EFFECT OF BRANDING STRATEGIES ON POST GRADUATE STUDENTS'
CHOICE OF UNIVERSITIES IN NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA

LYDIA CHEPKOECH LANGAT

A Thesis Report presented to the Institute of Postgraduate Studies of Kabarak
University in Partial Fulfillment of the requirement for the Award of
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration
(Marketing Option).

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DECLARATION

The report thesis is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it has not been

presented for the award of a degree in any university or college.

Signed:_____Date:_____

Lydia Chepkoech Langat

GDB/M/1144/09/14

RECOMMENDATION

To the Institute of Postgraduate Studies:

The research thesis entitled "**Effect of Branding Strategies on Post Graduate Students' Choice of Universities in Nakuru County, Kenya**" and written by **Lydia Chepkoech Langat** is presented to the Institute of Postgraduate Studies of Kabarak University. We have reviewed the research thesis and recommend it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for award of the degree of of Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration Marketing Option.

Signed:_____Date:_____

Dr. Robert Otuya

School of Business and Management Science, University of Eldoret

Signed:_____Date:_____

Prof. Ronald Chepkilot

School of Business and Economics, Kabarak University

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents Robert Langat and Grace Linner Langat whose value for education has been a source of inspiration to me; my sisters Feliscus, Florah, Peninah, Naomi, nieces and nephews. Much dedication goes to Ronny and the children:-Titian, Trevor and Calvin who have always given me continuous support and encouragement during my doctoral studies. Further dedication is to my late uncle for reminding me to remain focused when pursuing selected goals in life, ideals without which this work would not have been accomplished; I love you very much.

ABSTRACT

Branding in universities are alternatives to bring differentiation in order to attract the attention of stakeholders. The problem addressed by this study was to examine how branding strategies such as internal branding strategies, external branding strategies and service mix branding strategies influenced postgraduate students' choice of Universities in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study employed explanatory research design, the population of the study comprised of 3,742 universities postgraduate students, of which 212 were randomly sampled. The universities were inclusive of the campuses which were both public and private. A pilot study was used to pretest the questionnaire from the respondents. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of data collection instrument. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as; frequencies, percentages, and Chi-square while inferential statistics methods included Pearson correlation and multiple regressions analysis were used to test the relationship between variables. The study findings indicate that there exists a statistically significant positive relationship between internal branding strategies employed by universities and postgraduate student choice of universities (β = 0.401, p<0.05). There exist statistically insignificant, positive relationship between external branding strategies employed by universities and postgraduate student choice of universities (β = 067, p>0.05).The results further indicated that there exists a statistically significant positive relationship between service mix branding strategies employed by universities and postgraduate student choice of universities (β = 0.347, p<0.05). It is recommended that the university through internal branding leadership should ensure an organization culture created which will enhance prospective students' choice of postgraduate programs and also enhance employees' positive communication about the university. Universities management should have partnership programme and collaborations with the international institutions to enhance students and staff benefits. They should also support or carry out CSR activities. Postgraduate programs should also be priced fairly in a bid to attract more students, while relevant content and material information should be available for easy access in aiding students for registration of postgraduate academic programs. Universities should enhance the use of social media as a promotional channel for reaching prospective students. Universities should ensure stocked updated reading material through subscription to electronic academic journals.

Key words: Branding strategies, Post Graduate students' Choice.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BTSL	**:**	Brand-specific Transactional Leadership
CBBE	**:**	Consumer Based Brand Equity
CRM	**:**	Customer Relationship Management
CSM	**:**	Corporate Societal Marketing
HLI	**:**	Higher Education Institutions
NACOSTI	**:**	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
PGP	**:**	Post Graduate Programme
PGS	**:**	Post Graduate Studies
SERVQUAL	**:**	Service Quality
SPSS	**:**	Social Package for Social Sciences
TPB	**:**	Theory of planned Behaviour

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Brand in Universities: Higher education brand is a perceptions or feelings that consumers hold about a particular institution (McNally & Speak 2002). Brand refers to a target group or audience's comprehension of a branded object based on information they have received about the branded object and experiences they have had with the branded object (Wymer, 2013). The researcher considered branding to be strategies adopted by Universities which influence consumer choice. These included internal branding strategies, external branding strategies and service mix strategies.

Consumer choice: This relates preferences to consumption expenditures and to consumer preferences curves on universities postgraduate programmes. (Gershoff, Andrew &Gita Johar 2006).Consumer choice in this study implies to the choice of postgraduate programmes amongst students and the reason for their preference.

Corporate Social Responsibility: Social responsibility is the responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment through transparent and ethical behavior that is consistent with sustainable development and the welfare of society; takes into account the expectations of stakeholders; is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behavior; and is integrated throughout the organization". (Working definition, ISO 26000 Working Group on Social Responsibility, Sydney, February 2007). The study considered Corporate Social Responsibility as non -profit activities done by the Universities to improve its public image to the external stakeholders.

Culture: Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values , orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioral conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behavior and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behavior.' (Spencer, 2012). These included the beliefs, values, mission and core values which guide the activities of the Universities.

Customer Relationship Management: Customer relationship management (CRM) is a combination of people, processes and technology that seeks to understand a company's customers. It is an integrated approach to managing relationships by focusing on customer retention and relationship development (Injazz & Karen, 2003). It involves things done to link ties and create long-term student relationship and the Universities during their study period and after completion.

Employees: a person in the service of another under any contract of hire, express or implied, oral or written, where the employer has the power or right to control and direct the employee in the material details of how the work is to be performed (Muhl,2002). These are employees with the required skills, technical know-how in the specific areas considered by the students when making choices.

External brand strategies: It focuses on external communication and support which helped in creating a brand image, defining and delivering the brand promise to the customer. These are external factors that influence the consumer towards an organizations image. These include customer relationship focus and corporate social responsibility (Tosti & Stotz, 2002). This study considered external branding in terms of aspects conducted by the universities which influence the students' choice for postgraduate programmes. These activities include Corporate Social Responsibilities and Customer Relationship management.

Internal branding strategies: These are the set of strategic processes that support and enable employees in institutions of higher learning to give the students experience consistently. These include, but are not limited to, internal communications, leadership practices, training support, recruitment practices, reward & recognition programs and sustainability factors (Canadian Marketing Association, 2007). This study considered internal branding strategies in promoting the company brand values amongst postgraduate students by implementing strategic processes that align and empower employees to deliver the appropriate customer experience in a consistent fashion through processes like internal communications, training support,

leadership practices, reward & recognition programs, recruitment practices and sustainability factors, culture and leadership styles.

Leadership Styles: Leadership style' is the general manner, outlook, attitude, and behavior of a leader, particularly in relation to his or her colleagues and team members (Chartered Management Institute, 2010). These are the leadership traits adopted by management which is spread over to the employees in the cadres of the hierarchy which are considered by postgraduate students when making a choice.

Private Universities: Private University refers to any type of university which is outside the public university education system, that is, non-public, non-government and quasi-public (Reisz, 2003). These are universities owned by a for-profit company or a non-profit organization and privately funded through payment for services by students themselves, by insurers, Churches, or by other stakeholders.

Public Universities: Is a learning institution that is predominantly funded by public means through a national or sub-national government, as opposed to private universities. Whether a national university is considered public varies from one country (or region) to another, largely depending on the specific education landscape (Rizzo, 2006). This is a university that is predominantly funded by public means through a national or sub-national government. These are universities owned by a for-profit company or a non-profit organization and publicly funded through payment for services by students themselves through Higher Education Loan Board and others self- sponsored.

Service Mix Branding Strategies: Being part of service blueprint design, service mix strategies are also referred to as extended marketing mix. Service mix comprises 7 Ps compared to the product marketing mix which contains 4 Ps. Thus three more P's are further added which included people, process, and physical ambiance. Service mix assumes service as a product. These factors are necessary for optimum service delivery (Bhasin, 2016).For purposes of this study, these are the different types of service mix strategies including the product, price, promotion, place, physical aspects, process and the people

component considered by postgraduate students when making a choice for University.

Students Choice: This is a positive decision to take a module or to study in a particular institution where choices are made on the basis of consideration of different factors (Newton, 2007).The study considered postgraduate programme uptake in respective universities to denote student choice.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter lays the foundation of the study. It discusses the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, specific objectives, research hypothesis, and significance of the study, scope of the study, limitations of the study and assumptions of the study. These are based on the branding strategies and postgraduate choice of Universities in Nakuru County, Kenya.

1.2 Background to the Study

Customers value their relationships with their branded possessions and with marketing agents and institutions that own and manage the brand. Strong brands enjoy customer loyalty, the potential to charge premium prices, and considerable brand power to support new product and service launches. Companies need to have a thorough understanding of customer beliefs, behaviors, product or service attributes, and competitors (Alexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). Building a brand-driven culture is a lifelong commitment to a mindset and a way of life that takes time, planning and perseverance that produces intangible outputs which include greater customer satisfaction, reduced price sensitivity, fewer customer defections, a greater share of customers' wallets, more referrals, and a higher percentage of repeat business (Knapp, 2000).

Corporations have become aware of the importance of their names and are trying to establish and create a strong link between their corporate brand and product brand (Uehling, 2000). However, although there are several theories that have been advanced explaining how customers evaluate and select a particular product (Jamal & Goode, 2001; Muthukrishnan & Kardes, 2001; Low & Lamb, 2000) most of these

attempts have only partially examined the impact of corporate branding on consumers' product evaluation, purchase intentions and organizational performance.

Branding has increased in significance as both a corporate principle and as a marketing strategy as organizations struggle to compete for the devotion of customers and consumers in what has often been coined the attention economy (Davenport & Beck, 2001; Schroeder, 2002). Service marketing has been considered distinct from product marketing based on several fundamental characteristics considered to be unique to services: intangibility, the inseparability of production and consumption, heterogeneity and perishability. However, the fundamental difference most often cited is intangibility since most services are "performances, rather than objects, they cannot be seen, felt, tasted or touched in the same manner in which goods can be sensed" (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985).

The twenty-first century age represents changes in the marketing strategies employed by organizations and institutions in order to help them be very competitive and be sustainable in the turbulent market that they find themselves. Today's consumers live in a world where the purchase of products and services is enormous and continuous (Rindell, 2008). In order to survive in the market, companies are keenly interested in developing strong brands that lead to long-term and customer relationships (Hess, Story & Danes, 2011).

 Branding has emerged as part and parcel of modern day marketing strategies and now considered a key organizational asset (Kotler, 2000).   According to Aaker (2000), he offers that brand equity can help a customer interpret, process, store, and retrieve a large quantity of information about products and brands; affect the customer's confidence in the purchase decision, and enhance a customer's satisfaction when the

individual uses the product. Perhaps the first step to building a strong brand and fostering brand equity is to identify the power of the brand. Aaker (2000) proposes five brand equity assets as the source of the equity created, these brand equity assets include; being aware of the brand and name, brand loyalty, quality of the perceived brand, brand association and proprietary brand assets such as trademarks and patents. It is common for managers to recognize the importance of brand equity as an asset, however, their actions are sometimes more focused on short-term results than on that of building brand equity. Further, if brand-building activities represents, in lieu of activities that are more beneficial for performance, declines in brand equity may not be realized if adequate systems to measure it are not in place. Brand building activities warrant a long-term focus, however, are often sacrificed for sales promotions that yield a short-term return (Aaker, 2000). A great brand is not built by accident, but rather it is the result of accomplishing a series of logically linked steps with consumers (Keller 2008). Furthermore, Keller (2008) offers three elements for building a strong brand; they are a positive brand evaluation, accessible brand attitude and a consistent brand image. Positive brand evaluations involve the consumer believing that the brand delivers superior performance.

Farquhar (2009), states that brand attitude relates to how quickly an individual can retrieve something stored in memory, which is similar to Keller's (2008) brand recognition and recall. Finally, Farquhar (2008) describes the importance of a consistent brand image, meaning that all marketing communications should be integrated and the message to be consistent throughout all mediums. Ultimately, it has been found that 'it is the consistency of this brand-consumer relationship that counts; if one changes, the other must too' (Farquhar 2009). Aaker (2000) states brand equity as a set of assets which comprises name awareness, perceived quality, loyal customers

and other associations which are associated with the brand itself and which add equity to the service or product that is on offer. Brand equity has also been defined by Keller (2008) as brand's effect on customers' response to the marketing activities which are associated with any particular product or service. Therefore from the above definitions, brand equity is a multi-dimensional concept (De Chernatony, Duty & Segal-Horn 2003) and can be considered from a number of different perspectives, including financial markets, the consumer, the firm, the employees and the channel of communication (Supornpraditchai, Miller, Lings, & Jonmundsson, 2007). From customers' perspective, brand equity entails features such as superior product performance, minimal information costs, stronger reduction of risk and positive image of the product offered. Consumer-based brand equity represents the added equity of the brand to the consumer (Farquhar, 2009).

For many, a university degree is a one-time purchase. Therefore, when looking at brand loyalty and brand equity and the application of existing theoretical models to higher education marketing, where one must consider these differences. For instance, in the higher education context, there could be less emphasis on developing brand loyalty in terms of repeat purchase, and more emphasis on building customer-based brand equity to promote positive word of mouth marketing. This is not to say that brand loyalty is not pertinent to higher education marketing as it is. But rather brand loyalty may look somewhat different in higher education. In Keller's (2001) pyramid, brand loyalty assumes top priority and alludes to the importance of this in generating repeat purchases.

It is described as the 'ultimate relationship' between brand and consumer and should be the underlying goal in marketing decision-making (Keller, 2001). However, repeat purchase in he may not be the key driver, but rather it could be student satisfaction,

i.e. the experience involving the use of the product, as the key measure in developing customer-based brand equity. Keller's (2001), model for establishing brand equity is possibly the most comprehensive and will serve as the foundation for the discussion on establishing customer-based brand equity in the sector.

An important strategic decision is to build and maintain a favorable and strong brand (Sadler, 2003), which in turn will create a desirable external image for the company. Since Strategic Business Units have to operate in different industries and different markets, they want their own special brands and logos. The decision to apply a corporate brand, more generally called an organization brand (Aaker, 2004) must be made very carefully because the corporate brand is the identifier of a corporation and is used to support business unit communications. Consumers' perspective of the brand is likened to other products that to corporate with the parent brand or corporate brand. The corporate branding where is a valuable asset that encompasses the vision, core values, image and actions of the corporation. The corporate the organization increases its profitability and sales, reduce its costs and creates a unique position in the marketplace if it influences corporate on a well-run promotion campaign following an effective corporate branding strategy (Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Aaker, 2004). Consequently, one crucial decision in multi-business corporations is to determine the use of corporate branding strategy, and to a should assess whether the selected larger extent than product meets the intended outcome our not.

Researchers done on branding have focused on consumer products such as food, clothing, electrical appliances and telecommunications equipment, and so on. Kenya has a brand of excellence in the services sector such as banking, airlines, tourism and other forms of service. There exist few empirical studies (Malim, 2014; Mwangi, 2013; Schulz, 2013) which have focused on branding strategies and management but

with emphasis on firms' performance. A study conducted by Kamau (2013), although focused on private universities in Kenya, whose concentration was on generic strategies. Universities in Kenya are not just known as purely educational organizations; they are working to highlight the uniqueness of each other like other corporate organizations that are able to create financial support. University ranking is depended on the organizational distinguish with other universities, intensive branding effort, high mentality power, the behavior of buyers and also the location of the university (Chapleo, 2005).

Therefore, it is clear that branding is very important to Universities. It is able to distinguish a university with other universities. From the few studies that have been conducted, it was found that branding is necessary to avoid brand failure in the market by creating the perception that helps in business; building a quality reputation, increasing sales, delivering the promise consistently, improving product and process of organization, positioning difference and user experience, and enabling organizations to maintain a position in the market (Brymer, 2003). Branding activities in higher education institutions are relevant as well as in the commercial world (Roper & Davies, 2007). This sector is not easily compatible with all the principles. University branding by far receives limited observation among academicians. Although this scenario is changing, there is still little evidence on how and whether the branding activities at the university are effective.

1.1.1 Branding in Universities

Universities are looking for alternatives to differentiate their organizations in order to attract the attention of stakeholders and in line with the current educational trends. As a service field with the same characteristics like any other, it should always be designed differently to retain customers' perception of the service and avoid

duplication by competitors (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004). Increased competition makes it imperative for universities and colleges to search for a unique identity and a definition of what they are in order to differentiate themselves and attract students and academic staff (Chapleo, 2004; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007).One such brand management practice is the use of external visual executions like logos, taglines and advertising campaigns (Bunzel, 2007). According to Doyle (2001), the creation of a successful brand requires three things: an effective product, a distinctive identity, and added values. However, there continues to be no single accepted definition of what constitutes a brand, particularly with respect to higher education (Chapleo, 2009). Despite these criticisms, Bulotaite, (2003) argues that university names continue to have the power to evoke associations, emotions, and images suggesting that one of the roles of the university and a marketing department is to build, manage, develop and leverage these impressions to their competitive advantage. Although the use of branding in the education system in the United States is limited, branding is said to be a center of expertise, which needs to be understood and developed in order to face the increased competition between universities (Chapleo, 2007).

An organization can determine and communicate about the brand but may find it more difficult to manage reputation due to the influence of organizational behavior (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004). However, it seems there is little doubt about the extent of overlap between the terms when used in the context of the university, and in most cases, reputation is more comfortably used by the university in the discussion. Another fundamental issue being debated is the university corporate brand that may be interpreted in complex and different forms by various stakeholders with varying perceptions (Roper & Davies, 2007), which enhances the challenge of branding

activities (Waeraas & Solbakk, 2008). The definition of university branding may or may not be similar to other commercial organizations (Chapleo, 2004).

Rolfe (2003) states that universities have spent a lot of resources in branding their institutions. Branding objectives are to increase sales, maintain and enhance the development of the market, create a selling climax, inform and educate the market, create a different competition, and improve promotion efficiency, create the identity and brand awareness, assurance of quality, quantity and users satisfaction, and promote products Branding objectives for the university should take into account what is to be achieved by the brand in the broader context. Originally, the branding was stimulated as a method to highlight product's name and communicate authenticity, stability, and reputation of the manufacturer. Most of the branding concept is clear and unambiguous when it is associated with goods branding but generally, it is more related to the commercial field. According to De Chernatony and McDonald (2005), flourishing brands presents a sustainable competitive advantage and higher profit margin as well as enhanced market performance. These concepts have become a priority when used in universities but challenging to measure in other sectors of the economy.

Holt (2002) argues that, in order to obtain the social value, cultural content must go through the brand. Post-modern consumer culture also insists that the meaning must be communicated through the brand to make it worthwhile thus these brands will be more valuable if it is offered not as a cultural blueprint, but as a cultural resource. Keller (2003) and De Chernatony & McDonald (2005) assert that it is imperative to quantify the performance of the brand and also monitor this performance in accordance with the firm's laid statutes. Further, Keller (2003) states that the value

chain of a specific brand gives a firm to understand its financial impact on the marketing expenses associated with the brand.

Measurement is very important to show the difference of a university with other universities. This is because if the university does not focus on highlighting the difference of its brand, the university will be considered as clones and the best way for the university is to follow the leader (Fisher, 2005). Measurements in the university are based on the curriculum and the quality of faculty from student and financial aid and students' selection which are assessed as a whole. Chapleo (2005) rants to see whether Universities has successfully developed the brand or not and the measure of success will be based on sustainable branding brand (despite competition), images that encourage customers to buy, and the ever-increasing number of buyers. Meanwhile, Belanger *et al* (2002) describe the successful branding is the branding that can maintain the number of students in the institution, and maintain student exchange through students memory of the university and strive to create and maintain a strong brand to be distinguished from other universities. Despite the ongoing process of branding, the process in the university as a social institution should be maintained even if we are heading into the industrial age (Bjorn, 2005).

Branding can be used strategically and conceptually by educational institutions. The marketing of education is needed for successful recruitment and for increasing market share of resources and students (Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown & Foskett, 2002). Many educational executives are cognizant of the need for "marketization" – the marketing of their educational institutions. One particularly important marketing concept that has not been addressed adequately in the marketing of services is that of branding, particularly in the context of branding education. The university sector has traditionally led research into the marketing of education products (Arenson, 2004;

Chapleo, 2003; Holmes, 2003; Gifford, 2004 & Reader, 2003), amongst others. These articles describe how universities can differentiate themselves through the use of branding strategies, for example by creating a sense of community between the educational product and its customers (Arenson, 2004), and through a number of practical activities on how to create a brand, followed by reasons on why a brand is represented (Chapleo, 2003; Gifford, 2004; Holmes, 2003). There also exists a number of marketing articles dealing with branding in schools, such as those by Oplatka & Helmsley- Brown (2004), positioning schools using marketing plans, communicating with its customers and clients, and brand valuation. A research by Heaney and Ross (2006) provided a Strategic 3-Step Brand Building Model for schools and educational institutions. It further provided an important contribution to branding in the services sector to actually prescribe a process on how to build brand equity for schools.

 Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka's, (2006) acknowledges that the notion of branding has barely made its mark in higher education marketing. They further suggest that research into branding in the context of higher education is in its infancy, branding as a marketing concept has become increasingly common in higher education over the last decade as universities search for new ways to position themselves in an increasingly global and competitive marketplace. The concept of 'what is a university' and 'what do we stand for' has never been taken as seriously. Building on previous argues that the challenge for higher education institutions is that while product branding theory has evolved and its techniques are well established, the application to services is less certain, particularly in areas of education works (De Chernatony, Drury, & Segal-Horn, 2005; Hankinson, 2004; Chapleo, 2010).

McNally and Speak (2002), acknowledges that higher education brand is the perceptions that consumers hold about a particular institution and to secure sustainability in universities has meant a paradigm shift in the promotional mix of many universities from the use of traditional promotional tools as funding from various governments for universities and colleges dwindle to branding (Pinar, Trapp, Girard & Boyt 2011). They further assert that in today's complex and highly competitive marketplace, universities and colleges in realizing a need to develop sustainable strategies, these institutions of higher learning have turned to branding as a solution. However, because of unique service characteristics, universities' branding attempts may not always result in success.

Previous studies by numerous researchers have indicated that institutions of higher learning branding have heavily borrowed from numerous best practices from corporate environment thus showing some similarity in branding aspects between the universities and the business environment (Gumport, 2000).Whichever opinion that people hold branding organizations such as universities involves a lot of complexities as compared to product branding. Whichever opinion that people hold branding organizations such as universities involves a lot of complexities as compared to product branding. University brand management is concerned about people and their attitudes, beliefs, and values are not static or the same but may vary considerably. University branding can be likened to corporate branding where the organizational culture, for instance, can influence corporate brand to a much larger extent than product branding.

Balmer, (2001) states that it also requires total commitment to the corporate institution by all staff which in turn is needed to recruit high-quality students, faculty members and attract funding. The Higher institution of learning origin in the East

Africa dates back to 1922 when Makerere College in the Republic of Uganda was established as technical and vocational college. It setbacks, in a bid to meet the academic needs of citizens of the East African countries namely; Tanganyika and Zanzibar, Uganda, Kenya as well as Malawi and Zambia. In the 1940s and 1950s, Makerere College was the only institution of higher learning in East African region up to until 1952 when Royal Technical College was established in Nairobi. The Royal Technical College was later elevated to a University college in 1963. This elevation of Royal Technical College based in Nairobi to a university college was as a result of the establishment of The University of East Africa which had three constituent colleges located in Kampala (Makerere College), Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. The University of East Africa continued to offer academic programmes of the University of London through collaboration until 1966.

The University of East Africa was later dissolved in 1970 to pave way for establishment of three independent universities namely the University of Nairobi, University of Dar es Salaam and Makerere University. The University of Nairobi was thus established as a first autonomous institution of higher learning in Kenya (Jowi, 2003). Education, Science, and Technology 2012, Kenya has fifty-two public, private and constituent university college institutions. All these institutions compete for students; therefore universities need to be aggressive. Universities in Kenya are taking both electronic and print media to advertise programmes and display their achievement. Some universities are buying expensive airtime on television and in print media, showcasing prominent alumni they consider as role models who are most successful media and corporate personnel. This is done in hope that such display will attract more students to their institutions (Waruru, 2013).

University branding may vary in regards to the size of the university. Older universities often believe that they can survive on the reputation and that this gives them sufficient attention (Bulotaite, 2003). A better example of such an institution of higher learning rated highly in terms of reputation is the University of Nairobi. It was the first established university in Kenya and everyone believes it's the best university which they can recommend to anyone. This university has already established itself. The name stands out among the rest. On the other hand, smaller universities consider the concept of branding more.

Universities doing more branding other smaller universities will be required to join the bandwagon to remind their clients that they are the best too. Bunzel, (2007) urges that branding need not be necessary for the top universities, but , suggest the smaller universities should market themselves more to improve on their reputation. Universities are also changing their marketing strategies in advertising their programmes. According to Nganga (2010), Kenya's universities are targeting specific audiences by introducing courses that have market demand. Over the past few months Kenya's universities (public and private have spent tens of thousands of dollars to boost their capacity to enroll a soaring number of students seeking the additional qualifications. With the demand of MBA degree rising, universities are spending heavily on advertising their courses. No day goes by without a university advert on both print and broadcast media. Universities are spending money to make money – public universities are been forced to supplement their income through high-fee courses such as MBA, as their subsidies have declined (Nganga, 2010).

Education industry in Kenya has incrementally faced competition both public and private owing to globalization and technological improvement. Universities in Kenya are going through massive transformation efforts to cope with the constantly changing

business environment. Universities have expanded their capacities to meet increased demand for its training and research services both locally and regionally. Therefore, this study sought to examine the effect branding strategies on postgraduate students' choice of universities Nakuru County, Kenya.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Increased pressure on Higher Education Institutions leads to increased national and international competition for students and research funding, leading to an increase in managerialism and new public management techniques within the sector (Brandt, 2009; Brown, 2011). This has meant that tools and practices traditionally used within the corporate sector are increasingly employed by Universities in Kenya. An area in which this change is particularly apparent is in the use of marketing and brand management, which is largely used in order to attract students and build the reputation (Chapleo, 2011). Universities in Kenya have expanded their capacities to meet increased demand for training and research services both locally and regionally. It, therefore, follows that marketer who knows how best to manipulate consumer perception and therefore better position their brand in the minds of the consumers will definitely winners in the marketing warfare emerge. Thus, in order to keep up with fierce competition, universities need to transform their branding strategies which form the objectives of the study.

A powerful brand will enhance a customer's attitude strength of the product association of a brand. Despite quality service assurance processes and regulatory requirements, many consumers believe that educational institutions have lost sight of their original vision and are more interested in increasing profits, especially through self-sponsored programmes. This has been propagated by the increased number of universities offering the same courses and increasingly complex and subject scrutiny

especially from the Commission for University education (Commission for University Education, 2015). In this case, it has led to customer's need in building brand loyalty through the implementation of brand strategies by Universities (Wymer, 2013). Brand management studies have been conducted in Universities mainly in developed countries (Jevons, 2006, Chapleo, Molesworth, Sullion, & Nixon 2011; Brandt, Hovdhaugen & Aamodt, 2009). Locally, there exist few empirical studies (Malim, 2014; Mwangi, 2013; Schulz, 2013) which have focused on branding strategies and management but with emphasis on firms' performance.

However, empirical studies examining the relationship between branding management and universities positioning, marketing and brand management have reported ambiguous and complex responses and highlighted the unique values and beliefs inherent in the academic culture. Branding was appreciated in a study by Pringle (2013) in Universities it was perceived as representing the unwelcomed encroachment of business ideology within the University under study and a complex balancing act combining multiple attributes. Thus the question was the applicability of existing theories of branding in higher education and institutions. The conflicting finding in the literature and the unwelcomed encroachment of business ideology on branding within the University requires further studies.

 In Africa studies concerning brand management practices and universities positioning such as (Mourad, Ennew and Kortam, 2011) in Egypt and (Mupemhi, 2013) in Zimbabwe have been done. A study conducted by Kamau (2013) focused on private universities in Kenya but the concentration was on generic strategies. However, the studies focused on brand management which is a process and not the study of specific branding strategies and its implementation in the Universities. Therefore, this was part of the reason to empirically investigate the effect of branding strategies employed by

Universities in their bid to attract postgraduate students with a key to the variables under study.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of branding strategies on post graduate students' choice of Universities in Nakuru County, Kenya.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

In achieving the main objective, the study was guided by the following specific objectives:

i. To examine the effect of internal branding strategies on post graduate students' choice of university.

ii. To examine the effect of external branding strategies on post graduate students' choice of university.

iii. To assess effect of service mix branding strategies on post graduate students' choice of university.

1.6 Research Hypotheses

$H_{O1:}$ There is no significant effect of Internal branding strategies on post graduate students' choice of university.

$H_{O2:}$ There is no significant effect of external branding strategies on post graduate students' choice of university.

$H_{O3:}$ There is no significant effect of service mix branding strategies on post graduate students' choice of university.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The research findings will contribute to academic theory development in the application of branding in the domain of marketing by use of branding strategies in

response to postgraduate student's choice of universities. It describes the relationships between various variables operationalized by a conceptual model derived by the researcher using extant literature on brand marketing and its influence on postgraduate student's choice of universities. The findings will be useful for the turbulent market environment in universities by informing the industry players on appropriate branding strategies that can strengthen the organization brand image. Through generating a regression model of universities branding strategies and postgraduate students' choice of universities, the study has contributed towards the development of a branding strategies framework in the context of a developing country. The study will be of benefit to researchers by providing the facts needed for making comparisons in future university branding strategies studies conducted in Kenya or other developing countries during the irrespective time and usability.

Further, the findings of this study will inform policy-makers on potential interventions of branding strategies that may work to resolve the current problem posed by the skewed performance of firms in the University sector in Kenya. Universities can use corporate branding to unite their various clientele or stakeholders in strategically branding their organization and thus it is imperative to keep track of such activities. The study identified branding strategies and its influence on the postgraduate students choice of Universities in Nakuru County, Kenya and therefore will contribute positively to the knowledge relative to which influences are more effective.

The study established that there is a growing awareness of consumer on brands and massive transformation efforts by universities to cope with constantly changing business practices among universities in Kenya. It also established that consumers are forming generalized beliefs that there are many brands offered in the marketplace. This information is important for university management in Kenya business since in

the future they will be required to reshape their strategies to embrace branding strategies for competitive advantage in the marketplace. As students become more informed and knowledgeable of the brands offered, universities will be required to understand market-driven programmes to incorporate in their operations and corporate decisions.

The study is important to the universities and society at large by contributing to the existing knowledge on branding strategies on student choice in Nakuru County, which has not attract funding. The study unveiled the effect of branding strategies on and the synergy that exists between these variables considered and the strategies adopted by these universities in Nakuru County Kenya which the stakeholders might consider.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The study focused on branding strategies on student choice of university postgraduate students in Nakuru County, Kenya from March 2017 to May 2017. The study used a population drawn from postgraduate students in Universities in Nakuru County which represents a major component of both public and private universities. Nakuru County has a fair representation of these universities. Also, the area was considered because it constitutes an area with postgraduate students with homogeneity in terms of making choices for the university programmes. Postgraduate university students are deemed to be more rational in their choice compared to other categories of students. The researcher conducted the study to give an understanding of the effect of branding strategies adopted by these universities on students' choice of postgraduate programmes offered in Nakuru County, Kenya.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Since the study was carried out in Universities in Nakuru County, the generalization of results to other counties in the country was threatened. To overcome this, the study picked on a broad-based category of respondents as the unit of analysis by focusing on postgraduate students. Further, conducting the study in a cosmopolitan location with a good representation of both public and private universities helped to improve the research findings for generalization purposes. However, replication of the study may be required for other categories of students for comparison purposes.

During data collection phase, several setbacks, some respondents were unwilling to disclose information based on unfounded fear. In order to overcome this, the respondents were assured of the confidentiality of information they would give. The respondents were given an explanation of the purpose of the study and the benefits of its findings to the students and university management in the implementation of branding strategies. In case the respondents were not willing to participate due to busy schedules, they were replaced by selecting those who were willing to participate in the study in order to ensure that the required sample size was achieved.

Due to time constraints, it was impractical to conduct a longitudinal study over several years on branding strategies adopted by universities in Nakuru County, Kenya. To overcome this, the study adopted a descriptive research design approach hence it was not possible to clearly establish the different branding strategies adopted by universities in relations to increased competition triggered by universities offering the same programmes.

1.10 Assumptions of the study

The study assumed that all universities in Nakuru County carry out branding strategies under study. It was also assumed that all the universities offer post graduate programs and they have homogeneous characteristics in terms of academic programs offered, organizational structure and culture.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter discusses the theoretical review and the frameworks that explain the branding strategies and postgraduate students' choice of universities in Nakuru County, Kenya as well as the empirical studies that have been done on the area both in the private as well as the public University. A conceptual framework was developed from a review of existing studies.

2.2 Overview of Branding Strategies and Consumer Choice

These are many empirical researches undertaken by scholars on brand management, brand equity and consumer choice. The study built on these empirical studies in making inferences, on research findings consistency with the reviewed past studies.

2.2.1 Brand Management Practices

In a research conducted Hu (2016) on the relationship between brand origin and brand equity, he acknowledges that brand is an important element in the internationalization process and is very essential for a firm operating in the international business. The study further adds that brand equity is an important intangible asset for a firm, which also affects the customer's purchase intention. Therefore, it is necessary for a brand management team to understand how different consumer segments react to the different brand equity and which factors influence their choices of purchase. The aim of this research was to investigate and compare the Chinese and non-Chinese consumers' opinions towards the impacts of brand origin on brand equity.

The study adopted quantitative research method which is a deductive approach according to the author. An explanatory and cross-sectional study was conducted in

this research through a structured and self-completed online survey. During the data analysis process, the research utilized, a two-sample t-test and correlation analysis method were utilized. The empirical study tests four hypotheses on how brand origin is correlative to brand equity. Although only one hypothesis is accepted according to the data analysis process, some other new findings indicate that brand image has a significant relevance to brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty.

In a study conducted by Doo Syen Kang, (2016) on Turning inside out: perceived internal branding in customer-firm relationship building the researcher examined the strategic importance of perceived internal branding in building symbolic and behavioral relationships with a corporate in the service sector. He further states that Research on internal branding has been confined only to how internal staff understands brand values. He confirms that despite the importance of alignment between internal and external communication, little emphasis has been placed on consumers' perception of how internal staff understands brand values. Consumers can shape their overall evaluation on service based on external communication about internal training and its congruence with brand values even before experiencing service.

The researcher used a theoretical model of cognitive, affective and behavioral responses which is empirically tested using the structural equation modeling approach where multiple group comparison is also conducted to identify the difference between user and non-user groups. In his findings, he indicates that perception of employees' training and its congruence with external communication enables consumers to shape their cognitive and affective response toward a corporate, which is a source of future purchase intention. How consumers think about internal branding forms their attitudes and images of business and social conduct and enhances their behavioral intention.

In a research study conducted by Pringle (2013) he explores through the lens of branding practices at universities and how professionals in public sector spaces respond to the influence of corporate marketing practices. The research addressed the question of how faculties perceive branding activities in higher education and their role in branding activities at the university. The research was conducted at three Universities in Ontario Canada, which was selected based on differences in heritage and location. It revealed ambiguous and complex responses from faculty and highlighted the unique values and beliefs inherent in the academic culture. In the study faculty members appreciated the need for branding under current economic conditions, where many perceived branding as representing the unwelcome encroachment of business ideology within the university which had the potential of eroding the university's contribution to the public good. They also perceived branding as leading to changes in both the structure and culture of the university. The findings raise questions about the applicability of existing theories of branding to higher education institutions and an academic service brand model proposed that captures the complexity of academic responses to branding. The management implications arising from this thesis reveal that faculty members see branding as a complex balancing act combining multiple attributes and one that requires transparent communication, the cultivation of trust, accessible brand leadership and authenticity.

In an empirical research which examined the interrelationship between service brand credibility, attitude toward brand and purchase intentions (Sheeraz, Khattak, Mahmood & NadeemIqbal, 2016) the results revealed that both brand credibility and attitude toward brand positively impact purchase intentions. The attitude toward brand partially mediates the relationship between brand credibility and purchase intentions. This study provides insights for advertisers and brand managers to manage brand

communication campaigns more consciously and deliberately in the service sector. They further investigate the mediating role of attitude toward brand in understanding the relationship between brand credibility and purchase intentions in the service sector of Pakistan. The results were based on the perceptions of universities students regarding fast food restaurants and transport services in Pakistan. Linear regression and Sobel test were used to examine the proposed hypotheses.

Hoeffler & Keller (2002) in their research conducted on Building Brand Equity through Corporate Societal Marketing examined some critical decisions associated with establishing an effective, brand-building CSM program. They outlined six ways that CSM programs can affect brand equity and six means by which CSM programs can build brand equity: building brand awareness, enhancing brand image, establishing brand credibility, evoking brand feelings, creating a sense of brand community, and eliciting brand engagement. The goal of this research is to examine some critical decisions associated with establishing an effective, brand-building CSM program. According to their findings, they conclude that the use of corporate societal marketing (CSM) appears to be on the rise in accordance with the increasing recognition of the vast potential of CSM programs. Building a strong brand is the goal of many organizations because of the host of possible benefits that may result. To understand better how to build brand equity, several models and viewpoints of brand building have been put forth (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Essentially all the theoretical approaches in one way or another interpret branding effects in terms of consumer knowledge about the brand and how that knowledge affects consumer behavior.

In a research on Service Branding Model Small Service Firms' Approach to Building Brand Equity state that the growth of the service industry has led to increased

competition, and branding has become a tool for gaining competitive advantages (Hermansson & Larsson, 2005). They also note that services are essentially intangible and thus the branding of services is important and different from the branding of products. A strong brand offers many advantages in the service industry and when evaluating the strength of the brand, the concept of brand equity is used. The researcher chose to use a qualitative approach and conduct the, instrumental case study consisting of four companies. The data was collected through interviews. The researchers concluded that influences of external brand communications are greater in small service firms than in large ones while the impact of the presented brand is less significant. The researchers, therefore, adjusted the service branding model in accordance with these differences.

In a study on conceptual view of branding for services Davis (2007) noted that one of the most valuable resources a business has is the reputation of its brands. He suggests that a significant body of research exists to guide marketers of physically tangible products in their branding effort and little study has been given to branding in the services area. Given the significance of services to the global economy, this absence is noteworthy and worthy of further investigation. The research provides a justification for incorporating branding strategies in a services setting and services included in branding research, along with a conceptual overview of how branding may be viewed in a services context (Davis, 2007).

Further, Davis (2007) proposes that the presence of a strong brand image could be one such point of differentiation. In addition to tangibilizing the service, brands and brand equity may also serve as a means to increase the consumer's judgments of perceived value, satisfaction, and quality, thus fostering repeat purchase behavior, positive word of mouth intentions, and acting as a buffer for service failures. The proposal was

consistent with Gronroos' (1984) model of service quality, where brand image is described as a quality dimension consumers will use to assess service quality, even if their short-term experience contradicts their long-term image assessment (e.g., a hotel the consumer believes to be prestigious loses his/her reservation, has no porters available to carry luggage to the room, cannot accommodate smoking preference, et cetera, may still retain a positive overall image in the consumer's mind providing the poor experience is not repeated on subsequent occasions).

Further Davis (2007) concludes that brand equity may also play an important role in services marketing due to its impact on recovery from service failures (or even as a means of forestalling the consumer's perception that a failure occurred). Fostering positive brand equity could prompt the consumer to react less negatively to service failures since a poor service encounter would be inconsistent with their previously held attitude regarding the value of the brand name. Effective use of brand equity offers service marketers one avenue for enhancing the initial selection probability, developing loyalty, retaining customers, and supporting relationships by acting as a risk reducer.

In a research on the influence of customer brand identification on hotel brand evaluation and loyalty development, King, Sparks, & Wang (2016) acknowledges that hotel firms have increasingly recognized that branding strategies constitute a strategic weapon to secure a competitive edge in the global hotel industry. The study extends current understanding of hotel brand management, where the study investigates the role of customer brand identification in the formation of hotel brand loyalty. The study establishes that customer brand identification is an indirect predictor of hotel brand loyalty through its three known antecedents. The findings suggest that while the customer may identify with a particular hotel brand, hotel loyalty still depends on the

customer's positive evaluation of factors relating to service experiences. However, the study further finds out that, as consumers' identifies themselves with a hotel brand it affects their evaluation of certain factors like hoteliers should leverage customers' brand identification to engender positive consumer evaluation of the hotel brand and, ultimately, increase brand loyalty.

Bonnema and Waldt (2008) examined the impact of stakeholders on students' decision when selecting a university in South Africa they examined three types of sources that are key in influencing students' choice The sources were: direct sources which were provided by the universities itself, social sources which were fellow students, parents, lecturers, fellow friends and different promotional mix strategies where advertisement was given more preference.

Worthington and Higgs (2004) in their article entitled "factors determining the choice of an economics major where they surveyed one of the biggest universities in Australia," found out that the most important factors were: student's personal characteristics, an interest in economics profession, economics subject not studied at school, and student's gender. These students were said to be open to other business options which were offered in the university.

Vukasovic (2012) in his research on Managing Consumer-Based Brand Equity in Higher Education establishes the key elements of brand equity for international students by exploring existing brand equity theory and its applicability to international higher education. The research study sought to enhance academic understanding of brand equity in the higher institutions sector and discovers the inferences for management practice in higher institutions. The research adopted quantitative research to collect data and a self-completion survey was used to test the model of

brand equity in the context of higher education. The study was done in Slovenia where both public and private universities were surveyed which is exposed to the extremely competitive environment. The results propose a conceptual model, with image-related and awareness-related determinants Vukasovic (2012), found out that customer-based brand equity model can be applied to the higher education context as an element of competitive advantage and used to guide marketing activities for Universities internationally. The ability to provide consumers with relevant information about credence qualities and experience in advance of actual purchase has led to widespread recognition of the significance of brands in relation to consumer choice in the service sector. Arguably, what is of particular significance in this process is brand equity. It is often suggested that marketing in the service sector is relatively challenging due to the unique characteristics of the service and the dominance of experience and credence qualities. A particular consequence is that perceived risk is generally higher in a service selection (Laing, Lewis, Foxall& Hogg 2002).

In a study conducted by Heaney & Heaney (2008) on Services Branding Strategies: Using Corporate Branding to Market Educational Institutions says that corporate branding takes into account the perspectives of various stakeholders associated with the organization which has become a crucial strategy when branding and marketing educational institutions. The paper also examines how different stakeholders including staff, students, admissions officers and other related faculty and parents can be integrated to enhance the branding of education. Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown and Foskett, (2002) suggest that marketing of education is needed for successful recruitment and for increasing market share of resources and students. Branding is one particularly important marketing concept that has not been addressed adequately

in the marketing of services, particularly in the context of branding education. Universities as a service sector has traditionally led research into the marketing of education products, exemplified by numerous articles on how to brand education at the school and university level, including articles by Arenson (2004), Chapleo (2003), Holmes (2003), Gifford (2004) and Reader (2003), amongst others who describe how universities can differentiate themselves through the use of branding strategies, for example by creating a sense of community between the educational product and its customers (Arenson, 2004), and through education programs where the relationships and values of educational institutions are important to the decision process above the education or degree received.

McDonald *et al.,* (2001) state that corporate branding is more suited to professional services as the emphasis a practical activities on how to create a brand, followed by reasons on why a brand is important (Chapleo 2003, Gifford 2004, Holmes 2003). There also exists a number of marketing articles dealing with branding in schools, such as those by Oplatka & Helmsley-Brown (2004), positioning schools using marketing plans, communicating with its customers and clients and brand valuation. The research study by Heaney, Heaney & Ross, (2006) provided a Strategic 3-Step Brand Building Model for schools and educational institutions. The paper provided an important contribution to branding in the services sector to actually prescribe a process on how to build brand equity for schools. The research shows how educational institutions can use "corporate branding" to unite their various clientele or stakeholders in strategically branding their organization. De Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1999) commented on the lack of research into identifying best practices in services branding; in addition, McDonald, de Chernatony and Harris (2001) stated that more research is needed to produce a tailored model for services

branding. The research paper provides an important contribution into how educational organizations can use corporate branding, the aspects of corporate branding, and the implications this strategy has on an educational institutions' brand management strategies.

Corporate branding is distinct from product branding in that a corporate brand encompasses associations and communications with people, relationships, programs and values, corporate credibility, and benefits of products; corporate brands include who the company is, not just what the company does (Keller & Richey, 2006). Barich & Kotler (1991) also state that corporate brands are more likely (compared to product brands) to lead to associations of product benefits, attributes, relationships, and values. This seems to be eminently suitable to of corporate branding is on the capabilities of the provider. The benefits of corporate branding include the ability of the company to differentiate itself a positive image from its stakeholders resulting in profitability or other favorable outcomes (Gylling & Lindberg-Repo, 2006), sustainable competitive advantage as per the resource-based theory, and the fact that corporate brands cannot be substituted with other brands (Balmer & Gray, 2003). Other benefits include corporate credibility (Keller & Aaker 2008) where brand extensions and product innovation (or brand architecture) receive improved evaluations.

 Heaney & Heaney (2008) considered three main aspects of Corporate Brand which consists of Core Values of the organization, Internal Marketing of the corporate brand (employees, suppliers, board, administration), and External Marketing of the brand (customers, community, government, and associations). All of these stakeholders interact with the Core Values established by either the stakeholders or as a tenet of the organization's formation. The study contends that educational institutions including

schools and universities will be well served by using corporate branding strategies, as opposed to product branding strategies. In a research which explores through the lens of branding practices at universities and how professionals in public sector spaces respond to the influence of corporate marketing practices (Pringle, 2014) the research specifically addresses the question of how faculty perceives branding activities in higher education and their role in branding activities at the university. It also sought to understand the impact and influence of institutional attributes such as heritage and location on faculty perception of branding.

The research was conducted at three Universities in Ontario Canada, which was selected based on differences in heritage and location. The research revealed ambiguous and complex responses from faculty and highlighted the unique values and beliefs inherent in the academic culture. Also, most faculty members appreciated the need for branding under current economic conditions; many perceived branding as representing the unwelcome encroachment of business ideology within the university which had the potential of eroding the university's contribution to the public good. They further perceived branding as leading to changes in both the structure and culture of the university.

2.2.2 Branding strategies and Students' Choice of Universities

The factors influencing this process differ from one individual to another, but there are also several factors common for many individuals. Mubaira and Fatoki (2012), who in their article "The Determinants of the Choice of Universities by Foreign Business Students in South Africa" discovered a series of factors which determine the process of choosing a university among which mention: scholarships awarded by the University in various capacities, academic reputation, the level of tuition fees, the

ability to access information and technology, cultural diversity, the recommendations from family and acquaintances, university image, the quality of the offered facilities, the social life within the campus, the employment opportunities, the international partnerships, the admission requirements, the friendly attitude of the academic staff, the campus attractiveness, the location of the university, the facilities regarding sports activities, the quality of the teaching process and the existence of some flexible study modalities.

Moogan (2011), in his article "Can a higher education institution's marketing strategy improve the student-institution match?" pinpointed out other factors which influence the youth's decision to enroll at university and these are: the desire to be awarded a degree, the possibility to enhance the chances to obtain a decent job, the desire to have a high income in the future and the location of the university which acquires an increased importance in the decision making process. Ming (2010) in this study also identified a number of factors like the nature of the institution that influence the student's decision making process where he identified various independent variables such as: the university's location, programs offered, the university's reputation, the existence of different educational facilities, the level of the tuition fees, the employment opportunities, the employed promotion, the promotion by university representatives, the possibility to visit the campus and the possibility to obtain scholarships.

Black (2008) suggests that branding in institutions of higher learning is not limited to a particular product or service that is offered but a particular firm but about people who deliver the service. Nicolescu (2009) argued that higher education sector faces two main features that influence the marketing strategies that can be useful to it. Universities in most countries are not-for-profit entities, therefore concepts applied to

the segment do not function as in the business, where the primary goal is profit making. Also, the product is a service; therefore all peculiarities applicable to the marketing of services apply to it. Nowadays managers of these institutions include more often terms like competitiveness, awareness, differentiation, market share, strategy and positioning. This has to lead many authors to argue that universities require strong brands to build awareness of their existence and courses offered, to single out themselves and to gain market share (Bennet *et al*, 2007).

Brand name, price, advertising, and packaging are important extrinsic cues facilitating consumers' choices whenever it is difficult or costly to collect and examine intrinsic product attributes, such as flavor, color, size, and texture (Klein, 1998). Hence, for all goods and services that either cannot be properly evaluated prior to purchase or involve a high degree of purchase risk, brands fulfill an important role. Alba *et al*, (1997) note, "a brand is a search attribute that assures consumers of a consistent level of product quality. It might be the only attribute available to assess some credence goods". Brands may have an important role in shifting consumers' perceptions away from experience attributes, such as tactility to search attributes such as reputation (Citrine al, 2003), and well-known brands have been found to be important risk relievers for purchase (Van den Poel & Leunis, 1999).

Degeratu, Rangaswamy, & Wu (2000) postulate that brand equity could have a higher impact online than off-line, as confirmed by other researchers. Other researchers have noted a significant influence of existing brand attitudes on the attitudes of online shoppers, and Harvin (2000) found consumers to be more comfortable with companies that have strong offline brands they are already familiar with and whom they trust. Managers should, therefore, invest in building the reputation of their brands to enable the reduction of consumers' perceived risk. Well-established traditional

retailers will have an advantage over start-ups in electronic retailing since they can capitalize on their reputation as a risk reliever, reducing the risk aversion of online consumers. These considerations lead us to examine consumer-related factors and characteristics as a possible facilitator for barriers to e-commerce.

Yasin & Zahari (2011) says that it is imperative to acknowledge that brand equity is an inseparable part of marketing and essential to the companies to create core-competencies and build a strong brand experience that will impact the consumer decision-making process. Their study tries to survey the literature review that related to this point and found a few studies demonstrate the relationship between the two variables mentioned (Erdem *et al*., 2006) and study of (Njuguna *et al*., 2014) and which found that brand equity had a positive effect on consumer's choice. Despite a lot of media publicity on fast moving consumer goods and services, consumers are always faced with uncertainty when making a choice. Furthermore, the influence of brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and proprietary brand assets remain rudimentary.

Maringe (2006) conducted a study which revealed that there is the utilization of customer decision-making process. The author categorized universities and academic programs uptake among students into 7ps marketing mix strategies namely: Price, program, people, promotion, prominence, place and prospectus. Kotler's five phases of buying decision process namely: recognition of the need, search for information, alternatives evaluation, buying decision and post-buying behavior has further been applied by Brown *et al*, (2009).

Brown, Varley and Pal (2009), in his recommendation, assert that service marking model should be used by institutions of higher learning. There has been an increase

consumerism in the choice of university. As universities are viewed as grounds for career preparations, tuition fees and study programs are significant factors in influencing the prospective choice of university (Petruzzellis & Romanazzi, 2010). Worthington and Higgs (2004), in their study on determinants of economics specialization among students in Australian universities found out that major influencing factors in the choice of economics as an academic program major were: personal characteristics of students, economics profession perceived interest, students' gender and lack of economics subject study in the surveyed universities. The researchers also found that among students that were surveyed, students that chose economics as a major showed openness in their responses compared to students from other business studies course majors.

Oh Miyoung (2014), states that the choices and policies related to the consumer choices have become a concern for all stakeholders and the consumer being the beneficiary. Hirschman (1995) mentions that this variety-seeking behavior has a converse habit formation; in some situations, individuals seek to avoid change instead of looking for variety. A related factor is purchase feedback, which represents the "influence of observed past experience (through actual purchases) with a brand, on current choice probabilities" (Roy, Chintagunta, & Haidar, (1996). Hirschman (1995), further says that individuals may also have idiosyncratic tastes about their most preferred variants, that is they show unobserved heterogeneity, each of these aspects of purchase behavior could. The behavior potentially links the purchase of a brand at one point in time to its purchase (or lack thereof) on the next occasion.

According to Oh Miyoung (2014), the choices and policies related to the consumer choices have become a concern for all: government, agricultural industries and consumers. The markets have become many and varied, and the goods and services

are becoming more diverse and evolve from time to time and rapidly, especially in internet services and communications technology, and this, in turn, represents the difficulty sometimes in front of the consumer on how to choose the good or the appropriate service. Some previous studies that relate to consumer choice subject, have been taken from the subject of consumer choice for local goods compared to foreign goods (Ghose *et al*, (2012) and some other studies have focused on consumer choice for different types of distribution channels (Black *et al*, (2002).

2.3 Internal Branding Strategies on Postgraduate Students' choice of Universities

Several studies have examined internal branding strategies as practiced by companies. For example, a Research study on internal branding with an online survey examined how organizations view and implement internal branding practices. These Canadian marketers presented it as 'Internal Branding Best Practices Study. This was identified as one of the topmost issues. (Canadian Marketing Association, 2007).According to the research findings, Internal branding is a relatively new approach practiced by the companies of leading Canadian brands thus giving that its application is relatively inconsistent across participating organizations. This presents a significant opportunity to the Canadian service industry with the ability to be more attentive to branding and customer promise development which facilitates consistent delivery. The study employed quantitative and qualitative research techniques. The qualitative research consisted of eleven in-depth phone interviews with executives that are responsible for internal branding within their organizations while quantitative research portion of this study was managed through a CMA 2005 Internet survey of 475 respondents across industries. These marketers described Internal branding within the survey as "promoting the company brand values amongst employees. It is the set of strategic processes that align and empower employees to deliver the appropriate customer

experience in a consistent fashion. These processes include, but are not limited to, internal communications, training support, leadership practices, reward & recognition programs, recruitment practices and sustainability factors.

Narissara (2010) in a study entitled "An investigation into the effects of internal branding on employee brand support in Thai universities" states that In the context of higher education institutions, employees play a crucial role in the internal branding process. Findings indicate ambiguities surrounding internal branding in higher education. The study recommends a value for higher education management and public policy makers in order to encourage academic staff to support their university's brand. Tosti and Stotz, 2001; Mitchell, 2002; Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2004; Hankinson, 2004; Aurand *et al*., 2005; Mosley, 2007 further asserts that Internal branding is about aligning employee behaviour with brand values where employees should have the same perceptions of the values embedded in the brand (de Chenatony, 2002) Internal branding strategies in this study focused on; leadership style, employees and culture which were also reviewed.

2.3.1 Leadership Styles

Leadership practices and Employees in an organization is seen in a study conducted by Jandaghi, Bahamin & Abaei, (2015) on the effects of brand leadership styles on employees - based brand citizenship behavior Leadership Practices states that internal branding is a new strategy to assure that employees act in accordance with brand commitment. He justifies this by saying that in service organizations, employees are able to influence over customers" purchase decisions and conceptions, they play a critical role in organizational success. Enhancing employee – based brand citizenship behavior by managers can create a competitive advantage for the organization.

According to Ulrich and Smallwood (2007), stronger brand leaders will be shaped if the behavior of organization's representatives is based on stakeholders' principles and demands. Concerning organizational behavior, leadership is seen as an important behavior affecting the behavior of organizational members especially employees. Morhart *et al* (2009) suggested that brand leadership style can be divided into two parts: Brand-specific Transactional Leadership (BTSL): which is an approach of a leader to motivate its employees as the agents of company's band and emphasizes on employees" mindset and brand-specific Transformational Leadership (BTFL) where a leader to motivate its employees as the agents of company's band and emphasizes on employees" personal values and beliefs. Similar to traditional leadership, both brand leadership styles impact on organizational performance.

According to Morhart, Herzog, and Tomczak (2009), in their study on Brand-Specific Leadership: Turning Employees into Brand Champions where they examined the mechanisms by which brand-specific transactional and transformational leadership influence employees' brand-building behavior, the results show that brand-specific transactional leadership moderates the influence of brand-specific transformational leadership in a nonlinear, inverse U-shaped way, so that a medium level of transactional leadership maximizes the positive effects of transformational leadership. In the other study, the researcher addresses whether managers can learn brand-specific transformational leadership. The research surveyed 269 customer-contact employees show that brand-specific transactional leaders influence followers through a process of compliance, leading to an increase in turnover intentions and a decrease in in-role and extra-role brand-building behaviors. In contrast, brand-specific transformational leaders influence followers through a process of internalization, leading to a decrease in turnover intentions and an increase in in-role and extra-role brand-building

behaviors. In turn, both processes are mediated by employees' perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness with regard to their work roles as brand representatives. Moreover, in their field experiment shows that brand-specific transformational leadership can indeed be learned through management training. Management development programs; senior team personal site visits; Employee rating of leaders through regular performance reviews (Canadian Marketing Association, 2007).

Hackman and Wageman (2007) suggested that different leaders can behave in their own unique manner and still achieve effective leadership results. Mulford (2006) research conducted between 1996 and 2005, Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) confirm three of their four sets of transformational leadership practices of helping people, setting directions and redesigning the organization. In addition, they conclude that evidence about transformational leadership effects on organizational effectiveness, student outcomes and student engagement in school which are all positive (although with decreasing amounts of supporting evidence as one moves through the three areas) creating the conditions, opportunities and experiences for collaboration and mutual learning".

2.3.2 Employees

Employer branding integrates the previously separate policies and procedures of marketing and human resources to create a new unique blend within the organization. Within the context of internal branding processes, employer branding regards current and potential employees as branding targets (Edwards, 2009). Sartain and Schumann (2006) define an employer brand as how a business builds and packages its identity, from its origins and values, what it promises to deliver to emotionally connect employees so that they, in turn, deliver what the business promises to customers. It

has been shown that the advantages of a strong employer brand are that it will not only attract new employees but also generate satisfaction, affinity, and loyalty for current employees (Davies, 2008).

A consistent voice must be established through internal communications that can help create and maintain the employee commitment, shared vision, loyalty, and satisfaction (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). This requires a unified effort within the organization. Literature suggests that an important element of an employer brand is establishing employee commitment. customer confidence the discussion on developing employee emotional connections, it is shown that the emotional capital of an organization respondents felt by more committed employees (Thomson customer loyalty, 1999).Through their study of the retail banking industry in the UK, Pasolomou and Vrontis (2006) propose four elements to enhance the effectiveness of internal branding. Recognizing the central role of employees in building and differentiating their corporate brand, the first in the is about viewing employees as internal customers and hence reinforcing practices that enable to the customer satisfaction, motivation and retention. In order to enable the internal customer element, the authors propose training and development programmes as the second element to create knowledge and understanding among staff of how their attitudes and behaviour towards customers form an integral part of the overall service offering and hence shape employee behaviors to develop a strong service mentality that will pervade the entire organization. The third element internal standards urge organizations to set high standards of on-brand performance and equip employees in order to enable them to meet and exceed these standards of performance. The fourth and final element rewards emphasize the need to establish rewards systems rewards system which

instills confidence and elicits that extra energy that individuals voluntarily invest towards the success of the organization's brand.

Employee behavior has been identified as of paramount importance and strongly influential in shaping consumer perceptions of their most and least preferred service brands. Therefore it can be reasonably argued that the same attention to branding should be directed internally to employees as is currently directed externally to potential customers since it is at the intersection of service providers and customers that brand meaning is realized (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Elliot & Percy, 2007; Judson, Aurand, Gorchels, & Gordon, 2009).

2.3.3 Organization Culture

Organizational culture should only relate to the "deeper" less visible level, although he does use visible evidence to understand and describe different cultures. The visible aspects encompass behavior patterns, the physical and social environment and the written and spoken language used by the group (Schein's 1990). Kotter & Heskett (1992) explained that culture evolves as a result of the turnover of group members, changes in the company's market environment and general changes in society. According to Low and Mohr (2000), organization culture is an important combination of character, behavior and a self-identification of human being, these characteristics help an individual to create his or her own buying behavior, and however, isolating culture as a variable that can be studied and readily implanted is very difficult, taking into consideration that the buying behaviors of human beings consist of three phases which are the individual, societal and situational. Low and Mohr (2000) further state that culture affects all these phases but the extent of the effect depends on the individual person and the circumstance. Culture consists of beliefs, values and customs that serve to direct consumer behavior differently amongst the members of a

particular group or society Values and beliefs are guides to behavior in such that they form and affect attitude on how to behave in certain situations, on the other hand, customs are modes of behavior that constitute an acceptable way to behave in a particular culture.

Wilkins and Ouchi (1983) quoted a number of examples of organizations claiming to experience great distress because the culture could not be changed or because its members would not change fast enough. Hatch and Schultz (2000) depend on a successful and balanced interplay between corporate image, corporate culture and corporate vision. In brand related narratives, the question of identity is reflected at different levels. Culture has recently been conceptualized as a factor in shaping a company's image in the marketplace. Corporate image is an overall perception of the company held by different segments of the public (Villanova, Zinkhan & Hyman, 1990). Universities' represents the erosion of the traditional role that is based on scholarship and education to a role many worries are based on the broad acceptance of business ideologies and which reduces the role of higher education to not much more than an economic function. Criticisms argued there are consequences to the broad adoption of business ideologies and accountability measures as it unfairly leads to a devaluation and erosion of liberal arts programming as these subjects rely more heavily on intangible skills which are much more difficult to quantify (Anderson 2008, Deem & Brehony 2005, Dill 2012).

In a study conducted by Watson (2001), he greatly stated that if the culture is not hospitable to learning then student achievement can suffer. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2004) described organizational climate as the total environmental quality within an organization and believe that the recent attention to the effectiveness of public schools and their cultures has shed more interest on the importance of climate. The

relationship between culture and climate was supported by Schein (1985, 1996) when he stated that norms, values, rituals and climate are all manifestations of culture.

Mortimore (2001) further warns that firms should concentrate on establishing more knowledge about the complex interactions between culture and schooling. In a study by Lakomski (2001) he claims that it is necessary to change an organization's culture in order to bring about organizational change and concluded that there is a causal relationship between the role of the leader and organizational learning. Pringle (2014) revealed how institutions and faculty members within them respond to these forces is also directly influenced by contextual factors like heritage and geographic location, and these contextual factors lead to specific perceptions with respect to how they assess and choose to respond to branding practices at universities and the authenticity of specific brand elements.

2.4 External Branding Strategies on Postgraduate Students' choice of Universities

The study focused on external branding strategies relevant to the study's objective. These include; on include; customer relationship focus, corporate social responsibility.

2.4.1 Customer Relationship Focus

Relationship marketing theory and customer equity theory posit that customer perceptions of the intrinsic quality of the relationship (strength of the relationship) and customers' evaluations of a supplier's offerings shape customers' behavior in the relationship (Garbarino & Johnson1999, Rust, Zeithaml, & Lemon 2000, Woodruff 1997) and brand perceptions are the most prominent of these variables (Morgan & Hunt 1994; Rust, Zeithaml, & Lemon 2000). The brand is especially significant in

attracting new customers. During the relationship, the brand probably influences affective commitment (Bolton, Lemon, & Ver-hoef, 2002).

According to Gefen and Ridings (2002), a CRM system consists of multiple modules including operational CRM, which supports a variety of customer-oriented business processes in marketing, sales, and service operations; and analytic CRM which analyses customer data and transaction patterns to improve customer relationships. Successful CRM implementation often entails significant organizational transformation due to the complexity of multiple operations involved in managing customer relationships (Karimi, Somers & Gupta., 2001). Implementing a CRM system is only part of the needed change. To adopt the new ways of interacting with customers, firms need to align various organizational aspects with their CRM systems, business processes, strategies, top management support, and employee training ((Goodhue, Wixom & Watson, 2002).

Marketing considered as a general management responsibility plays "the crucial roles of navigation through effective market sensing, articulation of the new value proposition, and orchestration by providing the essential glue that ensures a coherent whole" (Hunt, 2004,). Customer Relationship Management enhances these capabilities because it is "the outcome of the continuing evolution and integration of marketing ideas and newly available data, technologies and organizational forms" (Boulding *et al*, 2005). Customer Relationship Management principles and systems help organizations to focus on the dual creation of value: the creation of value for shareholders (via long-term firm profitability) and the creation of value or utility for customers (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Its' applications help answer questions such as "What products or services are important to our customers? How should we communicate with our customers? What are my customer's favorite colors or what is

my customer's size?" In particular, customers benefit from the belief that they are saving time and money as well as receiving better information and special treatment (Kassanoff, 2000).

Generally, the management of customer equity requires that organizations use information about customers and potential customers to segment them and treat them differently depending on their future long-term profitability (Blattberg, Getz & Thomas 2001, Peppers & Rogers, 2005, Rust, Zeithaml & Lemon, 2000). Notably, firms must go beyond traditional market segmenta¬tion activities, such as customizing offerings (that is goods or services) and efficiently managing resources to achieve profitability criteria. Instead, firms must identify and acquire customers who are not only willing to accept the firm's offer or value proposition but also provide value for the company when they do (Cao & Gruca, 2005; Ryals, 2005).

CRM research can be organized along the customer lifecycle. It includes customer acquisition, development and retention strategies. Customer acquisition is the distribution strategies that customers use to access the firm products or services (Ansari *et al*., 2004) to the promotions mix that enhances consumer awareness on the buying behavior. The value of a customer can also be enhanced by the firm through appropriate development strategies such as delivering customized products meeting the consumer needs (Ansari and Mela, 2003) and cross-selling (Kamakura *et al*., 1991, 2003). When the organization is able to detect and prevent consumer attrition earlier it can enhance good customer base and its efforts will be focused on remaining the most valuable consumers.

Fozia (2014) in his article entitled "Impact of Customer Relationship Management as a Strategy for Competitive Advantage in Kenyan Public Universities," found out that

CRM increased customer confidence in their products, increased repeat purchases, improved customer confidence in the company, enhanced customer relationships with the company and its programs and improved how customers view the company in general. He also found that on the effect of CRM on customer loyalty, a majority of the respondents felt that CRM increases customer confidence in the products, increases responsiveness to marketing campaigns, improves customer confidence in the company, enhances customer confidence to the company's programs and improves how customers view the company in general. Prior studies have found that the development of loyalty programs in CRM, frequently leads to increases in repeat-purchases and profitability (Reichheld & Sasser, 2000).

2.4.2 Corporate Social Responsibility

Increasingly, management recognizes the need to promote socially responsible business practices to achieve a sustained strategic advantage (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006; Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006) and to enhance a corporation's reputation. Reputation, which is the perceptions of all relevant stakeholders (Miles & Govin, 2000) formed through a corporation's actions are an invaluable intangible asset. Corporations through strengthening and protecting the brand's reputation can communicate their credibility (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995) to stakeholders (Maignan, Ferrell& Ferrell 2005). Additionally, a plethora of academic research is devoted to corporate social responsibility, its impact, outcome and benefit (Sen *et al*, 2006). Corporations wanting to attract potential stakeholders are showcasing actions that further a particular social good (Castaldo *et al*, 2009). However, engaging in corporate social responsibility with the wrong motives can potentially undermine the corporate brand identity and adversely affect a brand's established reputation. Knowledgeable stakeholders, especially consumers (Miller, 2008), are alert to the

inauthentic actions of corporations. McWilliams and Siegel (2001) argue that corporate social responsibility involves going beyond the legal requirements. By investing in corporate social responsibility, corporations can secure competitive advantages, financial benefits (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006), build brand awareness (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002) and create brand legitimacy (Luo& Bhattacharya, 2006; Uggla, 2006; Vaaland *et al*,2008; Werther & Chandler, 2005), which can in turn strengthen the relationship of stakeholders with the corporate brand. However, few corporations fully leverage the brand building opportunities that corporate social responsibility offers (Blumenthal & Bergstrom, 2003). According to Firestein (2006), reputation is the strongest determinant of an organization's sustainability. While strategies can always be changed, when reputation is gravely injured, it is difficult for an organization to recover. Reputation is rooted in the aggregated perceptions of the organization's stakeholders (Fombrun, Gardberg, & Sever, 2000). Fombrun and Van Riel (2003) suggest that organizations with good reputations attract positive stakeholder engagement. A favorable corporate reputation results in business survival and profitability (Roberts & Dowling, 2002), is an effective mechanism to maintain competitive advantage and can aid in building customer retention and satisfaction and obtaining favorable media coverage (Fombrun *et al*., 2000).

Srinaruewan (2013), in his article titled "Consumer Reactions to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Thailand: The Moderating Effect of Competitive Positioning" found out that there are results indicate that there are positive relationships between CSR beliefs and Consumer Company identification. He further states that the challenge of CSR communication is to discuss how to increase consumers' CSR awareness and how to minimize consumers' skepticism (Du *et al*., 2010), the strategic benefits of CSR need to be contingent with consumers' awareness

of a firm's CSR activities. Previous studies reveal that awareness of a firm's CSR activities among consumers typically low therefore constitutes an obstacle to the firm's aim to gain strategic benefits from its CSR activities (Sen *et al*., 2006). In the context of the Study, Srinaruewan (2013), suggests that consumers perceive that companies are treating CSR as a cosmetic, public relations exercise, with some providers spending on CSR advertising rather than on actual initiatives which indicate that consumers' perception of a company's motivation is likely to influence consumer's scepticism toward their CSR initiatives.

According to Beckmann 2007, consumers are interested in CSR but at the same time hold rather skeptical viewpoints, and vague words and absence of proof may be the reason why this occurs (Elving, 2010). Becker-Olsen *et al*., (2006) suggested that if consumers are skeptical about companies' motives, engaging in CSR may even have a negative influence on their evaluations of a company and purchase intentions of a product. They cautioned that managers should prioritize care in the choice of their CSR activities and responses to reflect the company's values and domain so that consumers will perceive their CSR activities as proactive and socially motivated. As a result, it is necessary for managers to have a comprehensive understanding of the important issues related to CSR communication, including message content and message channels. They should also include factors that impact on the effectiveness of their CSR communication in order to accrue consumer's CSR awareness, positive attitude to company's motivations, and positive beliefs of the CSR of that company. Further, this study has found that the effect of consumers' CSR beliefs on brand choices suggest that companies need to focus on the specific concerns of their target consumers and try to actively involve them in any resulting CSR initiatives. If a

number of a company's target consumers participate in its CSR efforts, the company will be able to increase consumer-specific benefits (Du *et al*., 2010).

According to Torugsa, O'Donohue and Hecker (2013), they concluded that consumers have developed attitudes that favor ethical companies as well as products with practices that are socially responsible. This was suggested by Boulouta and Pitelis (2014) who stated that approximately 90% of buyers regard corporate responsibility as a factor in their purchasing as well as consumption behaviors. Kilpatrick *et al*., 2001 confirms the importance of CSR by firms. In their research study the extent and nature of the contribution of rural schools to their communities' development beyond traditional forms of education of young people and the ways in which leadership influenced the process. They found out that rural school community partnerships delivered a variety of positive outcomes for youth and for the community, including the provision of training that meets both student and community needs, improved school and community retention and positive environmental, cultural, recreational and economic outcomes. Whilst these tangible outcomes are important to the sustainability of many small rural communities, the potentially more valuable outcome from was increased individual and community capacity to influence their own futures.

2.5 Service Mix Branding Strategies on Postgraduate Students' choice of Universities

Prior to 1980, studies of marketing organization focused largely on its role in implementation of the marketing paradigm. Offered 4ps as marketing mix and introduced that to the scientific centers. He introduced four main factors as effective factors in the marketing of products. Such factors which were introduced include price, product, promotion and place. According to his point of view, all activities in

the field of product and service marketing can perform in the frame of four main factors (Mccarthy, 2002). In the service industry, the P's increase to seven that is physical evidence, process, and people (Bashan, 2011).

Gatignon 1993; Hanssens *et al*. (1998) suggest that Marketing mix modeling has increased in popularity with industry and academics Research has examined the effectiveness of different elements of the marketing mix. A research study conducted by Ailawadi, Neslin & Gedenk2001; Anderson & Simester, 2004 examined the short-term and long-term effects of advertising and promotion. The aim of the research was to look at different outcomes and indicators of marketing effectiveness.   Further, Pauwels & Koen (2000), found that price promotions have a strong effect on category purchase incidence for a storable product but a correspondingly larger impact on brand choice for perishable products.   Though there has not typically addressed the brand equity dimension which is rare that measures of customer mindset are introduced as possible mediating or moderating variables in analyzing marketing effectiveness.

According to (Eckel, 2007) growth in markets and the type of provider goes hand in hand with a fiercely increased competition and the notion of survival of the fittest; something that has impacted negatively on some universities. Through competing, the performance of universities varied, and consequently views and attitudes towards each group differed. Universities endeavor to achieve better results and rank higher. Amaral and Magalhaes (2007) believe that marketing and competition bring more benefits as they increase universities' sensitivity and responsiveness to the community. Eckel (2007) provides some examples where competition pushes universities to adopt strategies that improve their positions within the market, such as recruiting high caliber teaching staff, providing cutting-edge technology teaching aids

and student facilities. He asserts that such strategies and investments achieve positive potential returns on better-prepared students, improved institutional quality, or the ability to leverage additional resources or opportunities. In this respect, competition would result in a higher quality of education (Agasisti & Catalano, 2006). Ehrenberg (2002), nonetheless, does not see this positive impact, since competing and improving a university's assets would be at a higher cost which would result in increasing tuition fees.

Amofah, Gyamfi and Tutu (2016), in their research study "The Influence of Service Marketing Mix on Customer Choice of Repeat Purchase of Restaurant in Kumasi, Ghana" found that Process had the greatest influence on customer's decision to repeat purchase. All other attributes including product, price, place, promotion, people and physical evidence significantly influence the decision to repeat purchase for customers. Khatibshad, Hasheminejad & Babakhani (2016) in their article entitled "The Effectiveness of the Marketing Mix of Services to Mutual Funds in the Stock Exchange" found out a positive view of the marketing mix (place, people, physical evidence, process, product and promotion) and mutual funds in the stock exchange. The results present useful for mutual funds correct implementation of the marketing mix to increase the customer's satisfaction and absorb new customers.

According to Al-Fattal (2010), he states that service mix is a probable model to direct a higher institution towards a more strategic and systematic marketing mix approach. Universities need to adjust its marketing mix to lodge the demands articulated by customers. University management should rethink and re-engineer the way it addresses each of the marketing mix elements. If the university becomes successful in matching the students' demands with its marketing mix, there is a possibility consumer will buy the university's products currently and in (Hollensen, 2003).

Maringe(2005) highlights that these elements are never discrete entities; they overlap and should be considered as loosely grouped elements requiring careful blending to give the differential advantage to an institution.

Pratminingsih (2011) in their article "the impacts of Marketing mix on Students choice of University study case of Private University in Bandung, Indonesia" admit that higher education in Indonesia has experienced massive changes in policy, governance, structure and status which have an effect on the operation of higher education institutions which drives competition. The aim of this study is to obtain the influence of marketing mix towards students' decision making for selecting higher education institution. The survey questions were organized based on marketing mix combination for education developed by Kotler and Fox (1995) who suggested that marketing is relevant to higher education institutions because it will bring benefits to the institution, includes: greater success in fulfilling the institution's mission, improved satisfaction of the institution's public and market, improved attraction of marketing resources and improved efficiency in marketing activities.

Vrontis, Thrassou, and Melanthiou (2007) find out that when deciding on investing in higher education, it becomes very complex as this plays an essential role in career path formation for students. They further explain that in understanding these service providers must aim at satisfying consumer needs as acquisition knowledge and process formation. They also state that students will choose a specific university based on whatever they will gain in terms of value in the cost of learning with the benefits expected in the future that may result from graduating from the institution of preference. The marketing mix is one of the elements of marketing strategy that can be applied in higher education institutions which consists of seven elements: program, price, promotion, place, people, process and physical ambiance. The research findings

indicate that marketing mix has a significant and positive relationship with students 'decision making for selecting a university.

2.5.1 Branding Strategies for Programme

The product is a good or service that a firm should offer to a particular market (Kotler, Armstrong, Wong, & Saunders, 2008). It is something that can be offered to the customers for purchase, consumption or attention, and it should satisfy their need(s) and want(s). Kotler *et al* (2008) argue that a company should build an actual product around other levels of product like-the core product, augmented product and the potential product. According to Al-Fattal (2010), he states that the first element in the marketing mix is 'programme' for an institution. This is what programme to offer and how to structure and design it within an institutional marketing strategy which has been addressed by Frumkin, Milankovic & Sadler (2007), Cubillo, Sanchez & Cervino (2006). An institution of higher learning will always start by the programmes and services they offer and made available to the potential market and current customers, and any other stakeholder for the institution in this case companies or grants providers. The university should also ensure that the programmes they offer should match the market needs. Due to many Universities offering the same programmes, customers in this case students will try to differentiate the programmes basing on issues concerning quality (Kotler & Fox, 1995). For an institution to have a positive brand identity, the programmes offered should be responsive to the clients' needs and be of a higher quality.

Gibbs and Knap (2002) state that there is a strong relationship between the programme offered and the institution which gives an institution identity which is important in the mind of the customers which determines how they respond to the programme offered. According to Ismail, Hassan and Mohamad (2010) they stated

that suitability of programmes matters a lot when it comes to students selecting Universities. He further asserts that students compare programmes from one university to another. They also compare using different parameters education quality, the flexibility of degree and variety of education. Sia (2013) finds a significant relationship between programmes and college choice decision.

Hollensen (2003) remarks that a marketing strategy, when appropriately implemented, results in programmes being cooperatively designed, developed, tested, piloted, provided, installed and refined. The word 'cooperatively' embeds that programmes are not to be developed historically, with the institution producing programme concept, but rather researching this with the customers, bearing in mind that it should meet their requirements and needs. Amaral & Magalhaes, (2007), acknowledges that education is an experienced service as its relevant characteristics can only, by consumption (It is only when a student attends a study programme that he/she gets an idea about what has been 'purchased' in terms of quality. The programme does not exist until the service provider performs the service, usually in the presence of the customer, and it does not necessarily result in the ownership of any material thing (Kotler, Bloom, & Hayes, 2002). Gib and Knapp (2002) further suggest that an institution is recommended to increase tangibility of the programme offered by increasing what they describe as the 'wrapping' it is offering. Wrapping' in this case includes, for example, CD-ROMs, photocopied lecture material and handouts, course books, free access to the Internet, discounted materials.

Bourke, (2000) stated that students will evaluate programs based: selection of courses, availability of courses and entry requirements quality and variety of education and quality and flexibility of degree/course combinations. Yusof (2008) also found that availability of the required program as "the very important attributes" for first-year

university students to choose a particular higher education institution. According to Soedijati & Pratminingsih (2011) found out that higher education has three main activities as service offered: administration of knowledge, extensive research and service for humanity where institutions should evaluate the program and service offered and other marketing mixes periodically, and particularly when considering continuous improve to meet market requirements which are dynamic. These improvements may bring about satisfaction to all stakeholders through every have differing needs with respect to their different expectations.

2.5.2 Branding Strategies for Pricing

Kerin and Rudelins (2007) argued that in general, customers always want a reasonable price in buying a product or services. The price must, however, show value of the product for the customer to remain loyal. Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, & Wong, (2005) argued that price is considered to be the most significant factor that affects consumer's choice which includes Cost-based pricing as the simplest pricing strategy. Cost-based pricing involves price setting through the addition of a mark up to the cost of the product. This strategy functions if prices set by the firm are not too high compared to the prevailing prices charged by competitors (Kotler *et al*, 2005).

Break-even pricing is a cost oriented strategy where firms determine the price of products at which they are able to recover marketing and marketing costs, or market profit targeted (Nagle & Hogan, 2006). Competition based pricing prevails when a firm sets prices of products in accordance with the prevailing competition. Prices of products are largely based on competitors' prices. In customer value pricing, pricing of products is based on perceived products value. Firms strive to determine the value consumers assign to products of competitors and what value consumers perceive of a

firm's product. If more prices are charged than perceived value, sales may suffer, thus it becomes difficult to measure the perceived value (Nagle & Hogan, 2006).

Akroush, 2011, pricing of services are the policies and practices by firms to determine their transactions. It is the value placed on a product either direct or indirect which is added to the products gains which may earn a firm profit or loss (Tan, Ching-Yick Tse, & Wong, 2009). According to Peter and Donnelly (2007), they found out that price is what customers focus on while making their purchase. Customer will also consider price before they repurchase products from the organizations (Mahmood and Khan, 2014) Price is always used to measure quality, especially in service firms like universities. It is one of the most adjustable mixes for an organization (Kolter *et al*., 2004).

Pricing includes discount, allowance and credit. Research indicates that there is a positive relation between suitable prices with customer loyalty. (Martin, Ponder & Lueg, 2008), it must be remembered that customers who are loyal to a brand or company will always be less price sensitive. Discounting policies are typically found to decrease price elasticity's (make them more negative) by focusing consumers' attention on price-oriented cues (Pauwels *et al*, 2002). Wairachu (2000) found out that oil companies were becoming flexible on payment terms as indicated by extension of credit limit and period. He also found out that companies were also extending discounts and allowances to customers in order to retain them. Less frequent changes of prices caused customers to perceive a company as focused and this assists in planning hence positively enhancing a company perception in the market.

Eckel (2007) highlights that customers are usually cost-conscious, they tend to maximize the investment of their tuition fees, while maximizing their returns. Other

strategies used are discount and scholarship offers. Universities attract potentially good students to enroll by offering financial benefits which affect the students' choices as they may then put more consideration into institutions with the most generous offer. Kirp (2003) expresses concern of using this strategy, as it could potentially be used in an ethically problematic manner, as it could affect students' choices on what is best for them, and such a differential pricing conveys a sense of discrimination among students with different abilities. Soedijati & Pratminingsih (2011) asserts that in higher institutions of learning, pricing of academic is usually related to tuition and other associated costs per academic programme. There exists influence of pricing on marketing strategy adopted in institutions of higher learning since current and prospective students' factor in financial implications of attending or enrolling in universities. Amofah, Gyamfi & Tutu (2016) found out that price had significant but weak correlation with customers' decision to repeat purchase.

2.5.3 Branding Strategies for Promotion

Promotion involves a variety of activities undertaken by a firm to communicate the merits of its products and to persuade target consumes to purchase it (Nasirundin, 2011). According to Ennew, Banerjee, and Li, (2000) promotion is how an organization use communication activities to start a dialogue with its current and potential customers. It is a mixture of all traditional activities (Mahmood *et al*, 2014). Cannon Perreault, and McCarthy, (2008); Kurt and Boone (2006) state that firms will use promotion to inform, persuade and continuously remind the customer of its products which may, in turn, influence their decision to purchase.

Advertising may also signal product quality leading to an increase in brand equity (Kirmani & Wright, 1989). Moreover Kirmani and Wright (1989) assets that advertising has been found to have an enduring positive association on sales turnover.

Communication to different parties' i.e distributors, customers have been made through multiple channels. Inman, McAlister and Hoyer (1990) provide a behavioral explanation for the effect of promotional signals and promotional price cuts on consumer brand choice. Some marketers have attempted to orchestrate these activities to create synergistic effects (Duncan, 2002). Research has shown that coordinating marketing activities can lead to beneficial result (Naik & Raman, 2003).

In personal selling promotional method, representatives from the company meet with customers face to face in a bid to convince the customers to buy the products. In a bid to make a sale, it is important that customers' needs are understood (Kotler, *et al*., 2005). According to Keller (1998), personal selling is more customized and detailed. Trade promotions cum sales promotions entails giving incentives to heighten sales, such incentives include samples and discounts (Keller, 1998). While Kotler (2002) provides various reasons for sales promotions, he says that sales promotions to end-customers increase short-term sales and help to build long-term relationships, trade promotions focus on retailers and distributors so they purchase in large volumes and often advertise the product. Keller (2008) argues that public relations as a promotional strategy are highly credible since it is viewed as news rather than the advertisement. Through standardization of advertisement, consistency is enhanced in a manner in which a brand is represented (Melewar & Vemmervik, 2004). However, there may be a loss of competitive advantage for companies that tend to follow standardization of advertisements (Boddewyn *et al*., 2004).

The purpose of promotion is to communicate benefits of using a product or service so that more customers are attracted to buy (Lamb *et al*, 2009). Strategies employed are the advertisement, merchandise promotion (sales promotion) and direct selling (Lamb *et al*, 2009; Kotler & Keller, 2009; Kevin *et al*, 2009). It has been applied in order to

remind users about the product and to increase product demand. (Jager, 2007) argues that each product or service requires a unique mix of promotional activities to yield maximum effect. Therefore, each seller must tailor product promotion to suit the product and the market segment. Some users are attracted to product characteristics while others are attracted to discount price (Jager, 2007). Mona, Rahim and Salniza (2015), in their article entitled "Factors Contributing to Brand Loyalty towards Malaysia Higher Educational Institutions" found a positive relationship between image, quality and learning which were linked to each other and significantly influence brand loyalty. They stated a positive perception on these factors which had an impact on the word of mouth marketing which is a promotional variable. Also, Amofah *et al*., (2016), found out that promotion had significant but weak correlation with customers' decision to repeat purchase. Cetin (2011) and Cetin .R (2004) further asserts good image about the University facilitates international students in making effective choices.

The Higher institution should communicate its services to potential and current target market through different promotional strategies. According to Lambs *et al*., (2004) they suggest that promotional strategy is a marketing plan for effective utilization of promotional elements namely; direct marketing, publicity and public relations, advertising, personal selling and sales promotion. The students' market requirements and expectations determine the promotion elements that should be used by education institution and other elements of institution marketing decisions. It can very also play an important role in marketing an institution of higher learning. Rudd & Mills, 2008 in their research found out that promotion can enhance recognition of the universities name and provide its exposure. This is through the use of a combination of promotional mix of higher education consisting of internet, direct marketing,

sponsorship, sales promotion and advertising. Pull or push strategies may be used in promoting its services (Soedijati, 2006). The key thing in a university is to understand the students as the primary consumer when developing a promotion strategy. Most students would prefer the use of direct marketing and thus critical when choosing a promotional mix for the institution which can competitively leverage the institution as a brand in attracting potential students (Moogan, 2011).

2.5.4 Branding Strategies for Place

Popescu & Corbos (2011), states that a branding is a significant optimal initial point for place marketing. There is thinking that place branding is a bit difficult process compared to service and product branding (Hankinson, (2001); Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Rainisto (2001) further asserts that distribution branding strategy builds the identity of a particular place and which brings its attraction. Ability to identify a brand creates a relationship between the firm and the consumers, which makes an assessment proposition that comprises the emotional and financial benefits.

Kerin *et al.*, (2009), posited that customers benefit from a well-managed and effective distribution network. Kotler *et al.*, (2005), suggest that an organization can adopt numerous channels to distribute its products. These channels are dependent on the factors considered for channel choice which can be either direct or indirect. This has a strong effect on product sales (Keller, 2008). If a company decides to distribute its products direct it can do this through direct marketing, owned stores while indirect selling can adopt intermediaries such as agents, brokers, wholesalers or retailers. (Kotler *et al*, 2005). When a firm adopts indirect distribution they delegate functions like selling, distribution, promotion, negotiation and information (Kotler, 2000). In this case, the firm is unable to control the price charged for its products and how the product can be displayed by these channel members adopted.

According to Keller (2008), indirect channels should be used because intermediaries have the experience of the market, they are maybe specialized in a segment and may have a scale of operations and therefore they can add value to the product. (Kotler *et al*, 2005). Kotler *et al*, (2002) call the firms Multi- or Hybrid structures which use both direct and indirect channels for selling. A company having a strong brand image is more likely to get qualified intermediaries, and middlemen work more enthusiastically to promote a product with a strong brand image and demand (Keller, 2008). Soedijati & Pratminingsih (2011) acknowledges that the element placement is not restricted to geographic location as the information technology development provides alternatives in delivery the education service. Higher education institution may use distance learning and new technology in serving their students to enhance their competitive advantage.

2.5.5 People strategy

People are the employees of the business who always determine the quality of the service the customers receive. "Happy skilled and motivated staff will make happy customers." (CIM 2004). Good service can help the business build a competitive advantage and also impact on the pricing. A satisfied customer is likely to pay more for good service. Marketers need to: identify those staff that comes into contact with customers in different ways, analyze their task, set customer service standards and give the staff a relevant training to serve the customers satisfactorily. Ergen(2011), argues that people are the most significant component that distinguishes an organization. According to Hollensen (2010), and Brassington (2006), they state that for services to be delivered, it depends on the people who have a direct interaction with the consumer.

Akroush, 2011; Preko *et al*, 2014 they found a highly significant effect of process and consumer purchase behavior. Akroush (2011) highlights a number of factors that facilitate the provision of a service. According to Mahmood *et al*, 2014 technology has really shaped service delivery which has lead to value addition and services that can be distinguished between competing firms. Kotler & Fox 1995 say that people element of the universities marketing mix refers is the employees. In this case, people refer to all the teaching and administrative staff that deliver the required institutional services and create a basis of creating customer relationship management. Prospective university students are inclined to inquire about the universities they are interested in joining, they can get more information about their prospective universities from teaching and non-teaching staff, current enrolled students and also from the alumnus.

According to Lovelock and Wright (2004), customers will always evaluate the quality of the people delivering educational services in terms of their appearance, skills which they believe reflects the university's offer. For effective marketing strategy; an institution managing of their staff through training and development, effective motivation and compensation which should be continuously adopted by an institution. People have a great influence on consumer perception through their own appearance as they deliver a service, their behavior and attitude as motivated staff (Du Plesiss & Rouseau, 2005). A prospective student's initial impression on an institution of higher learning is usually based on the student's association and interaction with the people in the university.

2.5.6 Processes strategy

Processes are the ways or procedures used to deliver product or service to the customer/consumer. The process will impact on the perception of the customer towards the business. Marketers need to: always review the processes to make sure all

the delays in service or product delivery are reduced or fully eliminated; make sure that customers are familiar with the processes involved in product/service delivery and service staffs always honor their promises to their customers. Delays should always be explained and an apology was given with a promise of improvement where necessary and finally, they need to develop an effective process for handling customer complaints and feedback (CIM, 2004).

According to Kotler (2008), processes are the way institutions do business and this relates to the whole administrative system to this element. The flow of activities, procedures and mechanism by which services are consumed are the necessary elements of the marketing mix (Palmer, 2005). Universities need to ensure that students understand the manner of acquiring a service. Practice in higher education refers to the things that happen in an institution, such as the procedure of management, enrolment, teaching, learning, social and even sports activities. According to Ivy & Naude (2004) processes involve the teaching methods and assessment systems are the most evident points a prospective student enquires about.

2.5.7 Physical Ambiance strategy

Physical Evidence (services cape) could be seen as the environment in which the service is assembled and in which the seller and customer interact; combined with tangible commodities that facilities performance or communication of the service (Bitner,2000). It is important for service organizations including hospitality entities, to manipulate their physical environment effectively to enhance patronage and increase repeat business (Namasivyam, 2008). According to Mahmood and Khan (2014) in their article entitled, "Impact of Service Marketing Mixes on Customer perception, "they say that physical evidence assists in differentiating a service firm

from the competitor. These include a firm's interior décor and anything that enhances consumers' experience.

Remarkably, Bitner (2000) defined physical evidence as the built environment which has artificial physical surroundings as opposed to the natural or social environment. Furthermore, Namasivyam (2008), described physical Evidence as for the physical environment of an organization encompassing several different elements, such as overall layout, design and décor of a store. The physical Evidence also includes aspects of atmospherics such as temperature, lighting, colors, music and scent (Namasivyam, 2008). Physical evidence is important since it influences not only consumers' cognitive, emotional and physiological states but also their behaviors (Namasivyam, 2008).Lucas (2003) opined that there are three main dimensions of physical evidence which are: Building design, décor equipment and ambiance.

Ivy & Fattal (2010) argues that physical ambiance or evidence as all the physical and tangible items that a university makes available to all stakeholders and mainly the students ranging from the brochures to the infrastructures. Physical evidence is an important intangible nature of the service offered by a higher institution. The environment in which the service is delivered, both intangible and tangible assistance to communicate, perform and relay the customer satisfaction all customer. According to Kotler *et al*, (2008), physical ambiance gives the first impression about an institution and usually, the customers will see and consider the facilities and building. Gibs & Knapp (2002) further asserts that the condition of the physical location contributes greatly to the public image of the university which includes: Library cleanliness of rooms and technologies used.

2.6 Theoretical Framework.

A theory is a framework for organizing knowledge and providing a blueprint for action. The study focused on three theories that are related to the variables of the study namely; consumer based brand equity theory, the theory of planned behavior and Service quality theory.

2.6.1 Consumer Based Brand Equity Theory (CBBE Theory)

Branding has been of major concern and has received a lot of attention from companies and the business world. Organizations have attempted to understand various aspects of branding management in a bid to position themselves as strong brands. There has been an existence of uncertainty for longtime as to whether companies ought to keep emphasizing their brands and to what extent an average consumer cared on those brands. Thus, it became important for marketers to assess how vital the brands were in the purchasing and activation of demand for products. This challenge was accepted by Marquardt *et al*. (1965) when they decided to investigate this issue by focusing on an everyday product. According to the results, it was established that customers preferred products from well-established brands with only 25% of the respondents indicating that brand was not a key factor to them in influencing their consumption behavior for a product; instead price was termed as a key determinant in the buying behavior among the respondents. Cunningham (1956) in the 1950s explored brand loyalty a concept evoked much debate and became one of the biggest controversies of that time. By that time, companies had already invested a amounts in branding; the problem was scarce empirical evidence that the efforts had had any effect. Hence, even though the idea of brand loyalty had already been introduced, there was an uncertainty whether it was something worth striving for. Through his research, Cunningham revealed that household loyalty was strong and

consumers were brand loyal in more than 90% of the times while purchasing household goods.

In the early 1960s, another concept was introduced that had a major influence on marketing, namely lifestyle. The first person to discuss the use of lifestyles in branding and marketing was William Lazer. At that time, many companies still had mass communication and mass production as their main strategy; however, it was mainly in the 1970s that lifestyle marketing attracted much attention. Until then, mass production had worked fine for many companies. Companies often used consumers' income as the only variable when segmenting the market; however, this was all to be changed as a result of the emergence of stronger consumer lifestyles (Drucker, 1994).

A well-known term in today's marketing is the marketing mix, also known as the four P's of marketing. The founder of the marketing mix concept was Neil H. Borden, although E.Jerome McCarthy later popularized it when he proposed the four P's (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion). Culliton argued that marketing decisions should be seen as something similar to a recipe, and the marketer uses a "mixer of ingredients" to accomplish the goals. The four P's, on the other hand, symbolize marketing tools that companies could use to achieve their goals (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Borden first coined the term, which included branding, product planning, pricing, distribution channels, personal selling, advertising, promotions, packaging, display, servicing, physical handling, sand fact-finding and analysis (Borden, 1965).

Martineau (1958) laid the theoretical foundation of brand personality as early as in the 1950swhen he established that in spite of the fact that two similar stores could offer the same prices, quality of products, and equally good services, the customers still often show partiality toward one of the stores and not the other. The reason for this

behavior, he argued, is the personality of the store. To be able to create the desired personality, one has to use the power of the brand image. That is, consumers will always choose the store that represents their own personality and is, hence, in accordance with how they wish to be perceived. Branding was a topical issue in the 1950s and 1960s. However, it was in the 1970s and 1980s that branding was further developed and more firmly established, becoming an important research area within the entire discipline of marketing (Moore & Reid, 2008).

In the beginning of 1970's Kotler & Zaltman (1971) also wrote a well-cited article on how branding could be used by non-profit organizations. In the article, the authors introduced the reader to the concept of social marketing, which became a new framework for planning and implementing changes in the society. However, this approach was a natural result of the ongoing evolution of branding; the society went from focusing on sale returns only to become more market-oriented. Hence, social marketing showed that the boundaries of marketing are wide, and it became an important tool to influence the acceptability of new ideas. The theories behind social marketing were, however, up to much debate; for instance, they have been used to market new presidential candidates in the USA.

According to several authors, a new paradigm shift from the four P's of marketing to relationship marketing had already begun (Grönroos 1989, 1994; Gummesson 1993). Grönroos (1989) described the concept in this way: "Marketing is to establish, maintain, and enhance relationships with customers and other partners, at a profit, so that the objectives of the parties are met. This is achieved by a mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises." The relationships between the company and customers are often, but not necessarily, long-term relationships. To be able to establish a

relationship, the company first has to attract the customer and then build the relationship in a manner that profits both parties (Grönroos, 1989).

In the early 1980s, a new concept was coined that became one of the most researched areas within the field of marketing: namely, brand equity. This concept embraces the single most important aspect of marketing as of today, that is, how to measure the value of a brand. The foundation of brand equity was laid by American PR businesses to prevent companies from acting shortsightedly by reducing investment in branding. Hence, to be able to convince CEOs and managers of the long-term benefits of branding investments, they had to find a financial measurement to determine the return on such an investment. The literature was in a big need of a framework describing brand equity; that being so, in the late 1980s, the Marketing Science Institute (MSI) listed brand equity as a priority area for research. In the years to come, this resulted in a large number of publications and significant interest in the concept (Brodie, Glynn, & Van Durme, 2002). Brand equity has been considered in many contexts, but according to Kim, Kim & An (2003), there has been mainly three different viewpoints for considering brand equity: the financial perspective, the consumer-based perspective, and the combined perspective.

According to Simon and Sullivan (1993), this methodology has three important features: Brand equity is treated as an asset of the firm and is consequently separated from other assets of the firm; brand equity is calculated with a forward-looking perspective; and the value of the company changes when new information reaches the market. The aim of the consumer-based perspective is to measure how consumers react to a brand (Keller 1993; Shocker, Srivastava, & Ruekert 1994). Within this perspective, brand equity has been defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand (Lassar, Mittal, &

Sharma, 1995). Hence, the consumer-based perspective derives individually for every single consumer, and consumer-based brand equity arises when a consumer considers a brand to be well-known by means of positive, strong, and unique brand associations. To be able to understand the foundations of the consumer-based perspective, there are five considerations that have to be taken into account. First, brand equity refers to consumer perceptions, rather than any objective gauges. Second, the value associated with a brand refers to the global value. Third, the global value associated with the brand derives also from the brand name, and not only from physical aspects. Fourth, brand equity is not absolute, but relative to the current competition in the market. Finally, brand equity positively influences financial performance (Lassar *et al*., 1995).

Motameni & Shahrokhi (1998) argues that customer-base potency derives from the brand image and customer loyalty, which according to is a core dimension of brand equity. This demonstrates that a positive brand image plays a significant role in creating brand loyalty. The competitive potency refers to brand trend, brand support, and brand protection. Finally, the global potency is calculated by determining all the global differences between the local and global market. However, this has changed in the 1990s and 21st century when the role of branding was also included in relationship theories. This new integrated framework was coined as relational branding (Brodie *et al.*, 2002).

Gummesson, (2002) explains that there is a common belief that relationships are something that explicitly occurs between human beings. This is, however, not entirely true since there could be relationships that involve objects, symbols, and other immaterial phenomena. This kind of branding, which pays attention to the importance of relationships, is called para-social relationships. The existing relationships between customers and the company, including their products and services, are often

impersonal but nevertheless important in branding since such relationships affect the image of a company. This image is created by such factors as the company name, brands, famous company personalities, and other persons who symbolize the attitudes of the company.

It has been shown that consumers define the brand relationship from their own individual perspectives and the brand relationship and relational value are very much personalized in the minds of consumers. Customers generate individual relationships based on their individual perception of brand value, brand meaning and their experiences. That is, customers seem to personally create the brand through their communications across multiple contexts (Lindberg-Repo & Kirsti, 2001).

In the beginning of the 21st century, two different concepts were united into one, namely branding and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). CSR is, in reality, not a new concept; it was first introduced in the literature in the 1930s. However, it is more recently that the concept has gained popularity in branding. One of the reasons CSR is so complex is that it is unique not only for all lines of businesses but also for all companies (Kitchin, 2003). CSR became a hot topic due to the understanding of the connection between a company's reputation and its brand equity. Another reason for the huge interest of CSR is that research in the USA reveals that customers and employees disapprove of the way large corporations treat their customers and employees. One study showed that 88% of all respondents were of the opinion that companies must increase their responsibility to the society and urban districts. About 82% thought the top management favors their own interest above the employees, and 81% were of the opinion that companies consider it more important to make a profit than to ensure safe and reliable products (Dobson, 2003).

The main idea behind CSR is that all activities undertaken by a company affect the way consumers perceive that company. Although all activities affect the reputation, the company must acknowledge that all activities deliberately are undertaken to influence the brand must be accomplished in the name of the brand. Principally, there are four reasons to adopt CSR theories in companies: to understand the brand promise, to maintain customer loyalty, to maximize the effect of investments that were to be directed toward CSR regardless of the brand, and to avoid conflicts with stakeholders (Blumenthal & Bergstro, 2003).

Finally, companies could use ethicality as one of the brand benefits, allowing consumers to feel satisfied due to the linkage of the responsible behavior of the brand in its relationship with society (Kapferer, 2008). Therefore, CBBE theory is a tool that provides users with the direction in building a brand. It is built on the premise that the power of a brand is based on what customers experienced, heard and learned about a brand over time. Keller believed that people make a decision to use a brand depending on the reputation associated with that brand or company or organization. If a brand is a popular product or service, CBBE is presented in a positive light. CBBE is presented in a pyramid model containing four steps which include; creating the identity of the brand, having an understanding of the brand, creating consumer response and creating a strong relationship between the brand and the customer. Keller (1993) explained that customer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds some favorable, strong and unique brand associations are memory. In regard to this study, the CBBE theory is important to give an understanding of how Universities can brand their services, create consumer response and build a strong relationship between the brand and the customer.

2.6.2 The Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) is one of the most widely cited and applied behavior theories. It is one of a closely interrelated family of theories which adopt a cognitive approach to explaining behavior which centers on individuals' attitudes and beliefs. The TPB (Ajzen 1985, 1991; Ajzen & Madden 1986) evolved from the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) which posited intention to act as the best predictor of behavior. The intention is itself an outcome of the combination of attitudes towards behavior. That is the positive or negative evaluation of the behavior and its expected outcomes, and subjective norms, which are the social pressures exerted on an individual resulting from their perceptions of what others think they should do and their inclination to comply with these. The TPB added a third set of factors as affecting intention (and behavior) which is control in perceived behavior. This is the perceived ease or difficulty with which the individual will be able to perform or carry out the behavior and is very similar to notions of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Terry *et al.*, 1993).

Research relying on revealed preferences to infer decision-making processes typically confronts participants among products or services defined in terms of a selective set of attribute dimensions. Little information is gained about the considerations that actually guide the consumer's behavior. An alternative approach to understanding consumer decision making is provided by the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 2005, 2012). Instead of relying on the overall evaluation or utility of a product or service, this theory focuses on the specific consumer behavior of interest. The goal of the theory of planned behavior (TPB) is to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the determinants of such behaviors.

TBP was first described in 1985 by Ajzen, where today it is one of the most popular social -psychological models for understanding and predicting human behavior.

Briefly, in the TPB, the immediate antecedent of a particular behavior is the "intention" to perform the behavior in question. This intention is assumed to be determined by three kinds of considerations or beliefs. The first is termed "behavioral beliefs" and refers to the perceived positive or negative consequences of performing the behavior and the subjective values or evaluations of these consequences. In their aggregate, behavioral beliefs that are readily accessible in memory lead to the formation of a positive or negative "attitude toward the behavior".

The second kind of consideration has to do with the perceived expectations and behaviors of important referent individuals or groups, combined with the person's motivation to comply with the referents in question. These considerations are termed normative beliefs, and the normative beliefs that are readily accessible in memory combine to produce a perceived with artificial choices social pressure or subjective norm with respect to performing the behavior. The third type of consideration, control beliefs, is concerned with the perceived presence of factors that can influence a person's ability to perform the behavior. Together with the perceived power of these factors to facilitate or interfere with behavioral performance, readily accessible control beliefs produce a certain level of perceived behavioral control (or self-efficacy, Bandura, 1977) in relation to the behavior.

As a general rule, the more favorable the attitude and subjective norm with respect to engaging in the behavior, and the greater the perceived control, the more likely it is that a person will form an intention to perform the behavior in question. Finally, intentions are expected to lead to the performance of the behavior to the extent that people are in fact capable of doing so, that is to the extent that they have actual control over the behavior. Actual behavioral control is thus expected to moderate the effect of intention on behavior. However, in many applications of the TPB, it would

be difficult or impossible to identify all the factors that influence actual control over the performance of the behavior in question. This theory was relevant to the study since it provides the researcher in understanding students' behavior while choosing post-graduate programmes offered by different universities.

2.6.3 Service quality Theory

Wisniewski 2001 argues that service quality has aroused significant interest and debate in the research literature because of the difficulties in measuring it and also defining it with no overall consensus emerging on either. There are a number of different" definitions" as to what is meant by service quality. One that is commonly used defines service quality as the extent to which a service meets customers' needs or expectations (Lewis & Mitchell, 1990; Dotchin & Oakland, 1994; Wisniewski & Donnelly, 1996; Asubonteng *et al.*, 1996). The difference between consumer's expectations of service offered and perceived service is what is referred to as service quality. If the expectations of the customers are more than the service performance, then the perceived quality becomes minimal than satisfactory leading to consumer dissatisfaction due to unmet expectations (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985; Lewis & Mitchell, 1990).

Service quality should be measured because it allows for comparison before and after changes, for the location of quality related problems and for the establishment of clear standards for service delivery. Edvardsen Tomasson, & Ovretveit, (1994), states that, in their experience, the starting point in developing quality in services is analysis and measurement. Luke and Layton (2002) assert that external customers are associated with three crucial since these gaps have a direct association with the consumers namely; Gap 1, Gap 2 and Gap 6. Gap 1: Consumers outlook versus management perceptions: due to lack of focus on marketing research, inadequacy in

communication upward and numerous management layers. Gap 2: Management perceptions versus service specifications: as a result of an inadequate commitment to service quality, a perception of unfeasibility, inadequate task standard is action and an absence of goal setting. Gap3: Service specifications versus service delivery: as a result of role ambiguity and conflict, poor employee-job fit and poor technology-job fit, inappropriate supervisory control systems, lack of perceived control and lack of teamwork. Gap4: Service delivery versus external communication: as a result of inadequate horizontal communications and propensity to over-promise. Gap5: The difference between consumer expectations and their perception of delivered service: due to the influence which is exerted from the consumer's suggestion and the gaps on the side of the service provider.

In such a case, consumers' expectations get influenced by the degree of individual needs, recommendation by word of the mouth and experiences on past services. Gap 6: The difference between Consumers' expectations and organizations employees' perception: due to the difference in understanding the consumers' expectations by forefront service providers. Gap7: The discrepancy between employee's perceptions and management perceptions: as a result of discrepancy in understanding consumers' expectations between management and service providers. According to Brown & Bond (1995), "the gap model is one of the best received and most heuristically valuable contributions to the services literature". The model identifies seven key discrepancies or gaps relating to managerial perceptions of service quality, and tasks associated with service delivery to customers. The first six gaps (Gap1, Gap2, Gap3, Gap4, Gap6 and Gap 7) are identified as functions of the way in which service is delivered, whereas Gap5 pertains to the customer and as such is considered to be the true measure of service quality. The Gap on which the SERVQUAL methodology has

influence is Gap5. Thus in the education sector, it's good to value the quality of the service and adhere to set regulations and guidelines in academic programmes structuring as stipulated by the Commission of Universities Education(2015).

2.6.4 Consumer Buying Behaviour Model

The Engel Blackwell-Miniard Model also referred to as Consumer Decision Model was initially developed in the year 1968 by Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell. However, the model has undergone numerous revisions. It can be seen that many of the elements of the model are similar to those presented in the Theory of Buyer Behaviour (Howard & Sheth, 1969), however, the structure of presentation and relationship between the variables differ somewhat. CBB model is designed around a seven theme assessment procedure: basic recognition trailed by a search of information both inside and outside, the assessment of alternatives, acquisition, and post-purchase behavior and finally, divestment. These assessments are influenced by two broad factors:, Firstly stimuli conventional and managed by the consumer in conjunction with retentions of previous experiences, and secondly, environmental factors and disparities among individuals. The environmental influences identified include Culture; social class; personal influence; family and situation. While the individual influences include: Consumer resource; motivation and involvement; knowledge; attitudes; personality; values and lifestyle (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001).

The consumers enter to the model is by recognizing that they have a need where the consumer need concedes between the state he is in and some desired state. The development is determined by an interface between processed input stimuli environmental factors and individual aspects. When the need has been acknowledged; the consumer searches for information from both primary and secondary sources through the consumers' retention bank of past familiarities, and externally from word

of mouth. Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993 argue that the CBBE model is suitable for use in explaining the different types of buying situations ranging from extended problem solving and limited problem solving by modifying the gradation to which various steps of the model are affianced in by the consumer.

The search for information is extremely dependent on the nature of problem-solving, with new or complex consumption problems being subjected to extensive external information searches, while simpler problems may depend on wholly a simplified internal search of the repurchase of the consumer and previous experience. Information is said to pass through five stages of processing before storage and use, namely: exposure, attention, comprehension, acceptance and retention (Blackwell *et al*, 2001).

The alternative consumer preferences are evaluated by the establishment of beliefs, attitudes and purchase intentions. This process of evaluation is influenced by both the environmental variables and the individual variables. The intention is depicted as the direct antecedent to purchase which is the only outcome tolerated by the model. Inhibitors are not explicitly depicted as mediating between intentions and purchase, however, the environmental and individual influences are again said to act on the purchase. The situation is listed as an environmental influence, and while this factor is not clearly defined, it could include such factors as time pressure or financial limitations which could serve to inhibit the consumer from realizing their purchase intentions (Tonder, 2013). Consumption is followed by post-consumption evaluation which serves a feedback function into future external searches and belief formation. Divestment is depicted as the final stage in the consumption process acknowledging that the product purchased is likely to be disposed of at some point post-consumption. This model was relevant to the study as it aided in understanding aspects that

influence students' choice of postgraduate programs, pre and post process adopted when deciding on academic program service to consume.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

Smyth (2004) posits that a conceptual framework is a research tool intended to assist a researcher to develop understanding and awareness of the situation under inquiry and to communicate it. When clearly articulated, a conceptual framework has potential usefulness as a tool to assist a researcher to make meaning of subsequent findings. The researcher conceptualizes the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable in the study and shows the relationship graphically or diagrammatically.

According to Stratman and Roth, 2004 educational researcher conceptual framework is structured from a set of broad ideas and theories that help a researcher to properly identify the problem they are looking at, frame their questions and find suitable literature. The most academic research uses a conceptual framework at the outset because it helps the researcher to clarify his research question and aim. This study adopted a conceptual framework to assess the branding strategies and postgraduate students' choice of universities.

Specifically, the study aimed at examining the effect of branding strategies and postgraduate students' choice of universities Nakuru County, Kenya: internal branding strategies (organization culture, capabilities-employee and leadership styles), external branding strategies branding strategies (customer relationship focus and corporate social responsibilities) and its service mix brand strategies. According to Bunzel, (2007) he urges that branding needs not be necessary for the top universities, but rather suggest that smaller universities should market themselves

more to improve on their reputation. This entails whatever branding strategies that can be adopted in order to improve the Universities competitive edge for all its programmes. Recognizing the importance of branding strategies in Universities can differentiate themselves, by creating a sense of community between the educational product and its customers (Arenson, 2004).

The conceptual framework for the study presents the relationship between variables under study. The dependent variable (students' choice) will be regressed against explanatory variables (internal branding strategies, external branding strategies and service mix branding strategies) to determine their influence on the dependent variable under the intervention of other factors namely; government policies, regulators rules and policies, stakeholders' perception and students dispositions. Based on this review, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

Independent Variables   **Dependent Variables**

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Internal Branding Strategies    │
│                                 │
│    • Leadership styles          │
│                                 │
│    • Organisation Culture       │
│                                 │
│    • Employees                  │
│                                 │
└─────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ External Branding Strategies    │          │ PostGraduate Students'      │
│                                 │          │ Choice of Universities      │
│ • Customer Relationship focus   │  ──────▶ │                             │
│                                 │          └─────────────────────────────┘
│ • Corporate Social             │
│   Responsibility                │
│                                 │
└─────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Service mix Branding            │
│ Strategies                      │
│    • Programme                  │
│                                 │
│    • Price                      │
│                                 │
│    • Place                      │
│                                 │
│    • Promotion                  │
│                                 │
│    • Process                    │
│                                 │
│    • Physical Evidence          │
│                                 │
│    • People                     │
│                                 │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                            ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                            │  • GoK policies             │
                            │                             │
                            │  • Regulator's rules &      │
                            │    regulations              │
                            │                             │
                            │  • Stakeholder's Perceptions│
                            │                             │
                            │  • Students Disposition     │
                            │                             │
                            └─────────────────────────────┘
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Intervening Variables

Figure 2.1: Effect of Branding Strategies on Post Graduate Students' choice of Universities.

Source: (Author, 2016)

2.8 Critique of Existing Literature

The empirical review shows that a lot of studies carried out on branding strategies on postgraduate student choice of universities are mostly in foreign countries and mostly to other services which are not education. For instance Wymer (2013), Jevons (2006), Chapleo *et al*, (2011), de Chernatony & Segal-Horn (2003), M'zungu *et al*, (2010), Arruda (2009), Brandt *et al*, (2009). In a research conducted by Hu (2016), on the relationship between brand origin and brand equity he acknowledges that brand is an important element in the internationalization process and is very essential for a firm operating in the international business. The study further adds that brand equity is an important intangible asset for a firm, which also affects the customer's purchase intention. The empirical study tests four hypotheses on how brand origin is correlative to brand equity. Although only one hypothesis is accepted according to the data analysis process, some other new findings indicate that brand image has a significant relevance to brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty. In this study, the researcher only acknowledged the internalization of factors associated with branding and thus leaving out the external factors which are also variables affecting the internalization of the brands in the firm.

In a research conducted by Vukasovic (2012), on Managing Consumer-Based Brand Equity in Higher Education he found out that customer-based brand equity model can be applied to the higher education context as an element of competitive advantage and used to guide marketing activities for Universities internationally.

The ability to provide consumers with relevant information on credence qualities and experience before purchase has led to an extensive acknowledgment of the importance of brands relative to customers' choice in the service industry. The study, therefore, did not consider the specific aspects to be considered for branding in the

higher education sector. Thus in this study researcher considered the specific branding strategies and also consider branding for local students. Also, the researcher adopted other models unlike Vukasovic (2012), who only adopted customer-based brand equity model.

A research study conducted by Heaney & Heaney (2008), on Services Branding Strategies: Using Corporate Branding to Market Educational Institutions says that corporate branding takes into account the perspectives of various stakeholders associated with the organization which has become a crucial strategy when branding and marketing educational institutions. The research concentrated on branding taking into account the cost-oriented stakeholders involved, unlike this research where other relevant models in marketing were considered.

In a research study conducted by Pringle (2013), he explores through the lens of branding practices at universities and how professionals in public sector spaces respond to the influence of corporate marketing practices. The research addressed the question of how faculties perceive branding activities in higher education and their role in branding activities at the university. The research was conducted at three Universities in Ontario Canada, which was selected based on differences in heritage and location. The study concentrated on in three universities in Ontario Canada and only focused on faculty members where they perceived branding as leading to changes in both the structure and culture of the university. This study focused on students and management who are the key people in implementing branding strategies.

2.9 Research Gaps

A review of existing literature on branding strategies universities adopt indicates that most of the relevant studies have been conducted in the developed Countries. Most of these studies focused on general branding policies in universities and community colleges (Belanger *et al*, 2002; Judson *et al*, 2006; Chapleo, 2004). A study by Bulotaite (2003); Gray *et al*, (2003) focused on the learning environment, reputation, graduate career prospects, destination and cultural integration as factors that can be used in positioning a university. Studies by (Argenti 2000; Jevons 2006; Bunzel 2007) to a large extent focused on promotions and brand identity elements. (Waeraas & Solbaak, 2008), investigated how branding efforts were carried out in some universities and the challenges faced as a result of defining the university, strategic marketing (Balwin & James, 2000; Reindfleisch, 2003), market positioning and brand equity (Gray *et al* 2003), models adopted in marketing (Waeraas & Solbakk, 2009), planning for market activities (Maringe & Foskett, 2002) and promotional strategies (Klassen, 2002) and whether universities can have effective products (Chapleo, 2005). Although (Mupemhi, 2013) acknowledges that few types of research, for example, have been conducted on corporate brand management in the USA (Harvey, 1996; Curtis *et al*, 2009; Pinar *et al*, 2011), corresponding studies are almost negligible in Africa and even non – existent in the western part of the continent.

Few studies have been conducted in Africa concerning brand management practices and universities positioning such as (Mourad *et al*, 2011) in Egypt and (Mupemhi, 2013) in Zimbabwe. However, there exists scant studies and literature focusing on branding strategies and students' choice of post-programs in Kenyan universities. Thus, this formed the fundamental research base of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter provides a detailed research methodology of the study. Discussion under this chapter includes; research design, location of the study, population, sampling procedure, sample size and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed explanatory research design. Creswell (2004) refers research design as the entire process of research from conceptualizing an idea, literature review, methodological approach to writing the conclusion. According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008), research design is the way the research is organized, how evidence will be gathered, where the evidence will be found and how the evidence will be interpreted. The research design is a glue that holds all the elements of research together (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

According to Burns and Grove (2003), the purpose of research design is to achieve greater control of the study and to improve the validity of the study by examining the research problem. This study sought to obtain descriptive and self-reported information from the postgraduate students in the public and private universities in Nakuru County, Kenya. Also, the research design was chosen because it is the most appropriate method when the researcher seeks to determine the strength of the relationship between variables (Sekaran, 2004). The data collected was quantitative in nature as it attempts to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status with respect to one or more variables (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999).The design allowed the researcher to expose the respondents to a set of questions to allow comparison.

3.3 Location of the Study

Nakuru County is located in the former Rift Valley Province of Kenya, about 90km from Nairobi. Nakuru is an agriculturally-rich county blessed with various tourist attractions such as craters and lakes. It is made up of 11 constituencies. Nakuru borders seven counties; Laikipia to the northeast, Kericho to the west, Narok to the south-west, Kajiado to the south, Baringo to the north, Nyandarua to the east and Bomet to the west. It covers an area of 7496.5 square kilometers. Nakuru County is home to 1, 603, 325 people (male – 50.2% and female – 49.8%), according to the 2009 National Census. It is a cosmopolitan county, with its population originating from all the major tribes of Kenya. Universities and other institutions of higher learning in the county include Egerton University, Mt Kenya University Campus, Kabarak University, Kenya Methodist, Kenyatta University, Jomo-Kenyatta University of Science and Technology, University of Nairobi Extra Mural, St. Pauls University, Moi University, Kenya Industrial Training Institute (KITI) and Kenya Institute of Management (KIM) and Rift valley institute of Science and Technology (RVIST). The study concentrated on the universities in Nakuru County.

3.4 Population of the Study

Oso and Onen (2008) explain population as a larger group of items or objects from which samples are taken. Black (2008) indicates that a target population comprises of institutions and entities that are the object of investigation. This study focused on all postgraduate students admitted in the university both in the public and the private sector in Nakuru County, Kenya. The target population of the study included all students irrespective of the courses chosen. University's postgraduate students are always tasked with the responsibility of choosing courses offered by universities in

relation to marketability and career path progression and as such formed the best target population for this study.

Table 3.1: Student population in Universities in Nakuru County

No. of Universities	Population
Egerton University (EU)	1996
Kenyatta University(KU)	200
Jomo-Kenyatta University of Science and Technology(JKUAT)	851
Moi University(MU)	12
University of Nairobi Extra Mural(UON)	150
Kabarak University(KABU)	282
Kenya Methodist(KEMU)	91
St. Pauls University(SPU)	20
Mount Kenya University(MKU)	130
TOTAL	**3,732**

Source: (Postgraduate students registered in universities in Nakuru County, 2017)

3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

In determine the study sample the following sampling procedure was employed:

3.5.1 Sample Procedure

A sampling frame is the source material or device from which a sample is drawn. According to Orodho (2003), a sampling frame is a list of all those within the population who can be sampled. According to (Demsey, 2003), the sampling frame is a source list from which sample respondents have to be drawn. Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) define sampling frame as a list of all the possible items where a representative sample may be drawn for the purpose of a study. The sample for this study was 9 public and private universities in Nakuru County and offering post-graduate programmes (Ministry of Education Nakuru County, 2017).

3.5.2 Sample Size

A sampling frame shows the distribution of the population from which a sample was drawn. Sampling frame includes all the sampling units in the population. In practice, a physical list rarely exists; researchers usually compile a substitute list (Nachmias & Nachmias, 2003).

Purposive sampling was used to select the universities in Nakuru County. The method was for sampling the respondents (postgraduate students) who were expected to provide information on universities' choice (see Appendix 4). The purpose of sampling was to secure a representative group (Mugenda, 2008). Burns & Grove (2003), refer to sampling as a process of selecting a group of people, events or behavior with which to conduct a study. The sample for the study was designed to produce a representation of the university postgraduate students both in public universities and private universities in Nakuru County, Kenya. To arrive at a sample size, the study adopted a formula by Nassiuma (2000) for estimating a sample size, n, from a known population size, N and a coefficient of variation (C.V) which range between 21%s and 30% (i.e. 21%<e<30%) and error between 5% and 1 % (1%<e<5%).

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)e^2}$$

Where

n = optimum sample size;

N = population size;

C = coefficient of variation and e is error margin.

Substituting these values in the equation, estimated sample size (n) was:

n=3,732*0.3^2 / {0.3^2 + (3,732-1)0.02^2}

n= 212

To arrive at the above sample size, the study employed proportionate stratified random sampling technique. According to Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2011), a stratified method of sample selection is appropriate when getting a sample from a heterogeneous population. Simple random sampling was used to determine the final respondents based on the number of semesters covered in this case at least one semester. The researcher assumed that one semester is enough to a student to have acclimatized with the study environment and thus relevant to the topic under study. This sampling method ensured that different groups of the population are adequately represented in the sample so as to increase the level of accuracy when estimating parameters. Stratified random sampling was used to allocate the sample size proportional to size of each stratum population as;

$$n_h = \left(\frac{n}{N} \right) N_h$$

Where:

- n is the strata sample size
- N is the target population
- N_h is the optimum sample size.

The following are representative samples from each of the nine universities (stratas);

Table 3.2: Sample size of the Respondents

No. of Universities Stratas	Strata Population Size	Sampled Postgraduate Students size
Egerton University (EU)	1996	114
Kenyatta University(KU)	200	11
Jomo-Kenyatta University of Science and Technology(JKUAT)	851	48
Moi University(MU)	12	1
University of Nairobi Extra Mural(UON)	150	9
Kabarak University(KABU)	282	16
Kenya Methodist(KEMU)	91	5
St. Pauls University(SPU)	20	1
Mount Kenya University(MKU)	130	7
TOTAL	**3732**	**212**

Source: (Universities' Admission Records, 2017)

3.7 Instrumentation

The study used structured questionnaires that were distributed to all the continuing university students randomly irrespective of the courses they are undertaking involved in the sample. Primary data was collected through semi-structured self-administered questionnaires. Secondary data was gathered from existing credible and recognized the source. The data comprised of materials that are desirable, current, accurate, sufficient and relevant collected from library textbooks and electronic academic journals. The questionnaire was designed based on the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was used to obtain more responses from a large number of respondents in a short time and for obtaining structured responses which are also convenient in data analysis (Cooper & Schindler, 2003).

Designing a sound questionnaire requires a focus on three main issues. These include the simple wording of questions, planning of how the variables will be categorized, scaled and coded, and general appearance of the questions (Sekaran, 2003). The questionnaire (Appendix I) contained five sections: Section A contained information the bio-data of the respondents. Section B contained questions on internal branding strategies, section C contained questions on external branding strategies, section D contained questions on service mix branding strategies while section E contained questions students' choice of postgraduate programmes. This study used closed-ended questions mainly Likert-type scales because closed questions have the advantage of helping the respondents make quick decisions to choose among the set of alternatives. Closed questions also make it easier to code the information for subsequent analysis (Sekaran, 2003). The questionnaires contained a five-point Likert scale to measure the variables under study. The responses to the items were scored as follows; 1 - Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4- Agree and 5- Strongly Agree (5).

3.6.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to detect weakness in design and instrumentation and to provide accurate data for selection of a sample (Young, 2009). According to Polit and Beck (2003), a pilot study or test is a small scale version, or trial run, done in preparation for the major study. The method was selected because it is recommended whenever a test tool is administered only once and has multiple response items (Borg & Gall, 2003). The questionnaire was piloted by taking 20% of the sample population who were later excluded in the actual data collection process. From the pilot test results, the questionnaire yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.98 as shown on table 3.3. The instrument was considered reliable as its alpha value was above the recommended 0.7 threshold (Cohen & Manion, 2000).

Table 3.3: Pilot study results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Internal Branding Strategies	0.739	21
External Branding Strategies	0.629	13
Service Mix Branding Strategies	0.763	27
Students choice	0.741	14
Overall Reliability Coefficient	**0.98**	**75**

Source: (Author, 2017)

3.6.2 Validity of the Instrument

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), Validity is the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on the research results. For a data collection instrument to be considered valid, the content selected and included must be relevant to the need or gap established. The research instrument was tested for validity to ascertain whether they measure the variables under study.

According to Borg and Gall (1999), the validity of an instrument is improved through expert judgment. As such, the content validity was ascertained by engaging the research supervisors to check and assess the frequency of errors and the accuracy of data expected. The process of validation enabled the researcher to test the suitability of the questions, the adequacy of the instructions provided, the appropriateness of the format and sequence of questions. Some corrections were made to the questionnaires and the final version was printed out. Construct validity is the degree to which test measures an intended hypothetical construct (Mugenda, 2003). Using a panel of "experts" familiar with the construct is a way in which this type of validity can be assessed; the experts can examine the items and decide what that specific item is intended to measure (Mugenda, 2003).

3.6.3 Reliability of the Instrument

According to Kohl (2005), reliability as the ability of a test to consistently yield same results when repeated measurements are taken of the same individual under the same conditions. Trial testing of the measuring instruments should be undertaken using a few subjects whose characteristics are similar to those in the sample to ascertain the feasibility of the study (Nkpa, 1997). (Cooper & Schindler, 2001) explains reliability of research as determining whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. To ensure reliability branding strategies was piloted in the neighboring Uasin Gishu County that reflects similar characteristics with the study location. Reliability coefficient values were computed using Cronbach alpha coefficient method. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient normally ranges between 0 and 1. However, there is actually no lower limit to the coefficient. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. The formula used in the calculation is

$$\alpha = r*k\ /[1 + (k-1)r]$$

Where k is the number of items considered and r is the mean of the inter-item correlations. The size of alpha is determined by both the number of items in the scale and the mean inter-item correlations. George and Mallery (2003) provided the following rules of thumb: ≥ 0.9 – Excellent, ≥ 0.8 – Good, ≥ 0.7 – Acceptable, ≥ 0.6 – Questionable, ≥ 0.5 – Poor, and < 0.5 – Unacceptable. Values above 0.7 are assumed to indicate that the instrument is reliable (Kombo & Tromp, 2009). Thus an alpha range of 0.7 is commonly accepted the rule of thumb that indicates good reliability.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher proceeded to collect data from the selected respondents after receiving permission from the relevant authorities. Following the procedure used Ahire and Drefus (2000), the questionnaire survey asked the respondents to indicate their factual information and perception based on a five-point Likert scale. The researcher visited the areas of study before actual data collection for familiarization and acquaintance. During this visit, the researcher informed the universities management about the purpose of the study and book appointments for data collection. After familiarization, data was collected using the mentioned instrument. The completed instruments were verified and collected after three weeks of distribution.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data was processed and analyzed based on the objectives and research hypotheses using Statistical Package for Social Sciences. This was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involved; frequencies, percentages as well as chi-square with respective probability values (p-values). Inferential statistics entailed; Pearson correlation coefficient which was used to establish the nature of non-causal relationships between the dependent and explanatory variables, while the multi regression model was employed where dependent variable was regressed against all explanatory variables to determine combined effects of predictor variables on the dependent variable (Y). Research hypotheses were tested using the regression analysis at 5 percent significance level. The following regression model was employed

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Where Y –Post graduate Students' Choice of universities (dependent variable)

X_1 – Internal branding strategies

X_2 – External branding strategies

X_3 – Service Mix branding strategies

β_0 – intercept (regression constant)

β_1, β_2 and β_3, – Beta coefficients for explanatory variables

ε – Error term for the regression assumed to be randomly, normally and independently distributed with zero mean and constant variance

Table 3.4: Summary of Objectives, Hypotheses and Analysis Techniques

H_O	Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Statistics
H_{01}	Internal Branding Strategies has no significant effect on students choice of post graduate programs in Nakuru County	Internal branding Strategies	Student choice of post graduate programmes	Percentage, Frequencies, Chi-Square, ANOVA, Pearson's correlations
H_{02}	External Branding Strategies has no significant effect on students' choice of post graduate programs in Nakuru County.	External Branding Strategies	Student choice of post graduate programmes	Percentage, Frequencies, Chi-Square, ANOVA, Pearson's Correlations
H_{03}	Service Mix Branding Strategies has no significant effect on students choice of post graduate programs in Nakuru County	Service Mix Branding Strategies	Student choice of post graduate programmes	Percentage, Frequencies, Chi-Square, Pearson's Correlation

Source: (Author, 2017)

3.8.1 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was performed to explore the underlying relationships and the structure of the measurement models for the independent variable items and dependent variable items and to summarize data. To meet the statistical and conceptual assumptions regarding the appropriateness of factor analysis, the variables

included were of the metric level; the sample size was 212 which was greater than the preferable 100, the ratio of cases to variables thus exceeded the required 15 to 1 threshold. Variables with measures of sampling adequacy less than 0.50 were be removed, The overall measure of sampling adequacy's Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was expected to be higher than the required 0.50 and the Bartlett test of sphericity measured the statistical significance of the variables (Field, 2009).

Principal component Analysis was used as the method of extraction since it is more common and usually yields results similar to common factor analysis. The researcher performed factor analyses using rotation models, which does permit cross-factor loadings Gorsuch (1983), together with Kaiser Normalization. Furthermore, the researcher also used the latent root (Eigen value) criterion, examination of the Scree Plot as well as examination of the pattern matrix to determine the number of Factors. During examination of the pattern matrix, cut off value was set to be at 0.4, as recommended by Hair et al. (1998) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) who noted that factors with factor loading above 0.4 were retained for further study. Items with cross loading under 0.4 will be removed. Hair et al. (1998) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) described the factor loadings as follows: 0.32 (poor), 0.45 (fair), 0.55 (good), 0.63 (very good) or 0.71 (excellent). Factors mean scores were computed prior to conducting multiple regression analysis. Data was subjected through econometric tests to check that the assumptions of multivariate analysis were met. The data was checked for linearity, normality, multi-collinearity and hetero-scedasticity of residuals.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Voluntary participation by the respondent was applied in a bid to protect their rights (Borgatti, 2005). Respondents' confidentiality was ensured through the study (Trochim, 2006) as well as through literature review for authors' acknowledgment. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and how the information obtained was used. The researcher sought permission from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and was granted (Appendix XV).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings for each of the three objectives findings are presented on basis of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The results from the analysis formed the discussion basis for each of the study's variable.

4.2 General and Demographic Information

This section presents and discusses results of descriptive statistics of the profile of respondents and universities. It also presents descriptive analyses results of the study variables. The respondents in this study were postgraduate universities' students who were considered to be informed about their choice of postgraduate programs on account of branding strategies employed by universities. Frequencies and percentages were used to examine the distribution of the respondents.

4.2.1 General Information

Orodho (2003) defines response rate as the extent to which the final data sets includes all sample members and is calculated as the number of respondents with whom interviews are completed and divided by the total number of respondents in the entire sample including non-respondents. As presented in Table 4.1, out of two hundred and twelve questionnaires that were administered to the respondents, one hundred and sixty-nine were properly filled returned back which was 79.72 % response. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), argues that 50% and above respondents' response rate is appropriate in conclusion of research findings.

Table 4.1 Response Rate

Rate Response Rate	Frequency	Percent
Returned	169	79.72%
Unreturned	43	20.28%
Total	**212**	**100**

Source: (Author, 2017)

4.2.2 Demographic Data

This section presents the demographics of the study where the key characteristics of the respondents were: respondent's age, respondent's age, type of institution, postgraduate programme respondents are studying, mode, year and semester of study.

4.2.2.1 Respondents' age

The study sought to establish age of the respondents.

Table 4.2: Age of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-25 years	35	20.7	20.7	20.7
	26-35 years	59	34.9	34.9	55.6
	36-45 years	54	32.0	32.0	87.6
	above 46 years	21	12.4	12.4	100.0
	Total	**169**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: (Author, 2017)

Table 4.2 Shows that majority 59 (34.9%) of the respondent are aged 26-35 years, 54 (32.0%) of respondents are aged 36-45 years, 35(20.7%) were aged 20-25 years while only 21(12.4%) are above 46 years old. This means that a majority of those undertaking postgraduate studies are young people.

4.2.2.2 Respondents' gender

The study sought to establish gender of the respondents.

Table 4.3: Gender of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	94	55.6	55.6	55.6
	Female	75	44.4	44.4	100.0

| | | Total | 169 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: (Author, 2017)

From the results on Table 4.3, majority 94 (55.6%) of respondents were men while 75 (44.4%) were female. This means that majority of postgraduate students that is male though the difference between the two genders is not much.

4.2.2.3 Type of institution

The study sought to establish type of institution where respondents are undertaking their postgraduate programs.

Table 4.4: Type of Institution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	private	51	30.2	30.2	30.2
Valid	Public	118	69.8	69.8	100.0
	Total	**169**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: (Author, 2017)

From the results on Table 4.4, majority 118 (69.8%) of respondents were undertaking their postgraduate programs in public institutions while 51(30.2%) were undertaking the program in private institution. This means that majority of postgraduate students' preferred public universities than private universities.

4.2.2.4 Postgraduate Program Undertaken

The study sought to establish the post graduate program studied by the postgraduate students where respondents are undertaking their postgraduate program

Table 4.5: Post graduate program

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Masters	111	65.7	65.7	65.7

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Phd	40	23.7	23.7	89.3
	post graduate diploma	18	10.7	10.7	100.0
	Total	**169**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: (Author, 2017)

From the results on Table 4.5, majority 111 (65.7%) of respondents were undertaking their masters in their postgraduate programs while 40(23.7%) were undertaking PhD with a fairy number of respondents 18(10.7%) undertaking post graduate diploma program.

4.2.2.5 Year of study

The study sought to identify year of study for post graduate students.

Table 4.6: Year of study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	year 1	41	24.3	24.3	24.3
Valid	year 2	73	43.2	43.2	67.5
	year 3	55	32.5	32.5	100.0
	Total	**169**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: (Author, 2017)

From the results on Table 4.6, majority 73(43.2%) of respondents were in year two, 55(32.5%) were in their second year of study while a fair number of respondents 41(24.3%) were in their third year of post graduate study. This means that majority of the respondents had enough university experience to understand topic under study.

4.2.2.6 Semester of study

The study sought to identify year of study for post graduate students.

Table 4.7: Semester of study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	semester 1	44	26.0	26.0	26.0
Valid	semester 2	71	42.0	42.0	68.0
	semester 3	54	32.0	32.0	100.0
	Total	**169**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: (Author, 2017)

From the results on Table 4.7, majority 71(42.0%) of respondents were in semester two of study, 54(32.0%) were in semester three while a fair majority of respondents 44(26.0%) were in semester one of postgraduate studies. This means that majority of respondents were in the university long enough to understand the topic under study.

4.2.3 Cross tabulation results

The cross tabulation method was used in examining the percentage of respondents across various demographics (i.e gender, age and year of study).

Table 4.8ₐ: Students age * Students Gender Cross tabulation

| | | | Respondents Gender | | Total |
			Male	Female	
Age of the Respondents	20-25 years	Count	29	6	35
		% within age of the respondents	82.9%	17.1%	100.0%
	26-35 years	Count	44	15	59
		% within age of the respondents	74.6%	25.4%	100.0%
	36-45 years	Count	13	41	54
		% within age of the respondents	24.1%	75.9%	100.0%
	above 46 years	Count	8	13	21
		% within age of the respondents	38.1%	61.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	94	75	169
		% within age of the respondents	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%

Source: (Author, 2017)

Table 4.8ᵦ: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	43.491[a]	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	45.655	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	30.706	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	169		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.32.

Source: (Author, 2017)

Table 4.8ₐ, shows that there are few female students undertaking post graduate programs (44.4%) compared to the male counterparts (55.6%). Table 4.8ᵦ, shows that the results were significant (χ^2=43.491, $p<0.05$).This indicates that students age contributes significantly in post graduate students' choice of university, female gender between the ages of 36 years and above are more influenced by branding strategies in making choice of universities to undertake post graduate programs compared their male counterparts who are more influenced between the ages of 20-35 years.

Table 4.9_a: Age of students * Year of Study Cross tabulation

			Year of Study			Total
			year 1	year 2	year 3	
age of the respondents	20-25 years	Count	15	14	6	35
		% within age of the respondents	42.9%	40.0%	17.1%	100.0%
	26-35 years	Count	6	39	14	59
		% within age of the respondents	10.2%	66.1%	23.7%	100.0%
	36-45 years	Count	15	11	28	54
		% within age of the respondents	27.8%	20.4%	51.9%	100.0%
	above 46 years	Count	5	9	7	21
		% within age of the respondents	23.8%	42.9%	33.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	41	73	55	169
		% within age of the respondents	24.3%	43.2%	32.5%	100.0%

Source: (Author, 2017)

Table 4.9_b:Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	34.008[a]	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	34.750	6	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.148	1	.023
N of Valid Cases	169		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.09.

Source: (Author, 2017)

Table 4.9_a, shows that majority of respondent were in year two of study 43.2% while

32.5% were in year three of study with only 24.3% of respondents being in year one

of study. Table 4.9_b, shows that the results were significant (χ^2=34.008, $p<0.05$),

indicating that age was a significant factor in students year of study in relation to

branding strategies used by universities. The results indicate that at ages of 20-25

years, most respondents are either in first or second year. Moreover, students aged
between 26-35 years were also found to be in second year. Majority of respondents
aged between 36-45 years were in third year of study while those respondents aged
above 46 yearswere in second year of study and third year respectively. These results
show that as individuals advance in age they tend to be influenced more by branding
strategies employed by institutions of higher learning, thus influencing students'
choice of universities to undertake post graduate programs.

Table 4.10$_a$: Students gender * Year of Study Cross tabulation

			Year of Study			Total
			year 1	year 2	year 3	
Respondents Gender	Male	Count	26	50	18	94
		% within respondents gender	27.7%	53.2%	19.1%	100.0%
	Female	Count	15	23	37	75
		% within respondents gender	20.0%	30.7%	49.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	41	73	55	169
		% within respondents gender	24.3%	43.2%	32.5%	100.0%

Source: (Author, 2017)

Table 4.10$_b$: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.587[a]	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	17.775	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.583	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	169		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count
is 18.20.
Source: (Author, 2017)

Table 4.10$_a$, shows that majority of gender (43.2%) were in year two of study while respondent were in 32.5% of gender were in year three of study with 24.3% of gender being in year one of study. The results indicate that majority of male gender (53.2%) were in year two of study with a fair majority of female gender (49.3%) being in year three of study. The results as presented in Table 4.10$_b$, are statistically significant (χ^2=17.587, p<0.05), this shows that female gender tend to be more influenced by branding strategies employed by universities in making post graduate choice of universities, compared to the male gender. This can be supported by the percentage of female gender and male gender in relation to the year of study per gender.

4.2.4 Reliability, Validity and Regression Assumptions

The study sought to ensure that the research scales were reliable and valid, and the data met the regression assumptions. The following section discusses the results of tests of reliability, validity and assumptions of regression analysis.

4.2.4.1 Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha was also used to test internal consistency reliability. Kombo & Tromp (2009) indicates that an alpha range of 0.7 is an acceptable range that indicates good reliability. All the research constructs had alpha coefficients of above 0.7 except external branding strategies which was slightly low (0.616). The instruments returned an overall alpha correlation coefficient of 0.888 which indicated internal consistency reliability as shown on table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Reliability Test

Variable	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Students Choice	14	0.713
Internal Branding Strategies	20	0.766
External Branding	9	0.616

Strategies		
Service Mix Branding	23	0.745
Strategies		
Overall	66	0.888

Source: (Author, 2017)

4.2.4.2 Test of Validity

To test construct validity in this study, factor analysis was conducted. Because of the large number of items involved, separate sets of factor analyses were conducted for the items in the research constructs. Factor analysis was used to check the extent to which each item in the scales contributed to the respective factor. Before factor analysis was conducted, assumptions of factor analysis were tested. As a general rule regarding sample size, the minimum is to have at least five times as many observations as the number of variables to be analyzed; and the minimum absolute sample size should be 50 observations, but preferably, the sample size should be 100 or larger (Hair *et al*., 2011). In this study, sample size requirement was met as 169 post graduate students were studied.

Kaiser Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) was used to validate factor analysis and the measure varies from 0 to 1.0 and values closer to 1 are better. A value of 0.5 is a suggested minimum to proceed with factor analysis (Hair *et al*., 2011). Kaiser-Mayer Olkin (KMO) and Bartletts test was used to test the appropriateness of the sample from the population and the suitability of factor analysis. Another method of determining the appropriateness of factor analysis is by conducting the Bartlet test of sphericity, a statistical test for the presence of correlations among the variables. A statistically significant Bartlet's test of sphericity indicates that sufficient correlations exist among the variables to proceed with factor

analysis (Hair *et al*., 2011). In this study, Kaiser Meyer-Olkin measure and Bartlet's test of sphericity were employed and the results presented in Table 4.12.

In conducting EFA, the two most commonly used extraction methods are principal component analysis or principal axis factoring. The two methods generate similar results in most research situations (Gaur & Gaur 2011; Hair *et al.,* 2011). This study used principal component analysis and varimax rotation because of their wide usage and simplicity. The general rule of factor analysis stipulates that only factor with Eigen value of 1 and above are considered meaningful for interpretation (Anthony & Mustapha, 2010). However, it is important to note that only loadings greater than 0.4 were considered significant after varimax rotation in this research. Mabert *et al,* (2003) argues that factor loading values that are greater than 0.4 should be accepted.

Table 4.12: KMO and Bartlett's Test Results

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.783
	Approx. Chi-Square	228.304
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	6
	Sig.	.000

Source: (Author, 2017)

Table 4.12 shows that the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy gives a value of 0.783. The KMO is close to 1 which represents a perfectly adequate sample and Bartlet's test of sphericity shows a chi-square of 228.304 is statistically significant at 5 percent. This is an indication of the adequacy of the sample. The results from the two test instruments show that factor analysis can be used for the study.

4.2.4.3 Factor Analysis on Internal Branding Strategies

Exploratory factor analysis for items in internal branding strategies scale was conducted. Principal component analysis extraction method with varimax rotation method was used; and validity was assessed by examining the factor loadings to see if the items in the scale loaded highly on the construct. Table 4.13 presents the results of the analysis for the number of items that had significant loading on each component factor after varimax rotation.

Table 4.13: Rotated Component Matrix for Measures of Internal Branding Strategies

Internal Branding Strategies Items	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a. The leadership makes students enthusiastic about the university			.815				
b. The university's leadership encourages students to express their ideas and opinions			.818				
c. The university's leadership inspires students loyalty					-.698		
d. The university's leadership gives personal attention to students					.879		
e. Leadership practiced expresses appreciation to students when they perform							.882
f. Most students in this university have input into the decisions affecting them		.920					
g. The university recruits their own graduates		.672					

Item				
h. Cooperation and collaboration across different departments, functions or school is actively encouraged				-.620
i. There is high level of agreement about the way students do things in this university	.775			
j. University is very responsive and adapts to changes easily		.892		
k. University ensures Students are well informed about policy changes (for example CUE regulations)	.828			
l. University has a long-term purpose and direction			.726	
m. There is a shared vision of what the university would be like in the future			.866	
n. Institution holistically nurtures students		.714		
o. The university teaching staff have the required qualifications	.623			
p. Employees have self initiation activities that are beneficial to students	.744			
q. Employees provide feedback on inquiries timely	.721			

r.	Employees have collective focus on institution set goals, objectives and values	.646			
s.	Employees have enough knowledge to deliver assigned responsibilities	.732			
t.	Employees positively communicate about the university		.697		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Source: (Author, 2017)

The results on Table 4.13 show that that the factor loadings of internal branding strategies items range from 0.620 to 0.920. Except one item "employees pays attention to students' needs and addresses them" which did not meet loading cut off of 0.4, the other twenty items met the loadings cut-off of 0.4 and were thus retained for analysis. A maximum of seven factors were obtained, because the seven factors had Eigen values which are greater than one and their extraction sums of squared loadings are greater than 1. Factor 1 had the highest extraction sums of squared loadings of 4.419, which represents 22.097 percent of variation. Factor 7 had the lowest extraction sums of squared loadings of 1.308 representing 6.538 percent of variance. The extraction sums of squared loadings of other factors were between the range of 4.419 and 0.000. The contributing power of these other factors to the explanation of the variance in the variables was significantly considered. The factors account for 81.144 percent of the variance in the construct (Appendix III, Table A1).

4.2.4.4 Factor Analysis on External Branding Strategies

Exploratory factor analysis for items in external branding strategies scale was conducted. Principal component analysis extraction method with varimax rotation

method was used; and validity was assessed by examining the factor loadings to see if the items in the scale loaded highly on the construct. The number of items that had significant loading on each component factor after varimax rotation is as presented on Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Rotated Component Matrix for Measures of External Branding Strategies

External Branding Strategies Items	Component		
	1	2	3
a. The university has built a longterm relationship with alumnus	.737		
b. The university responds on issues timely			.524
c. The university ensures partnership programme with the local universities	.598		
d. The university ensures partnership programme with international universities			.650
e. The university ensures students are updated on issues concerning their academic results		.902	
f. The university has a prompt communication system with the students	.893		
g. The university supports/ carries out health awareness campaigns	.536		
h. The university supports/carries out environmental conservation awareness campaigns			-.677
i. The university participates in research development		.869	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Source: (Author, 2017)

As shown in Table 4.14, the rotated component matrix in the table indicates that the factor loadings of organizational culture items ranged from 0.524 to 0.902. Except four items "the university employees advises students on which course specialization to undertake, the university facilitates building of schools (primary, secondary in the community around), the university sponsors bright students, the university participates in research findings application" which did not meet loading cut off of 0.4, the other nine items met the loadings cut-off of 0.4 and were thus retained for analysis. A maximum of three factors were obtained, the three initial factors had Eigen values greater than 1 and their extraction sums of squared loadings were greater than 1. Factor 1 had the highest extraction sums of squared loadings of 2.545, representing 28.282 percent of variance. Factor 3 had the least extraction sums of squared loadings of 1.250 which represents 13.894 percent of variation. Other factors extraction sums of squared loadings were between the range of 2.545 and 0.151. The contributing power of these other factors to the explanation of the variance in the variables was considered very significant. The factors accounted for 59.411 percent of the variance of the construct (Appendix IV, Table A2).

4.2.4.5 Factor Analysis on Service Mix Branding Strategies

Exploratory factor analysis for items in service branding strategies scale was conducted. Principal component analysis extraction method with varimax rotation method was used; and validity was assessed by examining the factor loadings to see if the items in the scale loaded highly on the construct. Table 4.15 presents the results of the analysis for the number of items that had significant loading on each component factor after varimax rotation.

Table 4.15: Rotated Component Matrix for Measures of Service Mix Branding Strategies

Service Mix Branding Strategies Items	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
a. The university offers postgraduate programmes courses that are attractive to the market					.659			
b. The university offers sufficient content in their programmes	.704							
c. Tuition fee charged per program is affordable							.824	
d. Statutory fee changed for programs is affordable				.709				
e. Thesis supervision fee charged in respective programs is affordable					.547			
f. Cost of living in the university is affordable							.824	
g. Online postgraduate programs course registration guides students effectively						.717		
h. There is relevant information given by print media in advertising university programmes	.656							
i. There is relevant information given electronic media in advertising university programmes			.822					
j. The university uses social media in advertising its programs.						.830		
k. Students in corporate world act as referrals for the university programs.		.662						
l. The university website offers adequate information on offered programs	.911							
m. The university has qualified staff		.540						

Item					
n. The university teaching staff offer essential services required by graduate students	.616				.
o. University's staff are competent		.820			
p. The university has a policy of addressing students grievances	.825				
q. University's teaching/ methods applied are effective to learners			-.798		
r. University's policy on student- lecturer contact hours is effective				-.764	
s. University's policy on academic staff teaching hours in a semester is effective			.887		
t. The university has a policy of reviewing research proposals and thesis for defense and submission					-.613
u. The university has serene environment for learning					.893
v. The university offers quality library services (e.g availability of books , subscription for access to online journals)			.886		
w. The university offers quality lecture theatre facilities for postgraduate students		.673			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Source: (Author, 2017)

The rotated component matrix in Table 4.15 shows that all the factor loadings of service mix branding strategies items ranged from 0.540 to 0.911.Except four items "the university teaching staff professionals, the university is well located, the university's computer labs are well equipped for experimental research purposes, the

university offers efficient cafeteria facilities" which did not meet loading cut off of 0.4, the other twenty three items met the loadings cut-off of 0.4 and were thus retained for analysis.A maximum of eight factors were obtained, the eight initial factors had Eigen values greater than 1 and their extraction sums of squared loadings were greater than 1. Factor 1 had the highest extraction sums of squared loadings of 4.998, representing 21.732 percent of variance. Factor 8 had the least extraction sums of squared loadings of 1.271 which represents 5.524 percent of variance. Other factors extraction sums of squared loadings were between the range of 4.998 and -1.378 E-016.The contributing power of these other factors to the explanation of the variance in the variables was considered very significant. The factors account for 82.409percent of the variance of the construct (Appendix V, Table A3).

4.2.4.6 Factor Analysis on Students' Choice

Exploratory factor analysis for items in students' choice scale was conducted. Principal component analysis extraction method with varimax rotation method was used; and validity was assessed by examining the factor loadings to see if the items in the scale loaded highly on the construct. The number of items that had significant loading on each component factor after varimax rotation is as presented on Table 4.16.

Table 4.16: Rotated Component Matrix for Measures of Students' Choice

Students Choice Items	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a. This university remains among my first choice			.837			
b. I can refer this university to someone else	.851					
c. The university's informal reputation in research , teaching , social activities engagement	.741					
d. The university has met my academic needs	.604					
e. the university Leadership enhanced my choice			.702			
f. The university culture enhanced my choice				.904		
g. University's corporate social responsibility activities		.522				
h. Academic programme offered		.581				
i. University's participation in exchange programmes		.784				
j. University's pricing of academic programmes					.551	
k. University's promotional mode		.714				
l. University's academic staff					.926	
m. University's infrastructure	.521					
n. University's reputation						.889

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Source: (Author, 2017)

The rotated component matrix in Table 4.16 shows that all the factor loadings were above the cut-off of 0.4, and were in the acceptable range of 0.521 to 0.926. All fourteen items met the loading cut off of 0.4 and were thus retained for analysis. A maximum of six factors were obtained, the six initial factors had Eigen values greater than 1 and their extraction sums of squared loadings were greater than 1. Factor 1 had the highest extraction sums of squared loadings of 3.395, representing 24.248 percent of variation. Factor 6 had the lowest extraction sums of squared loadings of 1.082 which represents 7.726 percent of variance. The extraction sums of squared loadings of other factors ranged between 3.395 and 0.191.The contributing power of these other factors to the explanation of the variance in the variables was significantly considered. The factors account for 74.268 percent of the variance in the construct (Appendix VI, Table A4).

4.2.5 Test for the Assumptions of Regression Analysis

Since regression analysis was used as the main analysis technique, the assumptions of linearity and heteroskedasticity, normality and multicollinearity were tested. This section presents the results of the tests.

4.2.5.1 Test of Normality

Normality test of data is applied to determine whether a data is well-modeled by a normal distribution or not, and to compute how likely an underlying random variable is to be normally distributed. To test for normality, the normal probability plot was used; and the plotted data values were compared with the diagonal. Figure 4.1(Appendix VII) shows the results of the test for normality.

4.2.5.2 Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity means that there is linear relationship between explanatory variables which may cause the regression model biased (Gujarati, 2003). VIF is a statistic calculated for each variable in the model to test Multicollinearity. Theoretically, a VIF greater than 5 may suggest that the concerned variable is multi-collinear with others in the model and may need to be excluded from the model (Gujarati, 2003). Hence, as presented on Table 4.17, the VIF results indicate there was no collinearity in the explanatory variables. Moreover a tolerance of greater than 0.2 indicates non existence of multicollinearity. Tolerance and VIF results indicate there was no collinearity in the explanatory variables.

Table 4.17: Multicollinearity Test

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	**VIF**
Internal branding strategy	.501	1.997
External branding strategy	.719	1.391
Service mix branding strategy	.535	1.870

a. Dependent Variable: students' choice of post graduate programs

Source: (Author, 2017)

4.2.5.3 Test of Heteroskedasticity

Heteroskedasticity is a systematic pattern in the errors where the variances of the errors are not constant (Gujarati, 2003). Heteroskedasticity makes ordinary least square estimators not efficient because the estimated variances and covariance of the c efficients (βi) are biased and inconsistent and thus, the tests of hypotheses are no longer valid. Figure 4.2 (Appendix VIII) shows the graph for the data.

Figure 4.2 shows that data points are randomly and evenly dispersed around zero, the graph does not funnel out and there is no sort of curve in the graph. This pattern indicates that the assumptions of linearity and heteroskedasticity were met.

4.3 Descriptive statistics and discussions on Study's variables

Descriptive statistics analysis for study research variables and discussions are presented. The study's independent variables were; internal branding strategies, external branding strategies and service mix branding strategies while students' choice was the dependent variable.

4.3.1 Internal Branding Strategies

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with internal branding strategies statements in influencing choice of post graduate programs. The measurable indicators were ranked on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5). The responses were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Chi-square values for measured indicators were also determined with respective probability values (p-value). Table 4.18 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 4.18: Descriptive Analysis for Internal Branding Strategies

Measurable indicators	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Chi-square (χ^2)	P-value
Leadership							
a) The leadership makes students enthusiastic about the university	6 (3.6 %)	6 (3.6%)	34 (20.1%)	75 (44.4%)	48 (28.4%)	304.138	0.0000
b) The universitys leadership encourages students to express their ideas and opinions	6 (3.6%)	12 (7.1%)	70 (41.4%)	75 (44.4%)	6 (3.6%)	276.652	0.0000
c) The university's leadership inspires students loyalty	12 (7.1%)	18 (10.7%)	6 (3.6%)	97 (57.4%)	36 (21.3%)	358.915	0.0000
d) The university's leadership gives personal attention to students	-	27 (16.0%)	67 (39.6%)	51 (30.2%)	24 (14.2%)	290.143	0.0000
e) Leadership practiced expresses appreciation to students when they perform	6 (3.6%)	6 (3.6%)	16 (9.5%)	81 (47.9%)	60 (35.5%)	329.694	0.0000
Organization Culture							
a) Most students in this university have input into the decisions affecting them	6 (3.6%)	27 (16.0%)	51 (30.2%)	67 (39.6%)	18 (10.7%)	419.290	0.0000

Statement						χ²	p-value
b) The university recruits their own graduates	66 (39.0 %)	39 (21.3%)	40 (23.7%)	9 (5.3%)	18 (10.7%)	344.982	0.0000
c) Cooperation and collaboration across different departments, functions or school is actively encouraged	21 (12.4%)	28 (16.6%)	27 (16.0%)	66 (39.1%)	27 (16.0%)	374.339	0.0000
d) There is high level of agreement about the way students do things in this university	57 (33.7%)	52 (30.8%)	24 (14.2%)	18 (10.7%)	18 (10.7%)	276.578	0.0000
e) University is very responsive and adopts to changes easily	6 (3.6%)	49 (29.0%)	81 (47.9%)	18 (10.7%)	15 (8.9%)	436.266	0.0000
f) University ensures students are well informed about policy changes (for example CUE regulations)	30 (17.8%)	27 (16.0%)	46 (27.2%)	54 (32.0%)	12 (7.1%)	251.080	0.0000
g) University has a longterm purpose and direction	12 (7.1%)	27 (16.0%)	82 (48.5%)	42 (24.9%)	6 (3.6%)	446.880	0.0000
h) There is a shared vision of what the university would be like in the future	6 (3.6%)	-	45 (26.6%)	61 (36.1%)	57 (33.7%)	215.362	0.0000

i)	Institution holistically nurtures students	6 (3.6%)	12 (7.1%)	63 (47.3%)	52 (20.8%)	36 (21.3%)	355.050	0.0000

Employees

a)	The university teaching staff have the required qualifications	-	18 (10.7%)	42 (24.9%)	73 (43.2%)	36 (21.3%)	277.612	0.0000
b)	Employees have self-initiation activities that are beneficial to students	6 (3.6%)	9 (5.3%)	43 (25.4%)	69 (40.8%)	42 (24.9%)	338.876	0.0000
c)	Employees provide feedback on inquiries timely	6 (3.6%)	24 (14.2%)	66 (39.1%)	55 (32.5%)	18 (10.7%)	311.245	0.0000
d)	Employees have collective focus on institution set goals, objectives and values	24 (14.2%)	12 (7.1%)	27 (16.0%)	64 (37.9%)	42 (24.9%)	358.955	0.0000
e)	Employees have enough knowledge to deliver assigned responsibilities	18 (10.7%)	22 (13.0%)	45 (26.6%)	54 (32.0%)	30 (17.8%)	369.817	0.0000
f)	Employees positively communicate about the university	6 (3.6%)	16 (9.5%)	78 (46.2%)	18 (10.7%)	51 (30.2%)	348.239	0.0000

Source: (Author, 2017)

4.3.1.1 Leadership as an internal branding strategy

Universities' leadership makes students enthusiastic about the university (χ^2=304.138, p<0.05), with the leadership encouraging students to express their ideas and opinions agreed by 44.4% with a 41.4% of respondents holding a neutral opinion (χ^2=276.652, p<0.05). The leadership also inspires students loyalty (χ^2=358.915, p<0.05), gives personal attention to students (χ^2=290.143, p<0.05). Leadership practiced in universities expresses appreciation to students when they perform (χ^2=329.694, p<0.05).

The study findings agree with those of Özer and Tnaztepe (2014) who in their article "Effect of Strategic Leadership Styles on Firm Performance" in SMEs in Turkey noted that transformational leadership style is relationship-oriented and are significantly related to firm performance. The study further agree with those of Ulrich and Smallwood, (2007) who states that stronger brand leaders will be shaped if the behavior of organization's representatives is based on stakeholders' principles and demands. They further suggest that concerning organizational behavior, leadership is seen as an important behaviour affecting the behavior of organizational members especially employees.

The study findings also concur with those of Kim (2004) who in his article "Leadership Style and National Culture on Restaurant Employees' Affective Commitment who noted that is of the view that the kind of leadership style exhibited by managers to a large extent influences organizational valued outcomes such as low employee turnover, reduced absenteeism, customer satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness. He further asserts that transformational leadership style improves employee dedication, social behavior, role clarity, and satisfaction (Gill & Mathur, 2007).

The study findings further concurs with those of Mulford (2006), Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) who confirms that transformational leadership practices of helping people, setting directions and redesigning the organization brings about organizational effectiveness, student outcomes and student engagement in school.

4.3.1.2 Organization Culture as an Internal Branding Strategy

According to majority of respondents (50.3%), most students in this university have input into the decisions affecting them (χ^2=419.290, p<0.05). 60.3% disagreed that universities' recruits their own graduates (χ^2=344.982, p<0.05), cooperation and collaboration across different departments, functions or school is actively encouraged (χ^2=374.339, p<0.05). There is no high level of agreement about the way students do things in this university as agreed by majority of respondents (64.5%) (χ^2=376.578, p<0.05). Many respondents were neutral on whether universities are very responsive and adapts to changes easily (χ^2=436.266, p<0.05), universities ensures students are well informed about policy changes such as those outlined Commission of University Education (χ^2=351.080, p<0.05). Respondents held neutral opinion on whether universities have long-term purposes and direction (χ^2=446.880, p<0.05). There is also a shared vision of what the universities would be like in the future (χ^2=215.362, p<0.05) while most respondents were neutral on whether learning institution holistically nurtures students (χ^2=355.050, p<0.05).

These findings corroborate that one of Mintrom (2014) who in his article titled "Creating cultures of excellence: Strategies and outcomes" reports on a multi-year effort to create cultures of excellence among cohorts of graduate students. He suggests that explicitly promoting a culture of excellence among course participants can have a positive and sustained impact on their individual practices. This is mainly

in areas like excellence, learning and teaching, teamwork, pedagogy, educational effectiveness, scholarship of teaching and learning, professional development.

4.3.1.3 Employees as Internal Branding Strategies

Universities' teaching staff have the required qualifications (χ^2=277.602, p<0.05). Employees have self-initiation activities that are beneficial to students (χ^2=338.876, p<0.05). Most respondents (39.1%) were neutral on whether employees provide feedback on inquiries timely (χ^2=311.245, p<0.05).Universities employees have collective focus on institution set goals, objectives and values (χ^2=358.955, p<0.05) with enough knowledge to deliver assigned responsibilities (χ^2=369.817, p<0.05). However, most respondents (46.2%) held neutral opinion on whether the employees positively communicate about the university (χ^2=348.239, p<0.05).

The study findings agree with those of Jandaghi, Bahamin, and Abaei, (2015) who in their article titled "effects of brand leadership styles on employees - based brand citizenship behavior Leadership Practices" states that in service organizations, employees are able to influence over customers purchase decisions and conceptions. They further assert that employees play a critical role in organizational success. Enhancing employee – based brand citizenship behavior by managers can create a competitive advantage for organization.

4.3.2 External Branding Strategies

Regarding external branding strategies, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that the statements of aspects of external branding strategies influenced choice of post graduate programs. Each item had a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5). The responses were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Chi-square values for measured

indicators were also determined with respective probability values (p-value). Table

4.19 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 4.19: Descriptive Analysis for External Branding

Measurable Indicators	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Chi-Square (χ^2)	p-value
Customer Relationship Management							
a. The university has built a longterm relationship with alumnus	9 (5.3%)	14 (8.3%)	23 (16.6%	76 (45.0%	47 (27.8%)	215.888	0.000
b. The university responds on issues timely	8 (4.7%)	24 (14.2%)	44 (26.0%)	71 (42.0%)	22 (13.0%)	191.122	0.000
c. The university ensures partnership progranne with the local universities	12 (7.1%)	22 (13.0%)	55 (32.5%)	43 (25.4%)	37 (21.9%)	119.810	0.000
d. The university ensures partnership programme with international universities	33 (19.5%)	81 (47.9%)	22 (13.0%)	25 (14.8%)	8 (4.7%)	113.154	0.000

e. The university ensures students are updated on issues concerning their academic results	17 (10.1%)	44 (26.0%)	45 (26.6%)	53 (31.4%)	10 (5.9%)	245.667	0.000
f. The university has a prompt communication system with the students	21 (12.4%)	33 (19.5%)	15 (8.9%)	72 (42.6%)	28 (16.6%)	241.139	0.000

Corporate Social Responsibility

a. The university supports/ carries out health awareness campaigns	40 (23.7%)	38 (22.5%)	48 (28.4%)	26 (15.4%)	17 (10.1%)	353.742	0.000
b. The university supports/carries out environmental conservation awareness campaigns	38 (22.5%)	39 (23.1%)	56 (33.1%)	24 (15.4%)	12 (7.1%)	222.398	0.000
c. The university participates in research development	22 (13.0%)	30 (17.8%)	38 (22.5%)	48 (24.4%)	31 (18.3%)	260.700	0.000

Source: (Author, 2017)

4.3.2.1 Customer Relationship Management as an External Branding Strategy

Universities have built a long-term relationship with alumnus (χ^2=215.888, P<0.05) and responds on issues timely (χ^2=191.122, P<0.05). Universities in Nakuru County have partnership programme with other local universities (χ^2=119.810, P<0.05), however, universities have not enhanced partnership programme with international universities as agreed by 67.45% of respondents (χ^2=113.154, P<0.05). The universities ensures students are updated on issues concerning their academic results (χ^2=245.667, P<0.05), while according to majority of respondents (59.2%) universities has a prompt communication system with the students (χ^2=241.139, P<0.05).

The findings agree with those of Boulding *et al,* 2005 who states that Customer Relationship Management enhances capabilities such as navigation through effective market sensing, articulation of the new value proposition, and orchestration by providing the essential glue that ensures a coherent whole because it is "the outcome of the continuing evolution and integration of marketing ideas and newly available data, technologies and organizational forms. Vargo & Lusch, 2004 states that CRM principles and systems help organizations to focus on the dual creation of value: the creation of value for shareholders (via long-term firm profitability) and the creation of value or utility for customers. The study further agrees with those of Kassanoff, 2000 who states that CRM applications help answer questions such as "What products or services are important to our customers? How should we communicate with our customers? What are my customer's favourite colors or what is my customer's size?" In particular, customers benefit from the belief that they are saving time and money as well as receiving better information and special treatment.

Finally the study supports those of Gefen and Ridings (2002) who states that CRM system consists of multiple modules including: operational CRM, which supports a variety of customer-oriented business processes in marketing, sales and service operations; and analytic CRM which analyses customer data and transaction patterns to improve customer relationships. Karimi, Somers & Gupta., 2001 further assert that successful CRM implementation often entails significant organizational transformation due to the complexity of multiple operations involved in managing customer relationships.

4.3.2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility as External Branding Strategy

Universities do not support or carry out health awareness campaigns or environmental conservation awareness campaigns as agreed by 46.2% 45.6% of respondents (χ^2=353.742, P<0.05, χ^2=222.398, P<0.05) respectively. Most universities participate in research development (χ^2=260.700, P<0.05). Srinaruewan (2013) in his article titled "Consumer Reactions to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Thailand, states that the challenge of CSR communication is to discuss how to increase consumers' CSR awareness and how to minimize consumers' scepticism (Du *et al*. 2010), the strategic benefits of CSR need to be contingent with consumers' awareness of a firm's CSR activities. Moreover, Blumenthal & Bergstrom, (2003), argues that few corporations fully leverage the brand building opportunities that corporate social responsibility offers. Castaldo *et al,* 2009 further emphasizes that corporations wanting to attract potential stakeholders are showcasing actions that further a particular social good. Further, Miles & Govin (2000), states that perceptions of all relevant stakeholders are formed through a corporation's actions is an invaluable intangible asset. There is need to promote socially responsible business practices to achieve a sustained strategic advantage and to enhance a corporation's reputation

(Luo & Bhattacharya 2006; Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006). By investing in corporate social responsibility, corporations can secure competitive advantages, financial benefits, build brand awareness (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002) and create brand legitimacy (Uggla, 2006; Vaaland *et al,* 2008; Werther & Chandler, 2005), which can in turn strengthen the relationship of stakeholders with the corporate brand. Further, Holmes (2003); Gifford (2004), and Reader (2003) describe how universities can differentiate themselves through the use of branding strategies, for example by creating a sense of community between the educational product and its customers.

4.3.3 Service Mix Branding Strategies

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with service mix branding strategies statements in influencing choice of post graduate programs. The measurable indicators were ranked on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5). The responses were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Chi-square values for measured indicators were also determined with respective probability values (p-value). Table 4.20 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 4.20: Descriptive Analysis for Service Mix Branding Strategies

Measurable Indicators	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Chi-square (χ^2)	*p*-value
Programme offered							
a. The university offers postgraduate programs courses that are attractive to the market	13 (7.7 %)	32 (18.9%)	31 (18.3%	46 (27.2%	47 (27.8%)	307.303	0.0000

b. The university offers sufficient content in their programmes	33 (19.5%)	49 (29.0%)	15 (8.9%)	30 (17.8%)	42 (24.9%)	381.445	0.0000

Pricing Mix

a. Tuition fee charged per program is affordable	66 (30.1%)	82 (48.5%)	-	15 (8.9%)	6 (3.6%)	222.398	0.0000
b. Statutory fee charged for programs is affordable	45 (26.6%)	79 (46.7%)	30 (17.8%)	15 (8.9%)	-	220.183	0.0000
c. Thesis supervision fee charged in respective programmes is affordable	48 (28.4%)	72 (42.6%)	27 (16.0%)	22 (13.0%)	-	263.257	0.0000
d. Cost of living in the university is affordable	9 (5.5%)	12 (7.1%)	93 (55.0%)	49 (29.0%)	6 (3.0%)	360.591	0.0000

Promotion Mix

e. Online postgraduate program course registration guides students effectively	18 (10.7%)	48 (28.4%)	6 (3.6%)	76 (45.0%)	21 (12.4%)	372.948	0.0000
f. There is relevant information given by print media in advertising university programs	-	-	18 (10.7%)	76 (45.0%)	75 (44.4%)	196.407	0.0000

g.	There is relevant information given electronic media in advertising university programs	6 (3.6%)	25 (14.8%)	24 (14.2%)	72 (42.6%)	42 (24.9%)	394.487	0.0000
h.	The university uses social media in advertising its programs.	84 (49.7%)	28 (16.6%)	24 (14.2%)	12 (7.1%)	21 (12.4%)	353.742	0.0000
i.	Students in corporate world act as referrals for the university programs.	12 (7.1%)	31 (18.3%)	90 (53.3%)	24 (14.2%)	12 (7.1%)	351.438	0.0000
j.	The university website offers adequate information on offered programs	34 (20.1%)	36 (21.3%)	9 (5.3%)	42 (24.9%)	48 (28.4%)	352.669	0.0000

People

a.	The university has qualified staff	27 (16.0%)	24 (14.2%)	16 (9.5%)	45 (26.6%)	57 (33.7%)	344.185	0.0000
b.	The university teaching staff offer essential services required by graduate students	21 (12.4%)	30 (17.8%)	18 (10.7%)	43 (25.4%)	57 (33.7%)	353.472	0.0000

c. University's staff are competent	15 (8.9%)	6 (3.6%)	16 (9.5%)	69 (40.5%)	63 (37.3%)	308.030	0.0000

Process

a. The university has a policy of addressing students grievances	12 (7.1%)	12 (7.1%)	69 (40.8%)	52 (30.8%)	24 (14.2)	338.031	0.0000
b. University's teaching/ methods applied are effective to learners	22 (13.0%)	9 (5.3%)	72 (42.6%)	66 (39.1%)	-	249.895	0.0000
c. University's policy on student-lecturer contact hours is effective	73 (43.2%)	24 (14.2%)	39 (23.1%)	15 (8.9%)	18 (10.7%)	344.626	0.0000
d. University's policy on academic staff teaching hours in a semester is effective	40 (23.%)	42 (24.9%)	30 (17.8%)	6 (3.6%)	51 (30.2%)	301.561	0.0000
e. The university has a policy of reviewing research proposals and thesis for defense and submission	18 (10.7%)	52 (30.8)	24 (14.2%)	63 (37.3)	12 (7.1%)	426.192	0.0000

Physical Evidence

f. The university has serene environment for learning	6 (3.6%)	21 (12.4%)	42 (24.9%)	73 (43.2%)	27 (16.0%)	3.5562	1.01687

g. The university offers quality library services (e.g availability of books , subscription for access to online journals)	6 (3.6%)	84 (49.7%)	10 (5.9%)	6 (3.6%)	63 (37.3%)	4.1361	0.93818
h. The university offers quality lecture theatre facilities for postgraduate students	24 (14.2%)	12 (7.1%)	79 (46.7%)	-	54 (32.0%)	4.0355	0.86529
i. The university's computer labs are swell equipped for experimental research purposes	-	6 (3.6%)	9 (5.3%)	61 (36.1%)	93 55.0%	4.4260	0.75327

Source: (Author, 2017)

4.3.3.1 Programme offered as Service Mix Branding Strategy

The universities offers postgraduate programs courses that are attractive to the market as agreed by 55% of respondents (χ^2=307.303, P<0.05). Moreover, sufficient content is offered in these academic programmes (χ^2=381.445, P<0.05).

The study findings concur with those of Gibbs and Knap (2002) who states that there is a strong relation between the programme offered and the institution, as it establishes the institution's identity. They further assert that such identity positions the institution in mind of its customers and determines how they will respond to what

is being offered. They suggest that any institution is recommended to increase tangibility of the programme offered by increasing what they describe as the 'wrapping' it is offering. Wrapping' in this case includes, for example, CD-ROMs, photocopied lecture material and handouts, course books, free access to the Internet, discounted materials. The study findings also agrees with Hollensen (2003) who remarks that a marketing strategy, when appropriately implemented, results in programmes being cooperatively designed, developed, tested, piloted, provided, installed and refined. He further emphasizes that institution producing programme concept, should research this with the customers, bearing in mind that it should meet their requirements and needs.

The study findings also concurs those of Amaral & Magalhaes,(2007), acknowledges that education is an experience service as its relevant characteristics can only be effectively assessed by consumption(It is only when a student attends a study programme that he/she gets an idea about what has been 'purchased' in terms of quality. The programme does not exist until the service provider performs the service, usually in the presence of the customer, and it does not necessarily result in the ownership of any material thing (Kotler, Bloom, & Hayes, 2002).

The study findings are consistent with those of Soedijati and Pratminingsih (2011) found out that higher education has three main activities as service offered: administration of knowledge, extensive research and service for humanity where institutions should evaluate the program and service offered and other marketing mix periodically, and particularly when considering continuous improve to meet market requirements which are dynamic. These improvements may bring about satisfaction to

all stakeholders though they may have differing needs with respect to their different expectations.

4.3.3.2 Pricing Mix as Service Mix Branding Strategy

Tuition fee charged per post graduate program is high according to 78.6% of respondents (χ^2=222.398, P<0.05). Statutory fee charged for programs is not affordable (χ^2=220.183, P<0.05), as well as theses supervision fee charged in respective programmes (χ^2=263.257, P<0.05). Majority of respondents were neutral on whether cost of living in the universities was affordable (χ^2=360.591, P<0.05).

The findings of the study agree with Kerin and Rudelins (2007) who argued that customers always want a reasonable price in buying a product or services. They further state that price must however show value of the product for the customer to remain loyal. Price is considered to be the key significant factor affecting consumer's choice (Kotler *et al*, 2005).

The research findings further supports the study by Soedijati and Pratminingsih (2011) who observed that higher institutions of learning, pricing of academic is usually related to tuition and other associated costs per academic programme. There exists influence of pricing on marketing strategy adopted in institutions of higher learning since current and prospective students' factor in financial implications of attending or enrolling in universities.

4.3.3.4 Promotion Mix as Service Mix Branding Strategy

Most respondents were indifferent on whether universities' online postgraduate program course registration guides students effectively (χ^2=372.948, P<0.05). There is relevant information given by print media in advertising universities' programs (χ^2=196.407, P<0.05). Information given on electronic media in advertising university

programs is also relevant (χ^2=394.487, P<0.05). However, 66.3% of respondents disagreed that universities uses social media in advertising academic programs (χ^2=353.742, P<0.05). Respondents were neutral on whether students in the corporate world act as referrals for universities' programs (χ^2=351.438, P<0.05). Although 53.3% of respondents agreed that universities' website offers adequate information on offered programs, 41.4% disagreed (χ^2=352.669, P<0.05).

The study findings agrees with those of Rudd & Mills (2008), where in their article state that promotional mix of higher education found out that promotion can enhance recognition of the universities name and provide its exposure. This is through the use of a combination of promotional mix of higher education consisting of internet, direct marketing, sponsorship, sales promotion and advertising.

The findings are also consistent to those of Lamb *et al*, 2009 ; Kotler & Keller, 2009; Kevin *et al*, (2009) states that the purpose of promotion is to communicate benefits of using a product or service so that more customers are attracted to buy. They further emphasize those strategies employees are advertisement, merchandise promotion (sales promotion) and direct selling). Jager (2007) states that these promotional aspects are applied in order to remind users about the product and to increase product demand.

4.3.3.5 People as Service Mix Branding Strategy

According to most respondents, universities have qualified staff (χ^2=344.185, P<0.05), who offer essential services required by graduate students (χ^2=353.472, P<0.05), with much competency (χ^2=308.030, P<0.05).

The research findings are consistent to those of Lovelock and Wright (2004) who suggest that direct involvement of employees in service marketing means that

customers will always evaluate the quality of the people delivering educational services in terms of their appearance, skills which they believes reflects the university's offer. Thus for effective marketing strategy an institution managing of their staff through training and development, effective motivation and compensation which should be continuously adopted by an institution.

The study also concur with those of Du Plesiss & Rouseau (2005) who states that personal appearance, attitudes and behavior influence customers' perception of the service. They further assert that interaction with employees gives the student's first impression of a university.

4.3.3.6 Process as Service Mix Branding Strategy

According to 45% of respondents agreed that universities have a policy of addressing students' grievances although 40.8% of respondents held neutral opinion (χ^2=338.031, P<0.05). Teaching methods in applied in universities are effective to learners as agreed by 39.1% of respondents while 42.6% of respondents were neutral (χ^2=249.895, P<0.05). Universities' policy on student- lecturer contact hours is not effective (χ^2=344.626, P<0.05), while policies on academic staff teaching hours in an academic semester is ineffective (χ^2=301.561, P<0.05). Respondents were indifferent with a small margin on whether universities have a policy of reviewing research proposals and theses for defense and submission with 44.4% of respondents agreeing while 41.5% of respondents disagreed (χ^2=426.192, P<0.05).

The study findings by CIM (2004), state that process will impact on the perception of the customer towards the business. Institutions need to always review the processes to make sure all the delays in service or product delivery are reduced or fully eliminated; make sure that customers are familiar with the processes involve in

product/service delivery and service staffs always honor their promises to their customers. Delays should always be explained and apology given with a promise of improvement where necessary and finally they need to develop an effective process of handling customer complaints and feedback. This is contrary to the study because students are not always made aware of the process.

The study findings by Palmer (2005), suggest that mechanisms, procedures and the flow of activities by which service consumed are the key elements of the marketing strategy. He further asserts that institutions need to ensure that students understand the process of acquiring a service such as the process of management, enrolment, teaching, learning, social and even sport activities.

4.3.3.7 Physical Evidence as Service Mix Branding Strategy

Most respondents agreed that universities have a learning environment that is serene (χ^2=408.114, P>0.05). Universities lack quality library services such as availability of books and subscription for access to electronic academic journals (χ^2=316.633, P>0.05), as agreed by 53.3% of respondents while 40.9% of respondents disagreed. Respondents were neutral on whether universities offer quality lecture theatre facilities for postgraduate students (χ^2=269.208, P>0.05).

The study findings concur with those of Namasivyam, (2008) who in his article noted that described physical ambience as the physical environment of a firm encompassing numerous different elements, such as overall design, layout, and décor of a place is important since it influences not only consumers' choice through cognitive, emotional and psychographic states but also their behaviors.

The study findings further agrees with those of Ivy & Fattal (2010), who asserts that physical ambience or evidence as all the physical and tangible items that a university

makes available to all stakeholders and mainly the students ranging from the brochures to the infrastructures. Physical evidence is an important intangible nature of the service offered by higher institution. The environment in which the service is delivered, both intangible and tangible assist to communicate, perform and relay the customer satisfaction all customer.

Kotler *et al*, (2008) further supports this by stating that physical ambience gives the first impression about an institution and usually the customers will see and consider the facilities and building. Gibs & Knapp (2002) further opines that the physical location contributes greatly on the public image of the university which includes: Library, cleanliness of rooms and technologies used.

4.3.4 Students' Choice

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with students' choice measurable indicators. These statements were ranked on a 5-point likert-type scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5). The responses were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Chi-square values for measured indicators were also determined with respective probability values (p-value). Table 4.21 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 4.21: Descriptive Analysis for Students Choice

Students' Choice Indicators	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Chi-Square (χ^2)	p-value
a. This university remains among my first choice	6 (5.9%)	10 (5.9%)	28 (16.6%)	55 (32.5%)	70 (41.4%)	589.689	0.0000
b. I can refer this university to someone else	7 (4.1%)	29 (17.2%)	66 (39.1%)	47 (27.8%)	20 (11.8%)	576.560	0.0000

Item							
c. The university's informal reputation in research , teaching , social activities engagement enhanced my choice of program	28 (16.6%)	42 (24.9%)	34 (20.1%)	42 (24.9%)	23 (13.2%)	568.485	0.0000
d. The university has met my academic needs	22 (13.0%)	24 (14.2%)	33 (19.5%)	46 (27.2%)	44 (26.0%)	582.933	0.0000
e. The university leadership enhanced my choice of post graduate program	19 (11.2%)	25 (14.8%)	39 (23.1%)	55 (32.5%)	31 (18.3%)	582.264	1.2505
f. The university culture enhanced my choice of post graduate program	21 (12.4%)	47 (27.8%)	35 (20.7%)	29 (17.2%)	37 (21.9%)	8 555.650	0.000
g. University's corporate social responsibility activities enhanced my choice of post graduate program	56 (33.1%)	29 (17.2%)	31 (18.3%)	20 (11.8%)	33 (19.5%)	572.078	0.0000
h. Academic programme offered enhanced my choice of post graduate program	20 (11.8%)	31 (18.3%)	16 (9.5%)	58 (34.3%)	44 (26.0%)	580.937	0.0000
i. University's participation in exchange programmes attracted me to pursue post graduate program	77 (42.6%)	52 (30.8%)	19 (11.2%)	4 (2.4%)	17 (10.1%)	551.330	0.0000

	SD	D	N	A	SA	χ^2	P
j. University's pricing of academic programmes enhanced my choice of post graduate program	20 (11.8%)	35 (20.7%)	37 (21.9%)	47 (27.8%)	30 (17.8%)	579.416	0.0000
k. University's promotional mode l. attracted me to pursue post graduate program	15 (8.9%)	28 (16.6%)	27 (16.0%)	72 (42.6%)	27 (16.0%)	571.478	0.0000
m. University's academic staff scholarly experience attracted me to pursue post graduate program	8 (4.7%)	19 (11.2%)	23 (13.6%)	57 (33.7%)	62 (36.7%)	584.322	0.0000
n. University's infrastructure attracted me to pursue post graduate program	35 (20.7%)	41 (24.3%)	63 (37.3%)	15 (8.9%)	15 (8.9%)	556.627	0.0000
o. University's reputation attracted me to pursue post graduate program	10 (5.9%)	30 (17.8%)	39 (23.1%)	48 (28.4%)	42 (24.9%)	568.804	0.0000

Source: (Author, 2017)

Majority of respondents (73.9%) agreed that their universities remain among their first choice (χ^2=589.689, P<0.05). Respondents were indifferent on whether they can refer their university to someone else, with 39.6% of respondents agreeing while 39.1% held a neutral opinion (χ^2=576.560, P<0.05).Universities' informal reputation in research , teaching , social activities engagement has not enhanced choice of post graduate programs (χ^2=568.485, P<0.05). Universities have met academic needs of post graduate students as agreed by 53.2% of respondents (χ^2=582.933, P<0.05) while

universities' leadership has enhanced choice of post graduate programs (χ^2=582.864, P>0.05). Respondents were indifferent on whether culture has enhanced choice of post graduate programs, with 40.2% of respondents agreeing while 39.1% held a neutral opinion (χ^2=555.650, P<0.05). Corporate social responsibility activities has not enhanced choice of post graduate program as agreed by 31.3% of respondents (χ^2=572.073, P<0.05) while academic programme offered was reported to have attracted students to pursue post graduate programmes (χ^2=580.937, P<0.05). Participation by universities in exchange programmes does not attract post graduate students (χ^2=551.330, P<0.05) but pricing of academic programs do (χ^2=579.416, P<0.05). Majority of respondents agreed that universities' academic programs promotional mode enhance choice of post graduate programs (χ^2=571.478, P<0.05) academic staff scholarly experience also attract students to pursue post graduate programs (χ^2=584.322, P<0.05). Infrastructure in universities does not enhance choice of post graduate programs (χ^2=556.627, P<0.05), universities reputation was found to attracted students who were pursuing post graduate programs as agreed by 53.3% of respondents who were surveyed (χ^2=568.804, P<0.05).

The study findings concur with those of Mubaira and Fatoki (2012) who in their article "The Determinants of the Choice of Universities by Foreign Business Students in South Africa" discovered a series of factors which determine the process of choosing a university among which mention: scholarships, the academic reputation, the level of tuition fees, the facility to access information and technology, the importance of the higher education institution, cultural diversity, the recommendations from family and acquaintances, the image of the university, the quality of the offered facilities, the social life within the campus, the employment opportunities, the international partnerships, the admission requirements, the friendly

attitude of the academic staff, the campus attractiveness, the location of the university, the facilities regarding sports activities, the quality of the teaching process and the existence of some flexible study modalities. In addition to this, Moogan,(2011) in his article "Can a higher education institution's marketing strategy improve the student-institution match?" pinpointed out other factors which influence the youth's decision to enroll at university and these are: the desire to be awarded a degree, the possibility to enhance the chances to obtain a decent job, the desire to have a high income in the future and the location of the university which acquires an increased importance in the decision making process.

The study findings are consistent with those of Maringe (2006) who states that students utilize consumer decision making process when deciding on which university to attend to. In his study he grouped the university and factors influencing the choice of study into the seven P's of marketing mix: program, price, promotion, people, prospectus, prominence, and place. He further confirms in his findings that an increasing number of young people acted as consumers when choosing a university.

The findings also agree with a study by Brown *et al*, (2009) who suggest that consumers apply the Kotler's five stages of the buying decision process: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, post-purchase behaviour. Petruzzellis & Romanazzi (2010) further supports this by stating that University is perceived as a preparation for a career, therefore study program and tuition fee become important choice factors. Thus post-graduate students agreed that the factors affected their choice.

4.4 Chi-square Test for Goodness of Fit Analysis

This section presents the findings of the chi-square test for goodness of fit for study's variables.

Table 4.22: Chi-square test for goodness of fit

	Internal Branding Strategy	External Branding Strategy	Service mix Branding Strategy	Students choice of post Graduate Programs
Chi-Square	26.000[a]	85.822[b]	111.385[b]	116.024[c]
Df	14	26	26	28
Asymp. Sig.	.026	.000	.000	.000

Source: (Author, 2017)

Table 4.22 presents these findings. The Chi-squared test for equal proportions is a statistical test used to investigate whether the proportions of responses in each category are equal or whether there are statistically significant differences in the proportions of responses in each category. The null hypothesis of the Chi-square test is that the proportion of responses that fall into each of these categories is equal and any differences observed are due to chance or random variation. If the null hypothesis is true, then we cannot conclude anything based on the responses we observe, as these are essentially due to chance. We reject this null hypothesis of equal proportions at the 5% significance level (95% confidence) if the p-value of the test for that question is less than or equal to 0.05. The chi-square probability values shown are less than the conventional probability value of 0.05 (χ^2=26.000, p<0.05), (χ^2=85.822, p<0.05), (χ^2=111.385, p<0.05) and (χ^2=116.024 p<0.05) respectively, indicating that the results obtained are statistically significant, showing dominant and equal perception of respondents regarding the said questions.

4.4.1 Inferential Statistics

This section presents inferential statistics tools that were used namely; Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis.

4.5 Correlation Analysis

Correlation between variables is a measure of how well the variables are related. The most common measure of correlation in statistics is the Pearson Correlation which shows the linear relationship between two variables. Devore and Peck (2006) recommends a guideline for assessing resultant correlation coefficients as; correlation coefficients less than 0.5 represent a weak relationship, correlation coefficients greater than 0.5, but less than 0.8, represent a moderate relationship whereas correlation coefficients greater than 0.8 represent a strong relationship. The Results are between -1 and 1. A result of -1 means that there is a perfect negative correlation between the two values, while a result of 1 means that there is a perfect positive correlation between the two variables. Result of 0 means that there is no correlation between the two variables (Gujarat, 2004). Before carrying out a test on research' hypotheses, the study examined how the variables of the study: internal branding strategies, external branding strategies, service mix branding strategies and students choice were related. The analysis was carried out using done Pearson correlation coefficient. Table 4.23 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 4.23: Correlation Matrix for Internal Branding Strategies, External Branding Strategies, Service Mix Branding Strategies and Postgraduate Students Choice of Universities.

	Internal Branding Strategy (X_1)	External Branding Strategy (X_2)	Service Mix Branding Strategy (X_3)	PostGraduate Students' choice of Universities (Y)

Internal branding strategy	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	169			
External branding strategy	Pearson Correlation	.507**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	169	169		
Service mix branding strategy	Pearson Correlation	.669**	.455**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	169	169	169	
Postgraduate students' choice of universities	Pearson Correlation	.557**	.367**	.540**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	169	169	169	169

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: (Author, 2017)

The correlation results in Table 4.23 show a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between internal branding strategies and choice ($r = 0.557$, $p < 0.05$). The results also show that there exists a statistically significant weak positive relationship between external branding strategies and students choice ($r = 0.367$, $p < 0.05$). The correlation results also reveal that there is a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between service mix branding strategies and ($r = 0.540$, $p < 0.05$). Further, the results show a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between internal branding and external branding strategies ($r = 0.507$, $p < 0.05$); and a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between internal branding strategies and service mix branding strategies($r = 0.669$, $p < 0.05$). The results also show that there exists a statistically significant weak positive relationship between external branding strategies and service mix branding strategies ($r = 0.455$, $p < 0.05$). These results are consistent with findings of Kyei, 2016 who in her article "Assessing the effect of branding on consumer behavior in telecommunication companies in Ghana"revealed a positive correlation between consumer buying behaviour and the

various components of branding and a significant association (p-value <0.05, R= 0.665) between customer buying behaviour and brand loyalty.

Dolatabadi *et al*. (2012) also found a significant relation between product equity and customer loyalty and trust among customers. Amofah, Gyamfi and Tutu (2016), in their research study "The Influence of Service Marketing Mix on Customer Choice of Repeat Purchase of Restaurant in Kumasi, Ghana" found that Process had the greatest influence on customer's decision to repeat purchase. All other attributes including product, price, place, promotion, people and physical evidence significantly influences decision to repeat purchase for customers.

The study findings are consistent with those of Sia (2013) who in his article titled," University Choice: Implications for Marketing and Positioning'' found out that there is a significant relationship between prospective students consider programme, cost (financial aid), location, high school personnel, peers and friends and campus visit and college choice decision. He further asserts that in marketing services higher institution administrators and policy makers need to check how far they are providing their services in terms of customer orientation and areas they need to improve.

4.6 Test of Research Hypotheses

This section presents analysis and results of the tests of hypotheses using inferential statistics. Hypotheses formulated were tested followed by discussion of the results. joint effects of explanatory variables on the dependent variable were tested. Results obtained from statistical analyses and interpretations of the results in relation to the research hypotheses are presented in this section.

4.6.1 Multiple Regression Analyses

A multiple regression analysis was carried out to establish the joint causal relationship between explanatory variables and the dependent variable. Research hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis results. A multiple regression equation was obtained using the unstandardized beta coefficients.

Table 4.24: Model fitness for all the Independent Variables

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics						Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df2	Sig. F Change		
1	.604[a]	.365	.353	.45209	.365	31.578	3	165	.000		1.400

a. Predictors: (Constant), service mix branding strategy, external branding strategy, internal branding strategy
b. Dependent Variable: post graduate students' choice of Universities

Source: (Author, 2017)

Table 4.24 present the goodness of fit for the regression between the predictor variables (independent variables) and the outcome variable (Dependent variable). The overall R^2= 0.365 which indicates 36.5 percent of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables that are included in the model. The F-statistics of the regression result (F=31.578) whose probability value is 0.000 which is less than the conventional probability value of 0.05, indicate that the model is good and significantly fitted and the coefficients of the model are not equal to zero. The model can thus significantly predict the change in postgraduate students' choice of universities. Durbin Watson was calculated to check whether there is positive, negative or zero correlation among variables. The Durbin Watson statistic is a number that tests for analysis. The Durbin-Watson statistic is always between 0 and 4. A value of 2 means that there is no autocorrelation in the sample, values approaching 0 indicate positive autocorrelation and values toward 4 indicate negative

autocorrelation. Durbin Watson is 1.400 which means there is positive autocorrelation among variables of study.

Table 4.25: ANOVA for effects of Branding Strategies on Post graduate students' Choice on Universities

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	19.362	3	6.454	31.578	.000[b]
1	Residual	33.724	165	.204		
	Total	53.086	168			

a. Dependent Variable: post graduate students' choice of universities
b. Predictors: (Constant), service mix branding strategy, external branding strategy, internal branding strategy

Source: (Author, 2017)

Table 4.25 results show that the mean square of the residuals is very small (0.204) compared the mean square of the regression (6.454). The F-statistics of the regression is also statistically significant proving there is a significant relationship between the study variables. The ANOVA results indicate that the overall model was significant. The independent variables were good joint explanatory variables for postgraduate students' choice of universities.

Table 4.26: Multiple regression analysis coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
	(Constant)	.714	.285		2.503	.013		
	Internal branding strategy	.401	.107	.329	3.751	.000	.501	1.997
1	External branding strategy	.067	.071	.069	.944	.347	.719	1.391
	Service mix branding strategy	.347	.102	.289	3.406	.001	.535	1.870

a. Dependent Variable: students choice of post graduate programs

Source: (Author, 2017)

The regression equation is as follows;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Post Graduate students' Choice of universities (dependent variable)

β_0 = Regression constant

$\beta_0, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = Coefficient factors of the independent variables (X_1, X_2, X_3)

X_1, = Internal Branding Strategies

X_2, = External Branding Strategies

X_3: = Service Mix Branding Strategies

ε = Error term assumed to be normally distributed with mean zero and constant variance.

The regression equation model was:

PGSC = 0.714 + 0.401 IBS + 0.067 EBS + 0.347 SMBS + ε

Where:

PGPSC - Post Graduate Students' Choice of universities

IBS- Internal Branding Strategies

EBS- External Branding Strategies

SMBS- Service Mix Branding Strategies

The regression analysis results in table 4.26 indicate that there exist a statistically significant positive relationship between internal branding strategies employed and on postgraduate students' choice of universities ($\beta = 0.401$, p<0.05). Numerically, the 0.401 beta coefficient of internal branding strategies variable implies that for every one additional internal branding strategy the universities employ, uptake of their post graduate students' choice increases by 0.401. This positive relationship can be attributed to effective leadership practiced in the universities, employees' commitment, enthusiasm and professionalism as well as conducive organization culture in the universities as agreed by majority of respondents, hence increasing uptake of post graduate programs among students. Thus the study, therefore, fails to accept the null hypothesis (H_{01}) at 95% confidence interval and concludes that there is significant effect of Internal branding strategies on postgraduate students' choice of universities.

The results further indicated that the relationship between external branding strategies employed on postgraduate students' choice of universities was positive and not statistically significant ($\beta = 067$, p>0.05 according to table 4.27 This means that for every one additional external branding strategy the universities employ, uptake of their post graduate programs among students increases by 0.067. This positive relationship between variables can be attributed to the findings that most universities practice customer relationship management which are key to clientele or students retention and attraction of prospective post graduate students although the this positive effect was not statistically significant. These findings are consistent with those of Fozia (2014) who in his article entitled "Impact of Customer Relationship

Management as a Strategy for Competitive Advantage in Kenyan Public Universities," found out that CRM increased customer confidence in their products, increased repeat purchases, improved customer confidence in the company, enhanced customer relationships with the company and its programs and improved how customers view the company in general. He also found that on the effect of CRM on customer loyalty, a majority of the respondents felt that CRM increases customer confidence in the products, increases responsiveness to marketing campaigns, improves customer confidence in the company, enhances customer confidence to the company's programs and improves how customers view the company in general. Customer relationship management practices were measured as one of the indicators of external branding strategies. Thus the study, therefore, accepts the null hypothesis (H_{02}) at 95% confidence interval and concludes that there is no significant effect of external branding strategies on postgraduate students' choice of universities.

It was also established that there exist a statistically significant positive relationship between service mix branding strategies employed on postgraduate students' choice of universities ($\beta = 0.347$, $p<0.05$) according to table 4.27. Numerically, the 0.347 beta coefficient of service mix branding strategies variable implies that for every one additional service mix branding strategy the universities employ, uptake of postgraduate students' choice of universities increases by 0.347. This positive relationship can be attributed to adoption of seven (7p) of service mix by universities in a bid to attract students to different postgraduate programs as agreed by majority of respondents, hence increasing uptake of on postgraduate students' choice of universities.. Thus the study, therefore, fails to accept the null hypothesis (H_{03}) at 95%

confidence interval and concludes that there is significant effect of service mix branding strategies on postgraduate students' choice of universities.

The t-statistics show that the explanatory variables internal branding strategies and service mix branding strategies appear to be statistically significant (t=3.751, p<0.05; t= 3.406, p<0.05) while external branding strategies are statistically insignificant (t= 0.944, p>0.05) according to table 4.27. Multicollinearity shows that there is linear relationship between explanatory variables which may cause the regression model biased. Variance inflation factor (VIF) is a statistic calculated for each variable in the model to test Multicollinearity. Theoretically, a VIF greater than 5 may suggest that the concerned variable is multi-collinear with others in the model and may need to be excluded from the model (Gujarati, 2003).Moreover a tolerance of greater than 0.2 indicates nonexistence of multicollinearity. Tolerance and VIF regression results indicate there was absence of collinearity in the explanatory variables thus strengthening the analysis.

Table 4.28: Summary of the results of the test of hypotheses

Hypothesis	Results	Conclusion
H_{01}: Internal Branding Strategies has no significant effect on postgraduate students' choice of universities.	Positive statistically significant effect of internal branding strategies on postgraduate students' choice of universities. ($\beta = 0.401$, p<0.05).	H_{01} Rejected
H_{02}: External Branding Strategies has no significant effect on postgraduate students' choice of universities.	Positive statistically insignificant effect of external branding strategies on postgraduate students' choice of universities.($\beta = 067$, p>0.05).	H_{02} Accepted
H_{03}: Service Mix Branding Strategies has no significant effect on postgraduate students' choice of universities.	Positive significant effect of external branding strategies on postgraduate students' choice of universities. ($\beta = 0.347$, p<0.05).	H_{03} Rejected

Source: (Author, 2017)

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study sought to examine the effects branding strategies employed by universities on postgraduate students' choice of universities in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study investigated four independent variables; effects of internal branding strategies, effects of external branding strategies, effects of service mix branding strategies and how these strategies influence the post graduate students' choice of university. This chapter summarizes the research findings regarding the research objectives, hypotheses, draws conclusions and makes recommendations for further study.

5.2 Summary of Findings

This study examined effects of branding strategies employed by universities on the choice of universities by postgraduate students. Data for the study was collected from 169 respondents in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study intended to find whether there exists any relationship between internal branding strategies, external branding strategies, service mix branding strategies and postgraduate students' choice of universities. This section summarizes the research findings of the study on the basis of formulated research objectives.

5.2.1 Effect of Internal Branding Strategies on Postgraduate Students Choice of Universities.

The study's first objective of the study was to examine the effect of internal branding strategies on postgraduate students' choice of universities'. Majority of the respondents agreed that universities' management team makes students enthusiastic about the university and encourages students to express their ideas and opinions. University management also inspires students' loyalty and also gives personal

attention to students. Leadership practiced in universities expresses also appreciates students when they perform.

In addition, the respondents indicated that most students in universities have input into the decisions affecting them. Universities' does not recruit their own graduates while cooperation and collaboration across different universities' departments, functions or school is actively encouraged. There is no high level of agreement about the way students do things universities, many respondents were neutral on whether universities are very responsive and adapts to changes easily. Universities' management also ensures students are well informed about policy changes such as those outlined Commission of University Education. There was neutrality on whether universities have long-term purposes and direction. There is a shared vision of what the many universities would be like in the future but it was not really clear on whether universities institution holistically nurtures students.

The research findings also revealed that universities' teaching staff has the required qualifications. The employees pay attention to students' needs and ensure those needs are addressed. Employees also have self-initiation activities that are beneficial to students. Most respondents were neutral on whether employees provide feedback on inquiries timely. Moreover, universities employees have a collective focus on institution set goals, objectives and values with enough knowledge to deliver assigned responsibilities. However, it was not clear on whether the employees positively communicate about the universities. Internal branding strategies employed by universities have a significant influence on student's choice of postgraduate programs. This was evidenced by the statistically significant positive relationship as shown in the overall regression model. There exist a positive significant correlation between internal branding strategies and postgraduate students' choice of universities.

5.2.2 Effect of External Branding Strategies on Postgraduate Students Choice of Universities

The study's second objective of the study was to assess the effect of external branding strategies on postgraduate students' choice of Universities. The research findings also revealed universities have built a long-term relationship with alumnus and respond to issues timely. Universities employees advise students on which course specialization to undertake, and there exist collaborations and partnerships between universities. However, universities have not enhanced partnerships and collaborations programme with international universities. Students are continuously updated on issues concerning their academic results as well as on issues regarding policies change in the universities and those from the commission of university education, thus showing indicating and prompt communication system in universities.

Moreover, universities do not support or carry out health awareness campaigns and environmental conservation awareness campaigns. However, many universities participate in research development. The results established that external branding strategies were key drivers in explaining universities' students' choice of postgraduate programs although the relationship is significant. There exist statistically insignificant, positive relationships between external branding strategies and students choice of postgraduate programs according to joint regression model coefficients results. Moreover, there exists a weak, positive significant correlation between effects of external branding strategies and postgraduate students' choice of universities.

5.2.3 Effect of Service Mix Branding Strategies on Postgraduate Students' Choice of Universities.

The study's third objective of the study was to evaluate the effect of service mix branding strategies on postgraduate students' choice of universities. The research

findings indicate that universities offer postgraduate academic programs that are attractive to the market and which have sufficient content. Tuition fees charged per program, statutory costs as well as theses supervision fee charged in respective are high. As a result of neutrality opinion of respondents, it was not clear as whether the cost of living in the universities was affordable. Most respondents were indifferent on whether universities' online postgraduate program course registration guides students effectively. There is relevant information given by print media and electronic media in advertising universities' programs. However, universities uses of social media in advertising academic programs have been effectively enhancing. Respondents were neutral on whether students in the corporate world act as referrals for universities' programs. Moreover, most universities' website offers adequate information on offered programs.

The results indicate that universities have qualified staff who offer essential services required by graduate students with many competencies. The universities' teaching staffs are professionally oriented. Universities have a policy of addressing students' grievances. Teaching methods applied in universities are effective to learners although universities' policy on student-lecturer contact hours and academic staff teaching hours in an academic semester was found to be ineffective. It was very clear on whether universities have a policy in place of reviewing research proposals and theses for defense and submission. Most respondents agreed that universities are well located and the learning environment is serene. Universities lack quality library services such as availability of books and subscription for access to electronic academic journals. However, they have computer labs that are well equipped for experimental research purposes. Respondents were neutral on whether universities offer quality lecture theatre facilities for postgraduate students. The correlation

between the effects of service mix branding strategies and post graduate students' choice of universities was found to be moderate, positive and statistically significant. The joint regression results also indicate that the service mix branding strategies practiced by universities have a significant positive effect on postgraduate students' choice of universities based on the coefficients.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the research findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

5.3.1 Effect of Internal Branding Strategies on Postgraduate Students Choice of Universities

It can be concluded that effect of internal branding strategies has a significant effect on postgraduate students' choice of universities. There exists a positive significant relationship between the effect of internal branding strategies and post graduate students choice of postgraduate universities. Effective leadership practiced by universities management team has enhanced universities efficiency, it can be concluded that the mode of leadership practiced in universities has been a key driver in attracting students into pursuing post graduate programs. It can also be concluded that organizational culture is a key aspect in ensuring universities attract students who intend to undertake postgraduate programs. As the results indicate, effective organizational culture is key in positioning the organization to prospective clients, in this case, prospective postgraduate students. This is vital for universities to ensure that the existing organization's culture is all people inclusive culture that enhances various stakeholders' participation. However, it can also be concluded that most universities do not have a culture where they recruit their own students. It can be concluded that universities culture of ensuring that they hire professional employees who are

committed to universities, shared vision, have focused on institution set goals and values have enhanced students choice for postgraduate programs.

5.3.2 Effect of External Branding Strategies on Postgraduate Students Choice of Universities.

It can be concluded that effect of external branding strategies has a positive effect on postgraduate students' choice of Universities but the effect is not statistically significant. There exists a positive significant correlation between the effect of external branding strategies and post graduate students choice of universities. Based on the results it can be concluded that universities ensure there is effective customer relationship management and this may have contributed to the significant results between external branding strategies and postgraduate student's choice of universities. However, although customer relationship management has been effective in attracting postgraduate students to different programs, it can be concluded that universities in Nakuru County have not enhanced partnership programme and collaborations with international universities for students benefit. Most universities do not engage in corporate social responsibility activities such as; environmental CSR activities, health CSR activities and other philanthropic CSR activities such as sponsoring community events financially or in kind. Thus it can be concluded that CSR activities might be key in ensuring universities attract postgraduate students to various programs. Through participation in CSR activities universities can enhance their reputation and image to the society and communities around, thus attracting prospective postgraduate students to various universities.

5.3.3 Effect of Service Mix Branding Strategies on Postgraduate Students Choice of Universities.

It can be concluded that effect of service mix branding strategies has a significant influence on postgraduate student's choice of Universities. The results reveal that there exists a positive statistically significant relationship between the effect of service mix branding strategies and postgraduate students' choice of universities. It can further be concluded that universities postgraduate programs offered universities are quality and meet the job markets requirements. It can also be concluded that that pricing of postgraduate academic programs in universities is a bit high which may hinder prospective students. Although electronic and social media has been effective in promoting universities postgraduate programs offered, there is need to ensure that social media is also used as a promotional channel for reaching prospective students. Moreover, most universities have a competent and qualified teaching staff that may have been vital in contributing to student's choice for postgraduate programs in respective universities. Further, from the research findings, it can also be concluded universities' policy on student-lecturer contact hours is not effective while policies on academic staff teaching hours in an academic semester is also ineffective. Moreover, universities lack quality library services such as availability of books and subscription for access to electronic academic journals.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the research findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were made.

i. **Effect of Internal Branding Strategies on Postgraduate Students' Choice of Universities.**

According to the results respondents, it was not clear as to whether universities leadership team encourage students to express their ideas and opinions. The universities policy board of management should ensure that universities staff serving at different levels carry their duties and responsibilities by ensuring students opinions, grievances are taken into account. This will ensure that the relationship between students and the staff is cordial thus enhancing universities' reputation among prospective and continuing postgraduate students. Universities ought to create an organizational culture where top performing students in academic and extra curriculum affairs are hired and retained by their own universities this will create a culture of competition among students thus positioning and enhancing universities image. Universities management team should also ensure that universities are responsive and adapt to changes easily with long-term purposes and direction. There is also great need to ensure that postgraduate students are nurtured holistically in a bid to make students graduating from respective universities more competitive and resilient and knowledgeable with holistic employability skills. Most respondents were neutral on whether employees provide feedback on inquiries and whether employees positively communicate about the university. Thus the university leadership should ensure an organizational culture is created where employees are obliged to provide feedback on inquiries by students, employees motivation will also enhance employees positive communication about the university.

ii. Effect of External Branding Strategies on Postgraduate Students' Choice of Universities.

Universities management should partnership programme and collaborations with international universities is enhanced for students and staff benefits. This will ensure through exchange programs students are able to learn from their peers and also university staff may benefit from research development experience. Most universities do not engage in corporate social responsibility activities such as; environmental CSR activities, health CSR activities. It is thus recommended that universities' management team ensure universities support or carry out CSR activities since through these CSR activities universities may enhance their reputation and institutional image, thus attracting prospective postgraduate students' enrollment from the communities around. Although universities participate in research development, there is need to put into practice and push for research recommendations application carried out by university faculty members through NACOSTI.

iii. Effect of Service Mix Branding Strategies on Postgraduate Students' Choice of Universities.

The research findings indicate that pricing of postgraduate academic programs in universities is a bit high which may hinder prospective students from joining these universities to pursue postgraduate programs. Thus the universities management should ensure that postgraduate programs are priced fairly in a bid to attract more students. The effective pricing strategy of postgraduate programs will also put the universities in a competitive advantage edge. The pricing strategy should entail adjusting to a fair level tuition fees, statutory fees and theses supervision fee charged in respective programmes. It is also recommended that universities enhance their use of social media as a promotional channel for reaching prospective students. Most

respondents were indifferent on whether universities' online postgraduate program course registration guides students. Thus the ICT department in the universities should ensure relevant content and material information is available for easy access in aiding students for registration of postgraduate academic programs. Universities should ensure they nurture their students holistically so that these former students can act as referrals for universities' programs. Further, it is recommended that the academic affairs section heads ensure that training and instructional methods used by the teaching staff are effective, this can be done through continuous training of teaching staff.

Further, from the research findings, it can also be concluded universities' policy on student-lecturer contact hours is not effective while policies on academic staff teaching hours in an academic semester is also ineffective. It is recommended that immediate supervisors in the faculty should ensure that minimum student- lecturer contact hours policy is adhered to by all students. Teaching staff should insist on student's class attendance and also keep track of student's attendance to lectures through student's attendance forms. Universities through the respective departments should ensure that lecturers meet the minimum requirements on teaching hours. These can be ensured by ensuring they log in and out once they have a lesson. The attendance of lecturers in class should also be monitored closely by the head of respective departments. Respondents were indifferent with a small margin on whether universities have a policy of reviewing research proposals and theses for defense and submission. To ensure the quality of academic theses and research projects submitted, the academic research section should ensure plagiarism software is acquired or subscribed at. Moreover, universities lack quality library services such as availability of books and subscription for access to electronic academic journals. Finally, it is

recommended that the universities through the chief librarian ensure that universities stock updated reading material, these can be done through subscription of electronic academic journals.

5.4.1 Recommendation for polices

i. It is recommended that institutions adopt a multi-tiered approach; including fixing internal factors which will then be filtered down to positively reinforce the external brand. In an environment in which perceptions are reality, effectively brand management simply cannot be overlooked.

ii. The external branding pillar which entails outward communicative elements such as web site management, public relations exercises, etc. The study recommends that internal factors need to be optimized before the external brand can shine in universities. Universities' management must evaluate not only the external distinctiveness and value of their brands, but must also evaluate the perceived strength of this value internally and look for opportunities to enhance it.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Research

The study employed a case study approach of Nakuru County; it is recommended that this study is carried on a broader scale in Kenya. Yin (2003) asserts that a single case study is weaker than a multiple case study as the research findings cannot be applied in any other situations. In determining key measurable indicators under each study's variable qualitative research was used. Further research can be conducted to test and validate the research findings using a quantitative approach. Branding in Kenyan universities is an increasingly topical issue with practitioners with institutions of higher learning committing substantial financial resources to branding activities. It

has, however, received only limited academic investigation, and as the particular characteristics of the sector present challenges for those seeking to build brands, it seems to be timely and appropriate to investigate potential barriers to universities branding in Kenya.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Letter of Permission to Carry out Research Work

Kabarak University

Private Bag,

KABARAK

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT ACADEMIC RESEARCH

I am a Doctor of Business Administration student at Kabarak University conducting a research study entitled **"Effect of Branding Strategies on Post Graduate Students Choice of Universities in Nakuru County, Kenya".** The purpose of this letter is to request you for permission to interview members of your organization using the questionnaire copies attached. You are kindly requested to fill in the questionnaire with precision and accuracy. The questionnaire is supposed to assist in answering specific objectives of the research which is being undertaken as part of the University requirement. Any information given herein will be treated with utmost confidentiality and only be used for the purpose of research. So kindly feel free to fill the questionnaire.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Lydia. C. Langat

Appendix II: Questionnaire

Introduction

The following aspects intend to examine the effect of branding strategies on post graduate students' choice of Universities in Nakuru County, Kenya. Your participation in filling this Questionnaire will be highly appreciated. Your responses to this questionnaire will be handled with utmost confidentiality

SECTION A: BIO-DATA

1. Name of Institution (Optional)..

2. Age of the respondent actual years……………………………

3. Gender

   Male [ ]   Female [ ]

4. Type of Institution

   Private [ ]   Public [ ]

5. Post graduate Programme you are studying

   Masters [   ]   Phd [   ]   Post graduate diploma [   ]

6. Mode of Study

   Full-time [   ]   Part-time [   ]   Online Doctorate Learning [   ]

7. Year of study

   Year 1   [ ]   Year 2   [ ]   Year 3   [ ]

8. Semester of study

   Semester 1 [   ]   Semester 2 [   ]   Semester 3 [   ]   Others specify………

SECTION B: Internal Branding Strategies and Students choice

This section has some measures of Leadership styles, Culture and Employees as internal branding strategies

Please, indicate with a tick (√) your opinion on each of the statements on how they have attracted you to post Graduate studies. The meaning of the scores 1 -5 is given below.

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

A. Leadership Styles and Culture

A. Leadership					
Statements	5	4	3	2	1
1 The leadership makes students enthusiastic about the university					
2 The university's leadership encourages students to express their ideas and opinions					
3 The university's leadership inspires students loyalty					
4 The university's leadership gives personal attention to students					
5 leadership practiced expresses appreciation to students when they perform					
B. Organizational Culture					
6 Most Students in this university have input into the decisions affecting them					
7 The university recruits their own graduates					
8 Cooperation and collaboration across different departments, functions or schools is actively encouraged					

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
9	There is a high level of agreement about the way students do things in this university					
10	The university is very responsive and adapts to changes easily					
11	university ensures students are well informed about policy changes (for example CUE regulations)					
12	The University has a long-term purpose and direction					
13	There is a shared vision of what the university would be like in the future					
14	The institutions holistically nurturing students					

C. Employees

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
		5	4	3	2	1
15	The university teaching staff have the required qualifications					
16	Employees have self initiation activities that are beneficial to students					
17	Employees provide feedback on inquiries timely					
18	Employees have collective focus on institution set goals, objectives and values					
19	Employees have enough knowledge to deliver assigned responsibilities					
20	Employees positively communicate about the university					

SECTION C: External Branding Strategies and Students choice

This section has some indicators that relate to Customer Relationship Management and Corporate Social Responsibility as external branding strategies

Please, indicate with a tick (√) your opinion on each of the statements on how they have attracted you to post Graduate studies. The meaning of the scores 1 -5 is given below.

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

A. Customer Relationship Management						
	Statement	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
1	The university has built a longterm relationship with alumnus					
2	The university responds on issues timely					
3	The university ensures partnership programme with the local universities					
4	The university ensures partnership programme with international universities					
5	The university ensures students are updated on issues concerning their academic results					
6	The university has a prompt communication system with the students					

B. Corporate Social Responsibility Activities						
	Statement	5	4	3	2	1
1	The university supports/ carries out health awareness campaigns					
2	The university supports/carries out environmental conservation awareness campaigns					
3	The university participates in research development					

SECTION D: Service Mix Strategies and Students choice

This section has some items that relate to Product, pricing, promotion, place, physical evidence, processes and people as service mix branding strategies

Please, indicate with a tick (√) your opinion on each of the statements on how they have attracted you to post Graduate studies. The meaning of the scores 1 -5 is given below.

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

Service Mix Strategies

A. Programme offered						
	Activity	5	4	3	2	1
1	The university offers postgraduate programmes courses that are attractive to the market					
2	The university offers sufficient content in their programmes					
B. Pricing Mix						
3	Tuition fee charged per program is affordable					
4	Statutory fee changed for programs is affordable					

5	Thesis supervision fee charged in respective progrmmes is affordable					
6	Cost of living in the university is affordable					
C. Promotion Mix						
7	Online postgraduate programmes course registration guides					
8	There is relevant information given by print media in adverting					
9	There is relevant information given electronic media in advertising university					
10	The university uses social media in advertising its					
11	Students in corporate world act as referrals for the university programs.					
12	The university website offers adequate information on offered					
D. People						
13	The university has qualified staff					
14	The university teaching staff offer essential services required by graduate students					
15	University's staff are competent					
E. Process						
16	The university has a policy of addressing					
17	University's teaching/ methods applied are effective to learners					
18	University's policy on student- lecturer contact					

19	University's policy on academic staff teaching hours in a semester is					
20	The university has a policy of reviewing research proposals and					
F. Physical Evidence						
21	The university has serene environment for learning					
22	The university offers quality library services (e.g availability of books , subscription for access to online journals)					
23	The university offers quality lecture theatre facilities for postgraduate students					

SECTION E: Post-Graduate Students Choice

The following statements relate to consumer choice aspects. Indicate your preference

for the University in relation with other university's on a scale of 1-5 where (Strongly

Agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral=3, Disagree=2 and strongly disagree=1). Please tick ($\sqrt{}$)

appropriately on the agreement to which the statements influence your Post Graduate

choice of University.

| E.	Students Choice Indicators	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	This university remains among my first choice					
2.	I can refer this university to someone else					
3.	The university's informal reputation in research , teaching , social activities engagement					
4.	The university has met my academic needs					
5.	The university leadership enhanced my choice					
6.	The university culture enhanced my choice					
7.	University's corporate social responsibility activities enhanced my choice					
8.	Academic programme offered enhanced my choice					
9.	university's participation in exchange programmes enhanced my choice					
10.	University's pricing of academic programmes has enhanced my choice					
11.	University's promotional mode has enhanced my choice					
12.	University's academic staff has enhanced my choice					
13.	The university infrastructure enhanced my choice					
14.	The University's reputation has enhanced my choice					

Appendix III: Statistical Analysis Output for internal branding strategies

Table A1:Total Variance Explained for Internal Branding Strategies

Compo nent	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulati ve %	Total	% of Varianc e	Cumula tive %	Total	% of Variance	Cumul ative %
1	4.419	22.097	22.097	4.419	22.097	22.097	3.724	18.620	18.620
2	3.067	15.336	37.433	3.067	15.336	37.433	2.989	14.946	33.566
3	2.465	12.327	49.760	2.465	12.327	49.760	2.286	11.429	44.994
4	1.799	8.995	58.755	1.799	8.995	58.755	1.910	9.551	54.545
5	1.700	8.500	67.255	1.700	8.500	67.255	1.840	9.202	63.748
6	1.470	7.351	74.606	1.470	7.351	74.606	1.790	8.949	72.696
7	1.308	6.538	81.144	1.308	6.538	81.144	1.689	8.447	81.144
8	.974	4.871	86.014						
9	.743	3.714	89.729						
10	.565	2.825	92.554						
11	.396	1.982	94.536						
12	.300	1.501	96.037						
13	.271	1.353	97.390						
14	.199	.995	98.385						
15	.135	.677	99.062						
16	.089	.445	99.507						
17	.056	.280	99.787						
18	.035	.174	99.961						
19	.008	.039	99.999						
20	.000	.001	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Figure A1: Scree Plot for Internal Branding Strategies**

Scree Plot
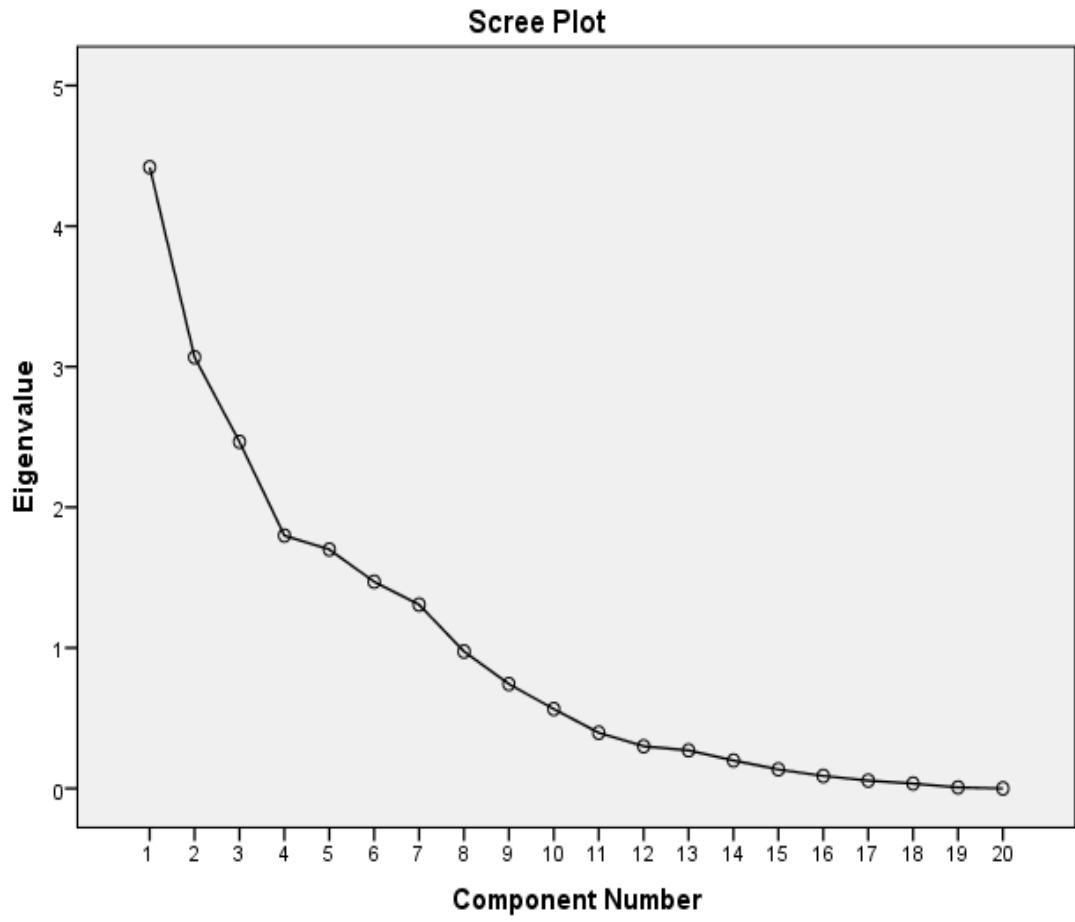
Appendix IV: Statistical Analysis Output for external Branding Strategies

Table A2: Total Variance Explained for External Branding Strategies

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.545	28.282	28.282	2.545	28.282	28.282	2.184	24.266	24.266
2	1.551	17.234	45.516	1.551	17.234	45.516	1.720	19.108	43.374
3	1.250	13.894	59.411	1.250	13.894	59.411	1.443	16.037	59.411
4	.876	9.739	69.149						
5	.861	9.572	78.721						
6	.799	8.875	87.596						
7	.632	7.024	94.621						
8	.333	3.697	98.318						
9	.151	1.682	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Figure A2: Scree Plot for External Branding Strategies
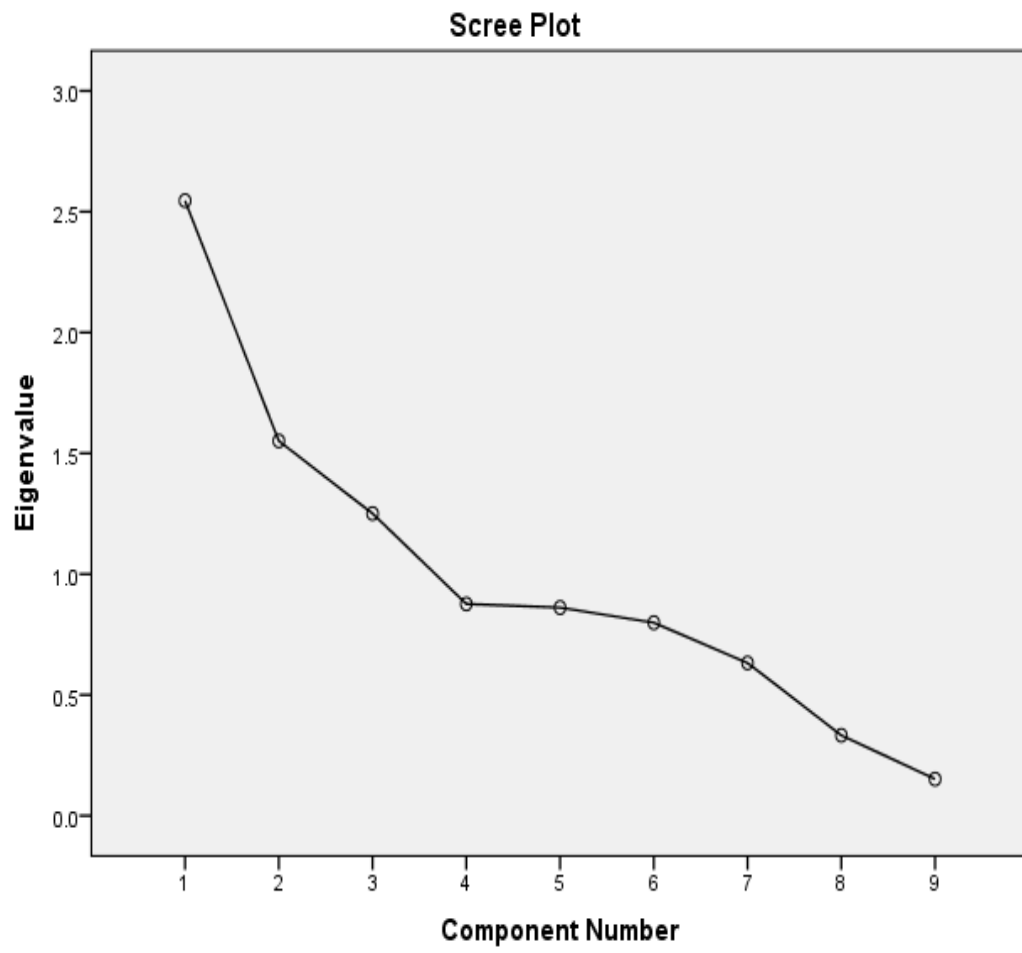
Appendix V: Statistical Analysis Output for Service Mix branding strategies

Table A3: Total Variance Explained for Service Mix Branding Strategies

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.998	21.732	21.732	4.998	21.732	21.732	4.181	18.180	18.180
2	2.823	12.274	34.006	2.823	12.274	34.006	2.328	10.122	28.301
3	2.651	11.528	45.534	2.651	11.528	45.534	2.215	9.628	37.929
4	2.250	9.783	55.317	2.250	9.783	55.317	2.142	9.314	47.244
5	1.929	8.387	63.704	1.929	8.387	63.704	2.137	9.290	56.534
6	1.651	7.177	70.881	1.651	7.177	70.881	2.063	8.969	65.503
7	1.381	6.004	76.885	1.381	6.004	76.885	2.020	8.782	74.285
8	1.271	5.524	82.409	1.271	5.524	82.409	1.869	8.124	82.409
9	.847	3.682	86.091						
10	.834	3.625	89.715						
11	.582	2.532	92.247						
12	.548	2.384	94.632						
13	.352	1.531	96.162						
14	.267	1.160	97.323						
15	.216	.940	98.262						
16	.136	.592	98.854						
17	.103	.448	99.302						
18	.055	.240	99.542						
19	.045	.196	99.738						
20	.035	.151	99.890						
21	.023	.099	99.989						
22	.003	.011	100.000						
23	-1.378E-016	-5.992E-016	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Figure A3: Scree Plot for External Branding Strategies**
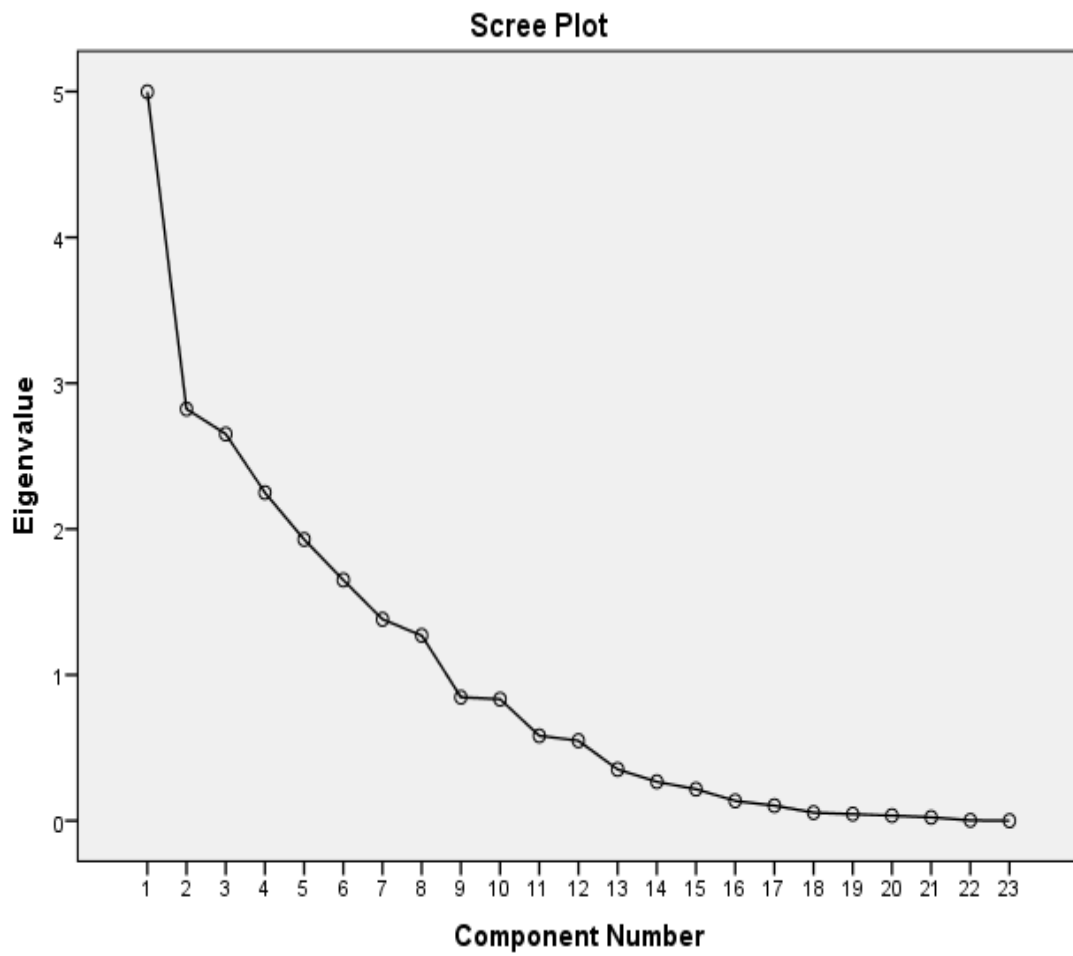
Appendix VI: Statistical Analysis Output for Students choice

Table A4: Total Variance Explained for Students choice

	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.395	24.248	24.248	3.395	24.248	24.248	2.340	16.715	16.715
2	1.986	14.183	38.430	1.986	14.183	38.430	1.986	14.182	30.897
3	1.460	10.427	48.857	1.460	10.427	48.857	1.666	11.897	42.794
4	1.356	9.687	58.544	1.356	9.687	58.544	1.547	11.051	53.845
5	1.120	7.998	66.542	1.120	7.998	66.542	1.434	10.245	64.090
6	1.082	7.726	74.268	1.082	7.726	74.268	1.425	10.178	74.268
7	.787	5.619	79.887						
8	.722	5.154	85.041						
9	.538	3.842	88.883						
10	.496	3.543	92.426						
11	.335	2.393	94.820						
12	.325	2.323	97.142						
13	.209	1.496	98.639						
14	.191	1.361	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Figure A4: Scree Plot for Students Choice
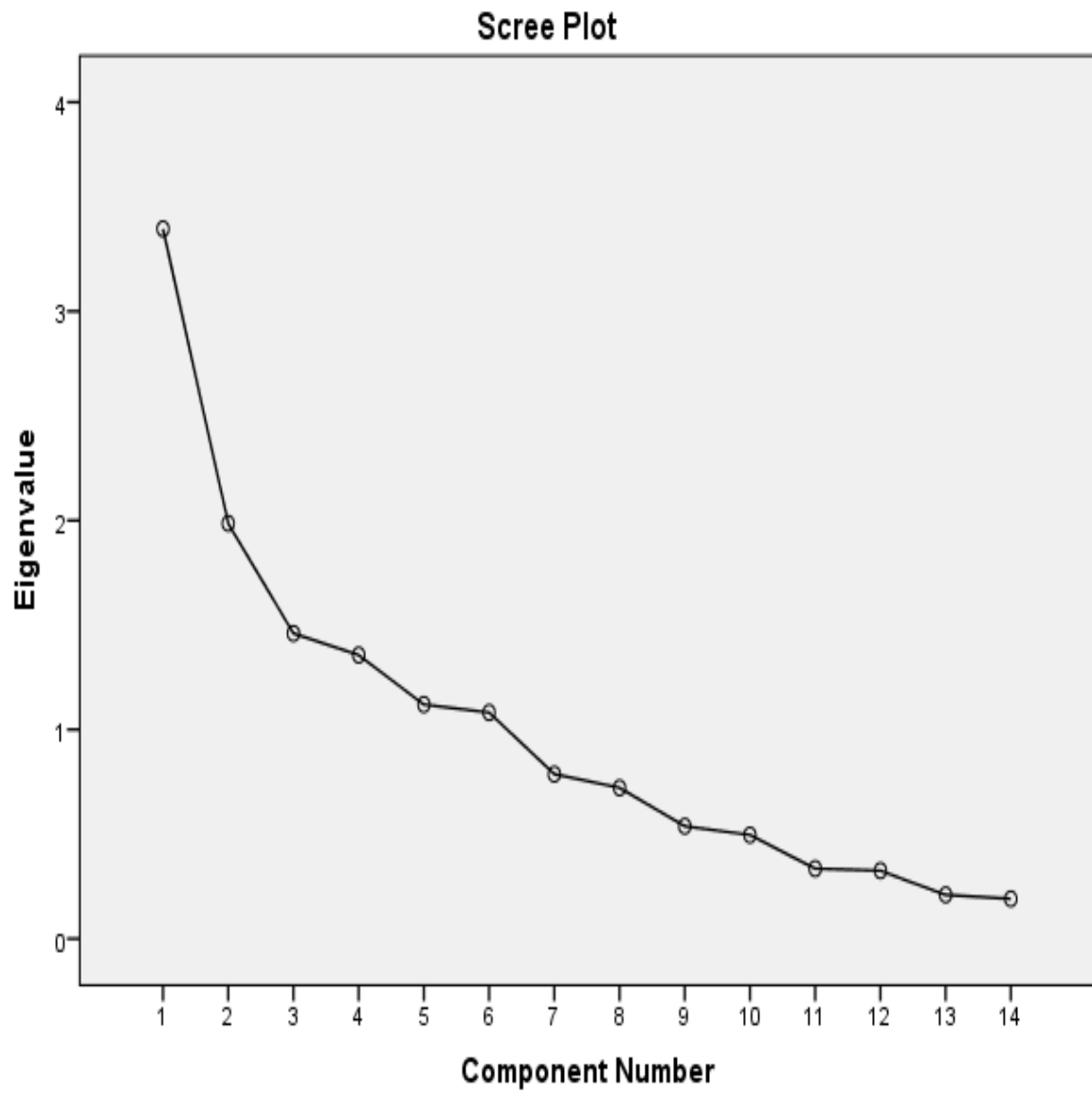
Appendix VII: Figure 4.1 Normal Probability Plot for effect of Branding Strategies on students choice

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

Dependent Variable: students schoice of post graduate programs
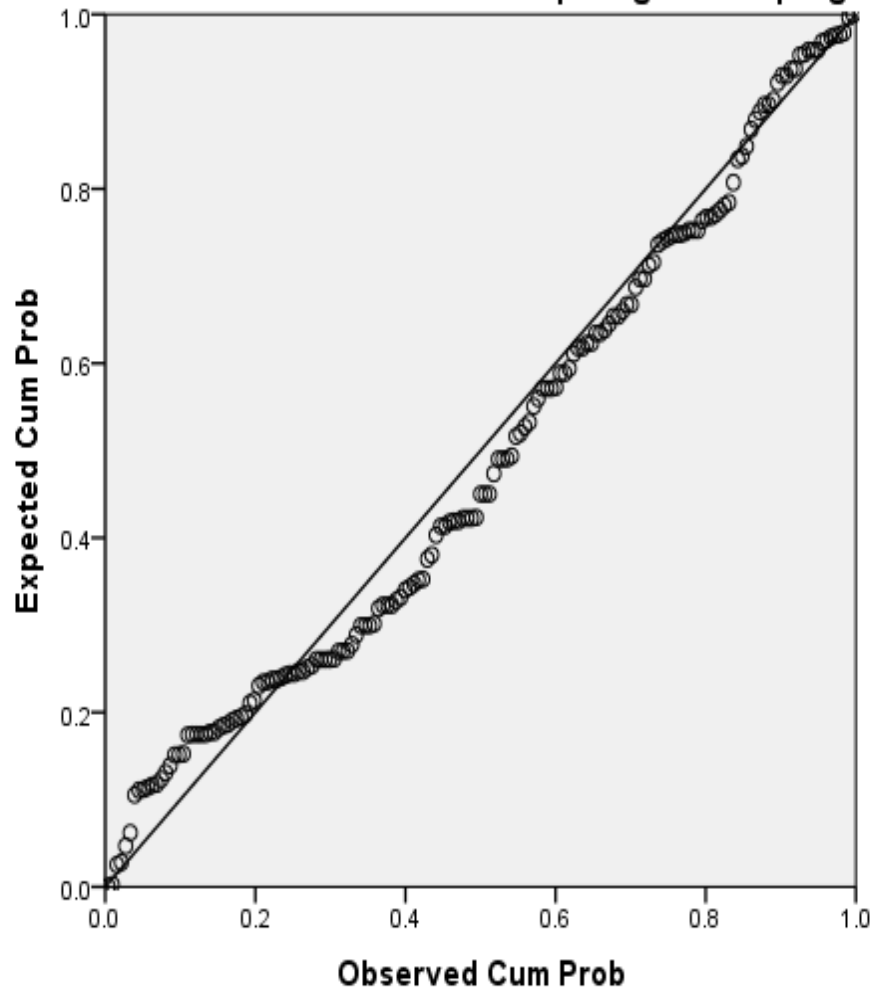
Appendix VIII: Figure 4.2 Scatter plot for effect of Branding

Strategies on Students Choice

Scatterplot

Dependent Variable: students schoice of post graduate programs
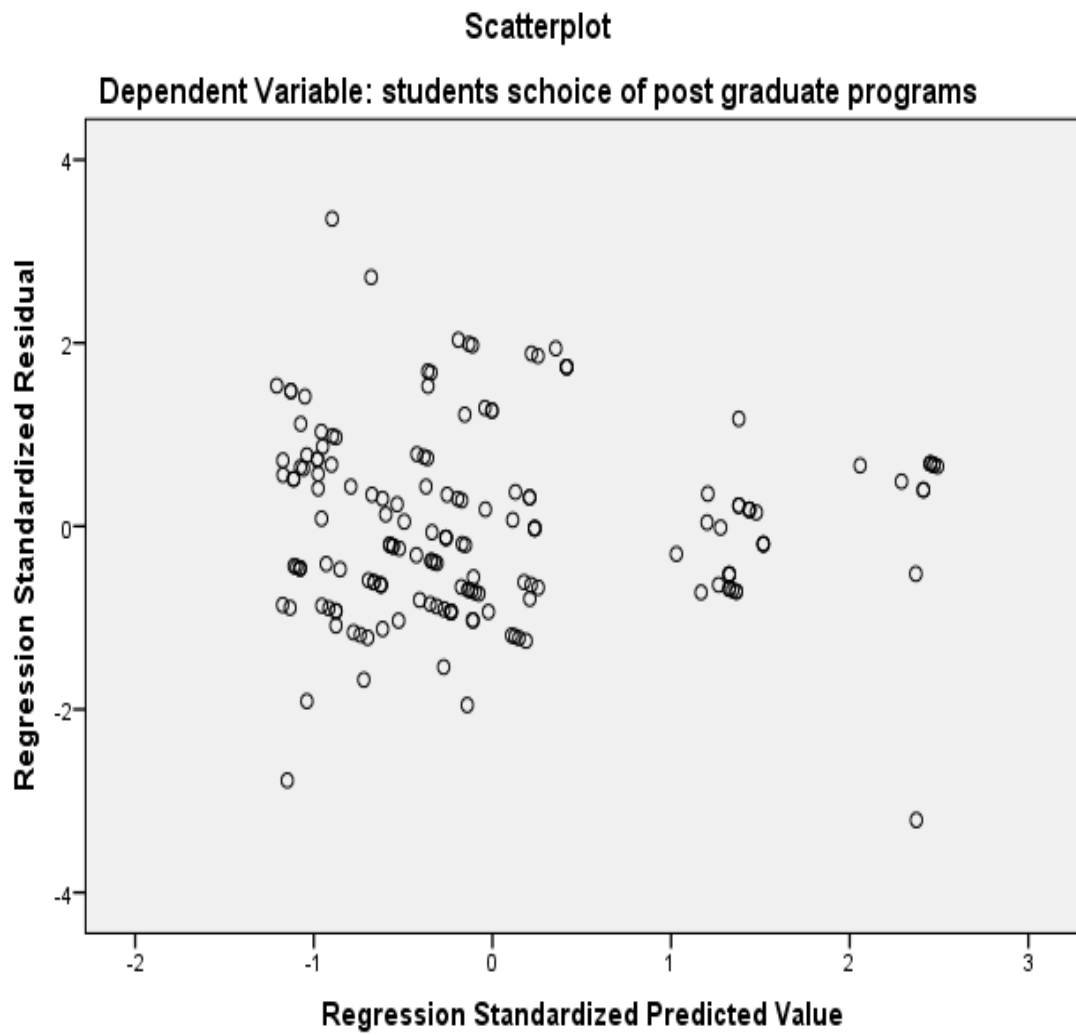
Appendix IX: Authorization to Proceed with Field Research by the Institute of Post Graduate Studies and Research

INSTITUTE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES & RESEARCH

Private Bag-20157   Tel: 0773265999
Kabarak, Kenya
Email:directorpostgraduate@kabarak.ac.ke   www.kabarak.ac.ke

21st February 2017

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation.
9th Floor, Utalii House,
P.O Box 30623-00100.
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBJECT: RESEARCH BY GDB/M/1144/09/14– LYDIA CHEPKOECH LANGAT

The above named is a Doctoral student at Kabarak University in the School of Business & Economics. She is carrying out a research entitled *"Effect of Branding Strategies on Student's Choice of Postgraduate Programmes in Universities in Nakuru County, Kenya"*

The information obtained in the course of this research will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Please provide the necessary assistance.

Thank you.

Yours Faithfully,

DR. BETTY J.TIKOKO
DIRECTOR POSTGRADUATE STUDIES & RESEARCH

Kabarak University Moral Code
As members of Kabarak University family, we purpose at all times and in all places, to set apart in one's heart, Jesus as Lord. (1Peter 3:15)

Appendix X: Letter from County Director of Education Nakuru County

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

State Department of Basic Education

Telegrams:"EDUCATION",
Telephone:051-2216917
Fax: 051-2217308
Email: cdenakurucounty@yahoo.com
When replying please quote
Ref. NO.
CDE/NKU/GEN/4/1/21/VOL.V/25

COUNTY DIRECTOR OF
EDUCATION NAKURU COUNTY
P. O. BOX 259,
NAKURU.

20th March, 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION - LYDIA CHEPKOECH LANGAT
       PERMIT NO. NACOSTI/P/17/34622/15947

Reference is made to letter NACOSTI/P/17/34622/15947 dated 10th March, 2017.

Authority is hereby granted to the above named to carry out research on **"Effects of branding strategies on students' choice of post graduate programmes in Universities in Nakuru County, Kenya,"** for a period ending 9th January, 2018.

Kindly accord her the necessary assistance

George Ontiri
FOR: COUNTY DIRECTOR OFEDUCATION
NAKURU COUNTY

Copy to:

Kabarak University
Private Bag-20157
KABARAK

Appendix XI: Research Authorization Permit

Lydia Chepkoech Langat
Kabarak University
Private Bag - 20157
KABARAK.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on *"Effect of branding strategies on students' choice of post graduate programmes in Universities in Nakuru County, Kenya,"* I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Nakuru County** for the period ending **9th March, 2018.**

You are advised to report to **the Vice Chancellors of selected Universities, the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Nakuru County** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit **two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf** of the research report/thesis to our office.

BONIFACE WANYAMA
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The Vice Chancellors
Selected Universities.

The County Commissioner
Nakuru County.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MISS. LYDIA CHEPKOECH LANGAT
of KABARAK UNIVERSITY, 0-20100
NAKURU, has been permitted to conduct
research in *Nakuru County*

on the topic: *EFFECT OF BRANDING*
STRATEGIES ON STUDENTS' CHOICE OF
POST GRADUATE PROGRAMMES IN
UNIVERSITIES IN NAKURU COUNTY,
KENYA

for the period ending:
9th March, 2018

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/17/34622/15947
Date Of Issue : 10th March, 2017
Fee Recieved :Ksh 2000

....
Applicant's
Signature

....
Director General
National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation

CONDITIONS

1. You must report to the County Commissioner and the County Education Officer of the area before embarking on your research. Failure to do that may lead to the cancellation of your permit.
2. Government Officer will not be interviewed without prior appointment.
3. No questionnaire will be used unless it has been approved.
4. Excavation, filming and collection of biological specimens are subject to further permission from the relevant Government Ministries.
5. You are required to submit at least two(2) hard copies and one (1) soft copy of your final report.
6. The Government of Kenya reserves the right to modify the conditions of this permit including its cancellation without notice

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

RESEACH CLEARANCE PERMIT

Serial No.A 13203

CONDITIONS: see back page

Appendix XI: Publications

Certificate of Publication

This is to certify that the paper entitled **"Effect of External Branding Strategies on Students' Choice of Post Graduate Programmes in Universities in Nakuru County, Kenya** " submitted by the author(s)

Lydia C. Langat, Robert Otuya, Ronald Chepkilot

has been published with details as follows:

September 20, 2017

Prof. Kefa Rabah, PhD MBA; Editor-in-Chief

www.mrjournals.org

"We believe in equal opportunities, the strength of cultural diversity, full participation in all aspects of society, and education & research as a means of bridging cultures."

MARA RESEARCH JOURNALS

International Journal of Economics Commerce and Management

IJECM

ijecm.co.uk

Date: 01/11/17

To,

LYDIA CHEPKOECH LANGAT

School of Business and Economics, Kabarak University

Dr. ROBERT OTUYA

School of Business and Management Science, University of Eldoret

Prof. RONALD CHEPKILOT

School of Business and Economics, Kabarak University

Dr. JOEL KOIMA

School of Computer Science and Bioinformatics, Kabarak University

Subject: Acceptance of research paper for final publication in IJECM.

Dear Author(s),

Your paper entitled "**EFFECT OF INTERNAL BRANDING STRATEGIES ON POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' CHOICE OF UNIVERSITIES IN NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA**" paper id ED511-141 is accepted for final publication in Vol. 5, Issue 11 (15th Nov 2017 issue) of International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management.

Regards

Emeritus Professor Dr. Malcolm Christopher
Chief Editor

Impact Factor: 0.656 (GIF), 4.109 (SJIF)

Appendix XII: Conference Presentations

KABARAK UNIVERSITY

Certificate of Participation

Awarded to

Lydia Chepkoech Langat

for participating in the 7ᵗʰ Annual Kabarak University International Research Conference on 5ᵗʰ and 6ᵗʰ October 2017

Title of Paper

"Effect of External Branding Strategies on Students' Choice of Post Graduate Programmes in Universities in Nakuru County, Kenya"

Conference Theme

Research, Innovation and Knowledge Translation for Community Transformation

_____
Registrar
(Academic & Research)

_____
Deputy Vice Chancellor
(Academic & Research)

KABARAK UNIVERSITY

Certificate of Participation

This is to certify that

Lydia Langat

Successfully Presented a paper titled

"Determinants of Consumer Preferences for Health Services Provided by Private Hospitals in Nakuru County, Kenya"

in the 5th Annual Kabarak International Research Conference held on 14th – 17th July 2015

Conference Theme

Research, Innovation For Sustainable Development and a Secure World

_____
Registrar
(Academic & Research)

_____
Deputy Vice Chancellor
(Academic & Research)

Appendix XIII: Nakuru County Map