms of delivery, consultation, installation, repair services or customer training (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012).

#### *3.3.2.2.1 Delivery*

It involves how well a product or service is supplied to a consumer. Quickness, precision, and reliability are all part of the delivery process (Lamb et al., 2015).

#### *3.3.2.2.2 Consumer training*

Customer training involves the training a customer or the client's staff to use the company's product offering or service correctly and proficiently (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012).

#### *3.3.2.2.3 Consulting service*

A consulting service is a guidance given to purchasers of a product for no fee or at a small fee.

#### *3.3.2.2.4 Miscellaneous services*

In addition to some other services offered a firm can offer a variety of other services that could improve the value to its products. E.g. better warranties, maintenance contracts and loyalty programs (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012).

### **3.3.2.3 *Image differentiation***

As far back as the 1950s, a shop's image was described as a force which is "the store personality" the manner in which the shop is described in the buyer's thoughts, partially by useful abilities and an atmosphere of psychological characteristics (Chowdhury, 2013). Image may also be described as a set of expectations. An image should fulfill various roles conveying one message in a unique manner that institute a brand's main feature and positioning. An image needs to provide an expressive control that pleases to both the hearts and minds of buyers. A firm may differentiate itself in terms of symbols, visual media, atmosphere and events (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012; Lamb et al., 2015).

#### **3.3.2.3.1 *Symbols***

When a company has had a sturdy recognised image it is instantly known by the people exposed to it. Businesses attempt to design their corporate and brand symbols, especially for immediate recognition (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

#### **3.3.2.3.2 *Visual media***

All commercials, campaigns, and publications, as well as websites, writing materials and business cards of a company, needs to communicate the character of a brand (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012).

#### **3.3.2.3.3 *Events***

Sponsoring occasions can cause in a very positive image for a company (Chowdhury, 2013).

#### **3.3.2.3.4 *Atmosphere***

The physical facility where the company produces or supplies its product or services can be a powerful tool for projecting an image. For example signage, parking, landscape, layout, equipment, lighting and décor (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012).

### **3.3.2.4 *Personnel differentiation***

Through cautiously choosing and teaching employees to be more proficient than the competitors' employees, companies can improve their competitive edge. Each employee would have to understand the value of knowing consumers' characters, interacting with them joyfully and replying speedily to their needs and concerns (Lamb et al., 2015). Each employee is carefully trained to make people happy. People who will live the positioning of the company

and show the true image of the company by the service they provide (Walker and Mullins, 2014).

### **3.3.3 Choosing the right competitive advantages**

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012), several marketing experts assume that firms ought to hostilely push for a single benefit to the target market because consumers have a tendency to recall one and not many attributes considering that they have so much communication coming their way. However, other marketing scholars assume that businesses ought to position themselves on more than one differentiator. This is because two or more firms may be insisting on being leaders on the similar aspect.

#### ***3.3.3.1 How to choose the right one***

Significant: the change should deliver a greatly appreciated advantage to target consumers

Unique: rivals should not provide the modification, or the firm can provide it in an enhanced unique way (Chowdhury, 2013).

Superior: the change should be exceptional to other ways that consumers might gain a similar advantage.

Communicable: the change should be transmittable and evident to buyers.

Pre-emptive: challengers should not be able to effortlessly imitate the modification (Aaker and McLoughlin, 2007).

Affordable: purchasers should be able to afford to pay for the change.

Productive: the firm should be able to present the change profitably (Walker and Mullins, 2014).

### **3.3.4 Choosing an overall positioning strategy**

The brand's value proposition is the total positioning of a brand. It is the entire blend of benefits on which a brand is distinguished and positioned (Aaker and McLoughlin, 2007). It is the response to the purchaser's question 'Why must I buy your brand?'

As shown in figure 3.2 below, the red zone consists of the losing value propositions and green consists of the winning ones. The yellow represents at best a marginal proposition (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

**Figure 3.2:** Choosing an overall positioning strategy

		<b>Price</b>		
		More	The same	Less
<b>Benefits</b>	More	More for more <span style="background-color: #76b82a; color: white; padding: 2px;">More for more</span>	More for the same <span style="background-color: #76b82a; color: white; padding: 2px;">More for the same</span>	More for less <span style="background-color: #76b82a; color: white; padding: 2px;">More for less</span>
	The same	<span style="background-color: #e74c3c; color: white; padding: 2px;"></span>	<span style="background-color: #f1c40f; color: white; padding: 2px;"></span>	The same for less <span style="background-color: #76b82a; color: white; padding: 2px;">The same for less</span>
	Less	<span style="background-color: #e74c3c; color: white; padding: 2px;"></span>	<span style="background-color: #e74c3c; color: white; padding: 2px;"></span>	Less for much less <span style="background-color: #76b82a; color: white; padding: 2px;">Less for much less</span>

Source: (Lamb et al., 2015:281)

#### **3.3.4.1 More for more**

Additional benefits for a higher price: Consist of offering the top upmarket products or services and charging a high price to cover the expenses. However additional for more brands could sometimes be susceptible because they usually have duplicators who claim similar quality but at a lower price (Kerin and Hartley, 2017).

#### **3.3.4.2 More for same**

More benefits for a similar price: a business can invade a rival’s more for more proposition by presenting a brand offering similar quality at a lesser price than the competitors. However, providing extra normally costs more, which makes it hard to provide on ‘the less’ part. There is a risk of increasing cost from the additional benefits and making fewer profits (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012).

#### **3.3.4.3 The Same for less**

Similar benefits for a lesser price: this could be such a compelling positioning strategy because every person loves a good deal. This is usually used by Discount stores as Walmart, who achieve this by offering similar products at good price reductions on the basis of superior purchasing power and lower-cost processes (Kerin and Hartley, 2017).

#### **3.3.4.4 *Less for much less***

Fewer benefits for a far lower price: comprises meeting customers' lower quality needs at a far lesser price (Kerin and Hartley, 2017).

#### **3.3.5 Developing a positioning strategy for a university**

Lowry and Owens (2001) agreed that universities that have the greatest chance to build up their enrolment are those that have positioned their selves in order to meet the needs of potential students and their parents. Kotler (2000) also summarised that the act of developing a firm's offering and image (an image referring to set of beliefs and ideas an individual perceives regarding a product or service) so as to occupy a unique place in the mind of the target market. Both descriptions clearly illustrates that it is imperative for a company to communicate a clear image to its consumers so that it allows them to make unprejudiced analysis of its services and products. This will give the consumers freedom to make an honest analysis of the benefits and limitations of the product or service (Kotler, 2000).

Any higher educational institution that has a unique position is able to express to potential students what it is and what it represents. A student is usually confident that she or he would have made the correct choice of university when the student's values corresponds with the values that originate from the university's positioning (Lowry and Owens, 2001). Consistency and unity in university activities is maintained when the university focuses all of its marketing efforts towards the desired position and this also creates a specific image.

The university needs to agree on its specific positioning, once the target market has been identified. A university needs to plan a positioning strategy that stimulates good feedback from its student market. As practical customers, learners often decide on the university they want to be based primarily on the college's positioning. It is imperative to understand students today are fixated on particular educational programs instead of the overall product and services of the college (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006). In a study by Spiegler (1998:53), he mentions that "many undergraduate students are outcome-oriented with a particular career in mind, so they are choosing programs in much the same way that in the past graduate students have selected their programs".

Lowry and Owens (2001) agree that good positioning directs all its attention on what the target consumers perceives is essential and not necessarily what management feels is important. Positioning of a university will only be successful when the students and parents have accepted

the products and services offered by the university. Therefore the university itself will not be creating the positioning but the strategic program to encourage the students to embrace a certain positioning in their minds (Upshaw, 1995).

In marketing a positioning plan is usually designed with proper use of the marketing mix which include price, product, promotion and place (also known as the four Ps). In a higher education institution environment, tuition and financial aid represent price, product is represented by academic programs, the communication strategy represents promotion and the delivery or distribution system for academic programs represents place (Lindblad, 2008). A university builds its position on the basis of the student's total experience with these key variables.

### ***3.3.5.1 Academic Programs***

In order for a university to position itself with the image that it is best in academics, it has to have a competitive advantage in being best in the academic programs wanted by the potential students. A study by done by Garden (2003) discovered that one of the most influential factors in selection of a university is the availability of particular academic courses. Spiegler did a survey in (1998) that discovered that a lot of students need academic programs that would prepare them for the corporate world.

Therefore, one of the positioning strategies that can be used by a university that wants to position itself as a market leader in academic disciplines would be to focus on revealing the amount and quality of graduates from a particular academic discipline, the number and quality of graduates from a specific academic discipline, the quantity of eminent chairs in the discipline, the desirability of the building housing the discipline, and the publicity produced by activities in the discipline (Lowry and Owens, 2001). Furthermore, graduates from those particular disciplines should be able to get admission to postgraduate studies without difficulty and also get adequate jobs from the top employers, as proof of the strength of the market leader university's programs.

### ***3.3.5.2 Tuition and Financial Aid***

In this highly competitive environment, every institution is looking for resourceful ways to decrease the financial burdens placed on parents and students and create an image that it is affordable for the target student (Lindblad, 2008). For a university such as UKZN, whose vision

is to be a premium university of African scholarship, it is imperative for it to excel in providing financial aid for all students who need it.

### **3.3.5.3 *Academic Delivery Systems***

Communicating to potential students on how a university's delivery system is different from its rivals and offering the prospect with added value leads to successful positioning. The quality of computers, sizes of lecture rooms, sizes of labs and student-to-faculty ratio are all considered as important features in an academic delivery system (Lindblad, 2008).

### **3.3.5.4 *Communication Strategy***

The main aspect in executing a successful positioning strategy is a broad communication program. It is important to construct a communication plan in order to portray the positioning selected. In this case, marketers are encouraged to use the IMC approach, which is the Integrated Marketing Approach. This approach entails coordinating several methods of communicating to consumers including sales promotions, sponsorships, and advertising via internet, television, print, and radio media, public relations, personal selling and direct advertising (Hooley et. al., 2004). This approach allows the constructing of all of the university's messages from the student's perspective and this will create most favourable feedback. Therefore it is imperative to use an integrated approach that is consistent in its communication, as this will not result in confusion of the university's positioning by potential students (Walker and Mullins, 2014).

## **3.4 Conclusion**

Chapter 3 has focused a lot on how to develop a positioning strategy. As discussed in this chapter, positioning is considered an important stage in marketing strategies of firms because it helps identify, and take possession of a strong purchasing rationale that gives the consumer a real or perceived advantage (Kotler and Keller, 2012). Ways to identify and choose a set of differentiating competitive advantages has been pointed out in this chapter. The next chapter discusses the research methodology that was utilized for the study.

# **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

## **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents an outline of the manner in which data was collected and analyzed by the researcher. This chapter provides an overview of the theory and concepts relating to the methods of conducting a research. It further gives an outline of how the researcher applied these concepts and theories to the data collection and analysis required to address the objectives of the study and ultimately the research problem.

The objectives and theoretical framework of the study were used to guide the research process. The research methods were, therefore, selected according to their ability to meet these objectives and collect relevant data to address the research problem.

This chapter will thus provide detailed information about the purpose, objectives, research design, research paradigm, sampling strategies and the instruments used to collect data. Furthermore, the chapter gives an account of the analysis of these data, provisions made to ensure the reliability and validity of the research process and efforts made to maintain the ethics of the entire research procedure. Finally, this chapter describes the limitations of the study and research process.

## **4.2 Purpose of the study**

Studies may be either exploratory, descriptive or causal in type and the type is determined by the point to which understanding about the study matter has progressed. This study made use of descriptive study. This type of research design is usually intended to gather information that defines the features of people, circumstances or positions (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). It may be either quantitative or qualitative in nature. The quantitative information collected may be satisfaction assessments, production statistics or demographic data and the qualitative information may be data gathered to describe consumer's decision-making process (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013).

The researcher chose a descriptive study because according to Cant, Strydom, Jooste and Du Plessis (2003), descriptive research describes aspects such as the market potential of a product, demographics and the attitudes of consumers or behavioural information. Therefore, the descriptive study will aid UKZN to know and understand better what the international post-graduate students' needs are. This study aims to create a good positioning strategy for the post-

graduate international students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg). Knowing what the international post-graduate students' needs are is an important part to creating the desired positioning strategy.

### **4.3 Research Objectives**

**a. To establish whom the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market.**

- What are the needs of international students going into postgraduate studies?
- What are the current segments and what characteristics are used to define them in the international post-graduate market?
- Among the segments identified, which ones are the most attractive?

**b. What is the university's position from an International student (going into post-grad) perspective?**

- What is the students' perception of other universities in comparison to UKZN?
- What is UKZN's position currently from a student's perspective?

**c. To assess whether the position of UKZN aligns with their current marketing strategies, vision and mission?**

- From a student's perspective, how do they feel currently about the university's mission and goals?

**d. To create a positioning strategy to attract more International Students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.**

### **4.4 Research strategies**

This study made use of a survey and case study research strategies.

A process for gathering data from or about individuals to define, relate or clarify their knowledge, characters, and nature, is known as a survey (Fink, 2003). The survey scheme involves setting goals for gathering the information, planning the research, arranging a dependable and authentic survey tool, managing the survey, supervising and evaluating information and recording the outcomes. The researcher chose the survey research strategy because it allowed the researcher to collect data on consumer behaviour, decision-making, and perception. Furthermore, this approach is quite common in business research because it permits

the investigator to gather quantitative and qualitative information on various kinds of research questions (Fink, 2003).

Case studies pay attention to gathering data about a particular item, occasion or exercise, for instance, a specific individual, business, institution, organization, group or event. In this study, the case was the specific market (which is the post-grad international students). The concept behind a case study is that in order to get the perfect picture of an issue, the researcher should study the real life circumstances from several approaches and viewpoints using many ways of data collection.

The researcher chose this design because it gives emphasis to comprehensive background analysis of a restricted amount of conditions and their relationships.

#### **4.5 Research Approaches/Paradigms**

An angle about research held by a society of researchers, based on a set of common thoughts, ideas, standards, and habits is known as a research paradigm. There are three major research approaches a study can use, which are qualitative, quantitative and mixed research. Pure qualitative research depends on the assembling of qualitative information (i.e., non-numerical information like words and pictures). While, pure quantitative research relies on the gathering of quantitative data (i.e., numerical data). Mixed research involves the mixing of quantitative and qualitative research methods, approaches, or other paradigm characteristics (Borrego, Douglas, and Amelink, 2009).

As mentioned before according to Cant et al. (2003), descriptive research describes aspects such as the market potential of a product, demographics and the attitudes of consumers or behavioural information. This particular study will be describing the attitudes and behavioural information of students through needs analysis and that is why this study will be descriptive. As a result, the researcher made use of the mixed research method which involves using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Both research methods were used because they both helped meet the objectives of the study. Below is a table of why both methods were used in the study.

**Table 4.1:** Comparisons of qualitative and quantitative research methods

	<b>Qualitative</b>	<b>Quantitative</b>
<b>Reasons why they were used in the study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It tries to comprehend a given research problem or subject from the views of the local population it involves</li> <li>• Adequate in procuring culturally particular material about the ethics, views, behaviours, and social contexts of specific populations</li> <li>• Provides complicated written explanations of how individuals experience a particular research problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps to describe characteristics of a population</li> <li>• Generalizable results that can be used for other people.</li> </ul>

Source: (Borrego et al., 2009).

#### **4.6 Study site**

A study site refers to the physical region the research will take place. The study site for this research was University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg campus, situated in Scottsville, a residential low-density suburb.

#### **4.7 Target population**

This kind of population is the total group of individuals, occasions, or things of importance that the investigator needs to examine. The target population for this study is all the undergrad final year (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>), post-grad diploma, honours and masters international students of the

University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus. As illustrated below the total population was 358.

**Table 4.2: Enrolment statistics for Prospective International students going into postgraduate studies in 2016 at UKZN Pietermaritzburg Campus.**

<b>Level of studies</b>	<b>Quantity</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup> year final international students	68
4 <sup>th</sup> year final international students	13
Postgraduate diploma international students	22
Honours international students	54
Masters international students	201
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>358</b>

## **4.8 Sample**

A subdivision of the population, which includes a few people chosen from the population is known as a sample. The investigator should know how to draw assumptions that are generalizable to the population of interest by examining the sample. The sample of this study was drawn from all colleges (College of Law and Management Studies, College of Humanities, College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science etc.).

### **4.8.1 Sampling method**

This study made use of non-probability sampling, which is used when the features in the population do not have any probabilities attached to their being selected as sample subjects. This type of sampling comes in two forms, convenience, and purposive sampling. The first one is defined as the assembling of data from participants of the population who are appropriately available to provide it (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013).

It was important for the researcher to obtain or collect data from the specific target group being researched because this study also made use of qualitative research. Collecting data from a specific target group is known as purposive sampling. This method is restricted to particular

kinds of individuals who can deliver the sought after information and in this study, the people would be: “the registered third year and postgraduate international students.” There are two types of purposive sampling, however, this study made use of judgement sampling which concerns the selection of individuals who are the most valuably placed or in the greatest position to supply the information needed (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013).

#### 4.8.2 Sample size

The procedure of choosing an adequate amount of the precise features from the population to facilitate a study of the sample, be able to interpret its properties and make it viable to generalize them to the population elements, is known as sampling.

**Figure 4.1:** Snapshot of the sample size results from Survey System Sample Size Calculator.



(Creative Research Systems, 2012)

The study made use of a sample size calculator of the internet shown in the diagram above. A total of 186 students was selected purposively for inclusion in the sample, targeting UKZN PMB campus international students who want to pursue or further their studies.

## **4.9 Tools used to collect the data**

One of the essential parts of research design would be the procedures used to collect data and the numerous methods available to the researcher each has its disadvantages and advantages. This study made use of mixed methods, therefore, it made use of data collection instruments used for both the qualitative and quantitative method.

### **4.9.1 Quantitative Method**

#### *Personally administered questionnaires and Electronic questionnaires*

A group of questions pre-prepared for respondents to record their answers, typically within narrowly defined options, is known as a questionnaire. These are effective when the researcher is using a descriptive or exploratory study (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). A set of open-ended, close-ended, ambiguous, positively and negatively worded questions were used to form the questionnaire. Questionnaires were administered on campus and the other were distributed electronically via UKZN Notice system in case some respondents were absent when the personal administered questionnaires were carried out. A confidentiality cover letter and consent form was also distributed together with the questionnaire, with a brief explanation of what the study was about and an assurance of the confidentiality and anonymity of the participant.

A Likert scale was employed in section B, C and D. The Likert scale is the most frequently used scale that consists of statements which are used to express either a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward a particular matter of interest (Cooper and Schindler, 2001). The Likert scale was, therefore, deemed as an appropriate method to investigate attitudes towards various subjects of interest in this study.

The questionnaire comprised four sections and is included as Appendix D.

#### **4.9.1.1 Section A**

Section A included biographical questions. This data was important to define the respondents and was used for classification of the data. The demographic information requested covered gender, nationality, age, race, level in studies and campus. This section was put first to ease the respondents into the questionnaire. The section of this questionnaire was informed by the first objective of the study which was to establish whom the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market. The purpose of this section was to enable segmentation

as it has clearly defined categories to group the students, leading to the classification of the primary and secondary target markets.

#### **4.9.1.2 Section B**

This section was related to research questions 1-3 and the first objective of establishing who the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market. The questions in this section were asked to determine what factors or attributes are important to the target market in their selection of a university. The questions were also aimed at identifying the needs of the possible target market. This section had one open-ended question to gain insight on all the needs the researcher might have missed in the close-ended questions.

#### **4.9.1.3 Section C**

Section C was informed by the second research objective which was to establish the university's position from an International student (going into post-grad) perspective. It aimed to examine students' perceptions of other universities in comparison to UKZN. A perception of competing universities will be created through people they know (siblings, parents, friends and lecturers) who have research and experience with these other universities, internet sources that rate universities, newspaper articles and through sporting and cultural events that UKZN students attend at other universities. Therefore students will be able to compare UKZN with other universities based on their perceptions of them, though they might not have actually experienced the services first hand. The purpose of questions asked in this section was to know which universities in South Africa are perceived by the potential international post-graduate students to be better or worse as compared to UKZN. Using the results in section B to determine who UKZN's direct competitors are is beneficial because the researcher would have found out exactly what the students consider very important in a tertiary institution when selecting it for post-graduate studies. Thus the researcher used these success factors to carry out the competitor analysis.

#### **4.9.1.4 Section D**

Research objective three informed this section of the questionnaire. The objective of this section was to assess whether the position of UKZN is aligning with their current marketing strategies, vision and mission. This section was important in determining the positioning of UKZN in the minds of the current international students. It was broken into two categories, questions that apply to the student's opinions of the facilities at UKZN and questions that apply

to the students' opinions of the goals of UKZN. The purpose of this section is to get students' perception of UKZN for purposes of comparing what they think with UKZN's strategic plan.

## **4.9.2 Qualitative Method**

### ***4.9.2.1 Focus Groups***

This type of method to collect data involves usually eight to ten participants with a mediator directing the discussions for about two hours on a specific subject. Participants are usually selected based on their level of know-how on the subject on which material is being sought. Benefits of such discussions include obtaining people's shared perceptions of the subject under study, the means in which people are influenced by others in a group event and it is relatively inexpensive to use but can deliver a favourably amount of reliable data within a small time frame (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). Two focus group discussions were conducted; one group with the third/fourth year, post-graduate diploma and honours international students, and one group with master's international students. Permission was sought from the participants and all discussions were recorded using an audio recorder.

### ***4.9.2.2 The Focus Group Interview Guide***

***Question1: I would like to know what your needs are as an international student going into postgraduate studies or who is already a postgraduate***

Lovelock and Wirtz (2011) defined a market segment as a set of consumers with the same needs, characters, purchasing behaviours or consumption patterns. The strongest method of segmentation pays attention to the most important consumer benefits, which will be of great concern to the various types of customers. Moreover, when consumers buy a certain brand because it greatly satisfies their needs, a company will have a strong competitive position (Hooley et al., 2004). Therefore, this question in this study was used in an effort to identify the needs or requirements that international students consider important when looking to select a tertiary institution for post-graduate studies. Understanding and identifying the needs of international students contributed to establishing who the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market.

***Question2: Would you say UKZN fulfills most of the needs required by postgraduate international students?***

According to Ries (1992:5) “positioning is based on perceptions”. How the customer perceives the organisation translates into the way in which the organisation is positioned in their minds. By focusing on the mind of the customer principles and concepts that will greatly increase the effectiveness of the communication process, will be learnt (Ries, 1992). It is in the mind that marketers fight their battles and it's in the mind that they lose or win (Editorial, 2000). Thus this question was aimed at observing the perception of post-graduate international students on the fulfillment of needs mentioned in question 1 by UKZN.

***Question3: Would you say your needs as an international student are ignored by UKZN as compared to local students?***

Also in this question, the researcher aimed to find out the perception or opinions of the international students in relation to equal treatment by UKZN between them and local students.

***Question4: In your opinion which would you say are the top 5 tertiary education institutions you would look at if choosing to study further?***

Competitor analysis helps enlighten marketers gain knowledge of competitors’ strong abilities and flaws which may, in turn, propose a chance for differentiation (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011). A firm needs to understand the competitors’ core competencies to identify how it can differentiate itself from them. The first step in the competitor analysis is to find out or identify who the potential competitors are. Therefore, this question aimed to list the possible institution competing with UKZN.

***Question5: I would like to get your views on what makes higher education tertiary institutions successful on an international scale.***

The most important goal of competitor analysis is to have sufficient information about a competitor to be able to reason like that particular competitor. This will enable the firm to create competitive strategies after having considered the competitor’s possible actions and responses (Czepiel and Kerin, 2012). The above question was used in an effort to identify the attributes regarded as important to have as a tertiary institution.

***Question6: Would you say UKZN is quite competitive on a national and international scale, looking at the success factors mentioned in the previous question.***

This question was asked because, according to Hooley (1995:420), “positioning can be explained in terms of the differential advantage or uniqueness of the offering.” Kotler and

Keller (2016:111) further explains that “points of difference are attributes or benefits that consumers associate a brand with, rate positively and perceive that they cannot find the same in any competing alternative”. This question aims to rank UKZN’s position based on the success factors mentioned in question 5.

***Question7: I would like to get your views on UKZN weaknesses and strengths, based on the success factors mentioned earlier.***

Thus based on the success factors mentioned in question 5, this questions aims to ascertain UKZN’s core competencies.

***Question8: What comes to mind when you hear of UKZN as a university brand?***

According to the marketing gurus of positioning Ries and Trout (1981:2), “positioning is about what you do to the mind.” Hence, the utmost marketing battlefield has been understood to be the mind of the consumer. Therefore, this question was aiming to get the perceptions of UKZN as a whole, the first thing that comes to mind when they hear of UKZN. This question enabled comparison between the perception that UKZN international students have of the university itself and the strategic plan that UKZN has currently.

***Question9: Would you say UKZN is a premier university of African Scholarship? Probe: In your opinion what defines a Premier University of African scholarship?***

The above question’s objectives were to get the opinions of international students on UKZN’s vision of being a Premier University of African scholarship and to get their opinions on the attributes that would make a Premier University of African scholarship. This purpose of this question is to enable a comparison to what the university wishes to achieve and what the students think of it.

## **4.10 Data quality control**

The purpose of data quality control is to ensure that the methods used to collect the data measures or examines the specific information required for that particular study. Furthermore, it ensures the data to me measured consistently.

### **4.10.1 Reliability and Validity**

It is important that conclusions derived from data be credible, reliable and valid. According to Roberts and Priest (2006), ways of representing and communicating the severity of research

processes and the credibility of research findings, are known as reliability and validity. More precisely, reliability measures a particular process or research technique, for instance: a questionnaire. Hence, it defines the extent to which similar results could be formed in different conditions, supposing nothing else has altered (Roberts and Priest, 2006).

**Table 4.3: Reliability statistics for questionnaire**

		N	%		
Cases	Valid	3	3,9	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	73	96,1		
	Total	76	100,0	,958	117

The Cronbach's Alpha test was used to establish the level of reliability. The closer Cronbach's Alpha is to 1, the higher the internal consistency reliability (Sekaran, 2003). As seen in the table above (Table 4.3) alpha value of 0.96 was obtained, therefore, indicating that the questionnaire was reliable.

Based on Golafshani (2003:599) "validity is necessary to ensure that the research has not deviated from what it was intended to evaluate". To address the concept of validity, this study used content validity which is "a measuring instrument which provides adequate coverage of the investigative questions and shows that the instrument adequately represents a sample of the subject matter investigated" (Cooper and Schindler, 2006:117). The researcher ensured the definition of the topic, items scaled and the scales used were carefully determined. Each item was cross referenced to each of the research objectives as well as relevant aspects of the literature to ensure that all subject matter was covered.

#### **4.10.2 Data analysis**

##### ***4.10.2.1 Qualitative data analysis***

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected. This type of data analysis requires the researcher to identify themes or patterns present in the data (Joffe and Yardley, 2004). Some of the themes explored in this study were mostly subjective based on the participants' personal experiences. Sekaran (2003) explains that themes can be noted at any point in the course of the data collection process.

#### ***4.10.2.2 Quantitative data analysis***

The quantitative data collected in this study was analysed on the statistical programme called SPSS. First, the questionnaires were coded, to make it easy to enter on to SPSS Version 22

**Objective 1:** To establish who the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market.

To begin with, the researcher did a brief descriptive analysis on SPSS using means to know which needs are considered most important by international students when considering to further their studies. The researcher then went on to use the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test, which is used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of two or more independent groups (Kozub,2010). In relation to this study, the purpose of this test was to know what the current segments are and what characteristics are used to define them in the international post-graduate market. The ANOVA test was done on five demographic groups (gender, nationality, level of studies, race, and age) to see if there are significant differences in responses between the subgroup groups within. The researcher made use of two needs considered most important by all the international students as the dependent variables to compare the means. The significance level being used in this study, is 5%, meaning anything below 5% is statistically significant. The results of the ANOVA tests done are shown in Table 5.3, chapter 5.

Further analysis was done to determine which characteristics could be used to define the segments identified. The researcher used descriptive means to test which needs are considered most important in each of the segments identified as shown in Figure 5.3.

*Final step: To determine the primary and secondary target markets.*

First, the researcher chose the different factors that makes a segment attractive and factors that make a business competitive. For this particular study factors that were chosen to make a segment attractive included market size and amount of competition and factors that make a business competitive included research reputation and quality of academic staff. Second, the researcher weighted the factors to rank the most important to the least important factor. Thirdly in order to get the market size factor ratings the researcher made use of the qualitative results of the frequencies of the nationalities and to limit the score to a 0-10 scale, she multiplied the results by 10. All the calculations are provided in the findings chapter. The results were then plotted onto a Market-Attractiveness/Competitive Position Matrix (Figure 5.4).

**Objective 2:** To establish what the university's position from an International student (going into post-grad) perspective is.

#### *In comparison to other Universities*

To achieve this objective, the researcher made use of the most satisfactory needs required by international students as the success factors of a university. Therefore, the success factors of any university based on the respondents are good research reputation, extremely qualified academic staff, global recognition, high safety standards, refined library resources, opportunities for employment and availability of the desired course. These success factors were then used to analyse the perception that international students have of UKZN against other universities. The researcher selected only 6 universities with the most satisfactory means within the success factors mentioned.

After the factors were identified the researcher weighed the factors to reflect their relative importance, from the most important to the least important. The researcher weighed the factors by dividing the mean of each weighed factor by the sum of the means of all the factors. The weightings were then rounded off to the nearest two decimal places.

In order to determine how well the competitors and the university itself are doing on each key factor, the factors were scored or rated by respondents using a Likert scale of 0 to 5, where 0 represented a poor score and 5 represented an excellent score. Table 5.9 illustrates the mean scores that were given by the respondents on each key success factor, the weightings for relative importance on each key success factor and the total scores after the two together. The total scores are then all added together for each university to get a University total score. The total scores are then plotted on a graph (Figure 5.5) to illustrate the market leader in the industry and the direct competition UKZN is facing.

#### *Perceptions of its facilities and goals*

In this section of the objective, the researcher made use of SPSS descriptive means to determine the most satisfactory goals and the most satisfactory facilities as perceived by the international students, as shown in figure 5.6 and 5.7.

## **4.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher had an in-depth discussion of how the research was conducted for this study. It fully explained the research strategies, data collection methods and the

technique used in analysing the data collected. In the next chapter, the researcher presented the findings from both research methods, qualitative and quantitative method.

# CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data that was collected with the use of the personally administered questionnaire and two focus groups. None of the questionnaires that were distributed via UKZN notice system were used therefore the data presented was only from the personally administered questionnaires and two focus groups. The objectives of this study were to:

1. To establish who the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market.
  - a) What are the needs of international students going into postgraduate studies?
  - b) What are the current segments and what characteristics are used to define them in the international post-graduate market?
  - c) Among the segments identified, which ones are the most attractive?
2. To establish what the university's position from an International student (going into post-grad) perspective is.
  - d) What is the students' perception of other universities in comparison to UKZN?
  - e) What is UKZN's position currently from a student's perspective?
3. To assess whether the position of UKZN is aligning with their current marketing strategies, vision, and mission?
  - f) From a student's perspective, how do they feel currently about the university's mission and goals?
4. To create a positioning strategy to attract more International Students that the University is looking to pull in.

An average score was calculated for each response on the statements in all the sections of the questionnaire based on the five-point Likert scale. In this chapter, satisfactory means any result above 4 out of 5 on a five-point Likert scale and unsatisfactory means any result below 3 out of 5 also on a five-point Likert scale. The findings were presented based on each research question.

## 5.2 Findings by objectives

### 5.2.1 Objective: To establish who the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market.

*Research question 1: What are the needs of international students going into postgraduate studies?*

#### *Findings from the Questionnaires*

**Table 5.1:** Key in descending order of means

<b>Need</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Need 2	Good research reputation and High academic standards
Need 11	Extremely qualified academic staff
Need 3	Global Recognition
Need 4	High safety standards
Need 6	Refined library resources
Need 9	Opportunities for employment
Need 10	Availability of the desired course
Need 7	High-tech computer facilities
Need 12	Availability of scholarships/financial aid/bursaries
Need 5	Affordability
Need 1	Availability of residences
Need 8	Favourable entry requirements

**Figure 5.1: Needs Analysis**

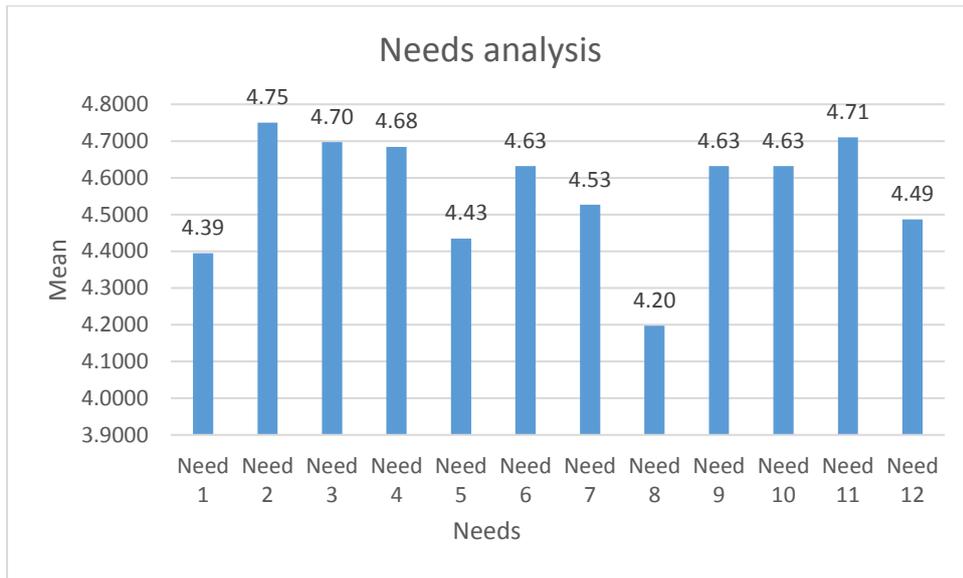


Figure 5.1 shows that all needs had an average mean of above 4 out of 5 indicating that all the needs brainstormed by the researcher had satisfactory results. Furthermore, as can be seen in Figure 5.1 above needs 2 (4.75), 11 (4.7105), 3 (4.6974), 4(4.6842), 6 (4.6316), 9 (4.6316), and 10 (4.6316) have the highest means indicating that these were the most considered needs. These needs include good research reputation, extremely qualified academic staff, global recognition, high safety standards, refined library resources, opportunities for employment and availability of the desired course, respectively.

### ***Findings from the Focus groups***

*Question: I would like to know what your needs are as an international student going into postgraduate studies or who is already a postgraduate.*

The needs that participants collectively brainstormed are “job opportunities, accommodation, scholarships, resources for research for Honours level, more library space, more library books and more LAN space (More Computers)”.

*Question: Would you say UKZN fulfills most of the needs required by postgraduate international students?*

**Table 5.2:** Focus groups responses

Themes	Needs	Score given
Employment opportunities	1. Job opportunities	“0”
Accommodation	2. Accommodation	“3”
Financial aid	3. Scholarships	“1-2”
Facilities	4. Resources for research Honours	“1”
Facilities	5. Library space	“1”
Facilities	6. Library books	“1”
Facilities	7. LAN space	“1”

The participants collectively scored UKZN in being able to fulfill the needs they brainstormed on a Likert scale of 0 to 5, where 0 is a poor score and 5 is an excellent score. It is clear that only one need was scored an average 3 and the rest of the needs scored poorly. This indicates that KZN does not meet most needs mentioned by this particular focus group.

*Question: Would you say your needs as international students are ignored by UKZN as compared to local students?*

All participants said that their needs are ignored by UKZN as compared to local students. They also gave examples of incidences where they are being treated unfairly.

**Theme: Unfair treatment**

- One student mentioned that “Career fairs are always arranged every year but they always invite companies that do not take international students and yet when they advertise them they do not make it clear that they only want South African citizens only.”
- Another student mentioned that “Post-graduate requirements are stricter for International students as compared to local students. When you apply for results (academic records) for the purposes of renewing your study visa UKZN put measures to pay a certain amount to receive the results. And considering the student will be in their home country the process will take longer than usual.”
- One suggested that “There is a lack of communication and integration and they feel like they do not have much of a voice.”
- Some participants agreed that “International student outside the SADC area pay in US dollars which is quite unfavourable and becomes a hindrance for them.”

- “UKZN has not done much about accommodation, and the International students’ office does not help much. Furthermore, they are enrolling more students they can cater for and preference for residence seems to be given Local students than international students” as mentioned by one participant.

*Research question 2: What are the current segments and what characteristics are used to define them in the international post-graduate market?*

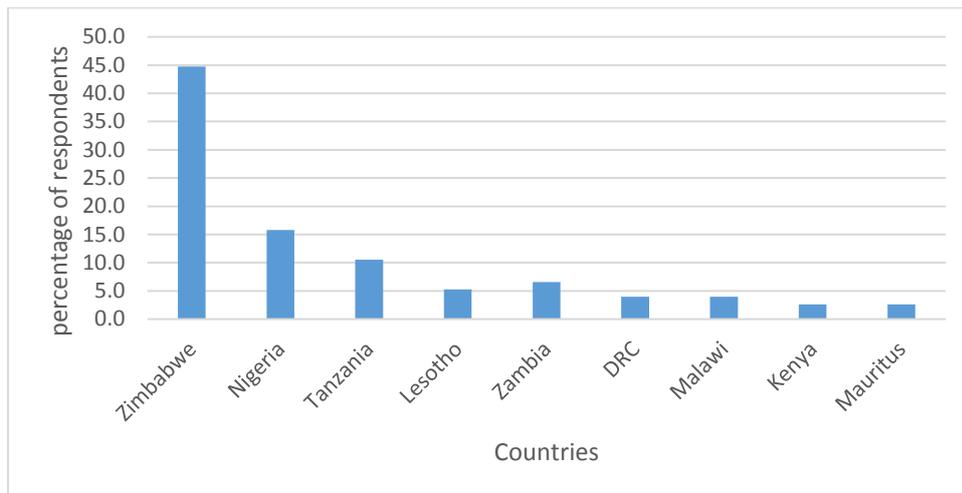
**Step 3: Decide on bases for segmenting the market**

**Table 5.3:** Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

<b>Fixed Factor/Independent variable</b>	<b>Most satisfactory dependent variables</b>	
	<b>Need 2(Good research reputation) Significance level</b>	<b>Need 11(Extremely qualified academic staff) Significance level</b>
Gender	0.203	0.353
Nationality	0.045	0.000
Age	0.881	0.444
Level of studies	0.618	0.983
Race	0.685	0.666

Table 5.3 above shows that the significance level of the top two satisfactory needs which are: good research reputation and extremely qualified academic staff. The significance level on both of these needs for nationality is 0.045 and 0.000 respectively which is below 0.05 or 5%. This shows that nationality as a factor affects the perception of students on these two variables. Therefore the researcher has decided to use geographical location as the bases for segmentation.

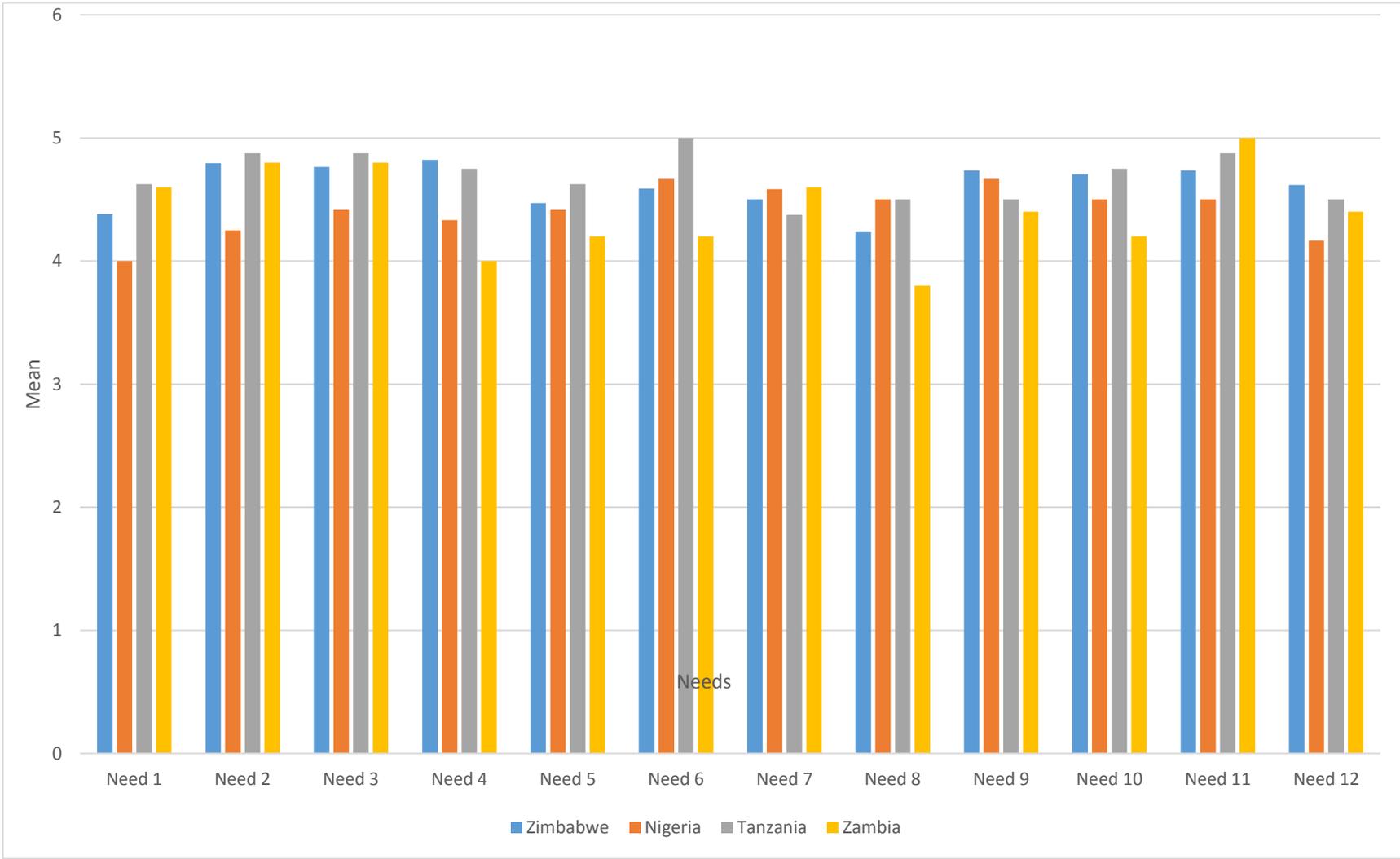
**Figure 5.2:** Geographic demographics



After having decided to use geographical location as a bases for segmentation for the international students’ market, the researcher made use of market size as segment descriptors. As seen in the biggest segment based on market size is Zimbabwe with a percentage of 44.7% respondents, followed by Nigeria with 15.8% respondents.

The researcher selected 4 of the top countries based on market size to form homogenous segments. As seen in the graph above these are Zimbabwe (44.7%), Nigeria (15.8%), Tanzania (10.5%) and Zambia (6.6%).

**Figure 5.3:** Homogenous segments



### **Segment A: Zimbabwe**

The graph above indicates the most satisfactory needs to students from Zimbabwe are high safety standards (Need 4, score: 4.8235), good research reputation (Need 2, score: 4.7941), global recognition (Need 3, score: 4.7647), opportunities for employment (Need 9, score: 4.7353) and extremely academic staff (Need 11, score: 4.7353).

### **Segment B: Nigeria**

As seen in the graph the most satisfactory needs that the respondents have in common include refined library resources (Need 6, score: 4.6667), opportunities for employment (Need 9, score: 4.6667), high-tech computer facilities (Need 7, score: 4.5833), favourable entry requirements (Need 8, score: 4.5000) and availability of the desired course (Need 10, score: 4.5000).

### **Segment C: Tanzania**

For the Tanzania group, as illustrated by the graph above the most satisfactory needs that the respondents have in common include refined library resources (Need 6, score: 5), good research reputation (Need 2, score: 4.8750), global recognition (Need 3, score: 4.8750), extremely academic staff (Need 11, score: 4.8750) and high safety standards (Need 4, score: 4.7500).

### **Segment D: Zambia**

The final segment identified in this study was Zambia. The graph above shows that the most satisfactory needs that the respondents have in common include extremely academic staff (Need 11, score: 5), good research reputation (Need 2, score: 4.8000), global recognition (Need 3, score: 4.8000), high-tech computer facilities (Need 7, score: 4.6000) and availability of residences (Need 1, score: 4.6000).

**Research question 3: Among the segments identified, which ones are the most attractive?**

**Table 5.4:** Assessing Segment A (Zimbabwe)

	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Rating (0-10 Scale)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Market-Attractiveness factors</b>			
Market Size	.65	$(34/59*10)$ 6	3.9
Amount of competition	.35	$(5/6*10)$ 8.33	2.92
Total: Market-Attractiveness	1.0		<b>6.82</b>
<b>Competitive position factors</b>			
Research Reputation of institution	.55	$(4.15/5*10)$ 8.3	4.57
Quality of academic staff	.45	$(4.06/5*10)$ 8.12	3.65
Total: Competitive position	1.0		<b>8.22</b>

**Table 5.5:** Assessing Segment B (Nigeria)

	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Rating (0-10 Scale)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Market-Attractiveness factors</b>			
Market Size	.65	$(12/59*10)$ 2.03	1.32
Amount of competition	.35	$(5/6*10)$ 8.33	2.92
Total: Market-Attractiveness	1.0		<b>4.24</b>
<b>Competitive position factors</b>			
Research Reputation of institution	.55	$(4.17/5*10)$ 8.3	4.57
Quality of academic staff	.45	$(3.83/5*10)$ 7.66	3.45
Total: Competitive position	1.0		<b>8.02</b>

**Table 5.6:** Assessing Segment C (Tanzania)

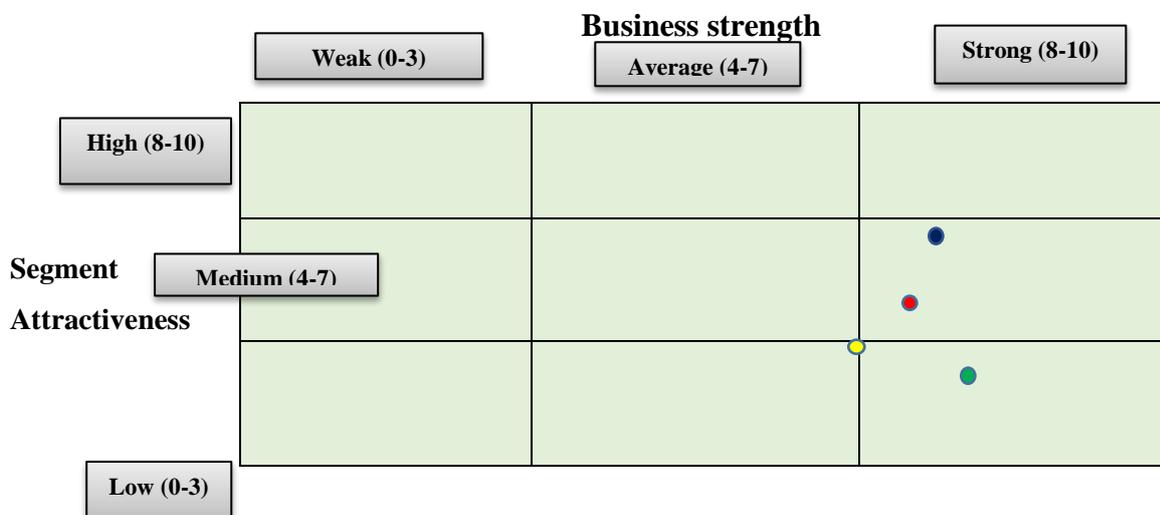
	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Rating (0-10 Scale)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Market-Attractiveness factors</b>			
Market Size	.65	$(8/59*10)$ 1.36	0.88

	Weight	Rating (0-10 Scale)	Total
Amount of competition	.35	(5/6*10)8.33	2.92
Total: Market-Attractiveness	1.0		<b>3.8</b>
<b>Competitive position factors</b>			
Research Reputation of institution	.55	(4/5*10) 8	4.4
Quality of academic staff	.45	(3.63/5*10)7.26	3.27
Total: Competitive position	1.0		<b>7.67</b>

**Table 5.7:** Assessing Segment D (Zambia)

	Weight	Rating (0-10 Scale)	Total
<b>Market-Attractiveness factors</b>			
Market Size	.65	(5/59*10)0.85	0.55
Amount of competition	.35	(5/6*10)8.33	2.92
Total: Market-Attractiveness	1.0		<b>3.47</b>
<b>Competitive position factors</b>			
Research Reputation of institution	.55	(4.6/5*10)9.2	5.06
Quality of academic staff	.45	(4.2/5*10)8.4	3.78
Total: Competitive position	1.0		<b>8.84</b>

**Figure 5.4:** Market-Attractiveness/Competitive Position Matrix



**Key:**

- = Segment A (Zimbabwe)
- = Segment B (Nigeria)
- = Segment C (Tanzania)
- = Segment D (Zambia)

The market attractiveness/competitive position matrix above illustrates the position of each segment. In this study, the results show that segment A-Zimbabwe (represented by the blue circle) would be the primary target market because it is working towards being highly attractive and the business will be more competitive in this segment. It is also clear that Segment B-Nigeria (represented by the red circle) would be the secondary target market as it is strong in business strength and the segment is averagely attractive. This segment has room for potential. Segment C-Tanzania fall in the average zone for both market attractiveness and business strength. This means that it has room for potential and UKZN can select it as a secondary target market as well. Whereas segment D came out with the poorest score of segment attractiveness and the highest score on business strength. This indicates that the Zambia segment is quite competitive more than the other segments however the segment is less attractive, therefore the segment can also be selected as a secondary target market because it has potential.

### **5.2.2 Objective: What is the university's position from an International student (going into post-grad) perspective?**

*Research question 4: What is the students' perception of other universities in comparison to UKZN?*

#### ***Findings from the Questionnaires***

In order to determine how well the competitors and the university itself are doing on each key factor, the factors were scored or rated by respondents using a Likert scale of 0 to 5, where 0 represented a poor score and 5 represented an excellent score. The table (Table 5.8) below illustrates the mean scores that were given by the respondents on each key success factor, the weightings for relative importance on each key success factor and the total scores after the two together. The total scores are then all added together for each university to get a University total score.

The graph below is a representation of the university total score to determine where UKZN stands in the minds of international students, against other tertiary institutions. It is clear that UKZN has the lowest total score of 3.58, indicating that it is the lowest threat in the industry based on the success factors that this study has found. It is also clear that UCT is the market leader in the industry with a total score of 4.32 and University of Stellenbosch came out second with a total score of 3.89.

**Table 5:8:** Competitive analysis

Key success factors	weight	UKZN		UCT		UW		UP		US		OTHER	
		S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T
G. R. Reputation	0.15	4.33	0.65	4.35	0.65	4.07	0.61	3.72	0.56	3.96	0.59	3.45	0.52
E. Q. A Staff	0.145	3.98	0.58	4.5	0.65	3.99	0.58	4.05	0.59	4.04	0.59	3.43	0.5
G. Recognition	0.145	3.42	0.5	4.6	0.67	3.87	0.56	3.81	0.55	3.96	0.57	3.62	0.52
H. S. Standards	0.14	2.9	0.41	3.97	0.56	3.44	0.48	3.56	0.5	3.51	0.49	3.38	0.47
R. L. Resources	0.14	3.7	0.52	4.41	0.62	4.04	0.57	4.12	0.58	4.19	0.59	3.9	0.55
O. F Employment	0.14	2.92	0.41	4.09	0.57	3.57	0.5	3.71	0.52	3.72	0.52	3.43	0.48
A.O. D. Course	0.14	3.61	0.51	4.28	0.6	3.81	0.53	3.91	0.55	3.84	0.54	3.9	0.55
University Total	1.00		3.58		4.32		3.83		3.85		3.89		3.59

**Key:**

S=score (Mean) and T=total

**UKZN** = University of KwaZulu-Natal

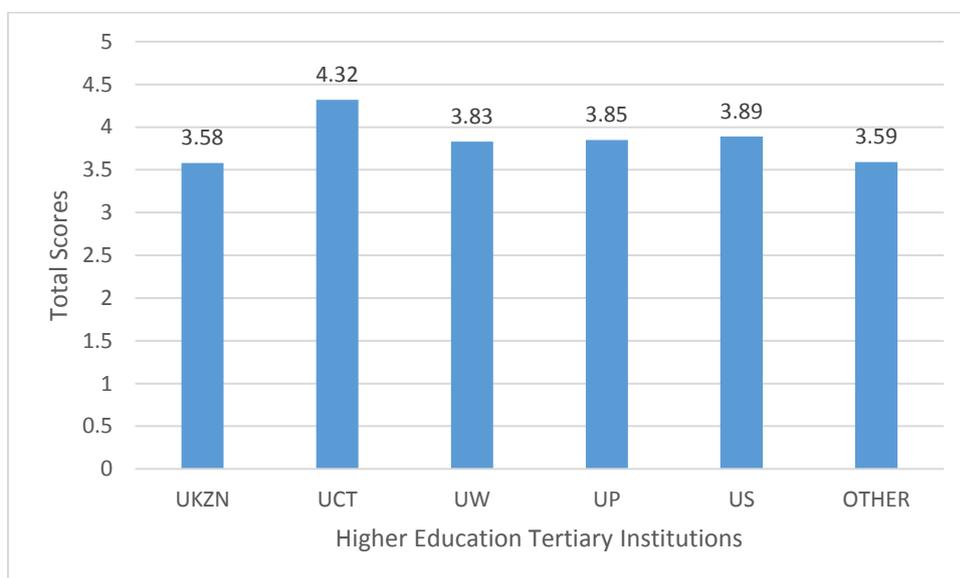
**UCT** = University of Cape Town

**UW** = University of Witwatersrand

**UP** = University of Pretoria

**US** = University of Stellenbosch

**Figure 5.5:** Competitive Analysis



***Findings from the Focus groups***

*Question: In your opinion which would you say are the top 5 tertiary education institutions you would look at if choosing to study further?*

The participants collectively selected universities they would like to consider for furthering their studies and these included:

**Table 5:9:** Competitive analysis

<b>Tertiary education institutions</b>	<b>Theme</b>
“University of Cape Town”	Local university
“University of Witwatersrand”	Local university
“University of Pretoria”	Local university
“University of Stellenbosch”	Local university
“Rhodes University”	Local university
“University of Namibia”	African university
“University of Birmingham”	European university
“University of Surrey”	European university

None of the participants mentioned the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The above table shows that the most institutions nominated in the focus groups by the participants were local universities.

*Question: What makes a higher education tertiary institution successful of an international scale?*

Some of the success factors mentioned included: “Relationships with other universities with research facilities, Research recognition, Research facilities, Quality of results (Standard should not be compromised) and Safety.”

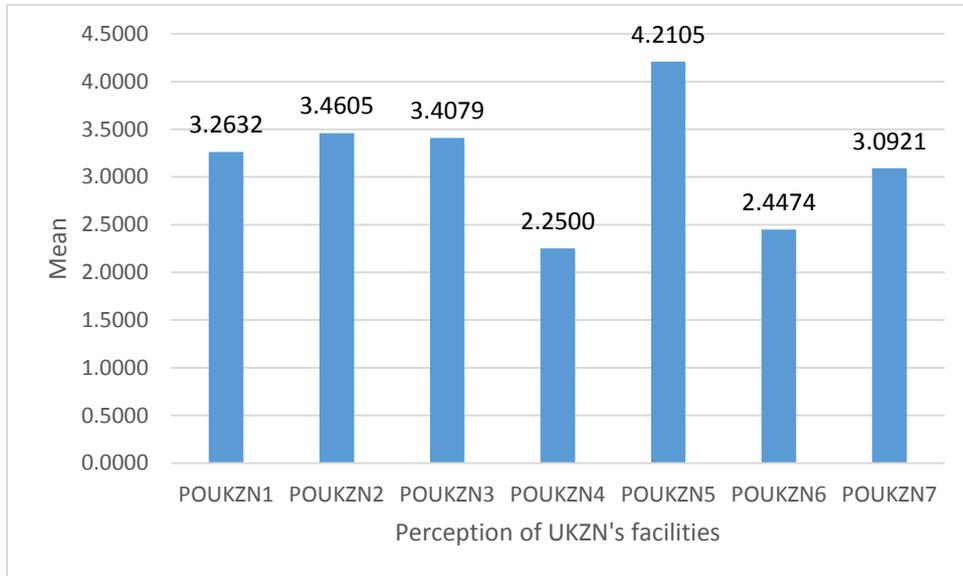
*Question: Would you say UKZN is quite competitive on a national and international scale?*

The participants collectively agreed that “UKZN competes on a local scale (Especially on the research output) and does not compete much on an International scale.”

**Research question 5: What is UKZN's position currently from a student's perspective?**

**Findings from the Questionnaires**

**Figure 5.6: Perception of UKZN**



**Table 5.10: Key and means in descending order**

Code	Meaning	Mean
POUKZN5	Affordability of fees at UKZN.	4.2105
POUKZN2	UKZN's standard of Library resources	3.4605
POUKZN3	UKZN is an excellent academic institution?	3.4079
POUKZN1	UKZN's standard of Computer facilities	3.2632
POUKZN7	Availability of adequate security across all campuses and residences at UKZN.	3.0921
POUKZN6	Availability of sufficient accommodation for international students at UKZN.	2.4474
POUKZN4	Availability of sufficient job opportunities for International students at UKZN.	2.2500

The results represented by a graph (Figure 5.6) above show that only UKZN's fees proved to be satisfactory with a magnitude of 4.2105 indicating that the majority of the respondent feel that UKZN's fees are affordable in comparison to other universities. The results also show that POUKZN4 and POUKZN6 had unsatisfactory results both with a magnitude of 2.25 and 2.45

respectively. This indicated that majority of the respondents feel UKZN does not have sufficient on-campus job opportunities (both part-time and full-time) and residential accommodation for international students respectively. For the majority of the questions respondents scored them an average above a magnitude of 3 but below a magnitude of 4, this indicates that the respondents had an indifferent feeling about UKZN being able to meet the needs of international students in terms of the facilities and benefits it offers.

***Findings from the Focus groups***

*Question: What would you say are the strengths and weaknesses of UKZN?*

The participants collaborated in stating the strengths and weaknesses below:

**Table 5.11:** Strengths and Weaknesses

<b>Theme</b>	<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
Safety	“During the time when xenophobia was a problem, a group of local and international students campaigned against it. Showing unity amongst students.”	Collaboration between campuses	“There is no collaboration between all the campuses”
Affordability	“Free tuition for masters (1 <sup>st</sup> year of masters research only) and PhD”	Inconvenience	“Unavailability of other modules in other campuses”
Affordability	“Compared to other South African Universities UKZN's fees are affordable”	Extra activities	“Lack of prior activities”
Qualified academic staff	“Qualified lecturers”	Unfair treatment	“SRC’s campaigns and demonstrations do not account for international students levy, they only deal with local student grievances.”

Theme	STRENGTHS	Theme	WEAKNESSES
Research reputation	“Good quality in the research output”	Safety	“Lack of safety”
		Management standard	“Poor management of the registration process”

Question: What comes to mind when you hear of UKZN as a university brand

**Table 5.12:** Perceptions of the UKZN brand

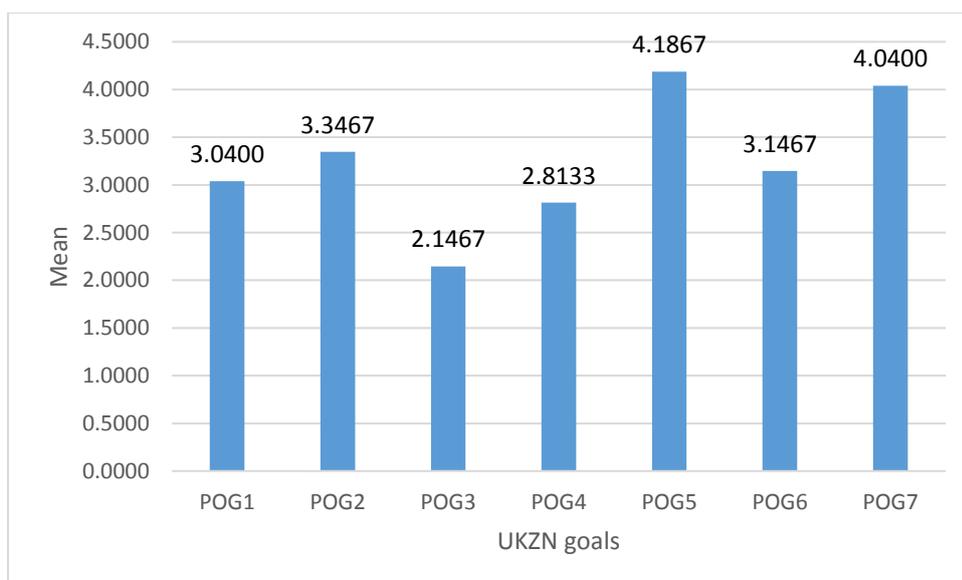
Participant	Response	Theme (Impressions)
1	“Zulu”	Positive
2	“Unreliable”	Negative
3	“Fun”	Positive
4	“Strikes”	Negative

### 5.2.3 Objective: To assess whether the position of UKZN is aligning with their current marketing strategies, vision and mission?

*Research question 6: From a student’s perspective, does UKZN meet its mission and goals?*

*Findings from the Questionnaires*

**Figure 5.7:** Perception of UKZN goals



**Table 5.13:** Key and means in descending order

<b>Code</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Mean</b>
POG5	UKZN has an outstanding reputation in research in comparison to other institutions	4.1867
POG7	UKZN has exceptional, qualified academic staff to supervise research and also to teach at a higher level of tertiary education.	4.0400
POG2	UKZN is engaged in the community?	3.3467
POG6	UKZN put great value in diverse students so as to be a university of choice for students	3.1467
POG1	UKZN is a premier university of African Scholarship?	3.0400
POG4	UKZN's management team and systems are efficient?	2.8133
POG3	As an international student at UKZN, bursaries, scholarships or financial aid are easily accessible	2.1467

The graph above shows that two goals POG5 and POG7 had satisfactory results with magnitudes of 4.1867 and 4.04 respectively. This indicates the respondents felt that UKZN has an outstanding reputation in research in comparison to other institutions and has exceptional, qualified academic staff to supervise research and to teach at a higher level of tertiary education. However, there were two unsatisfactory results that the findings brought out in this section POG3 and POG4 with a magnitude of 2.1467 and 2.8133 respectively, indicating that based on the respondent's feelings international students do not have easy access bursaries or scholarships or financial aid and UKZN's management team and systems are inefficient. Three of the goals POG1, POG2 and POG6 were above a magnitude of 3 but below a magnitude of 4, this indicates that the respondents had an indifferent feeling about UKZN being able to meet some of its goals.

These results suggest that majority of the respondents had either an indifferent feeling about UKZN being able to meet its goals or felt that UKZN is not meeting its goals at all.

## *Findings from the Focus groups*

*Question: Would you say UKZN is a premier university of African scholarship?*

Collective response:

“NO.”

### **5.3 Discussion by research objectives**

#### **5.3.1 Objective 1: To establish the primary and secondary target markets are in the international student market.**

##### **5.3.1.1 Focus groups**

The needs that came up in focus groups included job opportunities, accommodation, scholarships, resources for research for Honours level, more library space, more library books and more LAN space (More Computers). The results in this section of the study also corroborate with those obtained in prior studies by Chetty (2012) which reported financial assistance and lab facilities as some of the needs identified in the focus groups the researcher conducted. Based on the needs brainstormed, the response from the participants indicate that currently UKZN hardly meet these needs with poor scores given of 0 and mostly 1 out of 5. Furthermore, based on their responses and perceptions international students feel that they are not treated equally as local students and feel they do not have much of a voice in terms of issues such as availability of accommodation and job opportunities as stated earlier.

##### **5.3.1.2 Questionnaires**

A target market is a fairly homogeneous group of customers to whom a company wishes to appeal (Cannon, Perreault and McCarthy, 2008). Most revenue from sales of products or services comes from the primary target market. This market shares common characteristics and behaviours and usually accounts for the highest volume of sales. “The secondary target market includes future primary buyers, which are those buying at a higher rate within a small market segment and are those who influence primary buyers. Their characteristics and buying behaviours usually differ from those of the primary target market” (Cannon et al., 2008:33)

One of the bases of segmentation that can be used is geographical segmentation. In an international or global market, what differentiates consumers in most industries is their culture or where they come from. Therefore, this is the reason why the results of this study have segmented the international market using geographical bases (Lamb et. al., 2017).

According to the findings, Zimbabwe was the segment with the highest Market-Attractiveness/Competitive Position total score of 6.82 and 8.22. The segment with the highest Market-Attractiveness/Competitive Position total score (close to 10 on both segment attractiveness and business strength) and that falls on the top right of the Market-Attractiveness/Competitive Position matrix is the right primary target market (Lamb et al., 2015). Given that Zimbabwean students are the biggest segment, it comes as no surprise that they had the highest Market-Attractiveness/Competitive Position total score. Therefore it can be concluded that *Zimbabwe is the primary target* market found in this study. A segment with a lower total score (close to 0 on both segment attractiveness and business strength) and one that falls in the bottom left of the Market-Attractiveness/Competitive Position matrix is an unattractive segment.

According to the findings, the second highest Market-Attractiveness/Competitive Position total score of 4.24 and 8.02 was Nigeria. The score results are in-line with the geographic demographics shown in Figure 5.2, so therefore we can firmly establish *Nigeria as the secondary target market*. Segment C and D both had a strong competitive position, however, Segment D (Zambia) fell in the low market attractiveness section in the matrix, therefore the other *secondary target market that can be selected is Segment C, Tanzania*.

With reference to **Appendix A** (Needs Analysis), the results show the most important needs that international students consider when selecting a university for postgraduate studies. All the results for the needs analysis were satisfactory, since each need had a mean above 4 out of 5. However, the needs analysis in **Appendix A** show the needs in the order of the highest mean to the lowest mean indicating the most to the least important. These needs were put in a table against the segments to show which needs each segment considered most important. The ticks represent the need considered most important by each segment.

These needs considered most important included good research reputation, extremely qualified academic staff, global recognition, high safety standards, refined library resources, opportunities for employment and availability of the desired course, respectively. The results in this study, corroborate with those obtained in prior studies by Padlee, Kamaruddin and Baharun (2010) which reported that learning environment and facilities have a strong influence on international students' decision making of tertiary institutions.

Key issues brought about by this analysis include:

- Needs considered most important by the international student when selecting a university to further their studies. The top needs identified in this analysis were also identified as the key success factors of a university.
- The second key issue refers to the objective which was to establish who the primary and secondary target market are and Zimbabwe was identified as the primary followed by Nigeria as the secondary target market.
- Finally, the needs analysis brought about the characteristics (needs) that are used to define each segment.

### **5.3.2 Objective Two: What is the university's position from an International student (going into post-grad) perspective?**

#### ***5.3.2.1 Perception of other universities compared to UKZN***

##### *5.3.2.1.1 Focus groups*

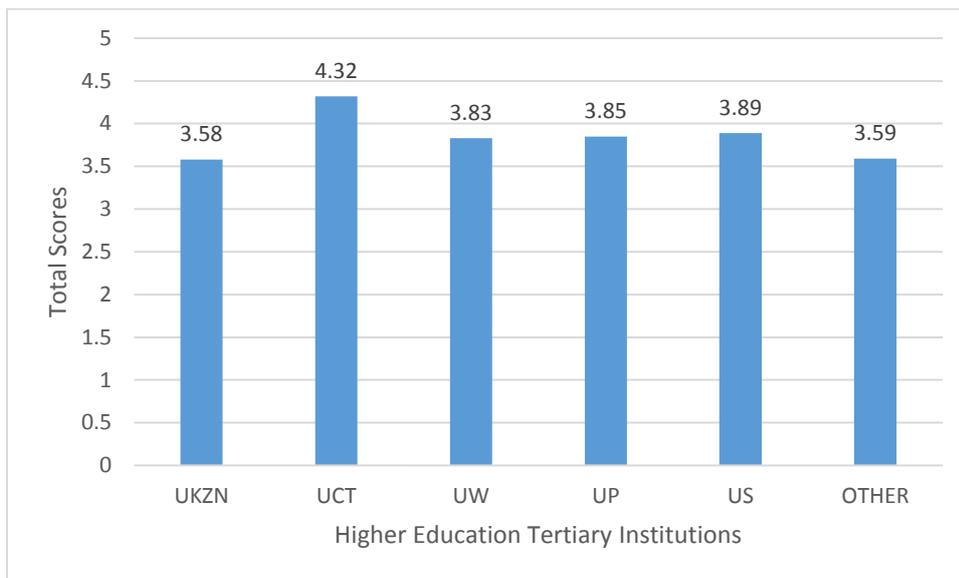
The results in the discussion with participants in the focus groups indicated that the University of Cape Town is the market leader in terms of the universities they would consider to select for purposes of furthering their studies. More so, this analysis indicated that international students prefer South African universities as opposed to universities outside the borders. This could be because of several factors such as affordability and lack of exposure to the overseas universities, as mentioned by some of the participants. However, there are two European universities identified as a preference, these are University of Birmingham and University of Surrey.

There is one success factor brainstormed by the participants collectively which was different from those identified in the quantitative data analysis and relationships with other universities with research facilities. The qualitative analyses from the focus groups indicate that UKZN competes more on a local scale than an international scale.

##### *5.3.2.1.2 Questionnaires*

Objective Two required the researcher to study how potential international post-graduate students position UKZN. The intent of this objective is to find out what is in the mind of the international students. Hence, in order to give consumers what they need it is important that an organisation find out from the consumers themselves. As mentioned earlier in this chapter satisfactory means any result above 4 out of 5 on a five-point Likert scale and unsatisfactory means any result below 3 out of 5 also on a five-point Likert scale.

**Figure 5.8:** Perception of other universities compared to UKZN



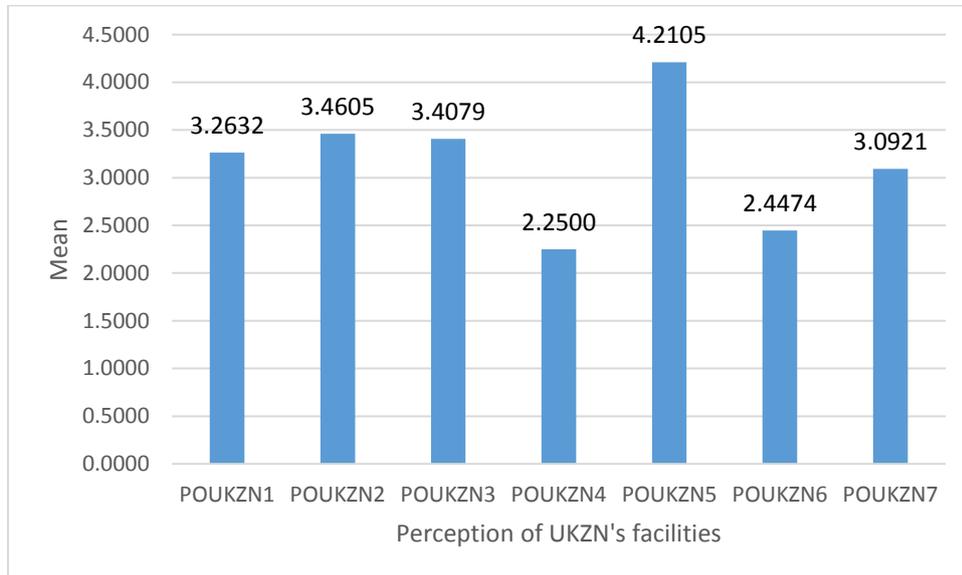
It is clear that after carrying out the competitive analysis using the results found in the study, UCT came up with the highest total score of 4.32 and according to the Likert Scale used in this study, any score above 4 out of 5 qualifies as a satisfactory score. The other categories in Figure 5.8 all fall between 3 and 4 out of 5, and according to Likert scale any score below 3 out of 5 is unsatisfactory. However since all other categories fall in between 3 and 4 out of 5 we can conclude that the scores were neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory. The results of this study (as shown in figure 5.8) clearly show that UKZN came up with the lowest total score of 3.58. These results imply that international students going into post-graduate studies at UKZN Pietermaritzburg Campus feel as though all other universities mentioned in Figure 5.8 are better positioned to provide for their needs highlighted in the competitive analysis as the Key success factors (Table 5.8).

Possible reasons why this study's results differ from that of Garden's (2003) are that the prior study was done fourteen years ago and since then a lot has evolved, such as developments of institutions in their quality of service and their improvement in research. Furthermore, this particular study was done on international students, whose perceptions might be different to those of local students.

### 5.3.2.2 Perception on UKZN facilities

#### 5.3.2.2.1 Questionnaires

**Figure 5.9:** Perception on UKZN facilities



It is clear from the graph above that UKZN was perceived satisfactory in one attribute by international students. Affordability of fees (POUKZN5) came out on top with a mean of 4.2105 (>4 = satisfactory score) indicating that in the minds of international students, UKZN's fees are quite affordable. The respondents had an indifferent feeling about UKZN being able to meet other needs of international students such as good computer facilities (POUKZN1), refined library resources (POUKZN2), adequate security (POUKZN7) and excellent academics (POUKZN3) which all have scores in between 3 and 4 out of 5 (neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory). Based on Likert scale used in this study, the scores for job opportunities and accommodation are unsatisfactory as they fall below 3 out of 5. This implies that UKZN is lagging in important matters which are job opportunities (POUKZN4) and availability of accommodation (POUKZN6) which have scores of 2.2500 and 2.4474 respectively.

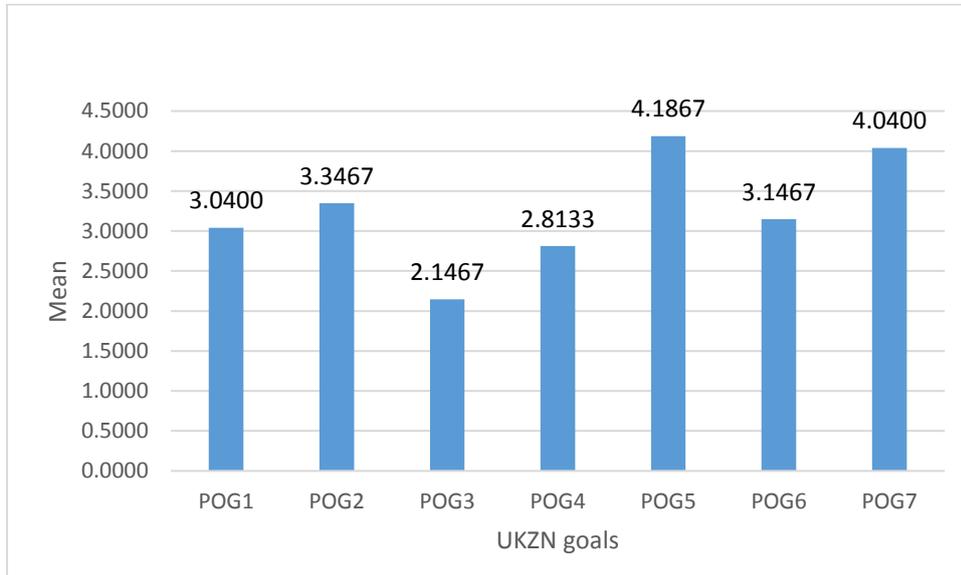
#### 5.3.2.2.2 Focus groups

Among the strengths identified were campus safety especially during xenophobia, affordability, qualified staff and good research reputation. These results from the focus groups corroborate with those obtained in a prior study by Chetty (2012) discussed in the literature review. The issue of unfair treatment also came about as a weakness in this part of the focus group questionnaire. Furthermore, other issues of inconvenience, lack of extra activities and lack of safety were raised as weaknesses in the discussion.

### 5.3.3 Objective Three: To assess whether the position of UKZN is aligning with their current marketing strategies, vision and mission

#### 5.3.3.1 Questionnaires

**Figure 5.10:** Perception on UKZN goals



Based on the results of this study shown above it is clear that UKZN was perceived satisfactory in only 2 out of 7 of its goals which are an outstanding reputation in research (POG5) with a score of 4.1867 and having exceptional qualified academic staff (POG7) with a score of 4.0400. This suggests international students at UKZN Pietermaritzburg campus believe that the University of KwaZulu-Natal meets its goals of having an outstanding research reputation and of having qualified academic staff. 2 out of the 7 goals scored below 3 out of 5 indicating an unsatisfactory result. These are availability of financial aid and scholarships (POG3) and also efficiency of management and systems (POG4). 3 out of the 7 goals scored between 3 and 4 out of 5 indicating that the respondents had an indifferent feeling about UKZN being able to meet the goals of being a Premier University of African scholarships (POG1), engaging in the community (POG2) and putting great value in having diversity amongst students (POG6). In the focus groups, the participants felt that UKZN is not a Premier University of African Scholarship as they mentioned that they are not given as much opportunities in terms of financial aid compared to local students.

#### 5.3.3.2 Focus groups

One word impressions were also requested from some of the participants and they came up with, “fun, Zulu, unreliable and strikes.” The first two impressions were coded as positive

because, fun represents interesting and happiness whereas Zulu represents an African background, which is part of UKZN’s goals (To be a university of Premier “African” scholarship). In contrast, when the participants in the focus groups were asked if they feel UKZN is a premier university of African scholarship, they collectively responded negatively. This indicates that the international students perceive UKZN as an African university, but not of premier scholarship. The word “unreliable” indicates a negative perception as unreliable represents UKZN being undependable whereas “strikes” also indicates a negative perception as it represents losing out on classes, violence and voices not being heard. The reason why strikes might have been suggested is because the study was carried out during the 2016 Fee Must Fall strikes.

**Table 5.14:** One-Sample Test (Test value 4)

<b>One-Sample Test</b>						
Test Value = 4						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
POG1	-7.856	74	.000	-.96000	-1.2035	-.7165
POG2	-7.424	74	.000	-.65333	-.8287	-.4780
POG3	-16.117	74	.000	-1.85333	-2.0825	-1.6242
POG4	-10.463	74	.000	-1.18667	-1.4126	-.9607
POG5	2.162	74	.034	.18667	.0146	.3587
POG6	-7.322	74	.000	-.85333	-1.0856	-.6211
POG7	.382	74	.704	.04000	-.1687	.2487

**Table 5.15:** One-Sample Test (Test value 5)

<b>One-Sample Test</b>						
Test Value = 5						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
POG1	-16.039	74	.000	-1.96000	-2.2035	-1.7165
POG2	-18.786	74	.000	-1.65333	-1.8287	-1.4780
POG3	-24.814	74	.000	-2.85333	-3.0825	-2.6242
POG4	-19.281	74	.000	-2.18667	-2.4126	-1.9607
POG5	-9.419	74	.000	-.81333	-.9854	-.6413

POG6	-15.902	74	.000	-1.85333	-2.0856	-1.6211
POG7	-9.166	74	.000	-.96000	-1.1687	-.7513

The study made use of the one-sample test using the test value 5 and 4 (meaning strongly agree and agree respectively). The hypotheses for the test were as follows:

**Table 5.16:** Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Explanation
H <sub>1</sub> - POG1-7 are significantly different to 4 and 5	UKZN is not aligning with their current marketing strategies, vision and mission
H <sub>0</sub> - POG1-7 are not significantly different to 4 and 5	UKZN is aligning with their current marketing strategies, vision and mission

This test was used to determine whether the sample of observations could have been generated by a process with a specific mean (which is test value 5 and 4 in this study). The value 5 and 4 represents the highest values that UKZN could be given by the participants. Ideally, the results should have been the value 5 or 4 for all participants. However, as the results indicate, this study obtained significant scores with a 95% level of confidence (represented by the p-value). With the exception of POG7 (meaning having exceptional qualified academic staff) with a significance level of 0.704, this study will reject its null hypothesis: H<sub>0</sub> - POG1-6 is not significantly different to 4 and 5 which translates to the fact UKZN is aligning with their current marketing strategies, vision and mission. Therefore, the study revealed that the majority of international students were not in agreement with the fact that UKZN is aligning with their current marketing strategy, vision and mission.

**Table 5.17:** Binomial test

Binomial Test						
		Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
POG1	Group 1	DO NOT AGREE	50	.67	.50	.005
		IN AGREEMENT	25	.33		
	Total		75	1.00		

POG2	Group 1	DO NOT AGREE	44	.59	.50	.165
	Group 2	IN AGREEMENT	31	.41		
	Total		75	1.00		
POG3	Group 1	DO NOT AGREE	68	.91	.50	.000
	Group 2	IN AGREEMENT	7	.09		
	Total		75	1.00		
POG4	Group 1	DO NOT AGREE	60	.80	.50	.000
	Group 2	IN AGREEMENT	15	.20		
	Total		75	1.00		
POG5	Group 1	DO NOT AGREE	62	.83	.50	.000
	Group 2	IN AGREEMENT	13	.17		
	Total		75	1.00		
POG6	Group 1	DO NOT AGREE	46	.61	.50	.064
	Group 2	IN AGREEMENT	29	.39		
	Total		75	1.00		
POG7	Group 1	DO NOT AGREE	20	.27	.50	.000
	Group 2	IN AGREEMENT	55	.73		
	Total		75	1.00		

The binomial test was done to determine whether a proportion from a single dichotomous variable was equal to a presumed population value. The study coded the results into two sets. First set (Group 1) included all participants who selected 1-3 (which is either strongly disagree, disagree or neutral) and second set (Group 2) included all participants who selected either 4 or 5 (which either agree or strongly agree). Group 1 represented students who did not agree that UKZN is aligning with its current marketing strategy, vision and mission and Group 2 represented students who agreed UKZN is aligning with its current marketing strategy, vision and mission. With the exception of POG 2 (engaging in the community) and POG6 (putting

great value in having diversity amongst students), the results illustrated in the table above show that five out of seven of the university's goals are significantly different. However, the test also revealed that POG7 (meaning having exceptional qualified academic staff) had a significantly different score between students who were in agreement and who did not agree and in this case more students were in agreement. Though, the Binomial test revealed slightly different results it is still safe to conclude that the majority of international students were not in agreement with the fact that UKZN is aligning with their current marketing strategy, vision and mission.

#### **5.3.4 Objective Four: To create a positioning strategy to attract more International Students that the University is looking to pull in.**

With reference to Appendix B a positioning statement was selected for the UKZN's international post-graduate student market: "University of KwaZulu-Natal: quality research is our priority!" A needs analysis was conducted in order to identify hot buttons (most important customer needs, see Appendix A) for the market segments identified. A competitor analysis and internal analysis was also conducted to identify the strengths of competitors and UKZN's core competencies. UKZN's core competencies and competitors' strengths were matched in order to identify differences on which they could position themselves on. After having identified the difference, they matched with one of UKZN's hot buttons which was: ***Good research reputation***. That then became the basis of positioning for UKZN's international post-graduate student market.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the findings of the study from both the focus groups and questionnaires managed to identify who the primary and secondary target market are, UKZN's competitors, UKZN's position from a student's perspective and enabled the researcher to draw conclusions and recommendations that will lead UKZN in creating a better positioning strategy for the international postgraduate students market .

# **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **6.1 Introduction**

The primary objective for this study mentioned in chapter 1 was to create a positioning strategy for the post-graduate international students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg). In order to meet this objective, Chapter 2 and 3 managed to discuss the processes required in order create a positioning strategy for a university and also the theory of positioning itself. Some of the important issues raised among the steps taken in the process of creating a positioning strategy included market analysis which involves needs analysis, segmentation and target marketing, competitive analysis and internal analysis. The importance of all these steps were also noted in Chapter 2. Research methodology concentrated on the procedures used to collect and analyse the data. The data collected was presented and discussed in Chapter 5 based on the objectives of the study. The final chapter concludes on the findings of the study and also presents a positioning strategy recommended by the researcher.

## **6.2 Conclusion of the study**

In today's competitive market-place, it is a challenge for universities to be always on-top of the tertiary services charts. The positions that universities occupy in the minds of potential students depend on the opinions and facts of those around them (media, family, friends' academics etc.) and also on the image that these universities portray. This points out to the ever increasing need for good positioning in the modern tertiary sector.

The primary objective of this study is to create a positioning strategy for the post-graduate international students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg Campus). The study achieves this aim by differentiating UKZN's strengths from that of its competitor's in order to reveal the competitive advantages and by constructing a needs analysis in order to identify the hot buttons (determining dimensions) used to align with the competitive advantages.

This study has confirmed that all the required steps done in the research of developing a successful positioning strategy are essential. The benefits of following this process when creating a positioning strategy for the University of KwaZulu-Natal include portraying a

clearer image of the university to the students and aligning the company's offering to the needs of the students.

### **6.3 The positioning strategy**

This study suggests a positioning strategy that will reveal the potential competitive advantages of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and the selection on the right competitive advantage to differentiate with and will choose a positioning statement to use as a basis for all effective marketing communication and distribution.

Appendix B shows results found in the study for all the stages of the research required in developing a positioning strategy (figure 3.1). After careful consideration and analysing the results, there are two potential competitive advantages that are revealed in this study. These came from differentiating UKZN's strengths (extremely qualified staff, affordability and good research reputation) from the direct competitor's strengths (global recognition, extremely qualified staff and refined library sources). This study reveals that UKZN's two competitive advantages are affordability and good research reputation. The study then went further to reveal the appropriate competitive advantage as Good research reputation, which UKZN can use to differentiate itself from its competition. As seen in Appendix B, the appropriate competitive advantage was revealed after comparing UKZN's revealed competitive advantages (affordability and good research reputation) with its determining dimensions or hot buttons (extremely qualified staff, availability of the desired course and good research reputation) derived from the needs analysis (Appendix A).

Bearing in mind good research reputation as of the most appropriate competitive advantage revealed in this study, the researcher chose the positioning statement for the University of KwaZulu-Natal international post-graduate students market as: "University of KwaZulu-Natal: quality research is our priority!" this statement is recommended to be the basis of UKZN's communication and market strategy. The next segment will address these two strategies.

#### **6.3.1 Product strategy**

##### **6.3.1.1 Branding**

Based on the results of this study it is recommended that in terms of branding UKZN needs to appeal more to the International Students market more than it currently does to change the

perceptions that international students have of UKZN. Appendix C is a picture sample of how UKZN can increase branding for the market in question, by reflecting the positioning statement that this study produced. Such a picture would appeal on a higher level to the primary target market, as the student in the picture is a Master's graduate from Zimbabwe. This picture communicates that UKZN's priority is quality research which aligns with the positioning statement: "University of KwaZulu-Natal: quality research is our priority!" Furthermore, in the picture he is holding his completed dissertation which also motivates students to extend their studies. This picture would be used on the international students start up page on the university website, UKZN Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages.

#### ***6.3.1.2 Quality control***

One of the weaknesses that UKZN has based on the findings from the section of perceptions in the questionnaire, was lack of accommodation for international students. The focus group participants felt that there was no equal treatment in terms of accommodation offered to them and local students. Since international students are coming into a foreign country, it is recommended that UKZN should put more effort into helping them secure safe and adequate residence.

#### **6.3.2 Place/ Distribution Strategy**

It is recommended that UKZN Pietermaritzburg campus maintain its location because it is in a low-density residential area which is safer for all students and also because of its proximity to shopping malls, taxi route and airport.

#### **6.3.3 Pricing strategy**

More so, it is recommended that UKZN also offers or award more scholarships, bursaries and subsidies to international students, particularly for those who want to do Masters by coursework.

#### **6.3.4 Promotion Strategy**

Objectives for UKZN would be building awareness, providing information, stimulating demand and reinforcing the position of UKZN.

##### ***6.3.4.1 Build Awareness***

In this situation UKZN will focus promotion on: effectively reaching customers, and tell their target market that they are and what they have to offer.

#### ***6.3.4.2 Provide Information***

Promotion is designed to assist customers in the search stage of the purchasing process. Therefore, it is recommended that UKZN put measures such as having international student representatives on orientation day. These would assist international students by showing them where the international office is, help with looking for accommodation and processes of getting registered as an international student.

#### ***6.3.4.3 Stimulate Demand***

The correct promotion can motivate consumers to purchase a product or service. Therefore, it is recommended that UKZN give incentives to international students that refer other international students to enroll at UKZN when furthering their studies. Such incentives could be for example, ten or fifteen percent off their international levy in the year. This would stimulate demand through word of mouth and rewards.

#### ***6.3.4.4 Reinforce the position of UKZN***

In order to reinforce the position of UKZN, it is recommended that UKZN organise seminars that will invite previous international students (alumni) with the goal of encouraging the current international students to pursue post-graduate studies at UKZN. This will aid in retaining current international students and it will create a solid relationship with UKZN international alumni.

The above objectives will be used in all the communicating strategies suggested below.

#### ***6.3.4.5 Print media advertising***

It is recommended that UKZN should have a column or advertising space in business magazines such as the South African Business Integrator Magazine, African Business Magazine or leadership magazine. In this column, UKZN will be showcasing the benefits of having a UKZN degree and its facilities.

#### ***6.3.4.6 Social media advertising***

UKZN should continue using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as a means of advertising. It is recommended that they should rebrand the international student Facebook page by using the picture shown in Appendix C as a guide line to make their cover page.

### **6.3.5 Process**

Some international students need their academic record when renewing their student visas in their home countries. The university requires outstanding fees to be cleared before a student can gain access to their academic transcripts. Unfortunately some international students are unable to pay for their outstanding fees in time to get their academic record for the purpose of renewing their study visas. In order to deal with this challenge the recommendation is for UKZN to at least offer international students letters to submit to the South African Home Affairs that confirm that the student has passed their modules or has finished his or her degree and owing to outstanding fees the university cannot release the student's academic records. This will help to make the process easier for those international students who would like to come back for post-graduate studies.

### **6.3.6 People**

It is recommended that UKZN have more staff to represent international students that will be available to help with accommodation and application processes. It is recommended that these representatives be trained so that they will fully know how to handle each level and type of international students (in other words, masters/Ph.D., country).

#### ***6.3.6.1 Level of customer orientation***

We suggest that UKZN uses the marketing concept which focuses on analysing the needs and wants of the target market and providing the desired satisfaction more effectively than competitors and building a long term relationship with international students.

### **6.3.7 Physical Evidence**

The service concept of UKZN cannot be experienced before it is delivered. The uncertainty can be reduced by helping potential customers to see what they are buying. The physical evidence in this study refers to the communication from the university and the infrastructure of the university.

- The infrastructure of the university would include facilities such library, laboratories, computer labs, accommodation
- Communication is through written information such as posters or brochures or other forms of advertising.

## **6.4 Further recommendations**

It is recommended that UKZN increases their LAN space and buy more computers for postgraduate students.

It is also recommended that UKZN updates their library systems and add more books to cater for all students.

It is recommended that UKZN builds more residences to cater for postgraduate international students.

## **6.5 Limitations and Recommendations for future research**

- The research was only limited to University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg campus due to limited resources and time constraints. More insight on service quality in other UKZN campuses could be gathered in future through a comparative study in Durban.
- Time concerns from students was a constraint to the researcher during the data collection period as most of the students hurriedly left after their lectures, before completely filling the questionnaire due to the length of the questionnaire.
- The research was conducted during the time when students were striking. This was quite destructing as other international students had to go home because of the violence that was happening at Pietermaritzburg campus.

### **6.5.1 Recommendations for Future Research**

- The research was based on University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg campus only. Future research could be done on the whole of UKZN and further education institutions for comparison purposes, specifically of the customer expectations.
- Future research on service quality in education institutions is recommended using an instrument with more open-ended questionnaires to allow respondents to provide suggestions from their specific environments.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Aaker, D.A., and McLoughlin D, (2007). *Strategic Market Management*, Wiley and Sons Ltd, Chichester.
- Abell, D. F. and Hammond J. S. (1979), *Strategic Market Planning*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Amit, R., Domowitz, I. and Fershtman, C., (1988). Thinking one step ahead: The use of conjectures in competitor analysis. *Strategic Management Journal*, 9(5), pp.431-442.
- Anthony, L (2016). Why Is Goal Setting Important in Organizations? Chron. Available: <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/goal-setting-important-organizations-2509.html> [Accessed 22 May 2016].
- Barney, J., (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of management*, 17(1), pp.99-120.
- Bergen, M. and Peteraf, M.A., (2002). Competitor identification and competitor analysis: a broad-based managerial approach. *Managerial and decision economics*, 23(4-5), pp.157-169.
- Borrego, M., Douglas, E.P. and Amelink, C.T., (2009). Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods in engineering education. *Journal of Engineering education*, 98(1), p.53.
- Boshoff, C. and Du Plessis, P. J. (2009) *Services Marketing: A Contemporary Approach*, Cape Town: Juta and Company Ltd, chapters 1 and 2.
- Bourdieu, P., (1988). *Homo Academicus*. Stanford University Press.
- Bower, W.M., 2006. Organizational goals versus the dominant coalition: A critical view of the value of organizational citizenship behaviour. *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management*, 7(3), p.258.
- Burge, R (1999). "Rensselaer Building Marketing Bridge to World," *Marketing News* (August 30) 17.
- Burgess, S.M., and Bothma C.H., (2007). *International Marketing*. Oxford University Press: Cape Town.
- Cahill, D.J., (1997). Target marketing and segmentation: valid and useful tools for marketing. *Management Decision*, 35(1), pp.10-13.

Cannon J.P, Perreault W.D and McCarthy E.J (2008). Basic Marketing: A Global-Managerial Approach 6<sup>th</sup> edition. McGraw-Hill International edition, New York.

Cant, M.C., Strydom, J.W., Jooste, C.J. and Du Plessis P.J. (2003) Marketing Management, 5th edition, South Africa: Juta & Co.

Cavanagh, S (2002), "Colleges Increasingly Look to Attract Gay, Lesbian Applicants," Education Week, 21 (June 19), 12.

Chamberlin, E. H., (1965). The Theory of Monopolistic Competition. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Chetty, Y., (2012). A Positioning Theory Perspective on Enrolment Targets: The Case of UKZN's Foundation Programme, Master's Thesis, School of Management, IT and Governance College of Law and Management Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Chowdhury, P.P., (2013). Key strategies and issues of positioning: A review of past studies. American Academic and Scholarly Research Journal 5, (1).

Clarke G., and Wilson I., (2009). International Marketing. McGraw-Hill: New York.

Cline, T.W, Altsech, M.B., and Kellaris, J.J., (2003). "When Does Humor Enhance or Inhibit Ad Responses? The Moderating Role of Need for Levity," Journal of Advertising, 32 (3), 31-46.

Cooper, D.R. & Schindler, P.S., 2006, 'Business Research Methods', McGraw-Hill (9): 1 – 744.

Cooper, P.S. and Schindler, D., (2001). Business Research Methods. Boston: McGraw Hill, Irwin.

Corporate Relations Division University of KwaZulu-Natal, (2013). Official Home Page of University of KwaZulu-Natal: 2015. From <<http://www.ukzn.ac.za/about-ukzn/strategic-plan>> (Retrieved February 26, 2016)

Creative Research Systems, (2012). Official Home Page of the Survey System: 2012. From <<https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>> (Retrieved September 1, 2017).

Cuellar-Healey, S. and Gomez, M. (2013). Marketing Module 4: Competitor Analysis. Charles S. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Cornell University, Ithaca NY 14853-7801 URL:

<http://dyson.cornell.edu/outreach/extensionpdf/2013/Cornell-Dyson-eb1305.pdf>. Accessed: 8 April 2016

Czepiel, J.A. and Kerin, R.A., (2012). 4 Competitor analysis. *Handbook of Marketing Strategy*, p.41.

Darlaston-Jones, D., Pike, L., Cohen, L., Young, A., Haunold, S and Drew, N (2003). Are they being served? *Student Expectations of Higher Education* 13, 1-19.

Devlin, J.F., Ennew, C.T., and Mirza, M. (1995). Organizational Positioning in Retail Financial Services. *Journal of Marketing Management* 11, (1-3), 119-132.

Dyson, R.G (2002). Strategic development and SWOT analysis at the University of Warwick. *European Journal of Operational Research* 152 (2004) 631–640.

Fink, L.D. (2003). *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses*. San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass.

Floor, J.M.G. and van Raaij, W.F., (2002). *Marketing-communication-strategie*. Noordhoff Uitgevers BV.

Garden, L.C., (2003). *An In-depth Look at the Positioning Strategy of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, Based on Scholar and Student Perceptions* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Natal).

Geoffrey, N., and Soutar, J., P. (2002). "Students' preferences for university: a conjoint analysis", *International Journal of Educational Management*, 16 (1):40 – 45.

Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., and Chadwick, B., (2008). *Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups*. Nature Publishing Group: UK.

Golafshani, N. (2003) 'Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research', *The Qualitative Report*, 8 (4): 597-607.

Grant, R.M., (1991). The resource-based theory of competitive advantage: implications for strategy formulation. *California management review*, 33(3):114-135.

Grant, R.M., 1991. The resource-based theory of competitive advantage: implications for strategy formulation. *California management review*, 33(3), pp.114-135.

Hartman, D.E. and Schmidt, S.L. (1995). "Understanding student/alumni satisfaction from a consumer's perspective: the effects of institutional performance and program outcomes", *Research in Higher Education*, 36 (2): 197-217.

Hassan, S.S., Craft, S. and Kortam, W., 2003. Understanding the new bases for global market segmentation. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 20(5), pp.446-462.

Hayes, T. J. (1993), "Image and the University," *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 4 (1/2), 423-425.

Hemsley-Brown, J. and Oplatka, I. (2006), "Universities in a competitive global marketplace", *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 19 Iss 4 pp. 316 – 338.

Hill, Y., Lomas, L., and MacGregor, J., (2003). "Students' perceptions of quality in higher Education", *Quality Assurance in Education*, 11 (1): 15-20.

Hofer, C.W. and Schendel, D.E., (1978). *Strategy formulation: analysis and concepts*. St. Paul, MN: West Publishing.

Hooley, G., Saunders, J., and Piercy, N., (2004). *Marketing Strategy and Competitive Positioning*. Prentice hall: England.

Houben, G., Lenie, K. and Vanhoof, K., (1999). A knowledge-based SWOT-analysis system as an instrument for strategic planning in small and medium sized enterprises. *Decision support systems*, 26(2):125-135.

Internet live Stats, (2016). Internet Users. Retrieved: 14 August 2016. From: <http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/>.

Jobber, D. (1995). *Principles and Practice of Marketing*. McGraw-Hill International: England. 224-229.

Joffe, H. and Yardley, L. (2003) 'Content and thematic analysis in Research Methods for Clinical and Health Psychology', London: Sage.

Kapferer, J.N., (2012). *The new strategic brand management: Advanced insights and strategic thinking*. Kogan page publishers.

Karadeniz, E., Kandir, Y.S., Balcilar, M. and Onal, B.Y. (2009). "Determinants of capital structure: evidence from Turkish lodging companies", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 21 (5): 594-609.

Kerin, R.A., and Hartley S.W. (2017). *Marketing*. 13th edition. McGraw-Hill Education: New York.

Kotler, P. (2000). *Marketing management*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Kotler, P. Armstrong, G. and Starr, R. G., Jr. (1991). *Principles of marketing*, (5th Ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Kotler, P., and Armstrong, G., (2012). *Principles of Marketing*. Pearson Education: UK. Pages 231-239.

Kotler, P., and Keller, K.L., (2012). *A framework for marketing management*. Pearson education: London. Pages 167-180.

- Kotler, P., and Keller, K.L., (2016). *Marketing Management*. Person: Boston.
- Kozub, R.M., (2010). An ANOVA Analysis of the Relationships between Business Students' Learning. *American Journal of Business Education*—March, 3(3).
- Lamb, C.W., Hair, J.F., McDaniel, C., Boshoff, C., Terblanche, N., Elliot, R., and Klopper, H.B., (2015). *MARKETING*. Oxford University Press: South Africa.
- Lewison, D.M. and Hawes, J.M., (2007). Student Target Marketing Strategies for Universities. *Journal of College Admission*, 196: 14-19.
- Lovelock, C., and Wirtz (2011). *Services Marketing: People, Technology, Strategy*. Person Education: New Jersey.
- Lowry, J.R. and Owens, B.D., (2001). Developing a positioning strategy for a university. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 22(4): 27-42.
- Maringe, F., (2006). "University and course choice: Implications for positioning, recruitment and marketing", *International Journal of Educational Management*, 20 (6): 466 – 479.
- Marsh, H.W., (1987). "Students' evaluation of university teaching: research findings, Methodological issues and directions for future research", *International Journal of Educational Research*, 11 (3): 252-388.
- McKenzie, J.F., Neiger, B.L. and Thackeray, R., 2016. *Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Health Promotion Programs: A primer*. Person.
- Miller, P., Lamb, C.W. Jr., Hoverstad, R., and Boehm E.G., (1990), "An Approach for Identifying Benefit Segments Among Prospective College Students," *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 3 (Issue 1). 49-65.
- Nasser, F., and Fresko, B., (2002). "Faculty views of student evaluation of college teaching", *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 27 (2):187-98.
- Nell, C.E., and Cant, M.C., (2014). *Determining Student Perceptions Regarding the Most Important Service Features and Overall Satisfaction with the Service Quality of a Higher Education Institution*. Management: South Africa.
- Official Home Page of University of KwaZulu-Natal: (2015). From <<http://http://ukzninternational.ukzn.ac.za/Homepage.aspx>> (Retrieved February 26, 2016).
- Ohmae, K., and Andrews, K.R., (1983) *Industry and Competitive Analysis* New York: Penguin Books, chaps. 3, 6, 7, and 13.
- Padlee, S.F., Kamaruddin, A.R., and Baharun, R., (2010). International Students' Choice Behavior for Higher Education at Malaysian Private Universities. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 2(2), p.202.
- Pappas, R.J, and Richard, M., Shaink, (1994), "Strategic Marketing: The President's Perspective," *Community College Journal*, 64: 29-34.
- Peterson, R.T., (1991). Small business usage of target marketing. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 29(4): 79-85.

- Richards, L., (2015). The Importance of Product Positioning to the Marketing Plan <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/importance-product-positioning-marketing-plan-24275.html>.
- Ries, A. and Trout, J., (1981). Positioning: The battle of the consumer's mind. New York: McGraw-Hill, p2.
- Rindfleish, J.M., (2003). "Segment Profiling: Reducing Strategic Risk in Higher Education Management," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 25: 147-159.
- Roberts, P., and Priest, H., (2006). Reliability and validity in research. *Nursing Standard*, 20, 41-45.
- Romaniuk, J., (2001). Brand Positioning in Financial services: A longitudinal test to find the best brand position. Henry Stewart Publications: Australia.
- Schiffman, L.G., and Kanuk L. L., (2010). Consumer Behaviour. Tenth Edition. Jakarta: PT Indeks.
- Sekaran, U., and Bougie, R., (2013). Research Methods for Business. United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.
- Selingo, J., (1999). "Texas Colleges Seek New Ways to Attract Minority Students," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 46.
- Shaw, A.W., (1912). "Some Problems in Market Distribution," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 703- 65.
- Sojkin, B., Bartkowiak, P., and Skuza, A., (2011). "Determinants of higher education choices and student satisfaction: the case of Poland", *Higher Education*.
- Spiegler, M., (1998). "Have Money Will Matriculate," *American Demographics* 51-56.
- Steenkamp, J.B.E., and Ter Hofstede, F., (2002). International market segmentation: issues and perspectives. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 19(3): 185-213.
- Stringer, E.T., (2007). Action research. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Thomas, K.M., (2004), "Where College-Bound Students Send Their SAT Scores: Does Race Matter?" *Social Science Quarterly*, 85: 1374-1390.
- Ulrich, D. and Lake, D.G., 1990. Organizational capability: Competing from the inside out. John Wiley & Sons.
- Upshaw, L.B., (1995). Building Brand Identity. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 112.
- Vigar-Ellis, D. (2014). Positioning. Unpublished lecture notes, MARK7FOP1, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
- Walker, O.C., and Mullins, J., (2011). Marketing Strategy: a decision-focuses approach. McGraw-Hill: New York.
- Walker, O.C., and Mullins, J., (2014). Marketing Strategy: a decision-focuses approach. McGraw-Hill: New York.

Walker, O.C., and Mullins, J.W., (2008). *Marketing Strategy: a decision-focuses approach*. McGraw-Hill: New York.

Wedel, M., (1999). "Discrete and continuous representations of unobserved heterogeneity in choice modeling." *Marketing Letters* 10.3: 219-232.

Wernerfelt, B., (1984). A resource-based view of the firm. *Strategic management journal*, 5(2): 171-180.

West, D., Ford, J. and Ibrahim, E. 2010. *Strategic Marketing: Creating Competitive Advantage*. 2nd Ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wilkins, S., and Balakrishnan, M.S., (2013). Assessing student satisfaction in transnational higher education. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 27 (2): 143-156.

Wojtas, G.W., (1991). "School Daze," *Direct Marketing* (September) 28-31, 48.

Wright, C., and O'Neill, M., (2002). Service quality evaluation in the higher education sector: An empirical investigation of students' perceptions. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 21(1): 23-40.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Needs analysis

Need	Segment A: Zimbabwe	Segment B: Nigeria	Segment C: Tanzania	Most important
• Good research reputation and high academic standards	✓		✓	
• Extremely qualified staff	✓	✓	✓	
• Global recognition	✓		✓	
• High safety standards	✓		✓	
• Refined library resources		✓	✓	
• Opportunities for employment	✓	✓		
• Availability of desired course	✓	✓	✓	
• High-tech computer facilities		✓		
• Availability of financial aid				
• Affordability				
• Availability of residences				
• Favorable entry requirements		✓		

Source: (Lamb et al., 2015)

**Key:** The ticks represent the needs that apply to a particular segment. The arrow represents the most important needs to the least important needs.

**Hot Buttons/determining dimensions**

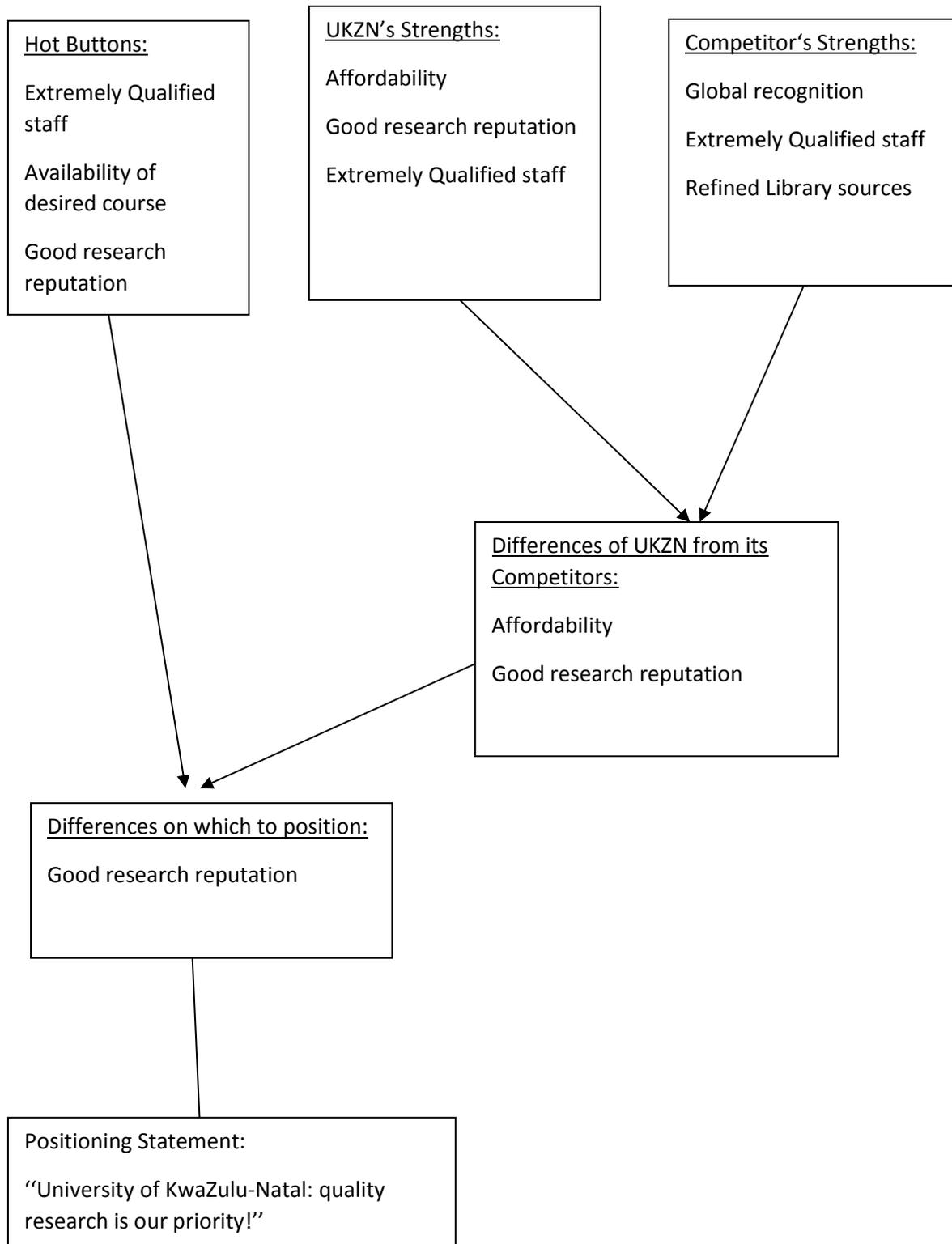
Extremely Qualified staff

Availability of desired course

Good research reputation

## Appendix B: Positioning Strategy

Source: (Lamb et al., 2015)



**Appendix C: UKZN's recommended future International students postgraduate start up page/branding picture**



## Appendix D: Questionnaire

**Thesis title:** “Positioning planning: Creating a positioning strategy for the post-graduate international students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus”

### Section A: Demographics

**Please complete the following questions by ticking the appropriate box:**

- 1) Gender: MALE   
FEMALE

2) Nationality/Country of Origin : \_\_\_\_\_

- 3) Age:
- Below 20 years
- 20-29 years
- 30-39 years
- 40-49 years
- 50-59 years
- 60 years and over

- 4) Race:
- Black
- White
- Coloured
- Indian
- Asian

- 5) At which campus are you based?
- Edgewood Campus
- Howard College Campus
- Westville Campus
- Medical School Campus
- Pietermaritzburg Campus

- 6) At which level in your studies are you?
- 3<sup>rd</sup> (final year)
- 4<sup>th</sup> (final year)
- Post-graduate diploma
- Honours
- Masters

**Section B: Needs analysis**

The following characteristics are the features that contribute to the success of a university. In your own opinion please rate the following characteristics, from the least to the most important.

	1	2	3	4	5
Characteristic	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very Important
Availability of residences					
Good research reputation and High academic standards					
Global Recognition					
High safety standards					
Affordability					
Refined library resources					
High-tech computer facilities					
Favourable entry requirements					
Opportunities for employment					
Availability of the desired course					
Extremely qualified academic staff					
Availability of scholarships/financial aid/bursaries					
Other:					

- 8) List five of your needs or requirements as an International post-graduate student, pertaining to the university you wish to study at. List from the most important to the least important.

---



---



---



---



---

**Section C: Competitive Analysis**

**Please complete the following questions**

9) In your opinion what are the top 5 tertiary education institutions or universities you would consider to study at?

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_
- d) \_\_\_\_\_
- e) \_\_\_\_\_

10) Rank the different tertiary institutions in terms of how well they provide these 13 characteristics (IN YOUR OWN OPINION)

Rate the universities on a scale FROM 0 TO 5 WHERE: 0 is a poor score and 5 is an excellent score.

If some of the institutions you mentioned above are not there in this list, please enter the institutions in the empty institution cells and rank them accordingly.

Characteristic s	Higher Education institutions/Universities						
	Univ. of Cape Town	Univ. of Pretoria	Univ. of Stellenbosch	UKZN	Univ. of Witwatersra nd	UNIS A	Other :
Availability of residences							
Good research reputation							

Availability of scholarships/financial aid/bursaries							
Availability of the desired course							
Affordability							
Opportunities for employment							
Refined library resources							
Global recognition							
High safety standards							
High academic standards							
Extremely qualified academic staff							
High-tech computer facilities							
Other:							

#### **Section D: International post-graduates' Perceptions of UKZN**

The questions below apply to your opinion of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's facilities, as an International post-graduate student.

**Please complete the following questions by ticking the appropriate box:**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Question</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Computer facilities at the UKZN are of a high standard.					

Library resources at UKZN are refined and up to date.					
UKZN is an excellent academic institution?					
International students have sufficient opportunities to obtain jobs.					
In comparison to other institutions, UKZN's fees are affordable.					
UKZN provides sufficient accommodation for international students.					
UKZN provides adequate security across all campuses and residences.					

The questions below apply to your opinion of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's goals, as an International post-graduate student.

**In your opinion please complete the following questions by ticking the most appropriate box, to the following statements:**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Question</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
UKZN is a premier university of African Scholarship?					
UKZN is engaged in the community?					
As an international student at UKZN, bursaries, scholarships or financial aid are easily accessible.					
UKZN's management team and systems are efficient?					
UKZN has an outstanding reputation in research in comparison to other institutions					
UKZN put great value in diverse students so as to be a university of choice for students					
UKZN has exceptional, qualified academic staff to supervise research and also to teach at a higher level of tertiary education					

## **Appendix E: Cover letter for Questionnaire**

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
School of Management, IT and Governance**

### **M Com Research Project**

**Researcher:** Chido Christina Mlambo (+27786055816)

**Supervisor:** Dr. Sanjay Soni (033-260 735)

**Research Office:** Mariette Snyman 031 260 8350

Dear Respondent,

I, Chido Christina Mlambo am an MCom student in the School of Management, IT and Governance, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: “Positioning planning: Creating a positioning strategy for the post-graduate international students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal”

The aim of this study is to: Create a positioning strategy for international post-graduate students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Through your participation, I hope to understand international post-graduate students’ needs from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The results of this survey are intended to contribute to the completion of my master’s degree.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this research project. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the School of Management, IT and Governance, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, please contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above.

The questionnaire will require a maximum of 15 minutes to complete. I hope you will take the time to complete the questionnaire.

Sincerely

Investigator’s signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: Consent form Questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
School of Management, IT and Governance

### M Com Research Project

**Researcher:** Chido Christina Mlambo (+27786055816)

**Supervisor:** Dr. Sanjay Soni (033-260 735)

**Research Office:** Mariette Snyman 031 260 8350

### CONSENT

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix G: Focus Group Discussion with International students

### INTRODUCTIONS

#### Moderator

**I will introduce myself and thank participants for agreeing to come.**

*Thank you for volunteering your time and coming to this focus group interview. I am Chido Mlambo a Master's Degree Student in the School of Information Technology, Governance and Management, and Discipline of Marketing Management.*

*For partial fulfillment of my programme I am required to conduct focus groups for my dissertation. My research topic or title is: **“Positioning planning: Creating a positioning strategy for the post-graduate international students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal”** I will moderate our discussion today.*

**I will explain group guidelines and tell how long the focus group will last.**

*We have the discussion scheduled for one hour today. During the discussion, I want to get your perception of the University of KwaZulu-Natal as a higher education institution.*

*Again, I am here just to facilitate the session today. You will not hurt my feelings or make me feel good with whatever opinions you might give. I am interested in hearing your point of view even if it is different from what others will express.*

- *I am going to make every effort to keep the discussion focused and within our time frame. If too much time is being spent on one question or topic, I may move the conversation along so we can cover all of the questions.*

#### Lay the ground rules

To facilitate the process I will lay down a few ground rules

- *Only one person is to speak at a time.*
- *No side conversations.*
- *Everyone must participate. I want to learn from everyone here your opinions, views, feelings, perceptions are important to me. I want each person to tell me a story today; your story may sound similar to someone else's story but tell it anyway! Don't always just say "I agree"! There is no right or wrong answer and I encourage you to "talk" to each other.*

- *You are responsible for the discussion that is to take place during this session.*
- *My role is as to be a moderator, not an interviewer so I facilitate the discussion not creates it. I urge you to ask each other questions and encourage those who are not participating to do so.*
- *You all signed the initial form confirming your participation in this session as well as your agreement to ensure that everything that is discussed in this venue remains confidential and private. Can I confirm that everyone is satisfied with this arrangement*

### **Icebreaker: Participant introduction**

*On that note, we will start on the questions. In order for us to know each other, let us introduce ourselves as we contribute to the discussion. Your name, what you are studying and the level you are.*

### **Discussion starter question**

*As mentioned earlier, the main topic of my theme is your 'personal experience' as a postgraduate international student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. To obtain consensus and before moving on with this exercise, it is important that I take a few minutes to define the term 'personal experience'.*

*Personal experience of a human being is the moment-to-moment experience and sensory awareness of internal and external events or a sum of experiences forming an empirical unity such as a period of life.*

*In simpler words your own personal encounter with UKZN as a whole*

### **Needs analysis**

To start with, the moderator will explain to the discussants what is meant by 'Needs' using practical examples.

A need is a necessity, something required something that is essential rather than just desirable.

1. I would like to know what your needs are as an international student going into postgraduate studies or who is already a postgraduate

2. Would you say UKZN fulfills most of the needs required by postgraduate international students?
3. Would you say your needs as international students are ignored by UKZN as compared to local students?

### **Competitive analysis**

The moderator will explain to the discussants what is meant by 'Competitive Analysis'.

Through competitor analysis, firms identify who their key competitors are, develop a profile for each of them, identify their objectives and strategies, assess their strengths and weaknesses, gauge the threat they pose and anticipate their reaction to competitive moves.

A competitive analysis is a critical part of your company marketing plan. With this evaluation, you can establish what makes your product or service unique and therefore, what attributes you play up in order to attract your target market.

1. In your opinion which would you say are the top 5 tertiary education institutions you would look at if choosing to study further?
2. I would like to get your views on what makes higher education tertiary institutions successful on an international scale.
3. Would you say UKZN is quite competitive on a national and international scale, looking at the success factors mentioned in the previous question?

### **Perceptions of International Students**

4. I would like to get your views on UKZN weaknesses and strengths, based on the success factors mentioned earlier.
5. What comes to mind when you hear of UKZN as a university brand?
6. Would you say UKZN is a premier university of African Scholarship?  
Probe: In your opinion what defines a Premier University of African scholarship?

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

I will offer an opportunity for any short final comments participants would like to make.

*Thank you very much for your input today. Are there any last comments that anyone would like to make? The information you provided will help me write my dissertation and inform Unilever on their Mergers and Acquisitions.*

## **Appendix H: Cover letter for Focus Groups Questions**

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**  
**School of Management, IT and Governance**  
**(HSS/0864/016M)**

### **M Com Research Project**

**Researcher:** Chido Christina Mlambo (+27786055816)

**Supervisor:** Dr. Sanjay Soni (033-260 735)

**Research Office:** Mariette Snyman 031 260 8350

Dear Respondent,

I, Chido Christina Mlambo am an MCom student in the School of Management, IT and Governance, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: “Positioning planning: Creating a positioning strategy for the post-graduate international students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal”

The aim of this study is to: Create a positioning strategy for international post-graduate students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Through your participation, I hope to understand international post-graduate students’ needs from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The results of this survey are intended to contribute to the completion of my master’s degree.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this research project. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the School of Management, IT and Governance, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, please contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above. The focus group interview will require roughly a maximum of 1 hour. I hope you will take the time to participate in the focus group interview.

Sincerely

Investigator’s signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix I: Consent form for Focus Groups Questions

(HSS/0864/016M)

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
School of Management, IT and Governance

### M Com Research Project

**Researcher:** Chido Christina Mlambo (+27786055816)

**Supervisor:** Dr. Sanjay Soni (033-260 735)

**Research Office:** Mariette Snyman 031 260 8350

### CONSENT

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

### I hereby provide consent to:

<b>Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>
<b>Video-record my interview / focus group discussion</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>
<b>Use of my photographs for research purposes</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix J: Ethical Clearance



11 November 2016

Ms Chido Christina Mlambo (210556066)  
School of Management, IT & Governance  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Mlambo,

**Protocol reference number: HSS/0864/016M**

**Project title:** Positioning planning: Creating a positioning strategy for the post-graduate international students market for the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg)

### Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 28 October 2016 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in Research Questions (Section 2.4)

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for period of 3 years from the date of original issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

.....  
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Sanjay Soni  
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Brian McArthur  
Cc School Administrator: Ms Debbie Cunynghame

---

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za) / [snymnm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snymnm@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville