



**EXPLORING THE EFFICACY OF DIGITAL MARKETING TO
PROMOTE HIGHER EDUCATION USING SOCIAL MEDIA
PLATFORMS**

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College of Law & Management Studies

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DECLARATION

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12 July 2022

Researcher: V. Surujpal

Date

DEDICATION

- *My Swami, Shri Sathya Sai Baba.* Thank you for the strength and guidance during this journey.
- *My late mum, Serita Surujpal and my late granny, Shantha Devi Sing,* even though you both are not physically here with me, you both made me the person I am today, always promoting education. To *my late granny, Shantha Devi Sing,* I dedicate my masters in your honor. You will always be my inspiration and it's because of you I was motivated to succeed.
- *My dad, Vijay Raj Surujpal,* thank you for all your love and support and for always motivating me.
- *My sister, Saiyuri Surujpal,* thank you for always ensuring that I ate well throughout my study and for always taking care of me.

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ABSTRACT

Exploring the efficacy of digital marketing to promote higher education using social media platforms

In recent years, businesses have adopted different marketing strategies and digital marketing has become a frequent way that businesses connect with their customers. This research aimed to explore if digital marketing is an effective method of promoting higher education using social media platforms.

The study was conducted within a private tertiary institution in KwaZulu-Natal. 224 students completed the online questionnaire comprising 5 sections. Section A was based on the biographical particulars of respondents, while sections B to E were related to questions dealing with the sub-dimensions of the study. The sampling method adopted in this study was non-probability sampling. The Validity and Reliability of the questionnaire were evaluated using Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha respectively. Descriptive and Inferential Statistics were implemented to initiate the results of this study.

The empirical findings of this study indicate that there is a positive relationship between the effectiveness of digital marketing, the impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media, the effectiveness of social media and prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media in promoting higher education. There were no significant differences in biographical profiles (gender, age, race, programme of study, and level of study) regarding each dimension of the study except for the level of study at the 1% level of significance.

A framework with recommendations for improving efficacy has been developed based on the key dimensions of the study. It is recommended that future research investigate the efficacy of other social media platforms in higher education and increase the scope and exposure to include a broader spectrum of tertiary institutions to gain a broader perspective.

Key words: digital marketing, social media, higher education, social media platforms

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past ten and a half years, marketing academics and practitioners have observed that marketing has transformed drastically (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). Technological innovations, such as the increase in home internet and broadband connection, as well as media platform such as Facebook, has played a major role in the way customers react to the type of marketing system, (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). Digital marketing is used to market products and services via digital distribution (Smith, 2011). Digital marketing goes beyond the internet and one of the channels of digital marketing is social media marketing (Yasmin, Tasneem and Fatema, 2015). Students of today are only familiar with the world that has internet (Assimakopoulous, Antoniadis, Dvizac and Kayas, 2017). Thus, the presence of social media is pivotal in Higher Education, if Universities want to sustain connections with their students (Assimakopoulous, *et al.*, 2017). This study explores the efficacy of digital marketing in Higher Education focusing particularly on social media in Higher education.

The first chapter in this dissertation commences by providing the background to this study whilst briefly explaining digital marketing and social media. The problem statement, the purpose and the contribution of the study are then outlined. Once the research questions and objectives of the study are identified, this chapter proceeds to give an overview of the research methodology of this study whilst acknowledging the limitations. The chapter concludes with a summary outline per chapter and the conclusion of this dissertation. The background of the study is discussed in the next section.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Digital marketing has become a type of marketing that is used to reach out to customers using digital channels and to promote products or services (Yasmin, *et al.*, 2015). Digital marketing enables consumers to retrieve information from any location at any time they require it (Yasmin, *et al.*, 2015). Kaur (2016) explains that digital marketing is a word used to refer to marketing that makes use of electronic devices such as computers, smart phones, and tablets to capture the consumers.

Girchenko and Ovsianikova (2016) explain that digital marketing covers a greater scope as it covers an offline audience, such as cell phones and downloaded application, digital television,

and self-service terminals to name a few. Girchenko and Ovsianikova (2016) point out that there are various advantages associated with using digital marketing instead of traditional marketing, which includes television, radio, and billboards. One of the advantages listed includes price as traditional marketing is very expensive in comparison to digital marketing (Girchenko and Ovsianikova, 2016).

Social media has become a vital tool that is used by many companies to market their products or services (Stuart, Stuart & Thelwall, 2017). Several writers (Hermkens, 2011, Kietzmann, 2011; McCarthy, 2011; Stuart *et al.*; 2017), agree that social media services generate interactive platforms in which individuals and communities share, discuss and enhance the user-generated content which is utilised by mobile and web-based technologies. The problem statement of the study is discussed in the next section.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In recent times, there has been a development in the way marketing has been communicated to customers. Businesses have adopted many marketing strategies; digital marketing has become a common way that businesses use to reach out to their customers. Digital marketing should be used in businesses as it is an affordable and convenient way to interact with customers and the information is easily available and accessible (Yasmin, *et al.*, 2015). Higher Education institutions should take advantage of digital marketing, as the major advantage associated with digital marketing is that it reaches a large number of customers (Todor, 2016).

However, some shortfalls are associated with digital marketing and one of these is that some people may not embrace this approach because they prefer the traditional form of marketing (Todor, 2016). Yasmin *et al.*, (2015) focused their study mainly on the importance of digital marketing. Furthermore, their study highlighted only the advantages of digital marketing and the analysis of their study lacked the exploration of the multiple social media platforms. Girchenko and Ovsianikova (2016) focused their study on the advantages and disadvantages of traditional marketing and digital marketing. Although Girchenko and Ovsianikova (2016) mentioned multiple social media platforms in their study, there is little information that explores the different social media platforms.

Recent authors have looked at the effectiveness of social media marketing strategy and looked at one social media platform that can be used in Higher Education (Assimakopoulous *et al.*, 2017). One of the weaknesses noted by such authors is that they focused solely on one social media platform, for instance, (Assimakopoulous *et al.*, 2017) only focused on

Facebook. It is crucial for marketers to explore digital marketing but particularly focusing on Social Media strategy as this is the area of focus that will assist to establish the efficacy of digital marketing. The study thus aims to explore this shortcoming further by investigating the effect of digital marketing through multiple social media strategies.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The overall purpose of the study is to explore the efficacy of digital marketing in promoting Higher Education using social media platforms. There are various social media networks available and each one is useful in its unique way. Understanding the effects that each social network has when adopting the social network will be beneficial to the way students perceive communication. The study aimed to establish how often students use the social media. This study aimed to uncover what the students' view of Higher Education currently is in terms of their needs and wants, how they access digital marketing platforms, focusing on social media and for what purposes, in terms of Higher Education needs, and finally, how institutions can align their marketing activities to better target as well as cater for the needs of these students, in order to foster better relationships going forward. The study also aimed to explore the effect of digital marketing on students and to determine if the type of social media system (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter) plays a role in exploring the efficacy of social media in Higher Education.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary research objective is: To explore the efficacy of digital marketing in promoting higher education institutions using social media platforms.

The sub-research objectives which stem from the primary research objective are:

1. To examine the effectiveness of digital marketing in addressing the needs of students.
2. To explore students' perceptions of the efficacy of higher education institutions that have an online presence on social media.
3. To examine students' perceptions of branding, service delivery and customer relationship among higher education institutions that have an online presence.
4. To investigate if there are any digital communication preferences of students when interfacing with higher education institutions.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question is: Is digital marketing an effective method of promoting higher education using social media platforms?

The sub-research questions which stem from the primary research question include:

1. How effective is digital marketing in addressing the needs of students?
2. What are students' perceptions of the efficacy of higher education institutions that have an online presence on social media?
3. What effect does interacting with institutions with an online presence have on students' perceptions in terms of branding, service delivery and customer relationships?
4. What are there any digital communication preferences of students when interfacing with higher education institutions?

1.7 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This research study will contribute to the discipline in exploring the efficacy of digital marketing in Higher Education and will focus particularly on social media from a South African Higher Education student perspective. There have been many studies conducted on the effectiveness of social media, but most studies focused on one particular social network and to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has been conducted in South Africa exploring the efficacy of the digital market in Higher Education.

This study will allow marketers to understand students in Higher Education, their understanding and expectations of digital marketing, focusing on social media. These insights will equip marketers to look into and explore other avenues available in digital marketing and to understand the usefulness of social networks in Higher Education. Furthermore, anyone interested in exploring digital marketing and social media will benefit from the body of knowledge derived from this research study.

1.8 HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis 1:

H_A : There exists significant intercorrelations among the key dimensions (effectiveness of digital marketing, impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media, effectiveness of social media and prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media) of the study relating to efficacy in tertiary institutions, respectively.

H₀: There exists no significant intercorrelations among the key dimensions (effectiveness of digital marketing, impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media, effectiveness of social media and prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media) of the study relating to efficacy in tertiary institutions, respectively.

Hypothesis 2:

H_A: There exists a significant difference in the perceptions of higher education students, varying in biographical profiles (gender, age, race, programme of the study, and level of study) regarding each dimension of the study (effectiveness of digital marketing, impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media, effectiveness of social media and prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media).

H₀: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of higher education students, varying in biographical profiles (gender, age, race, programme of the study, and level of study) regarding each dimension of the study (effectiveness of digital marketing, impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media, effectiveness of social media and prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media).

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design is an important component of empirical research. The research project undertook a descriptive study. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), the main focus of a descriptive study is to acquire data that relates to the topic of interest. For instance, in this study, we wanted to explore the effectiveness of digital marketing to promote higher education using social media platforms, so the data that was collected only focused on the topic. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), descriptive studies may assist the researcher to obtain a better understanding of the group's characteristics in a given situation. To accomplish this, there are research questions that are posed, to assist in understanding the characteristics of the group, using the social media platforms. A cross-sectional study refers to data that is collected at one point in time (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). A cross-sectional study is used to gather data and the data was gathered over 2 to 3 months from students.

The study site is the actual place where the research was conducted. This study took place at a Higher Education Institution, the School of Education in the vicinity of Durban in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. The Higher Education faculty is made up of three campuses, namely, the Durban campus, the Montana campus and the Waterfall campus. For

this research, the study was delimited to the Durban campus for easy access and convenience purposes. The questionnaires were distributed online by the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher is based on the Durban campus, and it was more convenient and feasible to obtain and gather data for the study.

For this study, non-probability sampling was used, this included quota sampling. Based on a population size of approximately 1007 students, the sample of 280 students was proportionately distributed between the various programmes based on the percentage of registered students. Data was collected from the target sample of students through online questionnaires with closed-ended questions. Two hundred and ninety-one questionnaires were distributed over a month on the Durban campus.

Questionnaires are a set of focused questions (Salkind, 2012). According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), questionnaires are outlined to gather large numbers of quantitative data. Questionnaires can be sent to respondents either electronically, via email, or personally (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Questionnaires save time as individuals can complete them without being administered (Salkind, 2012) and questionnaires are also feasible (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

1.10 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitation of the study is that the focus of this research is on Higher Education students, in the Education faculty within a specific geographic location. The study is therefore limited in scope. The study was limited to the Durban campus due to time and financial constraints and therefore the students in the Gauteng campuses were not included in the study. The results cannot be generalised due to this limitation. All students may not have been keen to participate in the study as they may have had limited access to the internet or poor connectivity, or due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic or probably had limited data. The response rate was inadequate. The study was also restricted to one private Higher Education institution, so the views and results generated cannot be generalised to other state-owned institutions.

1.11 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The dissertation consists of seven chapters.

CHAPTER ONE- Introduction

The introduction and overview of the study are presented in this chapter, specifically highlighting the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research objectives and a brief overview of the research methodology underpinning the study.

CHAPTER TWO-Digital Marketing

In this chapter, a review of literature and information related to digital marketing is presented.

CHAPTER THREE-Digital Marketing in Higher Education and Social Media

The chapter includes a discussion of digital marketing in higher education and social media in South Africa.

CHAPTER FOUR- Research Methodology

The chapter includes a discussion of the research methodology which encompasses research design, the research objectives, the sample selected, data collection techniques, reliability, validity, and statistical data analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE- Presentation of Results

This chapter of the study will present the results of the research and will be illustrated with graphical presentations for the sample that was used in the study. Additionally, the chapter outlines the statistical methods that were used ensuring that data analysis can be achieved.

CHAPTER SIX- Discussion of Results

In this chapter the data collected for this study are interpreted and discussed. Descriptive and multivariate statistics are used in analyzing the data and explaining the links between the theory and research objectives.

CHAPTER SEVEN- Recommendations and Conclusion

In the final chapter all conclusions based on the significant empirical findings are summarized and recommendations for further studies outlined are clearly stated in this chapter.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the study. The research design and methodology were carefully articulated followed by the research questions and objectives. The purpose of the study was clearly stated. The limitation was identified, followed by the dissertation outline. Chapter two will discuss digital marketing.

CHAPTER TWO

DIGITAL MARKETING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will review existing literature on digital marketing and social media, which assisted the researcher to have a better understanding of the various dimensions of the study. This assisted the researcher to find gaps in the specific area of research and enable the researcher to fill in the gaps and also provide possibilities for future research.

The chapter aims to analyse and review the literature on digital marketing and later discusses the various social media platforms. It will also unpack some digital terminologies, to achieve a better understanding of the digital environment and lastly, the theoretical framework in which the study is underpinned is discussed.

2.2 WHAT IS DIGITAL MARKETING?

To understand the efficacy of digital marketing, it is imperative to unpack the term digital marketing. Digital marketing entails using digital technologies for the promotion of products or services and has been growing drastically during the past years (Kaur, 2016). Kaur (2016) further explains that digital marketing is a new approach to marketing and the term digital marketing is used to depict marketing that makes use of electronic devices such as computers, smartphones, and tablets to interact with customers.

According to Kaur (2016), digital marketing is a wide term that depicts a set of marketing processes that uses all available digital channels to market a product or service and even build a digital brand. Darmaz and Efendioglu (2016) mention that digital marketing aims to attend to customers as efficiently as possible and requires guidance from customers, via the digital marketing platform, customers can reach products and services quicker and easier and can compare similar products and services. Therefore, customers can make their decision as to what to purchase at a much quicker rate (Darmaz and Efendioglu, 2016).

Todor (2016) explains that the main objective of digital marketing is to increase sales and promote brands using various digital marketing techniques. According to Todor (2016), there are other terms for digital marketing such as ‘online marketing’, ‘internet marketing’, or ‘web marketing.’ Budikova (2014) mentions that digital marketing strategies highlight the brands by utilising multiple formats such as video, micro videoblogs, studies and multiple screens (PC vs. tablet vs. mobile) which are blended with more recent digital marketing channels.

Yasmin, Tasneem and Fatima (2015) point out the various elements of digital marketing which are online advertising, email marketing, social media, and text messaging to name a

few. Kallier (2016) mentions that it is vital to understand consumer perceptions of digital marketing, the reaction of consumers to digital marketing efforts, and to establish the channels that are accepted to engage with the customer. Additionally, Nikunen, Saarela, Oikarinen, Muhos and Isohella (2017) agree, there are five elements of digital marketing tools that build customer relationships, and these are, attracting customers, engaging customers' interest, participation, retaining customers, learning customer preferences, and relating to customers. Otero and Rolàn (2016) mention that digital marketing is a new marketing approach, and it incorporates customisation and mass distribution to achieve marketing goals. Technology has expanded in such a way that it has led to the way we see marketing on the internet and has opened an opportunity for a new approach to digital marketing, that is user-centred, more measurable, interactive, and not ambiguous (Otero and Rolàn, 2016).

From the above definitions and detailed explanations, one can conclude that digital marketing is concerned with digital awareness and promoting a brand via using various digital channels and its goal is to attract customers by engaging on the customers interests. According to Kallier (2016), social media can be used as an online channel that allows individuals to communicate their opinions and interests with one other, or share professional and personal data, such as the brand or product that they deem to be their favourite (as cited by Ferrell, Lukas, Niininen, Pride and Schembri, 2012). Based on findings of relevant studies, digital marketing can be considered a suitable non-traditional marketing tool in higher education.

2.3 ADVANTAGES OF DIGITAL MARKETING

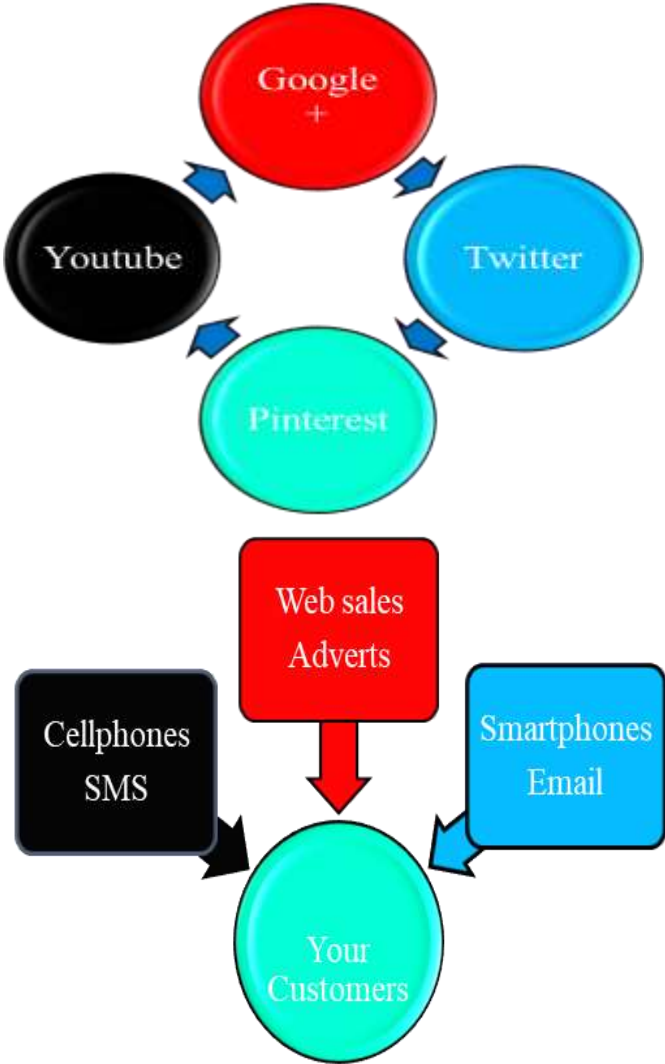
According to Das and Lall (2016), there are a few advantages associated with digital marketing. In their study, five advantages are given which are the following:

- Digital marketing is an interactive way to target audiences locally and internationally.
- Information is available instantly and is simpler to measure.
- Social media makes it possible for groups and individual customers to interact, for instance, through word-of-mouth marketing.
- Digital marketing enables a business to build strong relationships via social media.
- This marketing takes place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and attracts vibrant individuals.

Figure 2.1 depicts some of the social media platforms that are used in digital marketing, and these include Google +, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube. Digital marketing is the marketing

that makes use of electronic devices, these include digital devices such as smartphones, tablets and computers. Figure 2.1 illustrates that there are many ways of marketing, like traditional marketing which includes, SMS, websites, email, customers (word-of-mouth) and now businesses are moving to online digital spaces such as Google +, YouTube and search engines to promote products and services.

Figure 2.1
What is digital marketing?



Source: Das and Lall, (2016:05-11).

2.4 DIGITAL MARKETING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

According to Štefko, Fedorko and Bačik (2014), many authors point out that Higher Education Institutions should be marketed and managed as corporate brands (as cited by Chalupský and Schüller, 2012). Štefko *et al.* (2014) points out that the image of an institution such as in an educational sphere is based on its prior reputation and displays stability, this depicts that change can bring about long-term and patient work. The internet environment overcomes the physical distance with constant communication-marketing tools such as a website, blog, FAQ portals, etc. that are used (Štefko *et al.*, 2014).

Štefko *et al.*, (2014) mentions that higher education institutions focus on providing educational services which possess similar traits to other market subjects. The students represent the customers who understand their buying decisions, based on the information and the image of the Higher Education Institutions, students will determine the institution of their choice where they will pursue further studies (as cited by Quintal, Shanka, Svandova, 2013; and Taylor, 2006).

Varshney (2015) stated that traditional media was typically used in marketing in higher educational institutions to ensure that word-of-mouth was strong and emphasised good infrastructure and placement statistics. Varshney (2015) argues that digital marketing is mostly used in higher education institutes to target a specific group and create a message at a low cost. Education sector organisations also make use of marketing activities, just like any other organisation, this is used to appeal to students or their customers. Varshney (2015) mentions that according to the study by eMarketer, the education sector is seen as one of the top industries that depend on digital marketing globally and social media dominates in digital marketing (Varshney, 2015).

Varshney (2015) stated that students of nowadays and their parents are very involved on social media and internet updates of educational institutes such as Facebook, Twitter, Google search, Visual video communication, Institute websites, Emails, WhatsApp, YouTube marketing, etc. The study suggests that it will be beneficial for private educational institutes to choose digital marketing strategies so that they can reach out to many students.

According to Budree, Fietkiewicz and Lins (2019), the usage of social media can impact South Africa in different ways. Budree *et al.*, (2019) state that there are positives associated with using social media in South Africa and go on to explain that social media platforms have been a powerful tool for companies to get their products or messages to their customers.

According to Budree *et al.*, (2019), social media platforms in South Africa have been an effective way for students to be part of groups. Social media platforms bring virtual groups

that students participate in into life. Budree *et al.*, (2019) further mention that the virtual groups available on social media platforms allow for students to interact and share ideas.

According to Kusumawati (2019), digital marketing in higher education is important. Digital strategies assist colleges and universities, target the students that fit their institute and reach other students who may not be part of their personal needs without knowing it (Kusumawati, 2019). Furthermore, Kusumawati (2019) points out that digital marketing assists to connect with alumni students.

From the literature above, it is evident that digital marketing relates to Private, Tertiary Education Institutions. Various global trends have been noted such as digital marketing which builds good relationships between higher education institutions and students since they both understand each other (Kusumawati, 2019). It is important to understand the digital environment and the main aspects in order to have a better understanding of digital marketing, the digital environment will be discussed next.

2.5 DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Four main aspects are present in a business platform in digital marketing which are, search engine optimization (SEO), web/mobile marketing, social networks, and customer relationship management (CRM) as stated by Bryn (cited in Fierro, Arbelaez, Alonso and Gavilanez, 2017).

To have a better understanding of the digital environment, one needs to unpack the four main aspects and keywords. The first aspect is search engine optimization (SEO); this will be discussed next.

2.5.1 SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a required strategy in digital marketing, it refers to the process where the visibility of a web page or website is affected and the search engine's unpaid results are known as "natural" results" (Das and Lall, 2016). For search engine optimization to be effective, a particular keyword or a volume of keywords rankings are increased on a site result (Das and Lall, 2016). SEO refers to improving the search of the website so that the website is ranked to appear on the top of the search list (Taiminen and Karjaluo, 2015). The overall goal of SEO is to assist businesses to position their site accurately, so that it is found at the crucial stages in the buying process or when there is a need for the business site (Das and Lall, 2016).

Das and Lall (2016) further explain that an SEO can target various searches including image and video searches. Similarly, Fierro *et al.*, (2017) agree that SEO selects academic search, local, video and image. SEO is an effective tool in international education as it plays a significant role in ensuring that there is an increase in the traffic of viewers as stated by Satish and Sunil cited in Fierro *et al.*, (2017). Darmaz and Efendioglu (2016) emphasise that businesses that are regularly updating their optimizations on their web pages are a step ahead in their digital marketing. It is via SEO that the webpage and target audience are brought together using the search engines (Darmaz and Efendioglu, 2016).

Fierro *et al.*, (2017) refer to an example of SEO in their study, this fits in well with explaining the significance of the tool in relation to Higher Education. The authors state that if a student is looking to study a specified degree in a particular country, then the results that are given will be specific to that country. However, if a student has many countries to choose from and has many options, then, there would be more expansion of a range and it is in this case that the way the search engine is managed will ensure that the keyword for that business appears on the top of the list (Fierro *et al.*, 2017). Das and Lall (2017) mention that this strategy also serves as a valuable tool for the business in researching what their customers search for, and which search engines are preferred by their customers. By understanding what SEO is, this will help to determine how effective digital marketing is in addressing the needs of the students. Another aspect that forms part of the digital environment is web/mobile marketing that will be discussed next.

2.5.2 WEB/MOBILE MARKETING

Web/mobile marketing made its first appearance towards the end of the 1990s via short messages, this is known as short message service (SMS) according to Okazaki (as cited in Amirkhonpour, Vrontis, and Thrassou, 2014). In the past, mobiles were referred to as cellphones, however since then “mobile” refers to tablets, smartphones, and technological devices (Darmaz and Efendioglu, 2016). Darmaz and Efendioglu (2016) further mention that businesses that use web/mobile marketing have become closer to digital media and this was enabled via the internet. Web/mobile marketing refers to a type of advertising that is done using mobile devices and these include smartphones, wireless phones, tablet computers, or smartphones (Dall and Lall, 2016). This type of marketing has grown significantly in the digital marketing sphere (Dall and Lall, 2016). Customers want to access websites using their mobile phones (Darmaz and Efendioglu, 2016). According to Xu, Liao, and Li (as cited in Nikunen *et al.*, 2017), mobile marketing is an active channel that offers direct and personal

communication, and this enables businesses to form stronger relationships with their customers.

Furthermore, Persaud and Azhar (as cited in Nikunen *et al.*, 2017) add that web/mobile marketing is a feasible way to reach out to customers. According to Amirkhonpour *et al.*, (2017), there are many benefits associated with using mobile marketing in comparison to traditional marketing such as the return on investment, redemption rate and reading rate is higher. Mobile marketing permits the information that is relevant to be dispersed online to customers and this is done uniquely and interactively (Amirkhonpour *et al.*, 2017). Mobile devices that include smartphones and tablet PCs are used considerably for social networking, web browsing, photo/video sharing and online shopping, making calls and sending text messages according to Krum (as cited in Amirkhonpour *et al.*, 2017). Web/mobile marketing makes use of various ways to provide services to their customers, using media content such as videos, text and voice and different applications (Nikunen *et al.*, 2017). Short message service, multimedia and display adverts are some of the digital media where mobile advertising can take place (Dall and Lall, 2016).

Web/mobile marketing offers various benefits which include affordability, a wider distribution and immediacy as the campaigns are delivered within seconds to the targeted customers. It is also easy to integrate new promotional tools with the business's current ones, the campaigns are quantifiable and measurable, and the mobile content is targeted to appeal to a specific customer. The content is easily shareable, and this assists the business to reach more potential customers at no cost to the business, thereby increasing the reach rate and this allows the marketers as well as the business an opportunity to demonstrate themselves as leaders in their sector and to create an impact on potential customers. In essence, this is seen as creating the wow factor according to Strategic Growth (as cited in Amirkhonpour *et al.*, 2017). Web/mobile marketing is an important tool of the digital environment that can be used to determine if digital marketing is an effective method of promoting higher education. Additionally social networks forms part of the digital environment and will be highlighted next.

2.5.3 SOCIAL NETWORKS

According to Statista (2019) (as cited in Cordero-Gutiérrez, 2020), there were 2.82 billion social media users worldwide and 6.8 billion of those were smartphone users. Social networks allow members to communicate and share information through online communication

(Darmaz and Efendioglu, 2016). The authors submitted that in the 21st century, social networks are widely used.

Social networks play a vital role in creating opportunities to amalgamate and broaden a firm's marketing strategy with the mobile marketing strategy (Nikunen *et al.*, 2017). The authors further point out that exceptional customer experiences can be achieved by utilising smartphones and other technologies such as location-based marketing (Nikunen *et al.*, 2017). Customers are enabled to upload stories based on their experiences, send messages, and post information via social networks (Naeem, 2019).

According to Naeem (2019), customers are active on social networks and businesses respond quicker to complaints that take place via social networks, as the customers have followers and friends that are present on the social network. Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have gained popularity across the world and assist to connect people with their recent tools (Butt, 2020). Smartphones have been noted to play a role in influencing university students to use social networks and the internet (Butt, 2020).

Otero and Rolan (2016) opined that social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are very popular on the web. Social networks consist of many functions which have been developed, however, they also include similar traits and these traits aim to link users by creating communities that can communicate and share knowledge and discussion (Otero and Rolan, 2016). Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram allow people's lives to be captured on a digital platform (Darmaz and Efendioglu, 2016).

According to Lim and Richardson (as cited in Cordero-Gutiérrez, 2020), education institutions should adopt and integrate social networks into their promotional strategies as this can improve the enrolment numbers since the social network sites have users and brands that interact in their communities.

Social networks offer prospects to allow customers remain connected to brands and customers so that they can share their experiences (Naeem, 2019). A more driven approach requires a high participation plan of action by using social networks such as Twitter and Facebook according to Unal (as cited in Darmaz and Efendioglu, 2016). To meet one of the objectives of the study which is, to examine student's perception of branding, service delivery, and customer relationship among higher education institutions that have an online presence, it is important to understand what social networks are to ensure that the objective is achieved. To add is beneficial for the higher education institution to have an understanding about customer relationship management, this will be elaborated on next.

2.5.4 CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Customer relationship management or CRM refers to customer loyalty (Fierro *et al.*, 2017). Fierro *et al.*, (2017) mention that CRM is an important link in business and this relationship takes place between the customer and the business. There are three elements that CRM is based on according to Reinartz and Venkatesan (as cited in Fierro, *et al.*, 2017) which are:

- Customer retention
- Growth in the number of customers
- Customer acquisition.

CRM has components that are useful in providing information and this information will assist the business to separate the customers, and this will increase the customer's loyalty. According to Rigo, Pedron, Caldeira and Araajo (as cited in Fierro, *et al.*, 2017), CRM can increase sales and result in the return on investment being higher. Ferriero *et al.*, (2017:250) state that “student relations help to understand students by gathering their knowledge in the phases of their interaction such as registration, application, admission, payment and enrolment.”

A strong CRM strategy is vital in digital transformation (Goldenberg, 2020). He further explains eight elements that are important for a digital marketing campaign to be successful, these include:

- The business should be able to view the results in sales and revenue of the marketing investment via analytics and insights linked to sales.
- The campaign must be completely linked with the CRM for sales so that when a customer visits a company's website, their preferences and search history are captured on the database.
- Offer a unique customized communication to each customer group or customer.
- The campaign will automate lead, scoring, distribution, and tracking.
- The campaign includes events that are activated by the behaviour of the web.
- Online and offline customer information tools are integrated.
- The campaigns are integrated into a formal social media program that optimizes and keeps track and responds to the content of the customer.
- The campaign consists of insights and metrics that are often looked after and updated concurrently.

The research above highlighted the concept of CRM and the importance of having a strong CRM to ensure that digital transformation occurs. To add the primary research question of the study asks, is digital marketing an affective method of promoting higher education using social media platforms? To address this question, it is important to explore social media in greater detail. Therefore, social media will be defined next.

2.6 SOCIAL MEDIA DEFINED

Billions of people globally use social media which has become one of the century's defining technologies (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, and Stephen, 2019). Globally, social media has become a vital marketing tool in recent times (Turan and Kara, 2018). In comparison to traditional marketing communications media, social media offers high levels of interaction, participation, and engagement, thus ensuring that there are marketing opportunities for business owners to appeal to customers effectively (Turan and Kara, 2018). Appel *et al.*, (2019) mention that social media can be referred to as a major platform that has features such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, or social media can be referred to as a digital place where people interact. Social media is a platform where the sharing of information takes place or is an online platform for word-of-mouth conversations (Appel. *et al.*, 2019).

Cordero-Gutiérrez (2020) maintains that the more information is developed for the business by the customer who uses and interacts with social media, the business and the marketer of the business can use that information and provide a customized marketing experience to the customer to align with the customer's needs. According to Appel *et al.*, (2019), people devote many hours in their day to social media, and this is across many platforms, therefore, social media is a marketing channel mainly used by marketers. Assimakopoulous *et al.*, (2017) point out that social media has several advantages, for instance, it is easily accessible and available at any time of the day and is cost-effective.

Assimakopoulous *et al.*, (2017) go so far as to suggest that the research conducted by Nyangau and Bado (2012) was unclear as to whether the content on the target university's social media pages influenced prospective students to attend. Furthermore, Assimakopoulous *et al.*, (2017) points out that the study was not able to suggest that social network sites are understood by the university or the marketing department. This is one of the gaps in research that this study will look at to explore the efficacy of digital marketing in promoting higher education using social media platforms.

2.7. TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

There are many social media platforms that exist however, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter will be discussed next.

2.7.1 FACEBOOK

Facebook was founded in 2004 and its aims include bringing the world together, empowering people in media communities to remain connected with family and friends, to explore what's going on globally, and for people to share their opinion on what is important to them (Appel *et al.*, 2019). Ten years ago, Facebook was the only social media network commonly used by people (Girchenko and Ovisiannokovo, 2016). According to Girchenko and Ovisiannokovo (2016), Facebook became universal as many managers of huge businesses use this social media platform (Rodriguez-Ardura and Meseguer- Atola, 2019). Rodriguez-Ardura and Meseguer- Atola (2019) discussed in their study that Facebook creates more than one business opportunity for the company. Ambrose, Meng, and Ambrose (2020) focused on why millennials use Facebook and in their study, the authors used a mixed-method design and combined the structural TAM model with one-on-one interviews to research the particular phenomenon. They explain that the TAM model referred to as the technology acceptance model from information systems was adopted into marketing to describe customer technology adoption and is used in forecasting Facebook adoption. Facebook is the main social network that is used by the 18–29-year age group according to Smith and Anderson (as cited in Ambrose, *et al.*, 2020).

The purpose of their study was to generate a range of attributes salient to customers using Facebook and then to limit the features to uncover why they were important to them. It was found from their research and probing that Facebook was the most preferred social media platform and that the usage rate of Facebook was 72% in comparison to Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter (Ambrose, *et al.*, 2020).

Another question posed by Ambrose *et al.*, (2020) was why respondents used Facebook, the three responses included the following themes:

- Staying connected with friends
- Entertainment and news
- Ease of use

In Assimakopoulos *et al.*, (2017), the authors investigated Facebook as an effective social media marketing strategy for universities. Their study aimed to investigate the use of Facebook groups and sites by undergraduate students looking for information about their departments and the ways those pages could be used to attract students. The study found that students are active on the university's website which indicated an increase in internet usage. According to the study, it was found that when a Facebook group looks at the student's needs, it depicts the importance of the Facebook group, and this increases activity on the social media platform.

2.7.2 INSTAGRAM

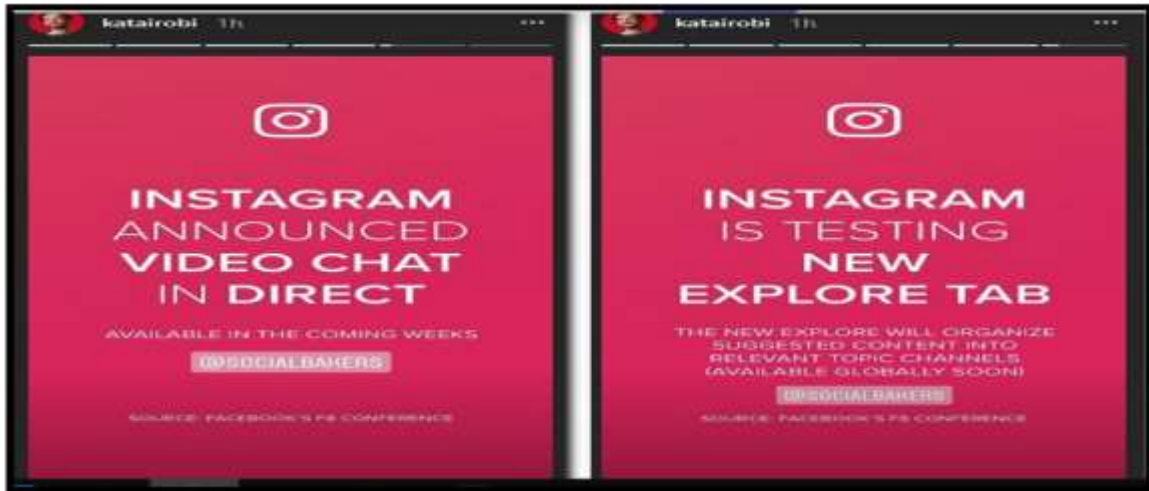
In 2010, Instagram was first introduced as a free application available via smartphones which enables users to share pictures and videos and edit using their phones or devices (Virtanen, Björk, Sjöström, 2017). Instagram has over 300 million users (David, 2015). One of the prominent features of Instagram is that the social network enhances a company's visual storytelling rather than just presenting via text (Virtanen *et al.*, 2017).

Instagram allows companies to interact with their customers and can be a good marketing tool for spreading awareness about a company by engaging with customers (Virtanen *et al.*, 2017). One of Instagram's creative development on social media is the Instagram stories, which was launched in August 2016 (Belanche, Cenjor and Pérez-Rueda, 2019). Instagram stories is a feature that is unique to Instagram however, this feature is also found on Snapchat, where users can upload short videos, live stream and upload their photos (Belanche *et al.*, 2019). The researchers highlight many benefits associated with using Instagram therefore Higher Education can explore the benefits of using the social media platform.

Figure 2.2 illustrates an example of an Instagram wallpaper story.

Figure 2.2

An example of an Instagram wallpaper story



Source: (Socialbakers, 2021).

2.7.3 LINKEDIN

LinkedIn was launched in May 2003 and has more than 300 members globally (TechTarget, 2020). LinkedIn plays a role in matching millions of jobs in a marketplace to more than 675 million members (Li, Shi, Yang, Yan, Wang, Chen, and He, 2020). Li *et al.*, (2020) mention that job information must be made clear as it affects the LinkedIn social media digital environment.

LinkedIn is a social networking site, and it appeals to the business community (TechTarget, 2020). The LinkedIn page of a member consists of the skills, employment history and education (TechTarget, 2020). The members on LinkedIn are called “connections” (TechTarget, 2020). LinkedIn is different from Facebook and Twitter, for instance, the social network requires a pre-existing relationship to exist between its members (TechTarget, 2020). Li *et al.*, (2020) point out that standard information impacts LinkedIn in the following ways:

- Recruiters are enabled to find the targeted candidate for the job.
- Members present on LinkedIn find it easier to seek employment.
- Members find it easier to look for vacancies based on their professional entity such as requirements and occupation.

Lui (as cited in Butt, 2020) comments that LinkedIn has become a widely used social media tool as students frequently use this social media platform. Tellis, MacInnis, Tirunillai and Zhang (2019) mention that LinkedIn stood out in their study when it came to sharing and

using social media in comparison to Facebook, Twitter, and Google +. According to Tellis *et al.*, (2019), LinkedIn is a professional social networking platform and consists of professional users and LinkedIn's motive as a social media platform is not to provide entertainment compared to other social media platforms.

Rodrigues and Martinez (2019) focused on unfolding the various digital marketing tools and strategies influencing recruitment effectiveness. In their findings, LinkedIn appeared to be a more credible social media platform when it comes to advertising job vacancies in comparison to Facebook. They opined that LinkedIn is a social media platform where personal profiles of people are created, where people can communicate, and information is shared among each other.

2.7.4 TWITTER

Twitter is a social network and microblogging service that is used to communicate with millions of people and organisations worldwide, this social network platform was launched in 2006 (Lenovo, 2020). Twitter is used to engage and build relationships with people (Lenovo, 2020).

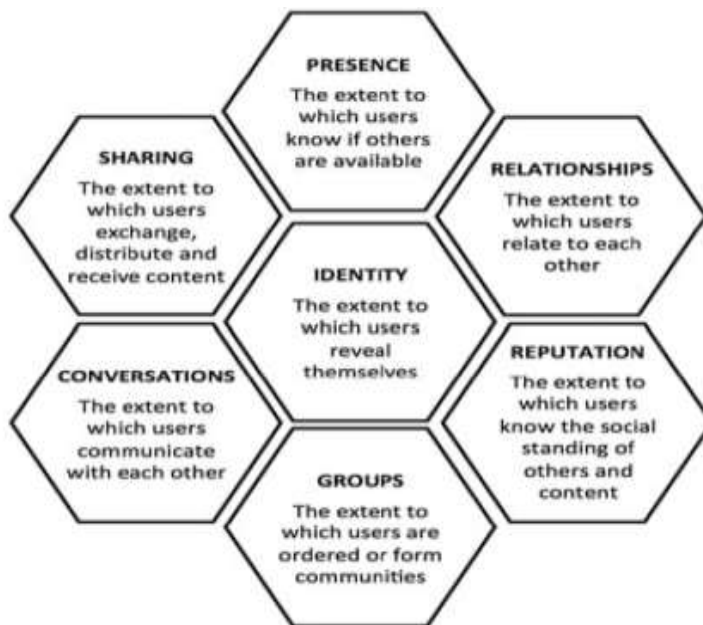
According to Irwin, Merchant and Kimmons (as cited in Hamid, Ijab, Sulaiman, Anwar and Norman, 2017), Twitter is one of the social media platforms and is one of the tools that is frequently used to ensure successful communication of information and is also responsible for communicating information to a greater audience. According to Gilpin and Steiner (as cited in Hamid *et al.*, 2017), Twitter is becoming popular in universities and is used to share news and answer the questions of the general public.

The next aspect that is central in the study is the theoretical framework, this will be discussed next.

2.8 The Honeycomb Model of social media formalities

The theoretical framework that underpins the study is the Honeycomb Model of social media formalities, figure 2.3 depicts the Honeycomb Model of social media formalities.

Figure 2.3
The Honeycomb Model of social media formalities



Source: Kietzmann., J.H., Silvestre, B.S., McCarthy, I., P., and Pitt, L.F. (2012). ‘Unpacking the social media phenomenon: towards a research agenda, *Journal of public affairs*, 12(2), pp.109-119.

Knilians. (2021). *What every marketer needs to know about digital marketing*. <https://www.tradepressservices.com/digital-marketing/> [Accessed: 23 August 2021].

The theoretical framework that was adopted for this study is the Honeycomb of social media formalities.

Kietzmann, McCarthy, Pitt, and Silvestre (2012) depict in their study that the Honeycomb model can be used for studying social media platforms. There are seven blocks in the Honeycomb model, in this section, all seven blocks will be briefly explained using the four social media platforms namely, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter. To understand how each dimension relates to the factors influencing social media in this study, it is important to give an in-depth discussion of all seven blocks in the Honeycomb model. Furthermore, by giving an in-depth discussion, one will be able to understand the importance

of the Honeycomb model blocks and its relation to the study. As mentioned above, all seven blocks will be used from the Honeycomb model in this section.

According to Kietzmann *et al.*, (2012), each building block indicates an important phenomenon relating to social media. The Honeycomb consists of seven blocks which are identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationship, reputation, and group. Each of the seven blocks represents a vital social media phenomenon. The blocks depict the usefulness of the honeycomb model for studying social media platforms, consumer engagement, content sharing and community needs (Kietzmann, *et al.*, 2012). In order to understand how each of the seven blocks relate to the study, one must unpack each of the dimensions and its distinctive features.

The first dimension of the Honeycomb block relates to identity, this indicates the magnitude to which users make their identities known in a social media setup (Ioanid and Scarlet, 2017). The identity block gives the user an opportunity to self-promote (via Facebook) or to self-brand (by using LinkedIn) (Ioanid and Scarlet, 2017). The identities of the students will inform the study of what social media platforms students use frequently. According to Kietzmann *et al.*, (2012), the identity block of the Honeycomb model shows the extent to which users decide to show their identity in a social media environment. In this study, the block that is represented by identity, refers to the extent to which students decide to reveal their identity via a social media platform. LinkedIn makes use of optional targeting facets and this enables to breakdown their target audience (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2020). According to Kietzmann *et al.*, (2012), tweets enable advertisers to depict personal tweets and the text based posted up to 146 characters.

The second dimension of the Honeycomb block relates to conversations (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2012). The study opined that the Honeycomb model allows customers to communicate with one other in a social media environment. Ioanid and Scarlet (2017) explain that conversations that are available on a social media platform may be scrutinized by companies and this will assist to determine whether users have a positive or negative perspective towards their business or towards the products/services that are offered. The conversations that take place via social media platforms will enable higher education institutions to understand their students better, as the conversations will give valuable feedback. Conversations among users can assist businesses, as users offer vital feedback at no cost (Ioanid and Scarlet, 2017).

According to Kietzmann *et al.*, (2012), the conversation block of the Honeycomb model refers to the extent to which consumers communicate with one another via social media. Kietzmann (*et al.*, 2012) mention that conversations that take place via social media

platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter are built on a relationship that requires trust, similar preferences, and viewpoints. In this study, the block that is represented by conversations, refers to the extent to which students communicate with one another using social media platforms namely, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Facebook focuses on the engagement rate, as more people interact with the content or post. This will attract more people and increase the conversations (Best Social Tricks, 2017). Hashtags are unique to Instagram, appealing to the right audiences' hashtags would increase the conversations via the Instagram platform (David, 2015). In order for conversations to take place on LinkedIn, it is vital that many people interact with the content on the businesses' LinkedIn page as this will assist in increasing the number of followers on the page (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2020). Tweets are unique to Twitter, and this enables companies to successfully market their promotions and events by making use of Hashtags (Ioanid and Scarlet, 2017).

The third dimension of the Honeycomb block relates to sharing. Kietzmann, *et al.*, (2012) explain that sharing refers to the exchange of information and content between individuals. According to the study, the Honeycomb focuses on either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. They believe that intense interest which includes an enjoyment, accomplishment or belonging will drive intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic refers to having a need to acquire a reward such as money, deadlines and threats which are associated with extrinsic motivation (Kietzmann, *et al.*, 2012). Students are able to share information and content with one another via the social media platforms. Similarly, vital information and content are shared by higher education institutions. Ioanid and Scarlet (2017) emphasise that sharing allows the users to distribute content. Kietzmann *et al.*, (2012) further add that businesses are cautious when sharing information as they need to respect users on the social media platform.

According to Kietzmann *et al.*, (2012), the sharing block refers to the extent to which consumers share their content. In this study, the block that is represented by sharing, will enable students to share their content on social media platforms. In order to increase the post reach on Facebook, the content that is shared on Facebook needs to be relevant and aligned with the current trends (Best Social Tricks, 2017). Relevant content assist to get a more rapid engagement (Best Social Tricks, 2017). When sharing on Facebook, the quality and variety of the content shared is important (Best Social Tricks, 2017). Posting once a day is required in order to be successful on Instagram, it is necessary to post frequently (David, 2015). Social media analytics tools report mentions that accounts that have the most fans, post between 3-4 times daily (David, 2015). It is therefore noted that the success rate is dependent on how frequently one posts (David, 2015). He further adds that the quantity and quality of posts are

also vital. InfluencerMarketingHub (2020) mentions that advertising via LinkedIn is very efficient and explains that one of the benefits of objective-based advertising involves website visits as this draws traffic to the website, text advertisements, sponsored content, dynamic adverts, and sponsored mail are included in website visits and formats (InfluencerMarketing Hub, 2020). Ioanid and Scarlet (2017) mention that the number of followers determines the value of the business and shows prospective customers the quality of products or services offered by the business. Tweets are also noted to reach a wider audience (Kietzmann, *et al.*, 2012).

The fourth dimension of the Honeycomb block relates to presence. Kietzmann, *et al.*, (2012) explain that presence refers to whether customers are aware (in terms of the availability) of other customers online at the same time. It is also important for customers (future students) to be informed and made aware of how they can contact the business or higher education institution. Also, it is imperative for the business or higher education institution to include all the social media platforms. Ioanid and Scarlet (2017) mention that the presence block provides customers with information on how the business can be reached, this could include a link or website or the physical address.

Kietzmann (*et al.*, 2012) submitted that the presence block of the Honeycomb model refers to the extent to which consumers are aware that other consumers are accessible at the exact time. In this study, the block that is represented by presence will provide students with information on how the higher institution can be reached. For instance, to provide students with different links available on the social media platform.

The fifth dimension of the Honeycomb block relates to relationship. Kietzmann *et al.*, (2012) mention that this building block focuses on how users relate to other users. Social media plays an important role in building relationships (Nikunen *et al.*, 2017). This dimension assisted the study to establish how to build a better relationship with customers. Furthermore, this dimension assisted to determine how the higher education fraternity can build longer lasting relationships going forward.

Kietzmann *et al.*, (2012) explain the relationship block of the Honeycomb model, this refers to the extent to which users relate to other users. In this study, students will be able to build a relationship with the higher institution, using social media platforms. Facebook focuses on the engagement rate, as more people interact with the content or post and Facebook's algorithm is familiar with this and hence support the post more, as there are more likes, shares, and comments (Best Social Tricks, 2017).

Instagram makes use of filters which play a vital role and using them correctly will ensure that there are a lot of engagement and added views (David, 2015). The leads can be captured via LinkedIn's filtered lead generation form (Marketing Hub, 2020). Twitter makes use of tweets and this assists to reach a wider audience Kietzmann *et al.*, (2012).

Social media platforms are a systematic way to build an indelible relationship with the current and prospective customers (Aloud and Alsufyan, 2016). There has been a shift in the way customers communicate, customers have moved away from using the traditional form of communication to using social media platforms to share information and views, therefore, businesses can use social media platforms to assist their businesses to manage customer relationships (Jain, Kumar, and Rahman, 2017). After discussing the factors influencing each social network system, it was decided to adopt the Honeycomb of Social Media Functionalities as the theoretical framework for this study. Ioanid and Scarlet (2017) made use of the Honeycomb of Social Media Functionalities theory as well in their study. The theoretical framework will explain how each dimension ties in with the literature.

The sixth dimension of the Honeycomb block relates to reputation. Ioanid and Scarlet, (2017) emphasise that this block refers to trust, in particular, the trustworthiness of the business. This dimension assisted the study to uncover the possibility of building a long-lasting relationship, going forward with customers. As the authors point out in the Honeycomb of social media formalities theory, reputation is based on trust and as a researcher, this particular dimension is beneficial to the study.

Kietzmann *et al.*, (2012) explain that the reputation block of the Honeycomb model refers to trust, in particular, the trustworthiness of the business. According to Kietzmann *et al.*, (2012: 110), "reputation is the extent to which users know the current standing of others' content." In this study, the block that is represented by reputation will provide the higher institution an opportunity to build a long-lasting relationship, going forward, with students. The content must always be reliable and trustworthy, fake news can damage the reputation of the business (Best Social Tricks, 2017). Always planning ahead, the feedback and information that businesses (Higher Education Institutions) get from the system and the people on Facebook should be used to improve posts and content, to achieve the reach (Best Social Tricks, 2017). It is also pivotal to always be consistent (Best Social Tricks, 2017). It is good for the business to make use of video views on LinkedIn as customers will be able to gain insight into the business (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2020).

The seventh dimension of the study relates to group. Ioanid and Scarlet, (2017) point out that the block is based on the extent to which users establish communities including hobbies and

interests. This block assisted the study to determine what social platform is most effective when posting on the various platforms. Ioanid and Scarlet (2017) acknowledge that companies can take advantage of groups by promoting events in a group and this will assist the business to target potential customers.

Kietzmann *et al.*, (2012) maintain that the group's block of the Honeycomb model refers to the extent to which consumers can create communities and sub-communities which anyone can access. In this study, the block that is represented by groups refers to the extent to which students create groups via social media platforms and establish communities including hobbies and interests. Students participate in Facebook groups for socialising, entertainment, obtaining information and for one's status as stated by Park, Kee and Valenzuela (as cited in Assimakopoulous, *et al.*, 2017). Instagram uses specific hashtags to attract particular groups (Virtanen, Björk and Sjöström, 2017). While LinkedIn uses targeting capabilities to attract groups. For any business, it is important to attract the right audience (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2020). Twitter uses hashtags and this is unique to the particular social media platform (Ioanid and Scarlet, 2017).

From the discussion of the various dimensions above, it is evident that each of the seven dimensions has its unique features and that gives relevance to this study.

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter of the literature review has illustrated the importance of digital marketing and elaborated on digital marketing in higher education. The digital environment was then discussed, followed by an in-depth discussion about social media. In order for a marketer to use digital marketing and promote higher education using social media platforms, it is important to provide the marketer with knowledge about the types of social media platforms available. The next chapter will discuss the effectiveness of digital marketing in higher education.

CHAPTER THREE

DIGITAL MARKETING IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss and analyse existing literature on the effectiveness of digital marketing in education and will look at how digital marketing addresses the needs of students as well as how customer relationship management can be enhanced in Higher Education. It will also reflect on what previous studies explored in relation to Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM) in Higher Education. This chapter will also provide recent statistics on social media in South Africa. This will assist marketers in the future when choosing a social media platform to market their services.

3.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education exposes future generations to the worldwide network that is based on digital technologies (Grinberga-Zalite, Rivza, Zvirbule and Tihankova, 2019). Lacayo-Mendoza and Pablos- Heredero (2016) point out that higher education institutions make use of digital marketing to meet their recruitment and marketing goals. Grinberga-Zalite *et al.*, (2019) emphasise that the importance of higher education is to utilise the benefits offered by digitalization, which refers to marketing and communication internally.

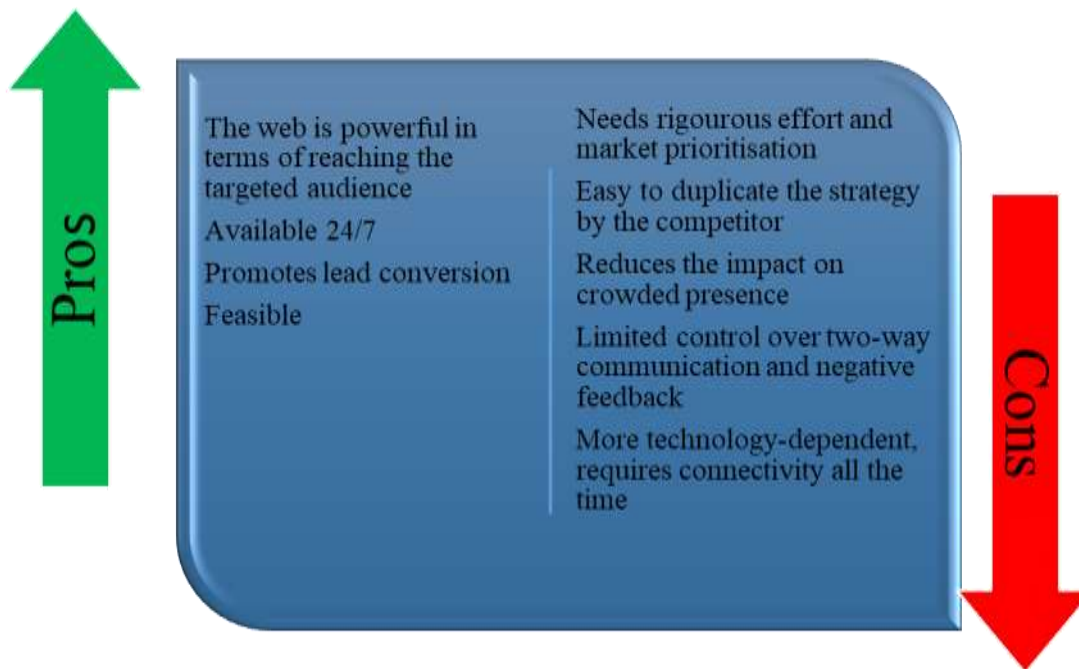
In the study conducted by Grinberga-Zalite *et al.*, (2019), the evaluation of higher education institutions using digital marketing activities was explored.

It was emphasised that higher education institutions must interact on social networks with their target audience as this will improve the effectiveness of digital marketing.

Higher Education Institutions can attract a much larger and diverse number of students using digital marketing (Krishnamoorthy and Srimathi, 2019). According to them, digital marketing is feasible and easy to use. Figure 3.1 illustrates the pros and cons of a digital tool

Figure 3.1:

The pros and cons of a digital tool



Source: Krishnamoorthy and Srimathi, (2019:3326-3329).

3.2.1 ADVANTAGES OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN ADDRESSING STUDENTS' NEEDS

Bala and Verma (2018) discuss eight advantages of digital marketing that attracts customers. In this study our customers are the students. Bala and Verma (2018) discuss the advantages of digital marketing in addressing students' needs, which are as follows:

- **Students stay updated with services:** the technologies of digital marketing allow students to receive recent information and gives the students the convenience of accessing the information from anywhere at any time.
- **Allows for better engagement:** students are able to engage with the higher education institution and its different activities, students can access the institution's website, give feedback and read up information about the services offered.
- **Students are given reliable information about the services:** digital marketing allows students to receive reliable information about the services offered.
- **Students can compare the quality of service with other Higher Education Institutions:** there are several higher education institutions promoting their services via

digital marketing. Students can compare prices and look at the services that other higher education institutions are offering.

- **Digital marketing is convenient:** the internet is available 24 hours and 7 days a week. Therefore, students are able to access information pertaining to the Higher Education Institution at any time of the day. The students do not have to physically go to the institution.
- **Allows to share content:** students can share content about the service with other prospective students via digital marketing.
- **Apparent pricing:** students can view the prices of the courses instantly without picking up the phone to call.
- **Enables instant interest:** students can inquire about the services offered by the higher education institution without physically going to the institution.

To address students' needs, it is important to have an understanding of customer relationship management (CRM) in Higher Education. This will be discussed next.

3.3 CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM) IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Customer relationship management (CRM) consists of processes, technology, and individuals and is looking for the origination of the customers' organisation (Oluseye, Tairat and Emmanuel, 2014). Furthermore, Oluseye *et al.* (2014) state that the core focus of customer relationship management is to recognise and contribute their unique services to all customers. Hrnjic (2016) focused on the CRM concept and its application adequacy in Higher Education and emphasised the importance of creating an effective student learning environment. He further stated that public and private institutions provide higher education services to their students and are faced with financial constraints and looked at students being observed as customers in the educational environment, thus looking at changing from CRM into a student relationship management (SRM).

Wali *et al.*, (2016) acknowledges that prior research in higher education sector looked at evaluating teaching and learning and a minimum amount of information was updated on the evaluation of the effect of customer relationship management system on service quality.

The study looked at six themes which included theme 1: customer experience feedback, theme 2: academic referral, theme 3: service customisation, theme 4: academic performance reward, theme 5: customer relationships and theme 6: economic status. In the study, it was

found that the university had a framework in place to satisfy customers' needs. This made it possible for the university to respond to queries. In their study, it was found that the university benefits from referrals and the university achieves this by understanding the needs of its customers. The university's service customisation is effective in informing students about their services (Wali *et al.*, 2016). Finally, the study found that the university's service customisation strategy upgrade of the CRM system prompted customer advocacy.

In order to understand how to use CRM in higher education, one needs to look at the goals of the CRM concept in higher education institutions. The following aims will assist one to understand the purpose of CRM in higher education institutions according to Hrnjic (2015).

- **Building an inbound and outbound connection with customers (students):** CRM is a great strategy to ensure that customers are satisfied and it increases the loyalty of present students. The CRM concept assists universities to manage longer relationships with their students as stated by Ahmadi, Ibrahim, Nilashni and Osman (2012) (as cited in Hrnjic, 2015).
- **Building customer (student) satisfaction and loyalty:** Customer satisfaction refers to the perceived value of a product that has been received for a service rendered.
- **Increasing customer (student) portfolio:** It is integral that universities create a portfolio of services and this should be included in academic, social, administrative and alumni ventures at the various levels such as undergraduates and graduates. These tools need to be created to merge relationships throughout.
- **Developing a competitive advantage:** Higher education institutions can distinguish themselves from their competitors by managing their relationships with students and by offering excellence in certain areas such as reducing their costs by implementing modern technology and lowering the complexity of the organisation.
- **Retaining old and new customers (students):** Retaining old and new students in the higher education sector is a recruitable business and there are various companies aiming to boost their capability to increase the retention rates in universities as stated by Tinto (2006) (as cited in Hrnjic, 2015).

3.4 STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION USING DIGITAL MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Social media has become an important aspect of a youngster's life (Dhume and Dirsant, 2020). Neier and Zayer (2015) acknowledge studies that have looked at the opportunities associated with the use of social media tools in the classroom and have not studied the perceptions of social media as an effective pedagogical tool. The study focused on students' perceptions and experiences of social media in higher education. In their study, it was found that students' understanding of microblogging was low.

Additionally, the study suggested that students do not have a full understanding of social media tools and the information gathered showed students' eagerness to make use of the different categories of social media. Dhume and Dirsant (2020) focused on social media usage and looked at the factors influencing academic use. Furthermore, the study found that social media plays an important role in ensuring that academic awareness is created among the students so that they are aware of the available job perspectives.

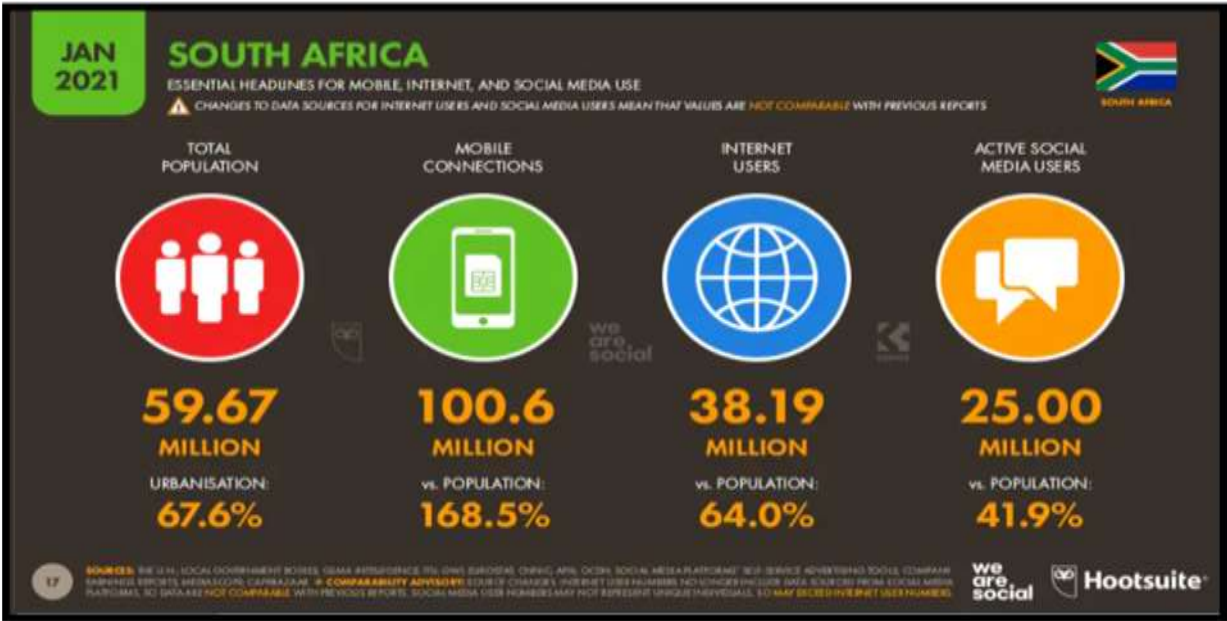
In the next section, social media in South Africa will be discussed.

3.5 SOCIAL MEDIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

According to Budree, Fietkiewicz and Lins (2019), the usage rate of South Africans making use of social media continues to increase (as cited by Worldwide Worx, 2016). Budree *et al.*, (2019) mentions South Africa as one of the countries on the continent that has the most users using social networking (as cited by UNICEF, 2012).

In 2021, as shown in Figure 3.2 with a population of 59.67 million, this figure has grown dramatically to 168% (100.6 million) users in South Africa which is an increase by 1.7 million (Hootsuite, 2021:17).

Figure 3.2: Mobile, Internet and Social Media Use in South Africa, (Hootsuite, 2021:17).



Source: (Hootsuite, 2021:17).

Figure 3.3 shows the annual digital growth in South Africa. The total population growth from January 2020 to January 2021 is +1.3% (+741 thousand), +0.8% (+817 thousand) more users connected to mobile connections. The internet users increased to +4.5% (+1.7 million) and + 13.6% (+3.0 million) more users became active on social media (Hootsuite, 2021:18).

Figure 3.3: Annual Digital Growth of users in South Africa, 2021 (Hootsuite, 2021:18).



Source: (Hootsuite, 2021:18).

Figure 3.4 shows the daily time spent on the social media by South Africans, 10 hours and 6 minutes are spent on using the internet.

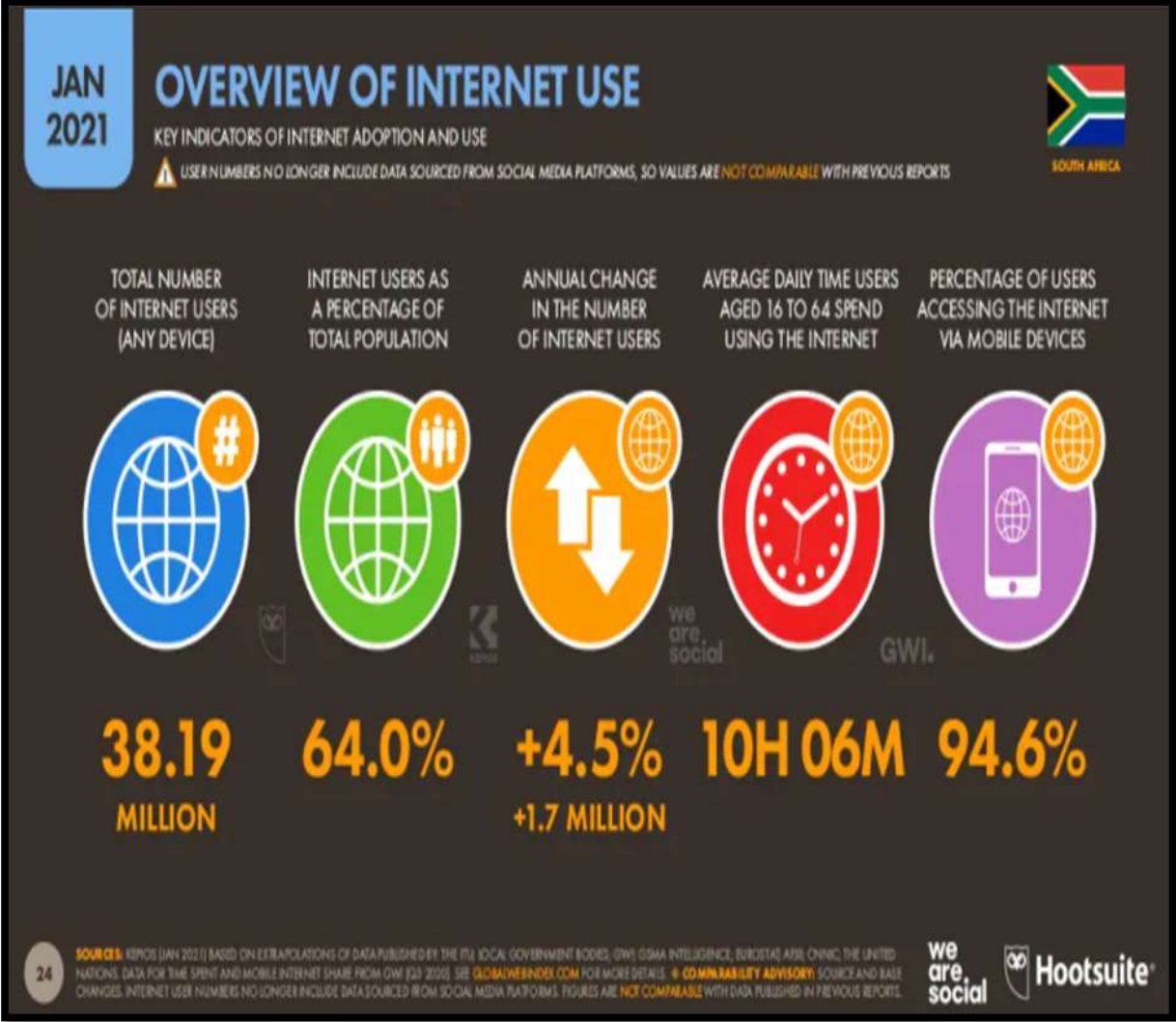
Figure 3.4: Daily Time spent on media in South Africa 2021 (Hootsuite, 2021:22).



Source: (Hootsuite, 2021:22).

Figure 3.5 shows that the total number of internet users on any device is 38.19 million, 64% of internet users make up a percentage of the total population. There has been a substantial increase in the number of internet users by + 4.5% (+ 1.7 million). The daily users spend 10 hours and 6 minutes using the internet, 94.6% of users access the internet using their mobile devices (Hootsuite, 2021:24).

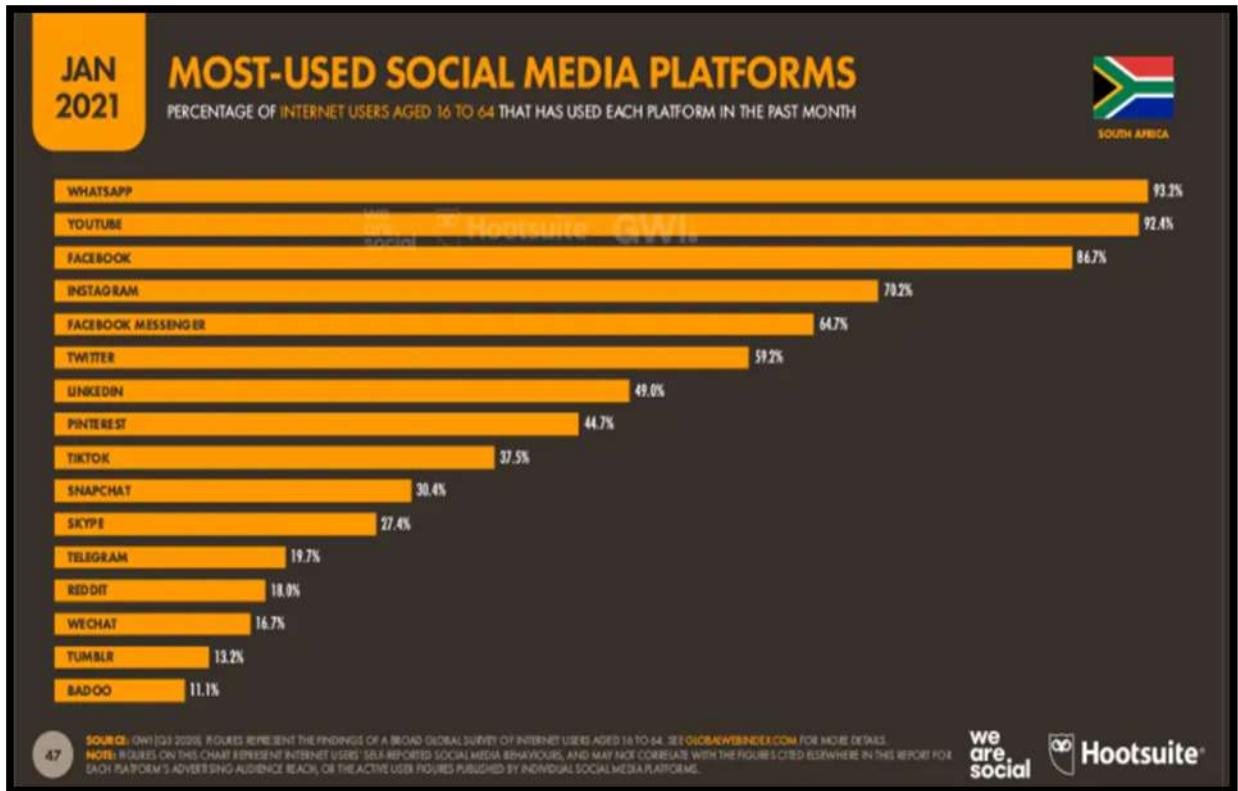
Figure 3.5: Overview of how South African internet users use the internet (Hootsuite, 2021:24).



Source: (Hootsuite, 2021:24).

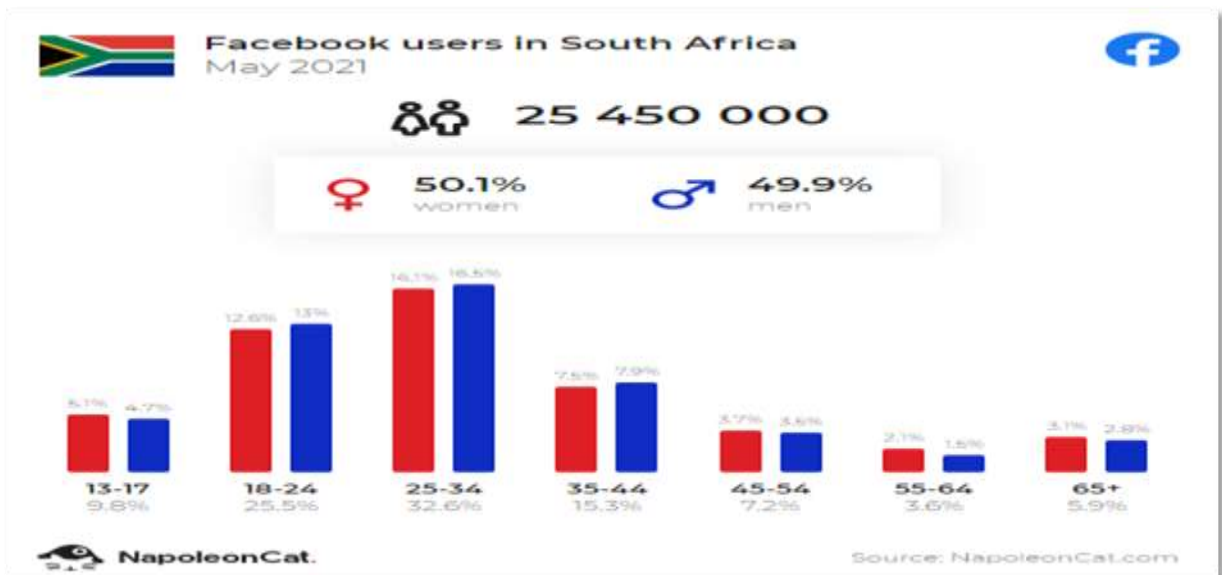
The following graph shows South Africa’s most-used social media platforms, WhatsApp is the most used social media platform, Facebook is the third, Instagram is the sixth and Twitter is the seventh social media platform that is used in South Africa (Hootsuite, 2021:47).

Figure 3.6 : Overview of how South African internet users use the internet (Hootsuite, 2021:24).



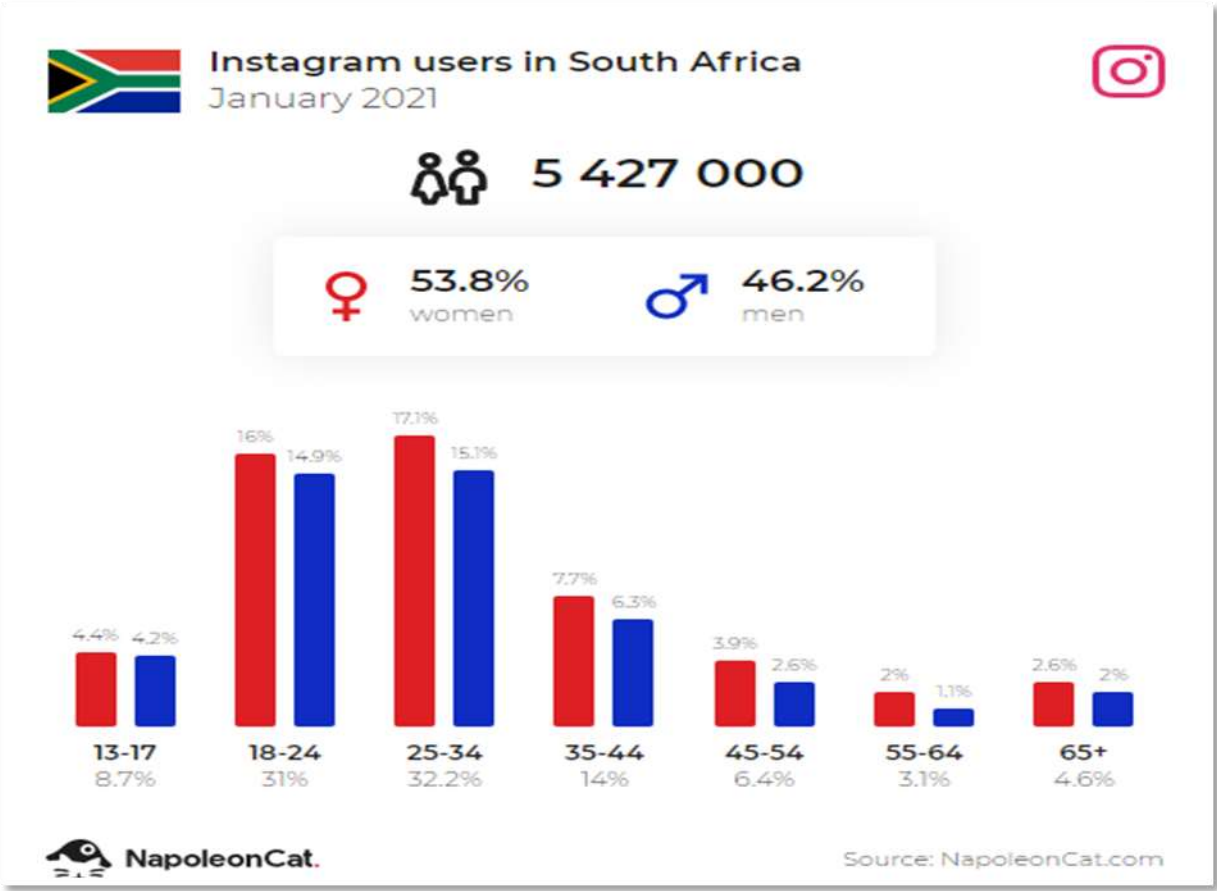
Source:(Hootsuite, 2021:24).

Figure 3.7 : Facebook’s South African Users, 2021 (Napoleancat, 2021).



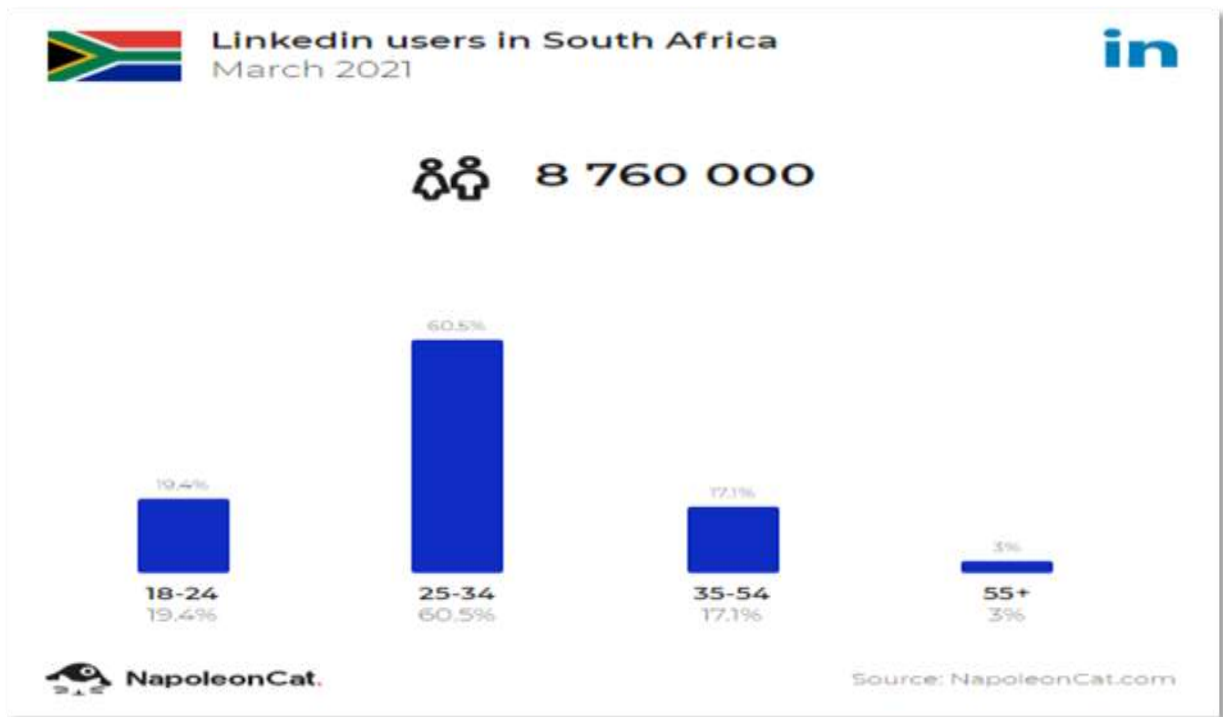
Source:(Napoleoncat, 2021)

Figure 3.8 : Instagram’s South African Users, 2021 (Napoleoncat, 2021).



Source: (Napoleoncat, 2021).

Figure 3.9 : LinkedIn’s South African Users, 2021 (Napoleancat, 2021).



Source: (Napoleoncat, 2021).

These statistics show that Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are commonly used in South Africa. It will be interesting to establish which of these social media platforms are mostly used by students in Higher Education Institutions.

3.6 CONCLUSION

It is important for marketers to have an understanding of digital marketing and its advantages. In this way, the marketers will be able to satisfy the customers’ (students’) needs. Lastly, marketers need to be knowledgeable about the role of customer relationship management in Higher Education.

The following chapter will discuss the research methodology that was used in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The methodology section assists the reader to understand how the researcher plans to answer the research question (Struwig and Stead, 2013). Research methodology refers to the path researchers take to conduct their study (Sileyew, 2019). Research methodology is referred to as the systematic process of solving a problem (Sahu, 2013). Struwig and Stead (2013) explain that there are three examples of methodology structures and these include empirical research methodology, emergent research designs (which is more exploratory) and lastly, there is the literature-based research (which reviews current research). Empirical research methodology refers to data-driven research, adopting this methodology structure entails collecting and analysing data (Struwig and Stead, 2013). This chapter entails a discussion of the research methodology used throughout the study. The chapter will rationalise the choice of the research design for the study. Furthermore, the sample techniques and the data collection methods will be discussed.

4.2.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary research objective is: To explore the efficacy of digital marketing in promoting higher education institutions using social media platforms.

The sub-research questions which stem from the primary research question are:

1. To examine the effectiveness of digital marketing in addressing the needs of students.
2. To explore student perceptions about the efficacy of higher education institutions that have an online presence on social media.
3. To examine student perceptions of branding, service delivery and customer relationship among higher education institutions that have an online presence.
4. To investigate if there are any digital communication preferences of students when interfacing with higher education institutions.

4.2.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is to explore the efficacy of digital marketing in promoting Higher Education using social media platforms.

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question is: Is digital marketing an effective method of promoting higher education using social media platforms?

The research questions underpinning this study are as follows:

1. How effective is digital marketing in addressing the needs of students?
2. What are the student's perceptions about the efficacy of higher education institutions that have an online presence on social media?
3. What effect does interacting with institutions with an online presence have on student perceptions in terms of branding, service delivery and customer relationships?
4. Are there any digital communication preferences of students when interfacing with higher education institutions?

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is referred to as a plan that is used to collect, measure, and analyse the data that is used to answer the researcher's question (Sekaran and Bougie, 2014).

4.4.1 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Empirical research is used to explore new ideas and concepts about the hypothesis, empirical evidence, and conceptual models (Habib, Pathnik and Maryam, 2014). The aim of empirical research is to provide researchers with sufficient information and assist them by creating a hypothesis about the subject Habib *et al.*, (2014). The hypothesis is then used as the research problem or issue when there are very few or no studies to which reference to the data about the problem or issue can be made (Habib *et al.*, (2014). In empirical research, conclusions that are extracted are built from solid evidence which is put together from the data collected, observations and real-life experiences (Kumar, 2011).

Patten and Newhart (2017) explain that the empirical approach is used by researchers to avoid poor interpretation and to ensure results are reliable. In this study, the researcher's main aim was to explore the efficacy of digital marketing in promoting Higher Education using social media platforms and it is therefore important to ensure that the results are interpreted correctly so that the study produces reliable results. According to Patten and Newhart (2017), the researcher needs to ask the following questions when adopting the empirical approach;

- Why do they want to make observations?

- How to observe?
- When to observe?
- Whom do they want to observe?

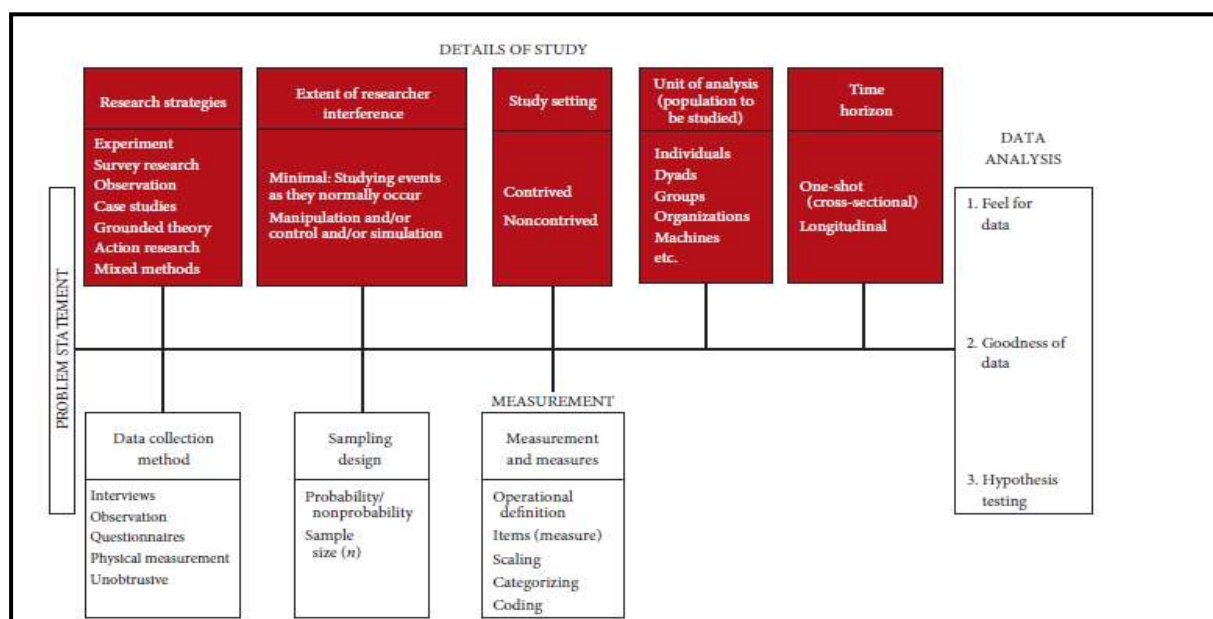
In the study, the questions above were used and this assisted the researcher to test the phenomenon, which is to explore the efficacy of digital marketing in promoting Higher Education using social media platforms by focusing on a particular sample group and directing relevant questions to the participants in Higher Education. The questionnaire was used to address the questions and it was decided by the researcher that the students from year 1 to year 4 will be the participants in the study.

In the empirical approach, researchers construct a design, collect data in a structured way, record the data that is collected, analyse the data, and finally report the results (Patten and Newhart, 2017). In this study, the researcher created a research design, collected the data in a structured way, documented their data collection, analysed the data and finally, reported the results. Therefore, the researcher found that the empirical approach was best suited for this study.

In this study, an empirical research design was thus used to address the research aim of exploring the efficacy of digital marketing by focusing on social media and to explore more knowledge about the research topic.

Figure 4.1 shows that each detail of the research design provides many choices and the quality of the research design is dependent on how the researcher selects the design alternatives (Sekaran and Bougie, 2014).

Figure 4.1: The research design



Source: Sekaran, U and Bougie, R. (2014) *Research Methods for Business: A Skilled-Building Approach*. John Wiley and Sons Ltd, West Sussex, UK.

4.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

“There are three approaches to research, namely, quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods” (Creswell and Creswell, 2018:3). Quantitative research is a systematic and objective process that uses numerical data from a particular subgroup or population (Clark, Creswell, Ebersöhn, Eloff, Ferreira, Ivankova, Jansen, Nieuwenhuis, Pietersen, 2016).

There are many differences between qualitative and quantitative research. Kumar (2011) highlighted ten differences in his book. However, for this study, five differences are depicted as these differences highlighted the key factors that assisted the researcher in deciding which approach to adopt.

Table 4.1: Differences between qualitative and quantitative research

Differences between the two types of research	Quantitative	Qualitative
Sample Size	Accommodates a larger sample size	Accommodates a small sample size
Focus of the enquiry	The focus of the enquiry is narrowed; however, this type of research allows for more respondents to participate in the research and therefore, more information is collected	The focus of the enquiry is broad; however, this type of research is limited to a few respondents, therefore, the information gathered from respondents is fewer
Dominant research value	Reliability and validity (value-free)	Authentic, however not value-free
Dominant research topic	Explains prevalence, opinions and attitude and formulates theories	Explores perceptions and feelings
Communication of findings	Tests magnitude and strength of a relationship	Descriptive and narrative

Source: Kumar, R. (2011). *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners*. Sage.

Table 4.1 shows a difference between quantitative and qualitative research and looking at the table, quantitative research is considered to be more appropriate for this study. In this research, the researcher asks specific questions and asks many respondents to participate in the research which means that the sample size is large and therefore, there is a considerable amount of data that will need to be analysed. Quantitative research provides researchers with a quick and simple way to measure and analyse considerable amounts of data (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Therefore, the researcher adopted the quantitative approach for this research study.

4.6 STUDY SITE

The study site for this research was Durban Kwa-Zulu-Natal within a private tertiary institution. The Higher Education Faculty consists of students from the following provinces: Kwazulu-Natal which consists of one campus and Gauteng, which has two campuses. This study, however, was confined to the Durban campus only.

4.7 TARGET POPULATION

In this study, the target population included all registered students from the Durban campus only, which comprised the following programmes: Bachelor of Foundation Phase, Bachelor of Intermediate Phase, Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education and Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education (Intermediate Phase Access). Since the research was focused on the Education faculty and the faculty consists of multiple programmes, it was decided by the researcher to select the sample for the study from the above programmes. The motivation for confining the sample to the Education Faculty only, by the researcher, was because these students have been at the institution for a period ranging from one to four years. Sekaran and Bougie (2014) stipulate a population to sample size table and this table was used in the study in determining the sample size from a given population.

Table 4.2 outlines the enrolment figures of students registered at the Higher Education: Education Faculty for 2021.

Table 4.2: Higher Education: School of Education, Institutional Reports: Student Registration per programme for Durban campus (2021).

Durban Campus: School of Education 2021 Registration Statistics					
Programme	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Total students registered
Bachelor in Foundation Phase *Four-year duration	49	97	83	117	346
Bachelor in Intermediate Phase *Four-year duration	103	159	150	107	519
Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education *Yearly course	69	N/A	N/A	N/A	69
Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education (Intermediate Phase Access) *Yearly course	73	N/A	N/A	N/A	73
Total	294	256	233	224	1007

Accessed via Shared point: 30th June 2021 (Higher Education: School of Education).

4.8 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

There are various sampling techniques (Salkind, 2012). Sampling methods have been categorised into probability and non-probability sampling techniques (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Non-probability sampling and probability sampling techniques will be discussed next.

4.8.1 NON-PROBABILITY

In non-probability sampling designs, the components in the population have very little chance of being selected as sample subjects (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). They further identified the following non-probability sampling techniques:

4.8.1.1 Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling refers to information that is collected from the available population due to convenience (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). An advantage associated with this design is that this sampling technique assists the researcher to get basic information quickly and efficiently (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

4.8.1.2 Judgment sampling

This type of sampling technique chooses subjects based on their expertise and their interest and is used when few people in a category have the information that is needed (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Kumar (2011) mentions that the researcher will select the sample based on his/her judgment.

4.8.1.3 Quota sampling

Quota sampling enables the researcher to access the sampling population and the population has different characteristics that the researcher is guided by, such as race, or gender (Kumar, 2011). Quota sampling is a form of proportionate stratified sampling and in this sampling design, a pre-planned proportion of people from various groups are sampled, this is done via convenience (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). One advantage of the quota sampling design is that it is a feasible way to select a sample as very little information is needed such as the location, sampling frame, and total number of elements, just to name a few (Kumar, 2011).

Kumar (2014) identified snowball sampling as one of the non-probability sampling techniques and this will be discussed in the next section.

4.8.1.4 Snowball sampling

This sampling technique selects the sample by using networks and it involves the subjects referring people from the group to gain more subjects (Kumar, 2011). An advantage associated with this sampling technique is that the researcher does not have to contact many people (Kumar, 2011).

4.9.1 PROBABILITY SAMPLING

The other sampling technique is probability sampling. In probability sampling, each respondent has a known and fair chance of being selected as a sample (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Sekaran and Bougie (2016) have identified the following probability sampling techniques:

4.9.1.1 Systematic sampling

In systematic sampling, elements are drawn systematically, every n th element in the population from between and n (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Kumar, (2011) emphasises that systematic sampling involves choosing a sample, where the samples are divided into segments these are referred to as intervals.

4.9.1.2 Stratified sampling

This technique uses stratification or segregation than choosing individuals randomly from each group (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). In this technique, the population is broken into similar groups. The stratified sampling method can be proportionate or disproportionate, disproportionate sampling takes place when the stratum or strata is very small or very large (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). According to Kumar (2014:186), “the number of elements from each stratum in relation to its proportion in the total population is selected.”

4.9.1.3 Cluster sampling

In this sampling technique, the target population gets divided into clusters (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). In cluster sampling the sampling population gets divided into groups by the researcher, these can be formed either by a common characteristic or geographic proximity (Kumar, 2011). Area sampling is a type of cluster sampling, and the cluster is made up of geographic sectors such as cities and towns (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

4.9.1.4 Double sampling

This type of sampling technique is used when further information is required from the actual sample and this involves gathering information from the same sample twice (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Table 5.3 depicts the advantages and disadvantages associated with the different sampling strategies.

Table 4.3
Sampling strategies and their advantages and disadvantages

Type of Sampling	When to use it	Advantages	Disadvantages
<u>Probability Strategies</u>			
Simple Random Sampling	When the population members are similar to one another on important variables	Ensures a high degree of representativeness	Takes up time and is monotonous
Systematic Sampling	When the population members are similar to one another on important variables	Ensures a high degree of representativeness, and no need to use a table of random numbers	Less random than simple random sampling
Stratified Random Sampling	When the population is heterogeneous and contains several different groups, some of which are related to the topic of the study	Ensures a high degree of representativeness of all the strata or layers in the population	Takes up time and is monotonous
Cluster Sampling	When the population consists of units rather than individuals	Easy and convenient	Possibly, members of units are different from one another, decreasing the technique's effectiveness

<u>Non-Probability Sampling</u>			
Convenience Sampling	When the members of the population are convenient to sample	Convenient and affordable	Degree of generalizability is questionable
Quota Sampling	When strata are present and stratified sampling is not possible	Ensures some degree of representativeness of all the strata in the population	Degree of generalizability is questionable

Cheang, M. (n.d). Sampling Strategies and their Advantages and Disadvantages. Available: <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~cheang/Sampling%20Strategies%20and%20their%20Advantages%20and%20Disadvantages.htm> [Accessed 18 January 2022].

The researcher adopted convenience sampling when selecting the sample and quota sampling to ensure that some degree of representativeness of all the strata in the population is represented.

4.10 SAMPLE SIZE

Table 4.4 shows the populations and the sample size that is suitable for each sample.

Table 4.4

Sample size table

Table for Determining Sample Size from a Given Population					
<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	100000	384

N is population size.
S is sample size.

Source: Sekaran, U and Bougie, R. (2014) Research Methods for Business: A Skilled-Building Approach. John Wiley and Sons Ltd, West Sussex, UK.

As per table 4.4, quota sampling was used and the appropriate sample size for this research was 280 students who were proportionately distributed between the various programmes based on the percentage of registered students. Based on the calculations, 105 subjects were selected from the Bachelor in Foundation Phase programme, 100 from the Bachelor in Intermediate Phase, 37 from the Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education and 38 from the Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education (Intermediate Phase access). The convenience sampling method was used to select students, thereafter, the sample was proportionally allocated using quota sampling.

A brief summary of the respondents' biographical variables will now be clarified.

Gender

According to the research findings, only 37 males answered the questionnaire, therefore, **16.5%** of males contributed to the study and 187 females answered the questionnaire which accounted for **83.5%** of the target population.

Race

According to the findings, most of the respondents are Indians, as 132 took part in the questionnaire which represents **(58.9%)** of the sample. The second highest group of respondents are Africans with 28 respondents **(12.5%)**, followed by Coloureds with 26 respondents **(11.6%)**. White respondents had the lowest percentage with 19 respondents **(8.5%)**, while 19 respondents did not indicate what racial group they belonged to **(8.5%)**.

Age

The majority of respondents were from the 18-25 years age category with 201 respondents **(89.7%)**. The 25 and above age category only had 23 respondents **(10.3%)**.

Programme of the study

According to the findings, 122 respondents registered for the Bachelor in Intermediate Phase **(54.5%)**, whereas 81 respondents registered for the Bachelor in Foundation Phase **(36.2%)**. There were 12 respondents registered for the Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education (Intermediate Phase Access) and 9 respondents from the Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education accounted for **5.4%** and **4%**, respectively.

Level of study

The majority of respondents in this study were fourth-year students, this consisted of 84 respondents **(37.5%)**, followed by third-year students who consisted of 65 respondents **(29%)** and first-year students who consisted of 40 respondents **(17.9%)**. The results further indicated that students enrolled for the second year consisted of 35 respondents **(15.6%)** of the sample.

Table 4.5

Proportionate allocation of sample (per programme) based on higher education: School of Education Student Registration Figures (Durban Campus) for 2021.

*(Figures rounded off)

Programme	Registered student numbers	Registered student percentages	Sample Proportion
Bachelor in foundation phase	346	34%	105*
Bachelor in intermediate phase	519	52%	100*
Higher certificate in pre-school education	69	7%	37*
Higher certificate in pre-school education (intermediate phase access)	73	7%	38*
Total	1007	100%	280

The sample of 280 students was distributed proportionately between the various programmes based on the percentage of registered students per programme. Based on the calculations, 105 subjects were selected from the Bachelor in Foundation Phase programme, 100 students were selected from the Bachelor in Intermediate Phase, 37 students were selected from the Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education, and 38 students were selected from the Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education (Intermediate Phase access).

4.11 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Questionnaires are a set of focused questions (Salkind, 2012). According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), questionnaires are outlined to gather quantitative data that consists of great quantities. Questionnaires can be distributed to participants who have responded via email, personally, or electronically (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Questionnaires save time as individuals can complete them without being personally administered (Salkind, 2012).

Questionnaires are a feasible research instrument (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). For this study, questionnaires were electronically administered to students from the Durban campus. A link to the online questionnaire as well as the Letter of Informed Consent was accessible to the students via the Higher Education Notices that were emailed to their student email accounts. After the sample of students was selected, a letter was sent to the Higher Education Institution requesting permission to obtain the student email addresses of those students registered in the Education Faculty.

Once the email addresses had been obtained, an email was sent to students, requesting them to participate in the study. Details of the study were elucidated in the letter of informed consent. Once students consented to participate and signed the informed consent letter, they were immediately sent a link to access the online questionnaire via google forms. Section A of the questionnaire used a nominal scale. Nominal scales are used for labelling variables without any quantitative value and focused on biographical details. Section A focused on the biographical information of the participants. Sections B, C and D utilised an ordinal scale. Ordinal scales are typically used for measuring non-numeric concepts. These sections had statements to which the participants agreed or disagreed by using the measures provided. A 5-point Likert scale was used with five options ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Closed-ended questions were used in this study as it gives a choice of alternative answers from which the respondents were asked to select responses. Questionnaires have various advantages, namely, low cost and are less time-consuming.

4.12 DATA QUALITY CONTROL

Researchers are responsible for ensuring that the facts are recorded during the data collection this includes an accurate recording of all participant's responses. It is important that the data is reliable and valid. In this study, attention will be focused on validity and reliability.

4.12.1 VALIDITY

Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 220) defined validity as “a test of how well an instrument that is developed measures the particular concept it is intended to measure”. Content validity was used in this study. Content validity examines the questions of a research instrument and shows the extent of coverage of areas under study (Kumar, 2011). According to Salkind (2012), factor analysis is an advanced technique that enables the researcher to limit the

number of variables that represents a construct and adapts factor scores as a variable. The validity was tested using Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha.

4.12.2 RELIABILITY

Reliability was measured by Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha, this is the method used for measuring the instrument's internal consistency (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The questionnaire was subjected to the Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha test.

4.12.3 PILOT TESTING

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), pilot testing assists the researcher to incorporate changes to the instrument, this measured content validity. For this study, a pilot test consisted of 10 participants who were requested to test the instrument. The 10 participants were randomly selected by the administrator of the higher education institution to ensure that the students were anonymous this was done before sending out the links to the survey. In the test survey a section was added to allow students to add comments related to the survey. Looking at that section it was clear that no changes needed to be implemented to the survey as, all 10 participants stated, "no further comments or all questions are clear" therefore no changes were implemented to the questionnaire based on the feedback received from the participants.

This was done to assist the researcher in identifying statements that were misleading, ambiguous, or unclear and to detect if there were any other glitches with the questionnaire.

4.13 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2014:182), data analysis is defined as "the process of studying the information obtained". The raw data were coded in Microsoft excel and was then analysed using SPSS.

4.13.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Salkind (2012:162) stated that "describing the analysis of data is the first step." According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), descriptive statistics refers to statistics such as standard deviation, mean and frequencies, these provide descriptive information regarding the position of data. Descriptive statistics assisted the researcher to describe the basic features of the study.

4.13.1.1 FREQUENCIES

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016:279), frequencies are described as “the number of times various subcategories of certain phenomenon occur, from which the percentage and the cumulative percentage of their occurrence can be easily calculated”. Frequencies can be depicted in the form of histograms, bar charts and pie charts and this will assist one in visually understanding the data (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). The researcher made use of bar charts and pie charts and interpreted the data visually.

4.13.1.2 MEASURES OF CENTRAL TENDENCY

According to Salkind (2012), measures of central tendency consist of three types of averages which are: the mean, the median, and the mode. Creswell *et al.*, (2016:208) define the mean as being the average of all numbers. The median is the middle number in a sequence of numbers (Creswell, *et al.*, 2016). The mode refers to the score that is used often (Salkind, 2012). These measures of central tendency were used by the researcher in this study to summarise the sample by using a single typical value.

4.13.1.3 MEASURES OF DISPERSION

The variance, range and standard deviation are measures of dispersion (Salkind, 2012). Creswell *et al.*, (2016:209) define variance “as a measure that quantifies the amount of spread data values around their mean.” According to Salkind (2012:166), “the larger the standard deviation, the more variable the set of scores.” Salkind (2012) defines range as the difference between the highest and lowest scores in a distribution. The measures of central tendency were used by the researcher in this study to describe the variability in the sample

4.13.2 INFERENCE STATISTICS

Salkind (2012:394) defines inferential statistics as “procedures that allow for inferences to be made from a sample to the population from which the sample was drawn”. Inferential statistics assisted the researcher to draw conclusions about the population from a sample.

4.13.2.1 PEARSON CORRELATION

According to Creswell *et al.*, (2016:264) correlation coefficient, can be defined “as the measure of the strength of the linear relationship that exists in the middle of two quantitative variables.” If all the points are close to the straight line, this is considered a linear

relationship, and this is a positive relationship and a negative relationship exists when values are close to zero (Creswell, *et al.*, 2016). Pearson correlation was used in this study.

4.13.2.2 T-TEST

In an inferential test where there are two means which are two independent variables and the groups are unrelated, then T-tests are used (Salkind, 2012). The Mann-Whitney U-test is used to compare the mean ranks or dimension between male and female participants among the variables of this study. The results of the Mann-Whitney U-test for this study indicates significant differences with regards to the variables at the 95% level ($p < 0.05$). The Mann-Whitney U-test is used in this study to compare differences between the independent groups that come from the same population and is used to test if two population means are equal or not. The Mann-Whitney U-test is a non-parametric test (Statistics Solutions, 2022).

4.14.4 ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE (ANOVA)

The groups that have different average scores are tested by Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), which uses the F-test to find differences (Creswell *et al.*, 2016). In this study Kruskal -Wallis ANOVA was used to make comparisons of mean ranks of all dimensions between the various biographical categories that were included in the research instrument.

4.14.5 REGRESSION ANALYSIS

This technique can be used in situations where there is an interest in examining relationships between variables, regression analysis needs a single quantitative dependent variable and one or more independent variables (Creswell *et al.*, 2016). In this study regression analysis was used.

In this study, inferential and descriptive statistics, narrative, tabular, and graphical formats were used. This will enable the reader to gain an overall description of the study. Inferential statistics were used as this assisted to go beyond the current data.

4.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

A letter was addressed to the Head of the Institution stating the nature and purpose of the study. They were informed that participation was voluntary, the name of the institution and its participants will not be revealed, this ensures that the researcher conforms with the gatekeeper's letter, and that confidentiality is guaranteed. The gatekeeper's permission letter was obtained via email, subject to a few conditions to which the supervisor and the researcher

have acceded. The institution wishes to be granted access to the findings and recommendations of the study upon completion of the thesis to assist them with the possible implementation of the recommendations.

Letters of Informed Consent to participants accompanied each questionnaire and specifying what the study was about. Students were made aware that their participation in the research study was voluntary and that there will be no payment or reward. Participants were made aware that they could leave the study at any point in time and there will be no repercussions, should they wish to do so. In this study, the participants' privacy was respected by not mentioning the participants' names on the research reports or questionnaires. As the study was administered online, only if participants consented to be a part of the study and signed the informed consent letters were they directed to a link granting them access to the online questionnaire.

The data that was received from participants will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be used for any other purposes besides this research study. All digital and physical data will be safely stored in compliance with the University's Ethical policy on data capturing and storage.

4.16 CONCLUSION

In this study, inferential and descriptive statistics, narrative, tabular, and graphical formats were used. This will enable the reader to gain an overall description of the study. Inferential statistics were used as this assisted to go beyond the current data. Descriptive and inferential studies were used by the researcher so that the data from the questionnaires could be studied. In this chapter, descriptive and inferential studies were discussed. Additionally, the importance of reliability and validity were outlined. The next chapter will look at data analysis and the results will be analysed in-depth.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The results of the research project are reported in this chapter. The researcher employed both inferential and descriptive statistics to analyse the data. Narrative, tabular, and graphical formats are used to present the data. The data from the sample was first entered into Microsoft Excel 2016 and then processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 27. Pie charts and tables were used to present the data. The following is how the data is presented in relation to the research objectives and related research questions.

The primary research question is:

Is digital marketing an effective method of promoting higher education using social media platforms?

The sub-research questions which stem from the primary research question are:

1. To examine the effectiveness of digital marketing in addressing the needs of students.
2. To explore students' perceptions about the efficacy of higher education institutions that have an online presence on social media.
3. To examine students' perceptions of branding, service delivery and customer relationship among higher education institutions that have an online presence.
4. To investigate if there are any digital communication preferences of students when interfacing with higher education institutions.

5.2 The Sample

In total, over 280 questionnaires were sent out to students and 224 were completed, which gave **80%** response rate. The students consisted of contact learning students only, these were first-year to fourth-year undergraduate students.

5.3 The Research Instrument

The research instrument consisted of 78 items with a level of measurement at a nominal or an ordinal level. The questionnaire was divided into 5 sections which measured various themes as depicted below:

Section A: Demographics

Section B: Effectiveness of digital marketing

Section C: Impact of digital marketing in Higher Education through social media

Section D: Effectiveness of social media

Section E: Prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media

5.4 Results of the study

The results of the study will be presented using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

5.4.1 Descriptive statistics: Biographical Variables

This section analyses the biographical characteristics of the respondents. In this study, frequencies and percentages have been used to outline the biographical variables from which 224 respondents are outlined in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Frequency distribution of biographical variables

		<i>n</i>	%
<i>Gender</i>	Male	37	16,5%
	Female	187	83,5%
	Total	224	100%
<i>Race</i>	African	28	12,5%
	Coloured	26	11,6%
	Indian	132	58,9%
	White	19	8,5%
	N/A	19	8,5%
	Total	224	100%
<i>Age</i>	18-25 years	201	89,7%
	25 years and over	23	10,3%
	Total	224	100%
<i>Programme of the study</i>	Bachelor in Foundation Phase	81	36,2%
	Bachelor in Intermediate Phase	122	54,5%
	Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education	9	4%
	Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education (Intermediate Phase Access)	12	5,4%
	Total	224	100%

<i>Level of study</i>	First year	40	17,9%
	Second year	35	15,6%
	Third year	65	29%
	Fourth year	84	37,5%
	Total	224	100%

Gender, age, race, programme of study, and level of study were some of the biographical information, as shown in Table 5.1.

5.4.1.1 Gender

As illustrated in Table 5.1, 187 respondents were females which consisted of a greater percentage (**83.5%**) in comparison to the 37 males who comprised **16.5%** of the participants. The gender proportions of the 224 respondents in this study are depicted in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1.
Composition of Sample: Gender

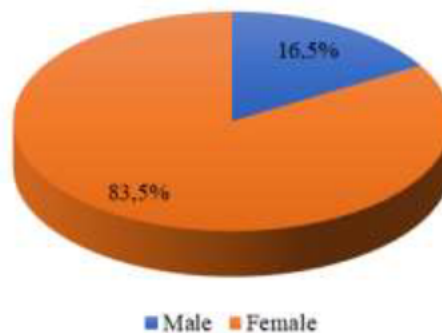
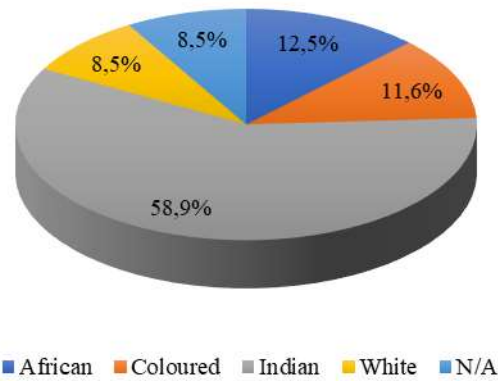


Figure 5.1 represents the gender composition of the sample used in the study. It is evident from the figure that the majority of the respondents were females (**83.5%**) whereas, **16.5%** of the respondents were male.

5.4.1.2 Race

Figure 5.2 provides a graphical depiction of the percentages of respondents from the various race groups of the study.

Figure 5.2
Composition of Sample: Race



As seen in **Figure 5.2**, the sample of this study included respondents from four race groups. Indians constituted the highest proportion with 132 respondents (**58.9%**). The second highest group of respondents was Africans with 28 respondents (**12.5%**), followed by Coloureds with 26 respondents (**11.6%**). White respondents had the lowest percentage with 19 respondents (**8.5%**), while 19 respondents did not indicate what racial group they belonged to (**8.5%**).

5.4.1.3 Age

Figure 5.3 illustrates the percentages of respondents by age categories in a graphical representation.

Figure 5.3
Composition of Sample: Age

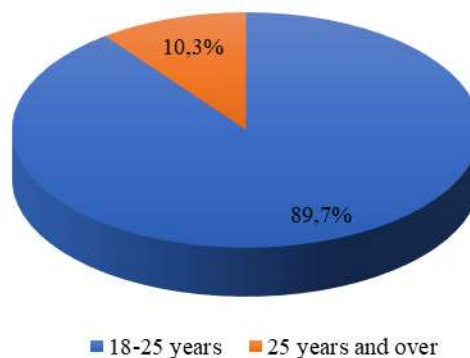


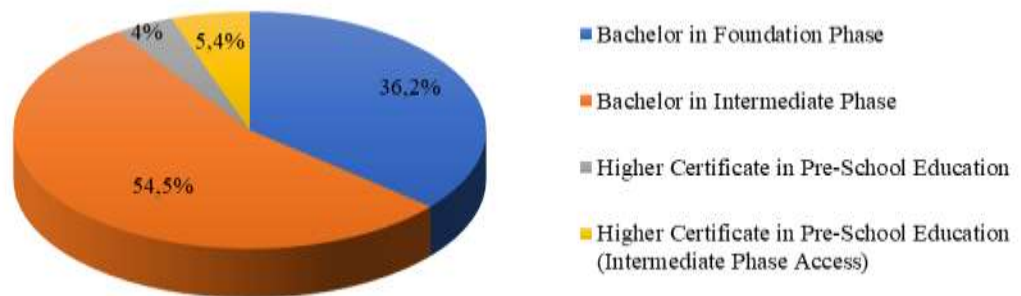
Figure 5.3 illustrates that the highest proportions of respondents were from the 18-25 years age category with 201 respondents (**89.7%**). The 25 and above age category only had 23 respondents (**10.3%**).

5.4.1.4 Programme of the study

A graphical representation of the study programme is illustrated in **Figure 5.4**.

Figure 5.4

Composition of Sample: Programme of the study



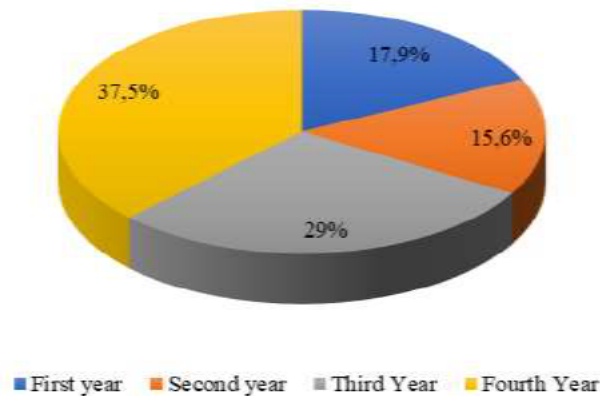
As seen in **Figure 5.4**, the results indicate that 122 respondents registered for the Bachelor in Intermediate Phase (**54.5%**), whereas 81 respondents registered for the Bachelor in Foundation Phase (**36.2%**). There were 12 respondents registered for the Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education (Intermediate Phase Access) and 9 respondents were registered for the Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education accounting for **5.4%** and **4%**, respectively.

5.4.1.5 Level of study

Figure 5.5 depicts a graphical illustration of the respondents' level of study.

Figure 5.5

Composition of Sample: Level of study



According to **Figure 5.5**, 84 respondents in this study were fourth-year students, which made up the majority of the study (**37.5%**), followed by third-year students which consisted of 65 respondents (**29%**) and first-year students which consisted of 40 respondents (**17.9%**). The results further indicated that students enrolled for the second year constituted 35 respondents (**15.6%**) of the sample.

5.5 Descriptive statistics: Key dimensions of digital marketing in promoting efficacy

The key dimensions of digital marketing that promote efficacy in Higher Education Institutions are presented in Table 5.2. The greater the mean score, the better the dimension is viewed (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2

Descriptive Statistics: Key dimensions of Digital Marketing

<i>Key Dimensions of the Study</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>Effectiveness of Digital marketing</i>	1,000	5,000	3,680	0,707
<i>Impact of Digital Marketing in Higher Education Through Social Media</i>	1,000	5,000	3,613	0,614
<i>Effectiveness of social media</i>	1,000	5,000	3,591	0,624
<i>Prevalence, Frequency and Purpose of Social Media</i>	1,000	5,000	3,244	0,532

Table 5.2 indicates that Higher Education students attach varying degrees of importance to the key dimensions of the study which, in descending level of mean score values are:

- Effectiveness of Digital Marketing (Mean =3,680)
- Impact of Digital Marketing in Higher Education Through Social Media (Mean = 3,613)
- Effectiveness of social media (Mean = 3,591)
- Prevalence, Frequency and Purpose of Social Media (Mean = 3,244)

Respondents that participated in this study attach the greatest level of importance to the effectiveness of digital marketing (Mean =3,680) and the least level of importance to the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media (Mean = 3,244) against a maximum attainable score of 5, indicating room for improvement. Therefore, to assess how respondents perceive each of these dimensions, frequency analyses were conducted. This included the assessment of the frequency distribution of the scale items to determine whether or not the data was normally distributed (See Table 5.3).

Table 5.3

Descriptive Statistics: Frequency distribution of the scale items

QBI.1 Through digital marketing the institution provides me with useful information, such as the sessional dates, information on various programs offered and contact numbers.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5	2,2
<i>Disagree</i>	4	1,8
<i>Neutral</i>	60	26,8
<i>Agree</i>	88	39,3
<i>Strongly agree</i>	67	29,9
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QBI.2 Digital marketing is a quicker source of reliable access to information about the institution in real time.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	3	1,3
<i>Disagree</i>	8	3,6
<i>Neutral</i>	31	13,8
<i>Agree</i>	95	42,4

<i>Strongly agree</i>	87	38,8
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QB1.3 I receive information that is relevant to my needs through the personalised marketing messages.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	7	3,1
<i>Disagree</i>	19	8,5
<i>Neutral</i>	55	24,6
<i>Agree</i>	86	38,4
<i>Strongly agree</i>	57	25,4
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QB1.4 It is much more convenient to obtain information through digital marketing in real-time.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	3	1,3
<i>Disagree</i>	8	3,6
<i>Neutral</i>	32	14,3
<i>Agree</i>	88	39,3
<i>Strongly agree</i>	93	41,5
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QB1.5 The information on the website is always updated and accurate.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	8	3,6
<i>Disagree</i>	22	9,8
<i>Neutral</i>	88	39,3
<i>Agree</i>	67	29,9
<i>Strongly agree</i>	39	17,4
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QB1.6 I appreciate the personalised marketing messages sent to me by the institution such as email, sms and via social media to keep me informed of important notices.		
	Frequency	Percentage

<i>Strongly disagree</i>	11	4,9
<i>Disagree</i>	5	2,2
<i>Neutral</i>	29	12,9
<i>Agree</i>	64	28,6
<i>Strongly agree</i>	115	51,3
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QBI.7 The interactive and creative website promotes the institution and its offering well.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	4	1,8
<i>Disagree</i>	13	5,8
<i>Neutral</i>	39	17,4
<i>Agree</i>	91	40,6
<i>Strongly agree</i>	77	34,4
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QBI.8 The institution has a strong internet presence making it easy to locate on search engines.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	7	3,1
<i>Disagree</i>	14	6,3
<i>Neutral</i>	45	20,1
<i>Agree</i>	95	42,4
<i>Strongly agree</i>	63	28,1
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QBI.9 The website assisted me in my choice of program to register for, due to the well-advertised and updated information on the website and on the pop-up banners.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	18	8,0
<i>Disagree</i>	10	4,5
<i>Neutral</i>	61	27,2
<i>Agree</i>	84	37,5
<i>Strongly agree</i>	51	22,8

<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QBI.10 Digital marketing assisted my parent/guardian in their choice to enrol me at this institution, as the costs of the programs was available and could be easily compared to competitors prices.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	21	9,4
<i>Disagree</i>	22	9,8
<i>Neutral</i>	57	25,4
<i>Agree</i>	71	31,7
<i>Strongly agree</i>	53	23,7
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QBI.11 Testimonials from Alumni students about their experiences are regularly emailed and posted on blogs to reassure students about their choice and the brand of the institution.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	31	13,8
<i>Disagree</i>	45	20,1
<i>Neutral</i>	83	37,1
<i>Agree</i>	48	21,4
<i>Strongly agree</i>	17	7,6
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QBI.12 I am provided with the correct content and the institution's presence is visible through digital marketing, this builds confidence in the institution.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	9	4,0
<i>Disagree</i>	11	4,9
<i>Neutral</i>	55	24,6
<i>Agree</i>	97	43,3
<i>Strongly agree</i>	52	23,2
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QBI.13 I feel like a valued student when the institution takes time to read my views posted on social media platforms like twitter and Facebook.		

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	18	8,0
<i>Disagree</i>	16	7,1
<i>Neutral</i>	74	33,0
<i>Agree</i>	61	27,2
<i>Strongly agree</i>	55	24,6
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QB1.14 Instant feedback to queries and complaints on social media indicates that the University cares about its students.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	13	5,8
<i>Disagree</i>	14	6,3
<i>Neutral</i>	48	21,4
<i>Agree</i>	72	32,1
<i>Strongly agree</i>	77	34,4
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QB1.15 In the event of strikes and disputes the University listens to students and often tries to reach amicable solutions.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	19	8,5
<i>Disagree</i>	23	10,3
<i>Neutral</i>	77	34,4
<i>Agree</i>	58	25,9
<i>Strongly agree</i>	47	21,0
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QB1.16 Through social media my institution communicates frequently, and this strengthens my relationship with the institution.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	16	7,1
<i>Disagree</i>	23	10,3
<i>Neutral</i>	57	25,4

<i>Agree</i>	81	36,2
<i>Strongly agree</i>	47	21,0
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QBI.17 The information shared by the institution on the chatrooms, blogs and social media platforms strengthens its bond with its students.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	11	4,9
<i>Disagree</i>	15	6,7
<i>Neutral</i>	63	28,1
<i>Agree</i>	87	38,8
<i>Strongly agree</i>	48	21,4
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QBI.18 The institution prioritises the needs of students and takes time to listen to what the student wants.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	22	9,8
<i>Disagree</i>	33	14,7
<i>Neutral</i>	74	33,0
<i>Agree</i>	56	25,0
<i>Strongly agree</i>	39	17,4
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QBI.19 The facilities both online and physical are conducive to an enhanced learning environment.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	8	3,6
<i>Disagree</i>	11	4,9
<i>Neutral</i>	47	21,0
<i>Agree</i>	85	37,9
<i>Strongly agree</i>	73	32,6
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QBI.20 The support provided by the institution during the Covid 19 lockdown period		

exceeded expectations and made my learning manageable.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	18	8,0
<i>Disagree</i>	29	12,9
<i>Neutral</i>	52	23,2
<i>Agree</i>	60	26,8
<i>Strongly agree</i>	65	29,0
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QBI.21 The institution is more profit driven rather than service orientated.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	15	6,7
<i>Disagree</i>	15	6,7
<i>Neutral</i>	68	30,4
<i>Agree</i>	54	24,1
<i>Strongly agree</i>	72	32,1
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QBI.22 I will recommend this institution to new students in future due to its good reputation and service.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	20	8,9
<i>Disagree</i>	20	8,9
<i>Neutral</i>	64	28,6
<i>Agree</i>	67	29,9
<i>Strongly agree</i>	53	23,7
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QBI.23 The institution is committed to student satisfaction with the level of education that they deliver.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	21	9,4
<i>Disagree</i>	16	7,1
<i>Neutral</i>	60	26,8

<i>Agree</i>	86	38,4
<i>Strongly agree</i>	41	18,3
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QCI.1 I find the digital marketing channels (email, sms, social media) are a practicable way to communicate with the institution.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	4	1,8
<i>Disagree</i>	9	4,0
<i>Neutral</i>	36	16,1
<i>Agree</i>	85	37,9
<i>Strongly agree</i>	90	40,2
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QCI.2 Digital marketing is a great way to market the institution locally and globally to new students via the internet.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	4	1,8
<i>Disagree</i>	5	2,2
<i>Neutral</i>	23	10,3
<i>Agree</i>	81	36,2
<i>Strongly agree</i>	111	49,6
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QCI.3 Digital marketing will attract new sponsorships and funding to the institution and will help promote the brand name and image of the institution.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	1	0,4
<i>Disagree</i>	4	1,8
<i>Neutral</i>	35	15,6
<i>Agree</i>	91	40,6
<i>Strongly agree</i>	93	41,5
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QCI.4 Greater Publicity through digital marketing makes the institution more popular and		

attracts more students making the institution more attractive against competitors.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	1	0,4
<i>Disagree</i>	6	2,7
<i>Neutral</i>	33	14,7
<i>Agree</i>	93	41,5
<i>Strongly agree</i>	91	40,6
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QCI.5 An institution with a strong brand presence and reputation online makes students more marketable to employees.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	4	1,8
<i>Disagree</i>	3	1,3
<i>Neutral</i>	43	19,2
<i>Agree</i>	81	36,2
<i>Strongly agree</i>	93	41,5
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QCI.6 I think that the digital marketing platforms utilised by the institution are very well executed to attract attention and publicity.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	2	0,9
<i>Disagree</i>	8	3,6
<i>Neutral</i>	55	24,6
<i>Agree</i>	98	43,8
<i>Strongly agree</i>	61	27,2
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QCI.7 I find that social media makes it easier to communicate with the institution.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	7	3,1
<i>Disagree</i>	19	8,5

<i>Neutral</i>	64	28,6
<i>Agree</i>	72	32,1
<i>Strongly agree</i>	62	27,7
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QCI.8 Social media assists me to obtain information about activities and current events taking place at the institution.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	8	3,6
<i>Disagree</i>	13	5,8
<i>Neutral</i>	52	23,2
<i>Agree</i>	87	38,8
<i>Strongly agree</i>	64	28,6
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QCI.9 Social media is a helpful medium to access information such as the costs of the program, curriculum outlines and other institutional information which is available online and is convenient, thus preventing a physical trip to the institution for information.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	3	1,3
<i>Disagree</i>	11	4,9
<i>Neutral</i>	56	25,0
<i>Agree</i>	84	37,5
<i>Strongly agree</i>	70	31,3
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QCI.10 Feedback and queries related to curriculum and costs are instantaneous on social media as opposed to traditional marketing.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	10	4,5
<i>Disagree</i>	22	9,8
<i>Neutral</i>	80	35,7
<i>Agree</i>	76	33,9
<i>Strongly agree</i>	36	16,1

<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QC1.11 I am able to communicate with the institution, on their Facebook page, Instagram and Twitter pages.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	16	7,1
<i>Disagree</i>	31	13,8
<i>Neutral</i>	83	37,1
<i>Agree</i>	60	26,8
<i>Strongly agree</i>	34	15,2
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QC1.12 I am able to interact with the institution from anywhere in the world, as the institution communicates on the different social platforms with instant feedback.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	10	4,5
<i>Disagree</i>	20	8,9
<i>Neutral</i>	71	31,7
<i>Agree</i>	74	33,0
<i>Strongly agree</i>	49	21,9
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QC1.13 Since the institution is easily accessible via digital marketing and makes use of more than one social-media platform, this allows for flexibility in terms of how I communicate (I am not only restricted to emails or one social media platform like Facebook).		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	14	6,3
<i>Disagree</i>	23	10,3
<i>Neutral</i>	57	25,4
<i>Agree</i>	91	40,6
<i>Strongly agree</i>	39	17,4
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QC1.14 In the event that I need to contact my institution I can simply post a query on social media or the website knowing that a response will be imminent.		

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	19	8,5
<i>Disagree</i>	40	17,9
<i>Neutral</i>	80	35,7
<i>Agree</i>	51	22,8
<i>Strongly agree</i>	34	15,2
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QCI.15 Social media helps me stay in better contact with my institution and strengthens my relationship with the institution as a result.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	17	7,6
<i>Disagree</i>	20	8,9
<i>Neutral</i>	83	37,1
<i>Agree</i>	71	31,7
<i>Strongly agree</i>	33	14,7
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QCI.16 Personalized marketing messages received via email, Facebook or sms from my institution gives me a sense of pride and makes me feel like I belong.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	13	5,8
<i>Disagree</i>	18	8,0
<i>Neutral</i>	67	29,9
<i>Agree</i>	75	33,5
<i>Strongly agree</i>	51	22,8
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QCI.17 The institution's LinkedIn page creates, a lot of awareness about the institution and provides adequate information on how one can contact them.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	16	7,1
<i>Disagree</i>	15	6,7
<i>Neutral</i>	78	34,8
<i>Agree</i>	71	31,7

<i>Strongly agree</i>	44	19,6
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QC1.18 The institution makes use of four social media platforms, these are: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn which I access.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	16	7,1
<i>Disagree</i>	21	9,4
<i>Neutral</i>	85	37,9
<i>Agree</i>	68	30,4
<i>Strongly agree</i>	34	15,2
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QC1.19 I am unsure of how to contact the institution on social media.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	69	30,8
<i>Disagree</i>	47	21,0
<i>Neutral</i>	42	18,8
<i>Agree</i>	38	17,0
<i>Strongly agree</i>	28	12,5
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QC1.20 This is the first time, that I have been made aware that my institution, uses social media platforms to communicate with students.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	91	40,6
<i>Disagree</i>	38	17,0
<i>Neutral</i>	38	17,0
<i>Agree</i>	33	14,7
<i>Strongly agree</i>	24	10,7
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QD2.1 I find social media channels to be a feasible way to communicate with the institution and peers.		
	Frequency	Percentage

<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5	2,2
<i>Disagree</i>	4	1,8
<i>Neutral</i>	57	25,4
<i>Agree</i>	92	41,1
<i>Strongly agree</i>	66	29,5
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QD2.1 I compare and contrast the offering of my institution with that of other private institutions in order to ascertain if I have made the best choices competitively.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	8	3,6
<i>Disagree</i>	16	7,1
<i>Neutral</i>	45	20,1
<i>Agree</i>	85	37,9
<i>Strongly agree</i>	70	31,3
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QD2.3 I follow graduate recruitment programs to see which institutions graduates are more employable.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	11	4,9
<i>Disagree</i>	35	15,6
<i>Neutral</i>	60	26,8
<i>Agree</i>	70	31,3
<i>Strongly agree</i>	48	21,4
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QD2.4 It is helpful and encouraging to chat to alumni and other students registered at the institution and other institutions when seeking information about programs.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	2	0,9
<i>Disagree</i>	15	6,7
<i>Neutral</i>	61	27,2
<i>Agree</i>	87	38,8
<i>Strongly agree</i>	59	26,3

<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QD2.5 Social media promotes two-way communication and conversations between the institution and its students.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	4	1,8
<i>Disagree</i>	7	3,1
<i>Neutral</i>	70	31,3
<i>Agree</i>	91	40,6
<i>Strongly agree</i>	52	23,2
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QD2.6 It is much easier and quicker to gather and share information about programs, access information about textbooks and e-books on social media.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5	2,2
<i>Disagree</i>	2	0,9
<i>Neutral</i>	47	21,0
<i>Agree</i>	95	42,4
<i>Strongly agree</i>	75	33,5
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QD2.7 It is helpful that all information such as, the costs of the program, curriculum outlines and other institutional information is available via digital media which is convenient and thus prevents physical trips to the campus.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5	2,2
<i>Disagree</i>	2	0,9
<i>Neutral</i>	47	21,0
<i>Agree</i>	95	42,4
<i>Strongly agree</i>	75	33,5
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QD2.8 The marketing of the institution on digital platforms such as Facebook and the website is more creative, and information is always updated regularly.		

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	4	1,8
<i>Disagree</i>	18	8,0
<i>Neutral</i>	76	33,9
<i>Agree</i>	82	36,6
<i>Strongly agree</i>	44	19,6
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QD2.9 The interface and apps on the website and social media pages are easy to navigate and are user-friendly making it fast and easy to access and download information.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5	2,2
<i>Disagree</i>	6	2,7
<i>Neutral</i>	63	28,1
<i>Agree</i>	98	43,8
<i>Strongly agree</i>	52	23,2
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QD2.10 The smaller classes and the use of digital interfaces in teaching and learning gives the institution a competitive advantage in their marketing strategy.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5	2,2
<i>Disagree</i>	16	7,1
<i>Neutral</i>	58	25,9
<i>Agree</i>	92	41,1
<i>Strongly agree</i>	53	23,7
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QD2.11 I sometimes find marketing messages on social media to be intrusive and an invasion of my privacy.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	24	10,7
<i>Disagree</i>	54	24,1
<i>Neutral</i>	72	32,1
<i>Agree</i>	45	20,1

<i>Strongly agree</i>	29	12,9
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QD2.12 I am not restricted to only one way of communication; I am able to communicate with institution on the type of social media platform that I prefer.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	14	6,3
<i>Disagree</i>	16	7,1
<i>Neutral</i>	72	32,1
<i>Agree</i>	86	38,4
<i>Strongly agree</i>	36	16,1
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QD2.13 I found the institutions information about students funding posted on social media very helpful.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	16	7,1
<i>Disagree</i>	20	8,9
<i>Neutral</i>	79	35,3
<i>Agree</i>	74	33,0
<i>Strongly agree</i>	35	15,6
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QD2.14 Social media is a channel for me to voice my feelings/experiences either positive/negative about the institution.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	18	8,0
<i>Disagree</i>	25	11,2
<i>Neutral</i>	73	32,6
<i>Agree</i>	64	28,6
<i>Strongly agree</i>	44	19,6
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QD2.15 I use social media channels as it allows for freedom of expression.		
	Frequency	Percentage

<i>Strongly disagree</i>	15	6,7
<i>Disagree</i>	18	8,0
<i>Neutral</i>	72	32,1
<i>Agree</i>	59	26,3
<i>Strongly agree</i>	60	26,8
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QD2.16 The University usually follows the conversations and responds when necessary to posts and videos posted on social media.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	15	6,7
<i>Disagree</i>	36	16,1
<i>Neutral</i>	98	43,8
<i>Agree</i>	49	21,9
<i>Strongly agree</i>	26	11,6
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QD2.17 Social media gives me independence and my own sense of identity.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	7	3,1
<i>Disagree</i>	18	8,0
<i>Neutral</i>	64	28,6
<i>Agree</i>	73	32,6
<i>Strongly agree</i>	62	27,7
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QD2.18 The institution uses Instagram to interact with both current and prospective students.

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	18	8,0
<i>Disagree</i>	22	9,8
<i>Neutral</i>	72	32,1
<i>Agree</i>	74	33,0
<i>Strongly agree</i>	38	17,0

<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QD2.19 Twitter is a social media platform, that my institution uses to create a hashtag movement.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	26	11,6
<i>Disagree</i>	34	15,2
<i>Neutral</i>	103	46,0
<i>Agree</i>	46	20,5
<i>Strongly agree</i>	15	6,7
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QD2.20 The institution attracts other professionals to the institution, using LinkedIn.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	10	4,5
<i>Disagree</i>	24	10,7
<i>Neutral</i>	93	41,5
<i>Agree</i>	55	24,6
<i>Strongly agree</i>	42	18,8
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QE.3.1.1 Please rate the following medium of choice in order of frequency when interacting on social media <u>with the institution</u> with 1 being very infrequent and 5 being very frequent. (Prevalence): (Facebook).		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Very infrequent</i>	33	14,7
<i>Infrequent</i>	16	7,1
<i>Neutral</i>	64	28,6
<i>Frequent</i>	48	21,4
<i>Very Frequent</i>	63	28,1
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QE.3.1.2 Please rate the following medium of choice in order of frequency when interacting on social media <u>with the institution</u> with 1 being very infrequent and 5 being		

very frequent. (Prevalence): (Twitter).		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Very infrequent</i>	59	26,3
<i>Infrequent</i>	29	12,9
<i>Neutral</i>	75	33,5
<i>Frequent</i>	33	14,7
<i>Very Frequent</i>	28	12,5
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QE.3.1.3 Please rate the following medium of choice in order of frequency when interacting on social media <u>with the institution</u> with 1 being very infrequent and 5 being very frequent. (Prevalence): Instagram.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Very infrequent</i>	14	6,3
<i>Infrequent</i>	8	3,6
<i>Neutral</i>	35	15,6
<i>Frequent</i>	51	22,8
<i>Very Frequent</i>	116	51,8
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QE.3.1.4 Please rate the following medium of choice in order of frequency when interacting on social media <u>with the institution</u> with 1 being very infrequent and 5 being very frequent. (Prevalence): LinkedIn.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Very infrequent</i>	47	21,0
<i>Infrequent</i>	26	11,6
<i>Neutral</i>	67	29,9
<i>Frequent</i>	50	22,3
<i>Very Frequent</i>	34	15,2
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QE.3.2.1. Please indicate approximately how much time is spent interacting on social		

media, <u>with the institution</u> , on the different platforms (time): Facebook.		
	Frequency	Percentage
0 -2 hours	89	39,7
2 - 4 hours	37	16,5
None	46	20,5
4-6 hours	25	11,2
6 hours or more	27	12,1
Total	224	100,0
QE.3.2.2. Please indicate approximately how much time is spent interacting on social media, <u>with the institution</u> , on the different platforms (time): Twitter.		
	Frequency	Percentage
0 -2 hours	102	45,5
2 - 4 hours	28	12,5
None	72	32,1
4-6 hours	12	5,4
6 hours or more	10	4,5
Total	224	100,0
QE.3.2.3. Please indicate approximately how much time is spent interacting on social media, <u>with the institution</u> , on the different platforms (time): Instagram.		
	Frequency	Percentage
0 -2 hours	62	27,7
2 - 4 hours	39	17,4
None	44	19,6
4-6 hours	35	15,6
6 hours or more	44	19,6
Total	224	100,0
QE.3.2.4. Please indicate approximately how much time is spent interacting on social media, <u>with the institution</u> , on the different platforms (time): LinkedIn.		
	Frequency	Percentage

<i>0 -2 hours</i>	110	49,1
<i>2 - 4 hours</i>	24	10,7
<i>None</i>	61	27,2
<i>4-6 hours</i>	19	8,5
<i>6 hours or more</i>	10	4,5
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QE.3.3.1. How often do you share *institution related information*, using social media platforms, with colleagues and peers at your institution (occurrence)? (Facebook)

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Daily</i>	31	13,8
<i>Weekly</i>	13	5,8
<i>Not at all</i>	84	37,5
<i>Monthly</i>	13	5,8
<i>Only when there is a need</i>	83	37,1
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QE.3.3.2 How often do you share *institution related information*, using social media platforms, with colleagues and peers at your institution (occurrence)? (Twitter)

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Daily</i>	42	18,8
<i>Weekly</i>	9	4,0
<i>Not at all</i>	115	51,3
<i>Monthly</i>	6	2,7
<i>Only when there is a need</i>	52	23,2
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

QE.3.3.3 How often do you share *institution related information*, using social media platforms, with colleagues and peers at your institution (occurrence)? (Instagram)

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Daily</i>	37	16,5
<i>Weekly</i>	13	5,8
<i>Not at all</i>	72	32,1
<i>Monthly</i>	16	7,1

<i>Only when there is a need</i>	86	38,4
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QE.3.3.4 How often do you share <u><i>institution related information</i></u> , using social media platforms, with colleagues and peers at your institution (occurrence)? (LinkedIn)		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Daily</i>	40	17,9
<i>Weekly</i>	10	4,5
<i>Not at all</i>	95	42,4
<i>Monthly</i>	9	4,0
<i>Only when there is a need</i>	70	31,3
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QE.3.4. How effective have you found <u><i>institutional related</i></u> social media marketing to be? Please use the following scale (1- very ineffective, 2- ineffective 3- neutral 4 – effective, 5 - very effective).		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Very ineffective</i>	10	4,5
<i>Ineffective</i>	11	4,9
<i>Neutral</i>	84	37,5
<i>Effective</i>	79	35,3
<i>Very effective</i>	40	17,9
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QE3.4.1 It is easy to identify with and express one's identity.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	9	4,0
<i>Disagree</i>	7	3,1
<i>Neutral</i>	81	36,2
<i>Agree</i>	74	33,0
<i>Strongly agree</i>	53	23,7
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QE.3.4.2 Allows for sharing of content on the interactive social media platforms.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	6	2,7

<i>Disagree</i>	2	0,9
<i>Neutral</i>	56	25,0
<i>Agree</i>	96	42,9
<i>Strongly agree</i>	64	28,6
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QE.3.4.3 Presence and availability of Higher Education information on the social media platforms.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	9	4,0
<i>Disagree</i>	10	4,5
<i>Neutral</i>	65	29,0
<i>Agree</i>	90	40,2
<i>Strongly agree</i>	50	22,3
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QE.3.4.4 Customer relationships are built with Higher Education institutions.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	10	4,5
<i>Disagree</i>	18	8,0
<i>Neutral</i>	79	35,3
<i>Agree</i>	79	35,3
<i>Strongly agree</i>	38	17,0
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QE.3.4.5 Reputation and trustworthiness are formed with Higher Education institutions.		
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	13	5,8
<i>Disagree</i>	15	6,7
<i>Neutral</i>	73	32,6
<i>Agree</i>	78	34,8
<i>Strongly agree</i>	45	20,1
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0
QE.3.4.6 Groups associated with Higher Education Institutions allow for socialising on social media platforms.		
	Frequency	Percentage

<i>Strongly disagree</i>	8	3,6
<i>Disagree</i>	8	3,6
<i>Neutral</i>	71	31,7
<i>Agree</i>	90	40,2
<i>Strongly agree</i>	47	21,0
<i>Total</i>	224	100,0

In terms of respondents' perceptions of the dimension pertaining to the *Effectiveness of Digital marketing*, **81.2%** of the respondents affirm that digital marketing is a quicker source of reliable access to information about the institution in real-time. In addition, the majority of the respondents (**80.8%**) attest that it is much more convenient to obtain information through digital marketing in real-time. Furthermore, the results of this study reveal that the majority (**79.9%**) of the respondents appreciate the personalised marketing messages sent to them by the institution such as email, SMS and social media to keep them informed of important notices, whereas **75%** of the respondents confirm that the interactive and creative website promotes the institution and its offering well. In addition, **70.5%** of the respondents, believe that the institution has a strong internet presence making it easy to locate on search engines and that the facilities both online and physical are conducive for learning. The results of this study also reveal that **66.5%** of the respondents attest that they are provided with the correct content and the institution's presence is visible through digital marketing. This builds confidence in the institution, and the instant feedback to queries and complaints on social media indicates that the university cares about its students.

The results further show that **63.8%** of the respondents receive information that is relevant to their needs through personalised marketing messages, while **60.2%** of the respondents attest that the information shared by the institution on chatrooms, blogs and social media platforms strengthens its bond with its students.

In terms of the *impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media*, **85.8%** of the respondents affirm that digital marketing is a great way to market the institution locally and globally to new students via the internet, while **82.1%** of the respondents admit that digital marketing will attract new sponsorships and funding to the institution and will help promote the brand name and image of the institution. Also, greater publicity through digital marketing makes the institution more popular and attracts more students making the

institution more attractive against competitors. The results of this study further show that **78.1%** of the respondents find digital marketing channels (email, SMS, social media) to be a practicable way of communicating with the institution. The results of the study also revealed that **77.7%** of the respondents attest that an institution with a strong brand presence and reputation online makes students more marketable to employees. In addition, the results reveal that **71%** of the respondents believe that the digital marketing platforms utilised by the institution are very well executed to attract attention and publicity. More so, **68.8%** of the respondents affirm that social media is a helpful medium to access information such as the costs of the program, curriculum outlines and other institutional information which is available online and is convenient, thus preventing a physical trip to the institution to obtain such information. **67.4%** of the respondents attest that social media assists them to obtain information about activities and current events taking place at the institution.

With regard to the *Effectiveness of social media*, the majority (**75.9%**) of the respondents affirm that it is much easier and quicker to gather and share information about programs, access information about textbooks and e-books on social media. They further stated that it is helpful that all information such as the costs of the program, curriculum outlines and other institutional information is available via digital media which is convenient and thus prevents physical trips to the campus. In addition, **70.6%** of the respondents think that they find social media channels to be a feasible way of communicating with the institution and their peers, whereas **69.2%** of the respondents compare and contrast the offering of their institution with that of other private institutions to ascertain if they have made the best choices competitively.

Furthermore, the majority (**70.2%**) of the respondents affirm that they find social media channels to be a feasible way of communicating with the institution and their peers. Additionally, **67%** of the respondents are of the opinion that they interface with apps on the website and social media pages are easy to navigate and are also user-friendly making it fast and easy to access and download information. Also, **65.1%** of the respondents attest that it is helpful and encouraging to chat with the alumni and other students registered at the institution and other institutions when seeking information about programs. **64.8%** of the respondents believe that having smaller classes and the use of digital interfaces in teaching and learning gives the institution a competitive advantage in their marketing strategy. The results further show that **63.8%** of the respondents attest that social media promotes two-way communication and conversations between the institution and its students. The majority

(60.3%) of the respondents confirm that social media gives them independence and their own sense of identity. In addition, more than half (56.2%) of the respondents believe that brands that use the marketing of the institution on digital platforms such as Facebook and the website are more creative, and information is always updated regularly. The results of this study further indicate that 54.5% of the respondents are not restricted to only one way of communication, they can communicate with the institution on the type of social media platform that they prefer.

In terms of *Prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media*, more than half (78.5%) of the respondents interact on Instagram very frequently compared to other social media platforms. In addition, 49.1% of the respondents spend 0 - 2 hours interacting on LinkedIn, while 45.5% of the respondents spend 0 - 2 hours interacting on Twitter. Furthermore, the results reveal that more than half of the respondents (51.3%) do not share institution-related information on Twitter, with colleagues and peers at their institution. Similar results show that 42.4% of the respondents do not share institution-related information on LinkedIn, with colleagues and peers at their institution. The results also show that 38.4% of the respondents share institution-related information on Instagram, with colleagues and peers at their institution only when there is a need. The results of this study further revealed that 37.5% of the respondents are uncertain as to how effective institutional-related social media marketing is, while 35.3% believe that institutional-related social media marketing is effective. The results further indicate that 71.5% of the respondents affirm that they use social media to share content and interact, while 62.5% of the respondents use it due to the presence and availability of higher education information on the social media platforms. Furthermore, 61.2% of the respondents believe that groups associated with higher education institutions allow for socialising on social media.

5.6 Inferential Statistics

5.6.1 Student perceptions of the key dimension of digital marketing

Hypothesis 1: There exists significant intercorrelations among the key dimensions (effectiveness of digital marketing, impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media, effectiveness of social media and prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media) of the study relating to efficacy in tertiary institutions, respectively.

Table 5.4**Correlation: Key Dimensions of the Study**

		<i>Effectiveness of Digital marketing</i>	<i>Impact of Digital Marketing on Higher Education Through Social Media</i>	<i>Effectiveness of Social Media</i>	<i>Prevalence, Frequency and Purpose of Social Media</i>
<i>Effectiveness of Digital Marketing</i>	R	1			
	P				
<i>Impact of Digital Marketing in Higher Education Through Social Media</i>	R	0.782	1		
	P	0,000**			
<i>Effectiveness of Social Media</i>	R	0.627	0.774	1	
	P	0,000**	0,000**		
<i>Prevalence, Frequency, and Purpose of Social Media</i>	R	0.407	0.450	0.509	1
	P	0,000**	0,000**	0,000**	
** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$					

R is the relationship between two variables and the closer to 1 the variable is the stronger the relationship to that dimension. A perfect correlation is said to be +1 (positive) or -1 (negative). If the correlation coefficient diverges from zero, there is a relationship among the two variables. Therefore, if there is a positive correlation coefficient, there is a positive relationship and if there is a negative correlation there is a negative relationship.

The results shown in Table 5.4 show that all the constructs are positively correlated to each other. These results indicate that there is a significant positive relationship among effectiveness of digital marketing, the impact of digital marketing in higher education through

social media, the effectiveness of social media and the prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media, respectively, at the 1% level of significance.

From the findings in Table 5.4, there are moderate relationships between the following constructs:

- Between effectiveness of digital marketing and prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media ($r = 0.407$).
- Impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media ($r = 0.450$).
- Effectiveness of social media and prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media ($r = 0.509$).
- Effectiveness of digital marketing and effectiveness of social media ($r = 0.627$).

Furthermore, from the findings in Table 5.4, it is apparent that strong relationships exist between the following key dimensions:

- Effectiveness of digital marketing and impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media ($r = 0.782$).
- Impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media and effectiveness of social media ($r = 0.774$).

Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

5.6.2 Key dimensions of the study and biographical variables

Hypothesis 2:

There is a significant difference in the perceptions of higher education students, varying in biographical profiles (gender, age, race, programme of the study, and level of study) regarding each dimension of the study (effectiveness of digital marketing, impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media, effectiveness of social media and prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media), respectively (Tables 5.1 to 5.11).

Table 5.5

Mann-Whitney U-Test: Key Dimensions of the Study and Gender

<i>Key Dimensions of the Study</i>	<i>Mann-Whitney U</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>P value</i>
<i>Effectiveness of digital marketing</i>	3343,500	-0,322	0,747
<i>Impact of digital marketing in higher</i>	3270,000	-0,526	0,599

<i>education through social media</i>			
<i>Effectiveness of social media</i>	3221,500	-0,613	0,540
<i>Prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media</i>	2924,500	-1,486	0,137

**p<0.01

*p<0.05

The results in Table 5.5 indicate that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents varying in gender. This suggests that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of digital marketing, impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, effectiveness of social media and prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media between the genders of the respondents.

Table 5.6

Mann-Whitney U-Test: Key Dimensions of the Study and Age

<i>Key Dimensions of the Study</i>	<i>Mann-Whitney U</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>P value</i>
<i>Effectiveness of digital marketing</i>	1796,500	-1,750	0,080
<i>Impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media</i>	1978,500	-1,132	0,258
<i>Effectiveness of social media</i>	2079,000	-0,755	0,450
<i>Prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media</i>	2153,500	-0,537	0,591

**p<0.01

*p<0.05

The results in Table 5.6 show that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents varying in age group, meaning that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of digital marketing, the impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media, the effectiveness of social media and the prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media as it pertains to the respondents' age group.

Table 5.7**Kruskal-Wallis One-way ANOVA: Key Dimensions of the Study and Programme of study**

<i>Key Dimensions of the Study</i>	<i>Chi-Square</i>	<i>P-value</i>
<i>Effectiveness of digital marketing</i>	10,506	0,015*
<i>Impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media</i>	17,824	0,000**
<i>Effectiveness of social media</i>	8,873	0,031*
<i>Prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media</i>	3,300	0,348

**p<0.01

*p<0.05

As illustrated in Table 5.7, there is a significant difference in the perceptions of students varying in the programme of study regarding the effectiveness of digital marketing, the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media and the effectiveness of social media, at 1% and 5% levels of significance, respectively. No other significant differences exist. Mean analyses (See Table 5.8) were conducted to assess where the significant differences lie.

Table 5.8**Mean Analyses (Race): Key Dimensions of the Study and Programme of study**

<i>Key Dimensions of the Study</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Effectiveness of digital marketing</i>	Bachelor in Foundation Phase	3,581	0,796	81
	Bachelor in Intermediate Phase	3,687	0,634	122
	Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education	4,304	0,623	9
	Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education (Intermediate Phase Access)	3,819	0,640	12
	Total	3,680	0,707	224
<i>Impact of</i>	Bachelor in Foundation Phase	3,483	0,620	81

<i>digital marketing on higher education through social media</i>	Bachelor in Intermediate Phase	3,618	0,585	122
	Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education	4,367	0,557	9
	Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education (Intermediate Phase Access)	3,863	0,448	12
	Total	3,613	0,614	224
<i>Effectiveness of social media</i>	Bachelor in Foundation Phase	3,485	0,691	81
	Bachelor in Intermediate Phase	3,593	0,539	122
	Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education	4,294	0,760	9
	Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education (Intermediate Phase Access)	3,700	0,543	12
	Total	3,588	0,623	224

The results in Table 5.8 reveal that students registered for Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education place greater focus on the effectiveness of digital marketing, the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, and the effectiveness of social media as compared to the students registered for another programme of study.

Table 5.9

Kruskal-Wallis One-way ANOVA: Key Dimensions of the Study and Race

<i>Key Dimensions of the Study</i>	<i>Chi-Square</i>	<i>P-value</i>
<i>Effectiveness of digital marketing</i>	4,615	0,329
<i>Impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media</i>	3,693	0,449
<i>Effectiveness of social media</i>	3,862	0,425
<i>Prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media</i>	2,702	0,609

**p<0.01

*p<0.05

The results in Table 5.9 show that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents on a racial basis. This means that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of digital marketing, the impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media, the effectiveness of social media and the prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media amongst respondents' races.

Table 5.10**Kruskal-Wallis One-way ANOVA: Key Dimensions of the Study and Level of study**

<i>Key Dimensions of the Study</i>	<i>Chi-Square</i>	<i>P-value</i>
<i>Effectiveness of digital marketing</i>	21,873	0,000**
<i>Impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media</i>	14,171	0,003**
<i>Effectiveness of social media</i>	4,144	0,246
<i>Prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media</i>	1,811	0,613

As outlined in Table 5.10, there is a significant difference in the perceptions of students varying in the level of study regarding the effectiveness of digital marketing and the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media at 1% level of significance. The results also show that no other significant differences exist. To assess where the significant differences lie, mean analyses were undertaken (See Table 5.11).

Table 5.11**Mean Analyses (Race): Key Dimensions of the Study and Level of study**

<i>Key Dimensions of the Study</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Effectiveness of digital marketing</i>	First year	3,924	0,662	40
	Second year	4,014	0,672	35
	Third year	3,542	0,721	65
	Fourth year	3,532	0,663	84
	Total	3,680	0,707	224
<i>Impact of digital marketing in higher education through social media</i>	First year	3,878	0,624	40
	Second year	3,744	0,633	35
	Third year	3,498	0,652	65
	Fourth year	3,520	0,527	84
	Total	3,613	0,614	224

The results in Table 5.11 reveal that second-year students place greater emphasis on the effectiveness of digital marketing compared to students from other education levels, whereas first-year students consider the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media the most. From the results reflected in Tables 5.1 to 5.11, it is evident that Hypothesis 2 may be partially accepted.

5.7 Statistical analysis of the questionnaire

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were computed which respectively reflected adequacy (0.897; Approx. Chi-Square = 12837,753) and significance (df = 3321; Sig. = 0.000). The statistical analysis of the questionnaire will be undertaken to determine the questionnaire's validity and reliability. Therefore, Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha will be tested.

Table 5.12

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

<i>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.</i>		0,897
<i>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</i>	Approx. chi-square	12837,753
	df	3321
	Sig.	0,000

5.8 Validity of the questionnaire

Table 5.13
Validity of the Questionnaire: Factor Analysis

ITEMS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
QB1.1		0,638																
QB1.2		0,702																
QB1.3		0,706																
QB1.4		0,577																
QB1.5		0,501	0,432															
QB1.6		0,574																
QB1.7		0,703																
QB1.8		0,469	0,332															
QB1.9		0,535	0,424															
QB1.10		0,449	0,444															
QB1.11	0,447	0,322	0,330															-0,368
QB1.12		0,504	0,442															
QB1.13												0,774						
QB1.14		0,320										0,708						
QB1.15	0,317		0,570															
QB1.16	0,373	0,392	0,473															
QB1.17	0,320	0,416	0,472									0,338						
QB1.18	0,314		0,686															
QB1.19		0,344	0,546															

QB1.20			0,796															
QB1.21																	0,765	
QB1.22	0,303		0,729															
QB1.23	0,333		0,692															

Table 5.13 Continued.

Validity of the Questionnaire: Factor Analysis

ITEMS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
QC1.1					0,495													0,301
QC1.2					0,776													
QC1.3		0,333			0,672													
QC1.4					0,720													
QC1.5					0,743													
QC1.6	0,421	0,309			0,310													
QC1.7	0,343		0,346										0,520					
QC1.8	0,362												0,465					
QC1.9						0,396							0,496					
QC1.10	0,350		0,411										0,370					
QC1.11	0,721																	
QC1.12	0,664																	
QC1.13	0,750																	
QC1.14	0,763																	
QC1.15	0,697		0,359															
QC1.16	0,355		0,429															0,435
QC1.17	0,549																	
QC1.18	0,534																	0,323

QC1.19										0,808								
QC1.20										0,864								
QD2.1													0,314					
QD2.2											0,525							
QD2.3											0,749							
QD2.4						0,515												
QD2.5	0,444					0,340												
QD2.6						0,545												
QD2.7						0,740												

Table 5.13 Continued.
Validity of the Questionnaire: Factor Analysis

ITEMS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
QD2.8	0,393					0,533					0,304							
QD2.9	0,398					0,457					0,321							
QD2.10	0,437					0,402												
QD2.11										0,523								
QD2.12	0,672																	
QD2.13	0,588										0,304							
QD2.14	0,334						0,590											
QD2.15							0,807											
QD2.16	0,617																	
QD2.17							0,763											
QD2.18	0,643																	

QD2.19	0,612																	
QD2.20	0,587																	
QE3.1.1														0,792				
QE3.1.2													0,435				0,463	
QE3.1.3													0,757					
QE3.1.4																	0,727	
QE3.2.1.								0,692						0,466				
QE3.2.2.								0,781										
QE3.2.3.								0,716					0,306					
QE3.2.4.								0,650									0,380	
QE3.3.1.								0,739						0,330				
QE3.3.2								0,839										
QE3.3.3								0,760										

ITEMS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
QE3.3.4								0,784										
QE3.4.	0,374			0,518														
QE3.4.1				0,592			0,381											
QE3.4.2				0,611												0,311		
QE3.4.3	0,305			0,720														
QE3.4.4				0,731														
QE3.4.5				0,758														
QE3.4.6				0,756														
Eigenvalue	24,393	4,330	4,140	2,757	2,619	2,506	2,060	1,792	1,641	1,546	1,473	1,461	1,339	1,264	1,214	1,173	1,104	1,073
% Of Total Variance	29,748	5,280	5,048	3,362	3,194	3,056	2,512	2,186	2,002	1,885	1,797	1,782	1,633	1,542	1,480	1,431	1,347	1,309

The results in Table 5.13 show that thirty-two items load significantly on Factor 1 and account for **29.75%** of the total variance. Of the items, seven items relate to the effectiveness of digital marketing, twelve items pertain to the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, eleven items relate to the effectiveness of social media and two others relate to prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media. Since the majority of items relate to the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, Factor 1 was then labelled likewise.

As indicated in Table 5.13, eighteen items load significantly on Factor 2 which accounts for **5.28%** of the total variance. Results further indicate that sixteen of the items relate to the effectiveness of digital marketing and the other two items relate to the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media. The results indicate that the effectiveness of digital marketing had the highest loading of (0.706), hence Factor 2 was labelled accordingly.

Table 5.13 reveals that Factor 3 has eighteen items that load significantly and accounts for **4.05%** of the total variance. Fourteen items relate to the effectiveness of digital marketing and four items relate to the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media. Since the majority of the items relate to the effectiveness of digital marketing, Factor 3 was labelled likewise.

Table 5.13 indicates that seven items load significantly on Factor 4 and account for **3.36%** of the total variance. All seven items relate to the prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media, hence, Factor 4 was labelled likewise.

Moreover, Table 5.13 indicates that six items load significantly on Factor 5 and account for **2.62%** of the total variance. All six items relate to the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, Factor 5 was therefore labelled likewise.

Table 5.13 shows that eight items load significantly on Factor 6 and account for **2.51 %** of the total variance. Seven items relate to the effectiveness of social media, and one item relates to the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media. The results indicate that the effectiveness of social media had the highest loading of (0.740). Therefore, Factor 6 was labelled accordingly.

As shown in Table 5.13, four items load significantly on Factor 7 and account for **2.06%** of the total variance. The results show that 3 items relate to the effectiveness of social media, and one item to prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media. Since the effectiveness of social media had the highest loading (0,807), Factor 7 was labelled accordingly.

The results in Table 5.13 indicate that four items load significantly on Factor 8 and account for **1.79%** of the total variance. All 4 items relate to the prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media; hence, Factor 8 was labelled accordingly.

Additionally, Table 5.13 indicates that four items load significantly on Factor 9 and account for **1.64%** of the total variance. All four items relate to the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media. Therefore, Factor 9 was labelled accordingly.

The results in Table 5.13 show that three items load significantly on Factor 10 and explain up to **1.47%** of the total variance. Additionally, two items relate to the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media and the other one, to the effectiveness of social media. Since more items relate to the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, Factor 10 was therefore labelled likewise.

Table 5.13 reveal that five items load significantly on Factor 11 and explain up to **1.47%** of the total variance. All items relate to the effectiveness of social media. Therefore, Factor 11 was therefore labelled accordingly.

Moreover, the results in Table 5.13 indicate that three items pertaining to the effectiveness of digital marketing load in Factor 12 and account for **1.46%** of the total variance. Therefore, Factor 12 was labelled accordingly.

The results in Table 5.13 also show that five items load in Factor 13 and account for **1.34%** of the total variance. Four items related to the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media and one item to the effectiveness of social media. Since the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media had the highest loading (0.520), Factor 13 was therefore labelled accordingly.

Furthermore, the results in Table 5.13 show that three items load significantly on Factor 14 and account for **1.26%** of the total variance. All three items relate to the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media; therefore, Factor 14 was labelled accordingly.

Table 5.13 indicates that three items load in Factor 15 and account for **1.24%** of the total variance, they pertain to the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media. Factor 15 was therefore labelled accordingly. As shown in Table 5.13, the results indicate that the two items loading significantly in Factor 16 account for **1.17%** of the total variance. One item relates to the effectiveness of digital marketing and the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media. The results in Table 5.13 show that three items load significantly in Factor 17 accounting for **1.10%** of the total variance, and they relate to the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media. Therefore, Factor 17 was labelled accordingly.

Table 5.13 shows that three items load significantly in Factor 18 and account for **1.07%** of the variance. Moreso, these three items relate to the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media. Therefore, Factor 18 was labelled accordingly.

From the results obtained in Table 5.13, five factors (Factors 1, 5, 10, 13 and 18) were labelled as the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media. In addition, three factors (Factors 2, 3, 12 and 16) were labelled as the effectiveness of digital marketing. Moreso, six factors (Factors 4, 8, 9, 14, 15 and 17) were labelled as the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media. Lastly, three factors (Factors 6, 7 and 11) were labelled as the effectiveness of social media. All the key dimensions of the study feature as factors.

5.9 RELIABILITY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The reliability of the questionnaire was statistically assessed using Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha (Table 5.14). For the scale to be considered reliable and internally consistent in its measurement, the Cronbach Alpha should be above 0.7, a Cronbach Alpha above 0.6 is considered to be acceptable (Pallant, 2013).

Table 5.14.

Overall Reliability of the Questionnaire: Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha

<i>Reliability Statistics</i>		
<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No of Items
0,958	0,963	82

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed to measure the consistency of the results. The results reveal a Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha of 0.958 which demonstrates a strong level of inter-item consistency and reliability. The reliability for individual dimensions was also computed (Table 5.15).

Table 5.15.

Overall Reliability of the Questionnaire: Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>
<i>Effectiveness of digital marketing</i>	0,938
<i>Impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media</i>	0,898
<i>Effectiveness of social media</i>	0,910
<i>Prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media</i>	0,762

As indicated in Table 5.15, all the key dimensions of the study are internally consistent in their measurement as all Cronbach's Alpha values are above 0.7. The reliability for key dimensions ranges from 0.762 to 0.938, indicating that the reliability per dimension ranges from moderate (prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media) to good (impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, effectiveness of social media and effectiveness of digital marketing). The reliability scores for all sections exceeds the recommended Cronbach's value this indicates a degree of acceptable, consistent scoring for these sections of the research.

5.10 CONCLUSION

The results of the descriptive and inferential statistics were presented in this chapter. To test the questionnaire, its reliability and validity were also assessed. For a more detailed analysis of the findings, the SPSS results were provided in tabular and graphical formats. The outcomes of this study will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter six discusses the findings generated from the study about exploring the efficacy of digital marketing to promote higher education using social media platforms. The chapter is broken down into different headings such as discussion of results and each dimension in the study is further explained. Literature mentions that digital marketing has various advantages and disadvantages. Digital marketing can be used in several ways to be effective in higher education. The higher institutions can achieve efficacy through digital marketing in higher education by making use of the different social media platforms. Each social media platform has its own unique benefits that the institution can maximise in order to be effective. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine if digital marketing is an effective method of promoting higher education using social media platforms.

The results of the empirical analysis have been shown in a tabular format and interpreted in the previous chapter. This chapter will continue to elaborate on how the results generated from this study explore the efficacy of digital marketing in promoting higher education via social media platforms. The hypotheses will be explored in this chapter and where needed, will be supported with the relevant literature. This chapter will proceed to discuss how the results generated from the study impact the key dimensions of the study and the biographical variables of the respondents. The key dimensions will be explained in this chapter to a greater extent.

6.2 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

A discussion of the 5 dimensions of the study (effectiveness of digital marketing, impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, effectiveness of social media, prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media) will be explained and their impact on digital marketing. In terms of the findings of the key dimensions, a mean value of 3,680 for the effectiveness of digital marketing was the highest in comparison to the other dimensions. The impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media had a mean of 3.613, followed by the effectiveness of social media with a mean of 3,591 and prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media had a mean of 3,244. These will be discussed in detail next. The effectiveness of digital marketing will be the first dimension that will be discussed.

6.2.1 EFFECTIVENESS OF DIGITAL MARKETING

This section highlights the results that have come out of this study relating to the effectiveness of digital marketing as it relates to the key sub-dimensions of digital marketing.

- **Quicker source of reliable access to information about the institution in real-time**

In terms of the respondents' perceptions pertaining to the effectiveness of digital marketing, 81.2% of the respondents affirm that digital marketing is a quicker source of reliable access to information about the institution in real-time. Yasmin, Tasneem and Fatema (2015) compare traditional and digital marketing and their study also confirms that digital marketing is a faster way to market services and also affirms that a customer receives a response via digital marketing at any time. However, Todor (2016) found that one of the disadvantages associated with digital marketing is slow internet connections and this consumes a lot of time which results in customers getting bored. In a recent study conducted by Durmaz and Efendioglu (2016), it was found that through digital marketing, customers access products and services quickly. Das and Lall (2016) however contradict the idea that digital marketing is quicker and mention that digital marketing can cause slow internet connectivity and users will take a longer period to receive the information. However, in this study, respondents confirm that digital marketing is a quicker source of reliable access to information about the institution in real-time. Digital marketing can therefore assist the institution to deliver information quicker in real-time.

- **Convenient to obtain information through digital marketing in real-time.**

The majority of respondents (80.8%) confirm that it is much more convenient to obtain information through digital marketing in real-time. A study conducted by Todor (2016) found that digital marketing is not fully accepted in comparison to traditional marketing, as older customers do not trust the digital environment. However, a study conducted by Yasmin *et al.*, (2015) revealed that digital marketing promotes interaction without the audience and that the response and feedback can take place at any given time. A recent study by Abaido (2020) focused on the negatives of social media and the researcher mentions that even though digital marketing offers convenience, the interaction via using technology, makes the users vulnerable to cyberbullying. Durmaz and Efendioglou (2016) affirm the results of their study that digital marketing is available 24/7, in other words, information is easier to obtain due to

digital marketing thereby promoting convenience. Even though the results indicate that 80.8% of the respondents agree that it is much more convenient to obtain information in real-time, the results for question C1.12 of the study indicate that 4.5% of the respondents strongly disagree with this statement. This question is related to the interaction between the institution and the students interacting from anywhere in the world and also is related to the institution using different social media platforms, 8.9% of the respondents disagree with this statement. The results from the study indicate that the dimension relating to digital marketing being convenient is not fully effective as there are a large number of respondents that share their unhappiness regarding convenience. By using digital marketing, the institution creates opportunities in the international market as students will be able to interact from anywhere in the world this makes it possible to reach out to the global market.

Appreciate personalised marketing messages sent to them by the institution such as email, SMS and via social media to keep them informed of important notices.

The results of this study revealed that a majority of the respondents (79.9%) appreciate the personalised marketing messages sent to them by the institution such as email, SMS and via social media to keep them informed of important notices. However, a study conducted by Todor (2016) noted that marketing that uses the internet relies on technology and therefore, is prone to errors. The study that shares a similar idea relating to digital marketing and its effectiveness is Das and Lall (2016) where it was revealed that using emails as a digital marketing strategy to target customers and send personalised messages is effective. A study conducted by Bala and Verma (2018) contradicts this and emphasises that personalised emails can be considered spamming. According to Ištvančić, Ištvančić and Krpić (2017), the differentiating factor between traditional and digital marketing is the personalised messages. The results also depict that 75% of the respondents affirm that the interactive and creative website promotes the institution and its offering well. The results further show that 63.8% of the respondents receive information that is relevant to their needs through personalised marketing messages, while 60.2% of the respondents attest that the information shared by the institution on chatrooms, blogs and social media platforms strengthens its bond with its students. It is important that the institution share personalised marketing messages with students to keep them regularly informed and up-to-date on the important activities that are taking place. The institution can use the digital newsletters to share the personalised marketing messages.

- **The institution makes it easier for students to locate search engines**

Previous research indicates that search engine optimization (SEO) is effective because search engines are easily accessible to users (Ištvančić *et al.*, 2017). The results of this study indicate that the respondents are of the opinion that the institution makes it easier for students to locate search engines. This finding contradicts the results of the study by Al Azzawi, Amin, Shahab and Sivaram (2018) (as cited in Al Mukhtar, Mahmood and Kareem, 2021) which indicates that there are limitations when using search optimization. One of the limitations discussed in the study refers to the limitation of idioms and key restrictions, it is also noted that there is an inadequacy of the same axioms and key constraints that are used under a similar domain under search engine optimization with an individual platform. However, the findings indicate that the respondents are pleased with the institution and acknowledge that there is a strong internet presence making it easier to locate search engines and it can be deduced that the facilities, both online and physical are conducive for learning. The institution can look at working with the IT department to add search engine optimization features to the institution's page, this way students will be able to find what they are looking for easily.

- **The institution's presence is visible through digital marketing, this builds confidence in the institution, and instant feedback to queries and complaints on social media is given and this indicates that the institution cares about its students.**

A recent conference held in Bulgaria explored the characteristics of digital marketing, its advantages and disadvantages, one of the advantages of digital marketing is the high level of interactivity (Veleva and Tsvetanova, 2019). According to them, the high level of interactivity allows an interaction to take place with customers and this enhances their understanding therefore, the communication builds a dynamic environment. Similarly, as evident in the results of this study, 66.5% of the respondents agree that they were provided with correct content and that the institution's presence is visible through digital marketing. This builds confidence in the institution, also, instant feedback to queries and complaints on social media is provided and this indicates that the institution cares about its students. The conference also looked at the disadvantages of digital marketing, and one of the disadvantages noted is about online reputation, it argues that the online reputation of companies can be destroyed by negative feedback (Veleva and Tsvetanova, 2019).

The results also show that a considerable number of respondents are not entirely satisfied with the way the institution oversees queries and complaints on social media as only 66.5% of the respondents were satisfied, which leaves 33.5% of the respondents dissatisfied. Therefore, there is a gap in research that needs to be addressed and one can look at what is needed by an institution to be more effective. The second dimension that will be discussed is the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media.

6.2.2 THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

This section will highlight the results spawned from the study relating to the effectiveness of digital marketing that relates to the key sub-dimensions of the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media.

- **Digital marketing is a great way to market the institution locally and globally to new students via the internet.**

In terms of the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, 85.8% of the respondents affirm that digital marketing is a great way to market the institution locally and globally to new students via the internet. In Cordero-Gutiérrez and Lahuerta-Otero (2020), they mention that higher education organisations need to look at ways to promote users to pursue higher education by making use of social networking sites and acknowledging that this is a challenge. Conversely to this, Cordero-Gutiérrez and Lahuerta-Otero (2020) found investing in social media paid advertising is an effective way of promoting postgraduate programs to prospective students. In a similar study relating to digital marketing in higher education conducted by Kusmawati (2019), the idea of higher education looking at digital marketing as part of the university's marketing strategy to attract qualified students was explored. Kusmawati (2019) found that the university's marketing interacts with digital media and students engage with social media to gain information about the university before registering.

85.8% of the respondents affirm that digital marketing is a great way to market the institution both locally and internationally. When asked in the study about a social media platform such as Instagram and the institution interacting with current and prospective students via social media platforms, 8.0% of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement and 9.8% disagreed with the results from question D2.18 suggesting that not all students are aware that the institution interacts on social media platforms. The result of the study indicates that the

higher education institution needs to pay attention to students using social media platforms and to create a stronger awareness of their presence on such platforms, especially among those students that do not know that the institution interacts on such platforms. The institution needs to work with the IT and marketing department to ensure that these platforms are user-friendly for the students.

- **Digital marketing enhances the competitive advantage of an institution**

82.1% of the respondents admit that digital marketing will attract new sponsorships and funding to the institution and will help promote the brand image of the institution. Hence, the results from this study show that greater publicity through digital marketing makes the institution more popular and attracts more students making the institution more attractive than its competitors. A recent study conducted by Fomunyam (2020) investigated social media and branding in higher education institutions in Africa, specifically ten universities in Africa. One of the key findings of the study referred to social media branding as an effective and intuitive website and highlighted that this is the differentiating factor for an institution to create a brand statement. According to Jothi (2019), one of the disadvantages associated with digital marketing is that information needs to be frequently edited, checked, and approved, comments need to be constantly addressed and pages need to be managed daily. Similarly, Hermawan (2018) found that respondents' assessment of the usage of digital marketing in the private IT university revealed that it had been used effectively.

However, in a conference held in Tirupur, one of the disadvantages associated with digital marketing relates to its reliability as many people still are not convinced that digital marketing is a reliable way of marketing products and services (Jothi, 2019). The results of this study further show that 78.1% of the respondents find that digital marketing channels (email, SMS, social media) are a practical way to communicate with the institution. Hence, the results from this study indicate that digital marketing channels (email, SMS, and social media) are an effective way for students to communicate with the institution.

There have been several studies that agree that digital marketing channels (email, SMS, social media) are effective means of communicating with businesses. Bala and Verma (2018) focused on the effectiveness of internet marketing and looked at the various advantages digital marketing brings to customers and one of the advantages that stood out in the study was that digital marketing offered greater engagement between the customers and the company, customers can communicate via the company's website and make purchases.

However, it was found by Veleva and Tsvetanova (2020) that a disadvantage associated with digital marketing is lack of customers' trust, as digital marketing uses technology that follows and gathers data from users, thereby causing security issues to arise. In a recent conference held in New York, a study that was conducted by Muhammedrisaevna, Bakhridinovna and Rasulovna (2021) looked at the use of digital technologies in marketing and found that the effectiveness of digital marketing is dependent on how the tools are used.

In this study, the results indicate that digital marketing channels are effective when it comes to using marketing channels and gives the institution a competitive edge. This result is favourable to marketers in Higher Education, as the results indicate that using digital marketing gives the institution an edge over their competitors and that digital marketing indeed also assists to promote the brand's name and image.

- **An institution with a strong brand presence and reputation online make students more marketable to employees.**

The results of the study revealed that 77.7% of the respondents attest that an institution with a strong brand presence and reputation online makes students more marketable to employees. In a study conducted recently by Harahap, Hurriyati, Gaffar and Amanah (2017), it was found that positive word-of-mouth does not significantly impact the decision of students to study at an institution.

In a study conducted by Barros, Rodrigues, Duarte, Shao, Martins, Barandas-Karl and Yue (2020), it was found that students that are familiar with the brand perceive that the brand is of quality and offers good service. The study also established an important and advantageous connection between the brand image and students' satisfaction. Dragseth (2019) concurs that a strong brand presence and reputation online make students marketable to employees and mention that peer networks such as Twitter provides students with a platform to build and expand professional networks.

Contrarily, in a study conducted by Zivnuska, Carlson, Harris, and Harris (2019) about social media reactions and the implications of job performance, it was found that social media addiction takes up time from family and work. However, the result of this study indicates that a strong brand presence and reputation online make students marketable to employees. Therefore, marketers should take advantage of the strong brand presence and reputation online and use this as part of their marketing strategy when marketing the institution.

- **Digital marketing platforms utilised by the institution are very well executed to attract attention and publicity.**

71% of the respondents believe that the digital marketing platforms utilised by the institution are very well executed to attract attention and publicity. This study found that when the institution uses digital marketing platforms, they attract attention and publicity to the institution. Ištvančić *et al.*, (2017) support this statement and mention that social media marketing is an effective tool for businesses to attract prospective customers. According to Veleva and Tsvetanova (2020), digital marketing may not be suited for all types of products, services and companies, as the target audience for many products and services cannot be reached and hence, is not reliable through digital marketing.

Digital marketing is an effective marketing strategy that can be used to assist marketers in higher education. The world is in the digital age and businesses need to adapt to the new technology of today as digital marketing is a reliable way of targeting future students. Marketers use digital marketing platforms in the institution to attract attention and publicity. This finding is consistent with a study conducted by Muhammedrisaevna *et al.*, (2021) where it was noted that businesses utilise digital marketing tools by advertising via mobile applications and using targeted advertisements. This is however inconsistent with the study conducted by Todor (2016) where it was stated that not everyone is comfortable with the use of internet marketing and that there are older customers that do not trust digital platforms and therefore, prefer traditional marketing.

It is of utmost importance that in the higher education environment, students are comfortable with using digital marketing platforms before using this marketing strategy in an attempt to attract attention and publicity. Therefore, the institution can work with the marketing team and come up with campaigns, where students are educated on the digital marketing platforms as it is only if they know how to use these digital marketing platforms will they be comfortable with using it.

- **Social media is a helpful medium to access information**

The results show that 68.8% of the respondents affirm that social media is a helpful medium of accessing information, such as the costs of the program, curriculum outlines and other institutional information which are available online and they found it to be more convenient, thus preventing embarking on physical trips to the institution to obtain such information. This study also found that social media is convenient.

According to Saraite-Sariene, Gálvez-Rodríguez, Haro-de-Rosairo and Caba-Perez (2019), when information is updated including relevant content, this motivates a larger level of communication with the stakeholders of the organisation. Zargar (2018) found that one of the disadvantages associated with social media in relation to education refers to students relying on the accessibility to information on social media to obtain answers.

According to Wickrannanayake and Jika (2018), social media is an effective and helpful way of communicating with students and further found that social media can be used to communicate homework and research work to students. However, Zargar (2018) found that social media creates a relaxed attitude in students, and it also affects their spelling and grammar due to constantly using social media.

In the study, question C1.10 when asked if feedback and queries related to curriculum costs are instantaneous on social media as opposed to traditional marketing, 4.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement and 9.8% of the respondents disagreed. It is therefore evident from the results that some students do not find social media an effective way of accessing information about the programs or curriculum outline of the institution. Additionally, social media assists to obtain information about activities and current events taking place at the institution. 67.4% of the respondents attest that social media assists them to obtain information about activities and current events taking place at the institution.

It is important to note that marketers in higher education institutions ensure that social media tools are used effectively to achieve maximum effectiveness in implementing this marketing strategy. The results clearly depict a gap when using social media to communicate information to students. It will be beneficial to bridge this gap so that social media tools can be effective when communicating information to students. The third dimension that will be discussed next is the effectiveness of social media.

6.2.3 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This section will seek to explore the results generated from the study that relates to the key dimensions of the effectiveness of social media.

- **Easier and quicker to gather and share information**

The results of the study revealed that 75.9% of the respondents affirm that it is much easier and quicker to gather and share information about programs, and access information about textbooks and e-books on social media. Furthermore, it is helpful that all the information such

as the costs of the program, curriculum outlines and other institutional information are available via digital media.

Similarly, in a study by Kumar and Nanda (2019), it was found that social media in higher education can be used to share resources/materials, post/upload assignments and inform students about campus activities. However, Jindal, Prasad, and Sharma (2021) mention that although social media assists people to share information, the information shared may have a negative meaning or be interpreted differently. In a study conducted by Ištvančić *et al.*, (2017), it was emphasized that social media enables people to share information and content and also to participate online thus enabling engagement to take place and promoting conversations. Contrarily, Zargar (2018) discusses that one of the negative effects of social media in relation to education is that students lose their ability to engage and communicate face-to-face.

Additionally, respondents found social media to be convenient in the sense of preventing students from physically going to the institution to find out information. This benefit regarding social media will assist future marketers when planning digital marketing campaigns and events or distributing information to students in the institution. The institution can use social media to send out information to students.

- **Social media channels are feasible**

The results of the study also revealed that 70.6% of the respondents are of the opinion that they find social media channels to be a feasible way of communicating with the institution and their peers. According to Kumar and Nanda (2020), social media is a feasible way to communicate and emphasises that digital technology reduces operational costs.

In a study conducted by Sobain, Moustafa, Ghandforoush and Khan (2016), it was found that social media in developing countries have some barriers to higher education, such as poor infrastructure, which includes limited accessibility on campus, no presence of ICT policy and ICT support. Ištvančić *et al.*, (2017) highlight the importance of adopting social media strategy and emphasise that if a business is not using social media marketing, it is missing out on a cost-efficient resource. It is therefore important for marketers to look at the benefits of social media channels when deciding on the type of marketing strategy to use in the institution. The institution can cut marketing costs and use social media.

- **Students compare institutions with other private institutions**

Also, 69.2% of the respondents compare and contrast the offering of their institution to ascertain if they made the best choice competitively. Additionally, it was found that 64.8% of

the respondents agree that the use of digital interfaces by the institution gives a competitive advantage.

In a study conducted by Salem (2020), it was found that by higher education institutions adopting social media, their competitive advantage over other higher education institutions is strengthened. According to Vrontis, Nemar, Ouwaida and Shams (2018), it was found that students preferred using traditional media sources when deciding where to study, some of the traditional media sources included friends, family, and the university website.

According to Paladan (2018), it was found that over 25 universities in Asia have adopted digital marketing and social media strategy and add that many higher education institutions are adopting these strategies to attract prospective students. In a study by Galan, Lawley and Clements (2015), they focused on social media in postgraduate students' decision-making journey and found that social media assists students to engage with former students and social media is used by students to gain information. It is therefore beneficial for marketers to adopt social media in their marketing strategy because this gives the institution a competitive advantage over its competitors and also differentiates the institution from its competitors.

- **Social media makes it easier to navigate online**

67% of the respondents were of the opinion that they interface with applications on the website and the institution's social media pages are easy to navigate and are user-friendly thereby making it fast and easy to access and download information. Even though pages are easy to navigate and are user-friendly, there were concerns that students had regarding marketing messages being intrusive and an invasion of their privacy.

According to Kumar and Nanda (2020), social media platforms enable one to follow up on information easily. In a study conducted by Simić, Petrović and Aničić (2019), it was found that one of the shortcomings associated with social networks is the loss of privacy and the manipulation of private data. Ištvančić *et al.*, (2017) point out that social networking assists one to share content and it also builds trust between businesses and their customers. However, in a conference paper written by Veleva and Tsvetanova (2020), it was found that one of the disadvantages associated with digital marketing relates to lack of trust, this also includes privacy and security issues.

Future marketers in education need to pay attention to privacy settings and confidentiality clauses, especially after the finalisation of the POPI act in South Africa. Both marketers and institutions are exposed to legal implications.

- **Social media connects current students to alumni students**

65.1% of the respondents attest that it is helpful and encouraging to chat with alumni and other students registered at the institution and other institutions when seeking information about programs. Similarly, Kusumawati (2019) agrees that digital marketing in higher education assists in connecting with alumni students (as cited in Spilker, 2017).

However, in a study conducted by Aleisa (2022), it was found that respondents expressed their concerns about the disagreements that occur on social media when connecting with other students. In a study conducted by Coleman, Petitt and Burning (2018), it was found that social media platforms have become tools that are used by the admin team to strengthen relationships with current and alumni students. In contrast, Fomunyam (2020) mentions that a recent survey found that direct interactions with potential students are deemed more effective in comparison to alumni referrals that took place via digital platforms.

13.8% of the respondents strongly disagree and 20.1% disagree that alumni students regularly reassure them about the brand and the institution and post regarding their experiences. This, therefore, leaves a gap for the institution to explore. It is important that marketers ensure that institutions interact with alumni students via social media to ensure that the marketing strategy is effective.

- **Social media promotes a two-way communication**

63.8% of the respondents attest that social media promotes two-way communication and conversations between the institution and its students. According to Kusumawati (2019), social media allows for many interactions to take place and thus agrees that social media serves as a two-way communication. In a study conducted by Zargar (2018), which focused on the impact of social media on education with positive and negative aspects, it was found that social media causes students to lose their ability to engage through face-to-face communication. Maresova *et al.*, (2020) emphasise that students' loyalty towards an institution increases when the institution communicates efficiently with the students via the institution's social media platform. According to Zargar (2018), social network sites cannot replace face-to-face communication. Even though 63.8% of the respondents in the study agree that social media promotes two-way communication between the students and the institution, the results of the study for question B1.16 indicate that 7.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 10.3% of respondents agreed that the institution communicates frequently and that the communication with the institution strengthens their relationship with the institution.

The results are an indication that a gap exists when it comes to communication between the student and the institution. Therefore, the institution must explore how communication between students and the institution can be improved.

- **Social media allows for independence and one's own sense of identity**

60.3% of the respondents confirm that social media gives them independence and their own sense of identity. Asamoah (2019) explains that social media allows people to use the platform for personal identity creation and to maintain social relationships. In contrast, Lee, and Cheung (2014) found that individuals with low self-esteem prefer using social media. In a study conducted by Martin, Wang, Petty, Wang, and Wilkins (2018), identity refers to how one perceives oneself and how others perceive a person. In the Honeycomb theory, one of the main concerns relating to identity is privacy (Silva *et al.*, 2019). Martin *et al.*, (2018) explain that people can choose to be anonymous when they are asked about their real online identity and students can form their own online identity.

It is important for marketers in an institution to understand that not all students will be comfortable revealing their real identities online. It is therefore important that marketers allow for the flexibility of students in choosing to reveal their identity or remain anonymous, as this can influence the students' interaction on the social media platforms used by the institutions.

- **Social media platforms such as Facebook are creative**

56.2% of the respondents believe that brands that use the marketing of institutions on digital platforms such as Facebook and the website are more creative, and information is updated regularly. Ištvanic *et al.*, (2017) emphasise that Facebook includes a lot of information about the users on the social media platform. However, Abaido (2020) acknowledges that social media platforms such as Facebook need to continuously ensure that their policy and security are monitored as cyberbullying is a negative element associated with using social media platforms such as Facebook. Wartalik (2017) looked at social media in terms of building a connected college and agrees that Facebook is good for posting content and is a social media platform that is used by both the existing students and new students. Simić *et al.*, (2019) acknowledge that social networks include threats such as cybercrime, which includes identity theft, cyber spying, and the sale of private data.

Although 56.2% of the respondents affirm that social media platforms are a creative way to market the institution, the result for question C1.13 of the study indicates that many students

are unaware that the institution is available on more than one social media platform. The results revealed that 6.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 10.3% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. It is therefore an indication that there are many students in the institution that are still unaware that the institution is available on more than one social media platform. Additionally, the results of this study indicate that 54.5% of the respondents can communicate on more than one social media platform. It is of utmost importance that the institution ensures that the students are knowledgeable that the institution is available on more than one social media platform.

The fourth and final dimension that will be discussed next is the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media.

6.2.4 PREVALENCE, FREQUENCY AND PURPOSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This section will highlight the results found from the study relating to the prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media.

- **Instagram is a frequently used social media platform**

78.5% of the respondents interact on Instagram very frequently compared to other social media platforms. An institution must be aware of the social media platform that is frequently used by students. Similarly, Eraslan (2019) found that Instagram is the most frequently used social media platform which is used for educational and language-learning purposes. According to Sanz-Blas, Buzora and Miquel-Romero (2019), a lack of control over the time spent on Instagram can lead to emotional fatigue and *instastress*. Ištvančić *et al.*, (2017) submitted that Instagram has over 700 million (monthly active) users globally. In a study conducted by Kusuma and Yuniardi (2019), which focused on the use of Instagram and psychological well-being in the digital era, it was found that some weaknesses are associated with using social media platforms. The first weakness found by the researchers included social inequality towards others, which caused users of Instagram to feel their lives are not good in comparison to other individuals and the second weakness found that Instagram can lead to the spreading of hate speech and fake news. These weaknesses can result in a person's psychological well-being being affected, this is a disadvantage associated with the frequent use of Instagram.

Although 78.5% of the students interact on Instagram in comparison to other social media platforms, some students were unable to communicate with the institution on their Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages. The results for question C1.11 indicate that 7.1% of the

respondents strongly disagreed with being able to communicate with the institution on their Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages and 13.8% disagreed with the statement.

It is therefore evident that more awareness regarding promoting Instagram as a social media platform by the marketer to students of the institution needs to be strategised so that students can communicate on Instagram and other social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The institution can look at creating a hashtag movement every month on Instagram by focusing on different and relevant topics, this way more students will become aware of the social media platform and awareness regarding the various topics will also be created.

- **Time spent interacting on social media platforms**

49.1% of the respondents spend between 0-2 hours interacting on LinkedIn while 45.5% of the respondents spend between 0-2 hours interacting on Twitter. Even though this study found that 78.5% of the students interact on Instagram, according to Stelzner (2013) (as cited in Galan *et al.*, 2015) in 2013, the most frequently used social media platforms included Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube, while Instagram was excluded. In a study conducted by Belanche *et al.*, (2019) which focused on Instagram stories versus Facebook wall: an advertising effectiveness analysis, it was mentioned that Instagram has the highest in terms of growth among all other social media platforms. According to Sheldon and Bryant (2016), visitors stay on Instagram 45 percent longer than on Facebook (as cited in Belanche, 2019).

In a study conducted by Koch, Gerber, and de Klerk (2018), LinkedIn was identified as the leading social media platform used to recruit candidates in comparison to Twitter and Facebook. Similarly, Rodrigues and Martinez (2019) found that LinkedIn is a credible social media platform in comparison to Facebook. In a study conducted by Roy, Singh and Ratva (2018), it was found that of the ten social media platforms, LinkedIn was the ninth most popular social media platform used by students, Instagram was second, followed by Facebook which came third and Twitter was eighth in their study. Furthermore, the findings of Balakumakshi (2018) disclosed that 40% of students spend 5 hours a day on social media. In the study, Facebook was ranked as the second most used social media network, followed by Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn featured as the sixth most used social media network.

The institution needs to know which is the preferred social media platform that students spend most of their time on. This is so that the marketers can use the social media platform that students spend most of their time on and ensure that the social media platform that is

most frequently used is used to convey messages and information to students of the institution and therefore extend the institution's reach and efficacy. This study found in order of preference that Instagram was the most preferred social media platform, followed by Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

- **Sharing of information on social media platforms**

51.3% of the respondents which is more than half of the total respondents, share institution-related information, using Twitter, with colleagues and peers at their institution. The results also indicate that 42.4% of the respondents share institution-related information using LinkedIn, with colleagues and peers at their institution. The results further show that 38.4% of the respondents share institution-related information, using Instagram with colleagues and peers at their institution only when there is a need. However, 51.3% of the respondents share institution-related information using Twitter. In response to statement D2.19, "Twitter is a social media platform, that my institution uses to create a hashtag movement," 11.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 15.2% disagreed with this statement. The result is an indication that not all students are aware that the institution is on Twitter and it is important that more awareness be created by marketers of the institution to ensure that students are aware of the benefits of Twitter. Therefore, a gap exists in this study in terms of using social media within the institution to investigate how Twitter can be more effective in marketing the institution and increasing its reach.

Cripps, Singh, Mejtoft and Salo (2020) found that people used Twitter to obtain information. However, Haustein (2019) revealed that institutions exploit the microblogging platforms so that they can expand their visibility to their members. According to Maclean, Jones, Carin-Levy and Hunter (2014), Twitter is a free social platform used by everyone to share information (as cited by Mistry, 2011). And according to Simić *et al.*, (2019), one of the disadvantages associated with social networks such as Twitter is the loss of privacy, this is because an email address and username are required upon registration of the Twitter account and this may pose a risk of private information being shared for marketing purposes.

Akakandelwa and Walubita (2018) explain that students use social media to share information, network, discuss topics and to stay connected with friends. In a study conducted by Roy *et al.*, (2018), they found that there are some disadvantages associated with social networking sites among which is intrusive communication. In addition, Yang and Lee (2018)

found that Facebook is a common social media platform used to communicate with students off-campus, Instagram appeared to be a peer space and Twitter was found to be peer-centered while it was observed that students interacted more frequently with other students on Twitter. Simić *et al.*, (2019) emphasise that there are risks and threats associated with social networks such as cyberbullying which include identity theft and cyber spying. One of the main benefits of social media as supported by this study and by other research is that social media platforms allow sharing of information. Furthermore, it was found in this study that students use more than one social media platform that is used by the institution to share information with peers and colleagues at the institution. This is beneficial to marketers of the institution because having knowledge about the way students share information and knowing which social media platforms are used will assist future marketers in ensuring that social media platforms in Higher Education are promoted effectively.

It is therefore in the best interest of the institution to ensure that awareness regarding social media platforms at the institution is promoted. In this way, students are aware of the social media platforms that are used by the institution and can therefore use the different social media platforms and share information with peers. The awareness generated by the institution will ensure that social media platforms are used effectively at the institution by the students.

- **Effectiveness of social media marketing**

The results also revealed that 37.5% of the respondents are uncertain as to how effective institutional-related social media marketing is. 35.3% of them however believe that institutional-related social media marketing is effective. According to Jothi (2019), social media marketing refers to internet marketing where the goal is to create content that users will share with other users on social networks. Social media marketing is popular on websites such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn and can be used to communicate with customers effectively. On the contrary, one of the disadvantages associated with social media among students is its overuse (Roy *et al.*, 2018). In a study conducted by Maresova, Hruska and Kuca (2020), it was found that the world's top universities are active on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. It was also found that the universities post every day on social media platforms as they believe that constantly posting on social media is key to effectiveness (Maresove *et al.*, 2020). According to Salem (2020), the usage of social media platforms enhances brand loyalty, identity and trust of students in the institution.

Furthermore, it was found that when respondents were asked, “I am unsure of how to contact the institution on social media,” 30.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 21.0% of the respondents disagreed with this statement. The result is a clear indication that many students are uncertain as to how effective social media marketing is at an institution or how to use it to effectively communicate with the institution. This is a cause for concern.

It is thus important that the institution explores the benefits of social media marketing and adopt the strategies in the institution so that students can experience the effectiveness of social media marketing strategy and make it more user-friendly for students to embrace.

- **Sharing content on social media**

According to Simić *et al.*, (2019), social networks allow for the sharing of information and news, connect people and allows sharing and discussing information. In a study conducted by Jindal *et al.*, (2021), it was found that some of their respondents were affected negatively by the words shared by others on the social media platforms such as Twitter, this is one of the disadvantages associated with sharing content via social media. In contrast, Parusheva, Aleksandrova and Hadzhikolev (2018) explain that social media enables users to connect, and share information, emotions, and experiences. Sharing content on social media also has its risks and one of the risks is associated with sharing personal information as this is required when registering on a social media platform (Simić *et al.*, 2019).

Social media has its benefits and its disadvantages, it is therefore important for marketers to ensure that the content shared on social media is meaningful. Sifting out irrelevant information will assist the institution to deliver quality information on social media.

- **Presence and availability on social media platforms**

62.5% of the respondents use social media due to the presence and availability of Higher Education on social media platforms. According to Silva, Feitos, Duarte and Vasconcelos (2019), the Honeycomb theory was developed by Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre and consists of seven functional blocks of social media, these include identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. Silva *et al.*, (2019:157) state that “presence is the ability of one user to know if the other users are available.” According to Barccarella, Wagner, Kietzmann and McCarthy (2018), the dark side of presence relates to issues involving protecting or invading privacy and the safety of individuals engaging on social media. In a study conducted by Fornara and Lonnicka (2019),

it was found that students build an online social presence. Barcarella *et al.*, (2018) mention that people still upload pictures and videos of children without their consent to start a digital presence even though the dark side of social media can impact one's private life. Furthermore, Kietzmann, Silvestre, McCarthy, and Pitt (2012:114) state that “the perception of presence can vary depending on the platform used.” According to Kurtzman *et al.*, (2012), some social media platforms such as MSN and Skype enable users to share their status updates as opposed to some other social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook where such an element does not require much. Social media presence is an important aspect in the digital environment, the institution therefore needs to ensure that the content shared online is accurate and will benefit the students as the way the social media presence is interpreted by students can either create a positive or negative impact.

- **Groups allow for socialising on social media platforms**

61.2% of the respondents believe that groups associated with Higher Education Institutions allow for socialising on social media. According to Silva *et al.*, (2019), group is one of the seven functional building blocks of social media (as cited in Hermkens *et al.*, 2012). Barcarella *et al.*, (2018) explain that the negative side of groups on social media happens when people no longer define themselves as individuals but rather define themselves by the groups they belong to on social media. Kietzmann *et al.*, (2012:158) state that “groups refer to the extent to which users form communities.” Some groups that are formed on social media become influential, gain power and capitalize on this power (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2012). Barcarella *et al.*, (2018) state that one of the dark sides associated with online groups takes place when people in the group lose empathy for one another (as cited by Brewer, 1999). Group is one of the building blocks in the Honey-comb model, as the researchers point out that groups refer to the extent to which users form communities. Marketers therefore, need to ensure that they are aware of the various student groups that are available on the different social media platforms in the institution. This way, the chosen marketing strategy can be used to ensure that the correct group is targeted thereby ensuring that the social media platform used at the institution is most effective to the students. The negative side of groups can also invite violence and bring the brand of the institution into disrepute, especially during disputes and unrests.

6.2.5 HYPOTHESES

To test the hypotheses of the study, inferential statistics were conducted regarding the effectiveness of digital marketing, the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, the effectiveness of social media and the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media on the efficacy of tertiary institutions.

In terms of the respondents' perceptions of the dimension of the effectiveness of digital marketing, the empirical findings indicate that a substantial percentage of respondents prefer digital marketing and express that digital marketing is a quicker source of reliable access to information about the institution in real-time. Additionally, the results indicate that respondents find digital marketing to be a more convenient way of obtaining information. However, a few respondents found that their complaints and queries on social media were not attended to promptly. The findings are supported by Stone and Woodcock (2013) and Ferel and Pride (2016), (as cited in Kusumawati, 2019) where it was indicated that digital marketing is a source of information that is obtained quickly. This finding indicates a significant relationship between the respondents' perception of the effectiveness of digital marketing and the actual effectiveness of digital marketing. These findings are also supported by Podar (2020).

In terms of the respondents' perceptions of the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, the results depict that most respondents agree that digital marketing is a great way to market the institution locally and globally to new students via the internet. The results indicate that most of the respondents admit that digital marketing will attract new sponsorships and funding to the institution and will help promote the brand name and image of the institution and this will make the institution more attractive than its competitors. However, some respondents still prefer traditional marketing. The results also depict a fair number of negative responses with regards to whether respondents find social media an effective way of accessing information about the program or curriculum online. It can be deduced that social media assists to obtain information about activities and current events taking place at the institution, this is supported by the study conducted by Ištvančić *et al.*, (2017) which concurs that respondents use social media to obtain information about activities and current events taking place at the institutions. In addition, Hayes, Rusehman and Walker (2009), (as cited in Palandan, 2018) found that students logged onto social networks and those that applied to the university first researched information about the institution online.

In terms of respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of social media, the results depict that a majority of the respondents affirm that it is easier and quicker to gather and share information about programs, access information about textbooks and e-books on social media and thus prevent embarking on physical trips to the campus. Additionally, most of the respondents find social media channels to be a feasible way of communicating with the institution and their peers. Kumar and Nanda (2020) support this notion as their study purports that social media is a feasible way to communicate. The results also illustrate that social media connects current students to alumni students. A small percentage of respondents indicate that alumni students do not always reassure them about the brand and the institution and posts regarding their experiences. It can be assumed that these respondents do not connect with alumni students on social media and therefore, are not reassured about the brand and the institution and their past experiences with the institution. Moreover, the results indicate that social media allows for independence and one's own sense of identity, this is supported by the study conducted by Asamoah (2019), where it was revealed that social media allows for people to be independent and to explore one's own sense of identity. Furthermore, the results also assert that social media platforms such as Facebook are creative, this is supported by the study conducted by Wartalik (2017). However, a small percentage of respondents indicate that they are unaware of the institution's presence on more than one social media platform.

In terms of respondents' perceptions of the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media, the results depict that a majority of the respondents interact on Instagram compared to other social media platforms. This is supported by the study conducted by Eraslan (2019) which revealed that Instagram is the most frequently used social media platform which is used for educational and learning purposes. However, a small percentage of respondents indicate that there are unable to communicate with the institution on their Instagram page. Also, the results depict that Facebook is the second social media platform that respondents spend their time on followed by LinkedIn while Twitter is the social media platform that respondents spend the least time on. Additionally, a majority of the respondents share information on Twitter, the study conducted by Cripps *et al.*, (2020) revealed that Twitter is viewed as a source of information. However, a small percentage of respondents indicate that they are unaware that Twitter is a social media platform that the institution uses to create a hashtag movement.

6.2.6 BIOGRAPHICAL VARIABLES

The impact of the biographical variables (gender, race, age, programme of study and level of study) on the key sub-dimensions of digital marketing was evaluated using the tests of differences, namely the Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA test.

As illustrated in the results of the research instrument, there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents based on their genders. The next section will discuss the biographical variables in more detail such as gender, race, age, programme of study and level of study. We will first explain the findings of this study by unpacking the findings of gender.

6.2.6.1 GENDER

The findings of the research indicate that the study was dominated by females as they consisted 83.5% of the study which was 187 participants. Their male counterparts only constituted 16.5% of the study which was 37 participants. According to this study, the majority of the institution's population consisted of females as confirmed by Conger and Long (2013).

6.2.6.2 RACE

The findings of this study show that the majority of respondents constituted of Indians as they consisted 58.9% of the study which was 132 participants. This finding corresponds with Espinosa, Turk, Taylor, and Chessman (2019) as their findings depict a similar result about Indians being the ethnic group with the highest level of post-secondary attainment.

6.2.6.3 AGE

The findings of this study illustrate that the highest proportion of respondents was between 18- 25 years of age and constituted 89.7% of the total respondents of the study which was 201 participants. The above 25 age category only constituted 10.3% of the study which was 23 participants. According to these findings, it can be assumed that the majority of the institution's population of students falls into this age group. The South African government report that the age group between 18 to 25 years is the age group in South Africa that mostly enrolls in higher education (South Africa Government, 2020).

6.2.6.4 PROGRAMME OF STUDY

The finding of the study revealed that 122 respondents registered for the Bachelor in Intermediate Phase which constituted 54.5% whereas 81 respondents registered for the Bachelor in Foundation Phase which constituted 36.2%. There were 12 respondents registered for the Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education (Intermediate Phase Access) and 9 respondents registered for the Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education accounting for 5.4% and 4% respectively.

6.2.6.5 LEVEL OF STUDY

The research affirms that most of the respondents are fourth-year students and consisted of 84 respondents which made up 37.5%, closely followed by third-year students made up of 65 respondents, who constituted 9% of the total respondents. The research further revealed that 40 respondents were first-year students, constituting 17.9%. Finally, 35 of the respondents were second-year students and this constituted 15.6% of the total respondents.

6.2.7 CONCLUSION

This study provided an extensive discussion of the findings and key dimensions of this study. It conveyed the key dimensions and sub-dimensions of exploring the efficacy of digital marketing to promote higher education using social media platforms. According to the empirical findings of this study, it can be deduced that digital marketing is effective in promoting higher education using social media platforms. The findings of this study were discussed and compared to similar research. There have also been a few discoveries in this study, and this will be used to construct a model to be implemented. This will assist marketers in the institution when using social media platforms. It will assist them in ensuring that the social media platform chosen is most effective.

The next chapter will give heed to the development of this model and will provide recommendations and conclusions based on the findings of the study and will also provide a guideline to enhance the efficacy of digital marketing to promote higher education using social media platforms.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter, a synopsis of the empirical findings was clarified. In this chapter, recommendations for future marketing managers in higher education institutions will be made. Upon, recommendations for future research will be deliberated upon. Furthermore, the conclusions based on the study will be unveiled.

The study is significant to institutions in Higher Education and marketers, particularly marketing managers working in institutions who are pondering the efficacy of digital marketing via social media platforms. It is relevant that they know which social media platforms are most effective and need to know the benefits associated with digital marketing and social media and how often social media platforms are used by students and finally, the purpose of social media in Higher Education.

It is beneficial for them to understand this in order to take full advantage of marketing strategies for digital marketing in Higher Education to be effective and for social media platforms to be fully utilised by students in an institutional environment. The recommendations presented in this chapter may assist marketing professionals in Higher Education, to use and implement successful marketing strategies as part of their marketing campaign.

7.2 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The empirical findings illustrated that there is a positive relationship between the effectiveness of digital marketing, the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, the effectiveness of social media and prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media, respectively.

7.3 RECOMMENDATION BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The results of the study reveal that students registered for Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education place greater emphasis on the effectiveness of digital marketing, the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, and the effectiveness of social media as compared to the students registered for another programme of study.

The results of the study reveal that second-year students place greater emphasis on the effectiveness of digital marketing compared to students from other levels of study, whereas first-year students consider the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social

media the most. The findings and recommendations for each dimension of the study will be discussed. We will start with the first dimension that underpins the study which is the effectiveness of digital marketing.

7.3.1 Effectiveness of digital marketing

The results show that there is a positive relationship between the effectiveness of digital marketing in promoting efficacy. In terms of the respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of digital marketing, it was revealed that not all students find digital marketing to be convenient. Similarly, it was found that not all students were satisfied with the way the institution oversees queries and complaints on social media. From these findings with regards to the effectiveness of digital marketing, it is evident that marketers at the institution are not making substantial efforts to ensure that digital marketing is effective and is understood by students of the institution. Marketers are not creating awareness to inform students that the institution is available on different social media platforms. Furthermore, it is important that digital marketing is conveniently accessible to all students.

Therefore, the following is recommended to improve the effectiveness of marketing in the institution:

- The institution can ensure that short videos are utilised in its marketing strategy to ensure that students do not have to physically go to the institution.
- The institution can use short videos to provide answers to student queries via frequently asked questions. A chatbot can be adopted as a digital tool, to answer questions immediately.
- The institution can use social media to provide virtual tours of the campus, in this way, prospective students do not have to physically visit the institution and this makes it convenient for prospective students.
- There should be a 48-hour business time frame to attend to all queries and complaints, these queries and complaints must be handled by the management departments of the institution and a decentralised approach should be adopted. This will ensure that all departments work together in handling queries and complaints that are exclusive to each department.
- The institution can use content marketing stories via social media platforms and communicate to students, For example, if there is an event that they want students to know about, a content marketing story can be used to convey the information.

7.3.2 The impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media

Taking the respondents' perceptions about the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media into consideration, it was found that an institution with a strong brand presence and reputation makes students more marketable. For digital marketing to have an impact on higher education through social media, the institution needs to ensure that students are comfortable with using digital marketing platforms. Additionally, the study found that some students were not aware that the institution uses Instagram to interact with current and prospective students. It was found that some students were dissatisfied with the institution when it comes to handling feedback and queries related to curriculum costs, as the response on social media is not instantaneous as opposed to traditional marketing. From these findings, with regards to the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, it is evident that marketers at the institution need to pay more attention to the students' needs in order for digital marketing in higher education through social media to be effective. Therefore, the following is recommended to have an impact on digital marketing in higher education through social media:

- The marketers should take advantage of the institution's brand presence and online reputation and plan their marketing strategy on social media, by posting content regularly. Also, social media analytics can be used to gain more insight into the audience that is making use of the social media platforms.
- It is recommended that the institution hosts road shows and on-campus broadcasts, especially during orientations at the institution to promote their social media platforms. By so doing, students will be confident to use the digital marketing platforms.
- It is recommended that marketers of the institution conduct marketing campaigns to ensure that both current and prospective students are aware that the institution uses Instagram to interact with current and prospective students. These should be publicised on the website of the institution, on the online learning platforms, on official communiques to students, via student email accounts and on posters in the canteen.
- The marketing team needs to prioritise the feedback given with regards to queries related to curriculum costs and ensure that their responses are instantaneous.

7.3.3 Effectiveness of social media

In terms of respondents' perceptions about the effectiveness of social media, it was revealed that some students found social media to be convenient as it prevents students from physically going to the institution to seek information. Furthermore, in terms of respondents' perceptions about the effectiveness of social media, it was found that the alumni students do not regularly reassure students about the brand and their past experiences with the institution. The results of the study indicate that a gap exists when it comes to communication between the student and the institution and that the institution does not strengthen the relationship with them. In addition, relating to the respondents' perceptions about the effectiveness of social media, it was found that some students were unaware that the institution is available on more than one social media platform.

From these findings regarding the effectiveness of social media, it was found that for the institution to be effective on social media, the marketers need to look at the gaps that the study has revealed and the suggested recommendations on how the institution can address these gaps. This will ensure that the institution achieves the goal of achieving the effectiveness of social media.

Therefore, the following is recommended for the institution to achieve the effectiveness of social media:

- Social media should be prioritised as one of the institution's marketing strategies as it allows the institution to be creative and is also convenient, for example, the institution can have digital events and live stream them to students.
- It is recommended that marketers create more awareness campaigns to ensure that alumni students regularly reassure students about the brand and their past experiences with the institution. Feedback should be sought from graduates on the day of graduation about their overall experience at the institution, levels of satisfaction, loyalty to the institution, gaps in terms of expectations and how the institution can improve levels of service delivery. A poll can also be undertaken as to whether these graduates are likely to recommend the institution to potential future students.
- It is recommended that an alumni section should be created on the LinkedIn social media platform, this can be a space where past students engage with current or prospective students and share their experiences.

- The marketing team of the institution needs to communicate more frequently with the students so that the relationship between the students and the institution can be strengthened.
- Marketers should create marketing campaigns at the institution to ensure that students are aware that the institution is available on more than one social media platform, students must know this. This way, social media can be effective.
- The institution can also consider publishing the employability statistics of past graduates and where they are currently employed in order to attract potential students. This serves as a perfect marketing opportunity to attract prospective students to the institution when the alumni interact with current students and share their work experience on LinkedIn.

7.3.4 Prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media

In terms of respondents' perceptions of the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media, it was found that some students were unable to communicate with the institution on their Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages. Additionally, concerning the respondents' perceptions of the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media, it was found that some students felt that Twitter is not a social media platform that the institution uses to create a hashtag movement. The study revealed that a gap exists in terms of using social media within the institution to investigate how Twitter can be more effective to market the institution and create a wider reach. Moreover, in terms of respondents' perceptions of the prevalence, frequency, and purpose of social media, it was revealed that some students were made aware for the first time that the institution uses social media platforms to communicate with students. Additionally, in terms of respondents' perceptions of the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media, it was found that some students were unsure of how to contact the institution on social media, and this is a cause for concern as it indicates that they lack technological skills.

From these findings regarding the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media, it is evident that marketers of the institution have several aspects to address, to achieve the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media.

Therefore, the following is recommended for the institution to achieve the prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media:

- It is recommended that awareness is created on the different social media platforms, ensuring that students are made aware of how to communicate on the pages. For instance,

a social media institution campaign can be implemented. Many students are not very tech-savvy.

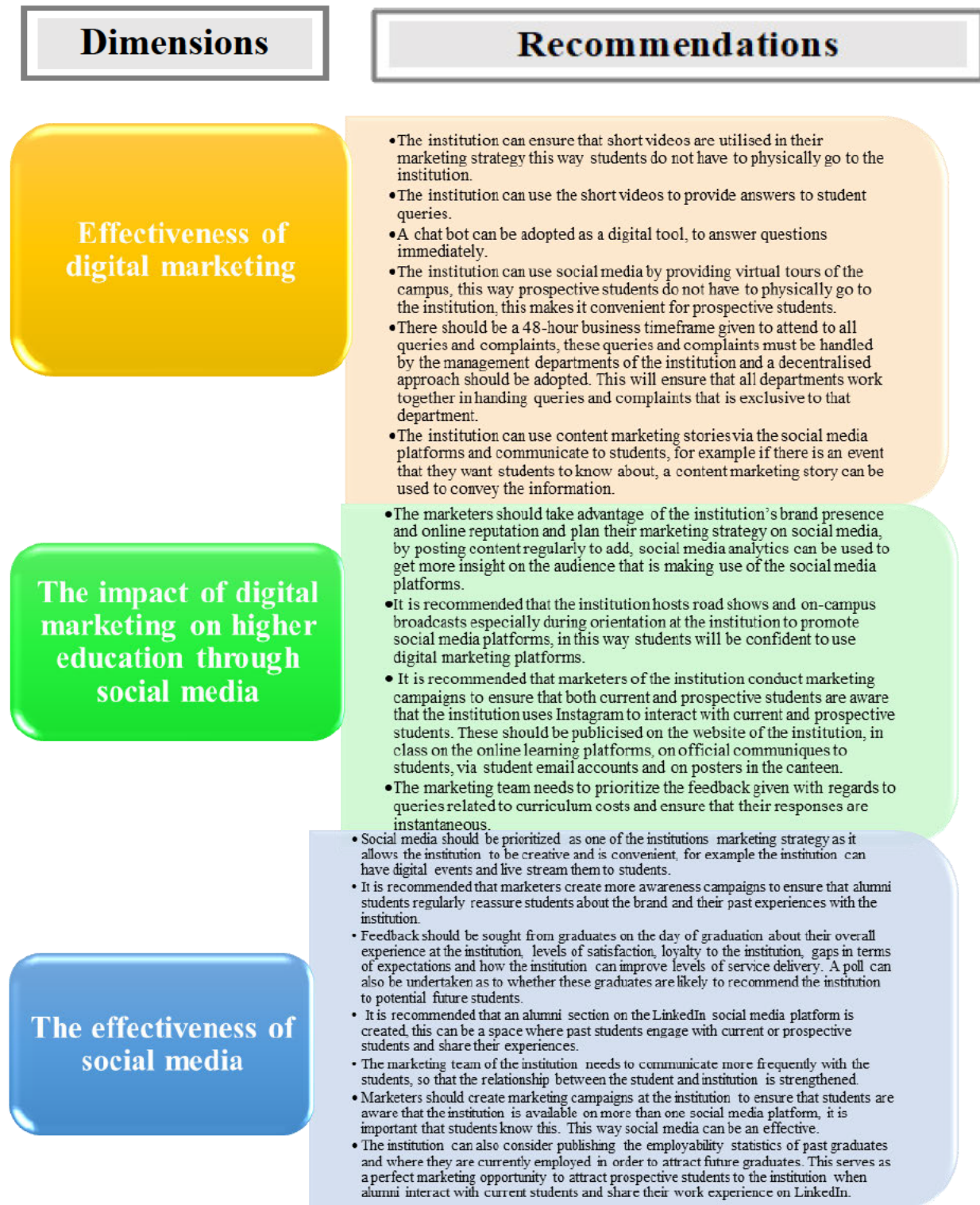
- The marketing team needs to create more hashtag movements on Twitter, for example, #Best campus memory. So that more students are aware that the institution is available on Twitter. Feelings of nostalgia are encouraged and this encourages both past and present students to care and share experiences.
- It is recommended that marketers conduct marketing campaigns at the institution informing students that the institution communicates via social media platforms.
- It is recommended that marketers need to ensure that an effective communication channel is put in place to inform students of the diverse ways that the institution can be contacted, and social media needs to be included in the communication channel. Management needs to constantly share in this process and show a hands-on approach. They need to be a part of this communication process and engage with students. This communication should not only be about marketing the institution but about interacting with students, establishing rapport, and displaying a sense of belonging while building the brand and image of the institution.
- Students are the backbone of any institution and need to feel a sense of belonging. Management, therefore, needs to be open to suggestions and be amenable to change, suggestions, queries and complaints.

In addition, regarding the Honey-comb theory, marketers need to be aware that the Honey-comb theory has seven functional blocks of social media, and these include identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups Silva, Feitos, Duarte and Vasconcelos (2019).

This study has discussed the seven functional blocks of social media and elaborated on the significance of these blocks in relation to the study. For marketers to achieve the full effectiveness of the marketing strategy, it is beneficial to understand the Honey-comb theory. The afore-mentioned recommendations are aimed at academics, marketing professionals and marketers at the institution and are graphically presented in Figure 7.1.

7.4 Recommendations for using digital marketing at higher education

Figure 7.1 Recommendations for using digital marketing at higher education institutions to enhance efficacy through social media platforms



Prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media

- It is recommended that awareness is created on the different social media platforms, ensuring that students are made aware of how to communicate on the pages. For instance, a social media institution campaign can be implemented. Many students are not very tech savvy.
- The marketing team needs to create more hashtag movements on Twitter, for example: #Best campus memory. So that more students are aware that the institution is available on Twitter. Feelings of nostalgia are encouraged and encourages both past and present students to care and share experiences.
- It is recommended that marketers conduct marketing campaigns at the institution informing students that the institution communicates using social media platforms.
- It is recommended that marketers need to ensure that an effective communication channel is put in place to inform students of the diverse ways that the institution can be contacted, and social media needs to be included in the communication channel. Management needs to constantly share in this process and show a hands-on approach. They need to be a part of this communication process and engage with students. This communication should not only be about marketing the institution but about interacting with students, establishing rapport and displaying a sense of belonging whilst building the brand and image of the institution.
- Students are the backbone of any institution and need to feel a sense of belonging. Management needs to be open to suggestions and be amenable to change, suggestions, queries and complaints.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has been limited to students from the Durban campus. Further research on this topic should be expanded to students in other campuses that reside in other provinces. Additionally, a larger sample size could be used. Also, this study focused on only four social media platforms which included Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. Research should be done to evaluate the efficacy of other social media platforms in higher education.

Digital marketing is broken down into other categories and not just social media hence, it will be interesting to look at how the other categories of digital marketing can be effective in higher education. This study looked at the efficacy of digital marketing in promoting higher education using social media platforms from the perspective of students. It will be interesting to look at the efficacy of digital marketing in promoting higher education using social media platforms from the perspective of lecturers, as an online teaching platform.

Hence, further research can be carried out on exploring the efficacy of digital marketing in promoting higher education using social media platforms and that can be compared to the results of this study.

7.5 CONCLUSION

The concluding chapter of this study has highlighted some of the recommendations that marketing professionals need to take notice of when using digital marketing to promote higher education using social media platforms. The recommendations from the results of this study were illustrated and if applied effectively by marketing professionals and marketers at an institution, can be effective in the institution. Students are also able to fully utilise the social media platforms and experience all the benefits associated with digital marketing and social media in higher education. It will provide information that is beneficial to marketers, such as social media platforms that are primarily used in the institution by students, this can assist in devising effective campaigns and widening the institution's reach.

Furthermore, recommendations for future research were discussed with an outline of the empirical findings of the study. As mentioned earlier in the first chapter, the key point of this study was to explore the efficacy of digital marketing in promoting higher institutions using social media platforms. The empirical findings of this study reveal that there exists a positive relationship among the effectiveness of digital marketing, the impact of digital marketing on higher education through social media, the effectiveness of social media and prevalence, frequency and purpose of social media. Hence, it has been established that the purpose of the study has been fulfilled.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL For research with human participants

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Good Day

My name is Vidata Surujpal and I am an MCom (Marketing) student in the School of Management, Information Technology and Governance at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Westville Campus. I can be contacted on 0799232806; email: 220052778@stu.ukzn.ac.za. My supervisor is Dr D Oodith (031 2607850; Email: oodithd@ukzn.ac.za).

You are being invited to consider participating in a study entitled, *Exploring the efficacy of digital marketing to promote higher education using social media platforms*. The aim of this study is to explore how social media addresses the needs of the student and assists in the efficacy of Higher Education institutions in fostering better customer relationships through social media platforms and how digital marketing has changed the landscape of communication and interaction within the Education fraternity.

If you choose to participate and remain in the study, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire, which should take you about 15 minutes to complete. Through your participation, I hope to uncover what are student's perception of Higher Education institutions utilisation of digital marketing mediums, particularly focusing on social media. I hope to also analyse what are the popular social media platforms of choice; and, usage rates of these platforms and most importantly how long-lasting relationships can be fostered through these new digital platforms. The results of this survey are intended to improve the value and efficacy as well as customer relationships of Higher Education Institutions in the future. The study will not involve any risks and/or discomforts.

The study is expected to comprise of 297 students that are registered at a Private Higher Education Institution in KwaZulu-Natal. Students that will be utilised for this study, are based on the Durban campus.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number HSSREC/00003244/2021).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at 220052778@stu.ukzn.ac.za. or 0799232806 or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban 4000 KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

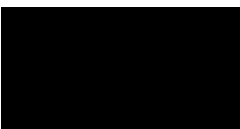
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Your participation in the study is voluntary and by participating, you are granting the researcher permission to use your responses. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in the study. Your anonymity will be maintained by the researcher and the School of Management, I.T. & Governance and your responses will not be used for any purposes outside of this study.

All data, both electronic and hard copy, will be securely stored during the study and archived for 5 years. After this time, all data will be destroyed.

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

Sincerely
Vidata Surujpal



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I _____ have been informed about the study entitled, *Exploring the efficacy of digital marketing to promote higher education using social media platforms*, by Vidata Surujpal (0799232806; email: 220052778@stu.ukzn.ac.za).

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at (0799232806; email: 220052778@stu.ukzn.ac.za).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Signature of Participant

Date

Section B: Effectiveness of Digital Marketing

1. How does digital marketing address your needs as a student?

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement below by ticking the appropriate column.

1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

	Likert Scale	1	2	3	4	5
NO	STATEMENT	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	Through digital marketing, the institution provides me with useful information, such as the sessional dates, information on various programs offered and contact numbers.					
2.	Digital marketing is a quicker source of reliable access to information about the institution in real-time.					
3.	I receive information that are relevant to my needs through the personalised marketing messages.					
4.	It is much more convenient to obtain information through digital marketing in real-time.					
5.	The information on the website is always updated and accurate.					
6.	I appreciate the personalised marketing messages sent to me by the institution such as email, sms and via social media to keep me informed of important notices.					
7.	The interactive and creative website promotes the institution and its					

	offering well.					
8.	The institution has a strong internet presence making it easy to locate on search engines.					
9.	The website assisted me in my choice of program to register for, due to the well-advertised and updated information on the website and on the pop-up banners.					
10.	Digital marketing assisted my parents/guardians in their choice to enrol me at this institution, as the costs of the programs were available and could be easily compared to competitors' prices.					
11.	Testimonials from Alumni students about their experiences are regularly emailed and posted on blogs to reassure students about their choice and the brand of the institution.					
12.	I am provided with the correct content and the institution's presence is visible through digital marketing, this builds confidence in the institution.					
13.	I feel like a valued student when the institution takes time to read my views posted on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook.					
14.	Instant feedback to queries and complaints on social media indicates that the university cares about its students.					
15.	In the event of strikes and disputes, the university listens to students and often tries to reach amicable solutions.					

16.	Through social media, my institution communicates frequently, and this strengthens my relationship with the institution.					
17.	The information shared by the institution on the chatrooms, blogs and social media platforms strengthens its bond with its students.					
18.	The institution prioritises the needs of students and takes time to listen to what the student wants.					
19.	The facilities both online and physical are conducive for an enhanced learning environment.					
20.	The support provided by the institution during the Covid 19 lockdown period exceeded my expectations and made my learning manageable.					
21.	The institution is more profit-driven rather than service-orientated.					
22.	I will recommend this institution to new students in future due to its good reputation and service.					
23.	The institution is committed to student satisfaction with the level of education that they deliver.					

.....

Section C: Impact of Digital Marketing on Higher Education Through Social Media

1. How does digital marketing assist, to determine the efficacy in Higher Education focusing on Social Media?

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement below by ticking the appropriate column.

1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

	Likert Scale	1	2	3	4	5
NO	STATEMENT	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

1.	I find the digital marketing channels (email, sms, social media) are practicable ways to communicate with the institution.					
2.	Digital marketing is a great way to market the institution locally and globally to new students via the internet.					
3.	Digital marketing will attract new sponsorships and funding to the institution and will help promote the brand name and image of the institution.					
4.	Greater publicity through digital marketing makes the institution more popular and attracts more students making the institution more attractive against competitors.					
5.	An institution with a strong brand presence and reputation online makes students more marketable to employees.					
6.	I think that the digital marketing platforms utilised by the institution are very well executed to attract attention and publicity.					
7.	I find that social media makes it easier to communicate with the institution.					
8.	Social media assists me to obtain information about activities and current events taking place at the institution.					
9.	Social media is a helpful medium to access information such as the costs of the program, curriculum outlines and					

	other institutional information which are available online and is convenient, thus preventing a physical trip to the institution for information.					
10.	Feedback and queries related to curriculum and costs are instantaneous on social media as opposed to traditional marketing.					
11.	I am able to communicate with the institution, on their Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages.					
12.	I am able to interact with the institution from anywhere in the world, as the institution communicates on the different social platforms with instant feedback.					
13.	Since the institution is easily accessible via digital marketing and makes use of more than one social-media platform, this allows for flexibility in terms of how I communicate (I am not only restricted to emails or one social media platform like Facebook).					
14.	In the event that I need to contact my institution, I can simply post a query on social media or the website knowing that a response is imminent.					
15.	Social media helps me stay in better contact with my institution and strengthens my relationship with the institution as a result.					

16.	Personalised marketing messages received via email, Facebook or sms from my institution gives me a sense of pride and makes me feel like I belong.					
17.	The institution's LinkedIn page creates, a lot of awareness about the institution and provides adequate information on how one can contact them.					
18.	The institution makes use of four social media platforms, these are: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn which I access.					
19.	I am unsure of how to contact the institution on social media.					
20.	This is the first time that I have been made aware that my institution uses social media platforms to communicate with students.					

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Section D: Effectiveness of Social Media

2. Do students find social media to be an effective way of marketing?

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement below by ticking the appropriate column.

1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

	LIKERT SCALE	1	2	3	4	5
NO	STATEMENT	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	I find social media channels to be a feasible way to communicate with the					

	institution and peers.					
2.	I compare and contrast the offering of my institution with that of other private institutions in order to ascertain if I have made the best choice competitively.					
3.	I follow graduate recruitment programs to see which institutions' graduates are more employable.					
4.	It is helpful and encouraging to cha with the alumni and other students registered at the institution and other institutions when seeking information about programs.					
5.	Social media promotes two-way communication and conversations between the institution and its students.					
6.	It is much easier and quicker to gather and share information about programs, access information about textbooks and e-books on social media.					
7.	It is helpful that all information such as, the costs of the program, curriculum outlines and other institutional information are available via digital media which is convenient and thus prevents physical trips to the campus.					
8.	The marketing of the institution on digital platforms such as Facebook and the website is more creative, and information is always updated regularly.					
9.	The interface and apps on the website and social media pages are easy to navigate and are user-friendly making it fast and easy to access and download					

	information.					
10.	The smaller classes and the use of digital interfaces in teaching and learning gives the institution a competitive advantage in their marketing strategy.					
11.	I sometimes find marketing messages on social media to be intrusive and an invasion of my privacy.					
12.	I am not restricted to only one way of communication; I am able to communicate with institution on the type of social media platform that I prefer.					
13.	I found the institutions' information about students' funding posted on social media very helpful.					
14.	Social media is a channel for me to voice my feelings/experiences, either positive/ negative about the institution.					
15.	I use social media channels as it allows for freedom of expression.					
16.	The university usually follows the conversations and responds when necessary to posts and videos posted on social media.					
17.	Social media gives me independence and my own sense of identity.					
18.	The institution uses Instagram to interact with both current and prospective students.					
19.	Twitter is a social media platform that my institution uses to create a hashtag movement.					
20.	The institution attracts other professionals to the institution, using LinkedIn.					

.....

Section E: Prevalence, Frequency and Purpose of Social Media

3. What are the most prevalent and frequently used social media platforms that students prefer using and for what purposes are they utilised?

Please indicate the most suitable responses to the questions set below: -

3.1. Please rate the following medium of choice in the order of frequency when interacting on social media **with the institution** with 1 being very infrequent and 5 being very frequent.

(Prevalence)

	Very Infrequent 1	Infrequent 2	Neutral 3	Frequent 4	Very Frequent 5
Facebook					
Twitter					
Instagram					
LinkedIn					

3.2 Please indicate approximately how much time is spent interacting on social media, **with the institution**, on the different platforms **(time)**.

	0 -2 hours 1	2 - 4 hours 2	None 3	4-6 hours 4	6 hours or more 5
Facebook					
Twitter					
Instagram					
LinkedIn					

3.3 How often do you share **institution-related information**, using social media platforms, with colleagues and peers at your institution **(occurrence)**?

	Daily 1	Weekly 2	Not at all 3	Monthly 4	Only when there is a need 5
Facebook					
Twitter					
Instagram					
LinkedIn					

3.4 How effective have you found *institutional-related* social media marketing to be?

Please use the following scale (1- very ineffective, 2- ineffective 3- neutral 4 – effective, 5 - very effective).

Very ineffective 1	Ineffective 2	Neutral 3	Effective 4	Very effective 5

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement below by ticking the appropriate column.

1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

The purpose that students utilise social media platforms for include the following:

	Likert Scale	1	2	3	4	5
No	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	It is easy to identify with and express one's identity.					
2.	Allows for sharing of content on the interactive social media platforms.					
3.	Presence and availability of Higher Education information on the social media platforms.					
4.	Customer relationships are built with Higher Education institutions.					

5.	Reputation and trustworthiness are formed with Higher Education institutions.					
6.	Groups associated with Higher Education Institutions allow for socialising on social media platforms.					

.....

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE!

Thank you for your co-operation and time in completing this document.

APPENDIX C: GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION LETTER



FACULTY OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION



28 February 2021

Dear Vidata Surujpal

RE: GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH STUDENT PARTICIPANTS AT STADIO
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at STADIO Faculty of Education, towards the M Com (Marketing) degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). It is noted that the title of the research project is: *Exploring the efficacy of digital marketing to promote higher education using social media platforms: A case study perspective.*

Your request for permission was received with a signed letter from your research supervisor Dr Devina Oodith, as well as the UKZN HSSREC Application for ethics approval – Information sheet and consent to participate in research form. It is noted that the study intends to engage with an estimated 297 student participants drawn from those enrolled in the Bachelor in Foundation Phase, Bachelor in Intermediate Phase, Diploma Programme, Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education (FP); and from the Higher Certificate in Pre-School Education with access to Intermediate Phase. The participant sample will only be drawn from students registered at the Musgrave, Durban Campus. Data will be collected via a close-ended structured questionnaire which will be emailed to the students' email address and will likely take 5-10 minutes to complete. It is envisioned that data collection will take place over a two to three month period.

The application was duly considered by the Chair of the Research Committee Dr Cherrington, and based on her feedback this permission is granted on the following conditions:

1. Ethical Clearance is obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), as the institution at which you have registered for your post graduate studies and must be submitted to the Chair: Research Committee at least one week prior to the commencement of participant recruitment.
2. Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity. STADIO Faculty of Education as the institution site of data collection must remain anonymous.
3. Data collection and student recruitment is not permitted to take place from ten days prior to the commencement of examination periods up until the close of the semester.

info@embury.ac.za

www.embury.ac.za

Head Office and Durban Musgrave Campus | T 031 303 7390 | 75 Silvertown Road, Musgrave, Durban, 4001

Registered with the Department of Higher Education and Training as a private higher education institution under the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Registration Certificate no. 20180HE5W004)
Directors: Mr JJ Huron, Dr C van der Boven, Ms S Tatham, Prof D Singh | Executive Deans: Prof. F Beer | Company Registration no. 200403172027

APPENDIX D: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



15 October 2021

Vidata Surujpal (220052778)
School Of Man Info Tech & Gov
Westville Campus

Dear VS Surujpal,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003244/2021
Project title: Exploring the efficacy of digital marketing to promote higher education using social media platforms
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 26 July 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the 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.

This approval is valid until 15 October 2022.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Professor Dipane Hlalele.

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX E: EDITORIAL CERTIFICATE



EDITORIAL CERTIFICATE

Author: Vidata Surujpal

Document Title: Exploring the Efficacy of Digital Marketing to Promote Higher Education
Using Social Media Platforms

Date Issued: 08/07/2022

JOYDEDITOR

This document certifies that the above manuscript was proofread and edited by
Mrs Joy Joel (Cell number: 078 226 9038; Email: joydeditor@gmail.com).

The document was edited for proper English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling and overall style. The editor endeavoured to ensure that the author's intended meaning was not altered during the review. All amendments were tracked with the Microsoft Word "Track Changes" feature. Therefore, the authors had the option to reject or accept each change individually.

Kind regards

