FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS’ CHOICE OF UNIVERSITIES IN TWO SELECTED UNIVERSITIES: SOUTH EASTERN KENYA UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, KENYA

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A Research Project Submitted for Examination in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements of the Award of the Degree of Master of Education in Corporate Governance

University of Nairobi

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for an award of a degree in any other university

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This work is dedicated to Venus Anita, my loving parents: Benedetta Mulonzi and Antony Mumangi, brothers, sisters and friends for their continuous assistance and guidance towards writing of this work.
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ABSTRACT

University education is one of the key drivers of economic, social and political development of the world hence its increase in demand. Universities are faced with the challenge of attracting and retaining students. The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence students’ choice of universities at South Eastern Kenya University and University of Nairobi. The objective of the study was so to determine: the extent to which accessibility to universities, university’s flexibility in fee payment, marketing strategies and its geographical location influence students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University. Descriptive survey research design was employed in the study of 2210 students from both University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University. Among undergraduate students in their first year of study, 385 respondents were sampled randomly. Using questionnaires administered to them, data was collected to determine those factors that influenced their choice for the universities. Quantitative data was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages while qualitative data was analyzed by tallying the number of similar responses. Results of data were presented using frequency distribution tables. The study established that accessibility to an institution was the most influential factor students considered while choosing the university for student with 70 percent non-financial accessibility. University reputation which was made by the specialized programmes a university offered and employing marketing strategies to make it famous was rated second in preference. Flexibility in fee payment had a lesser influence on students’ choice of the universities. The study therefore concluded that students require easily accessible universities whose information can be obtained through proper marketing before making a choice for it. The study recommended the need to increase understanding of the importance of employing various strategies to attract students to a university. Secondly, the personnel working on students during selection process ought to know the process of selection and the influential factors to students’ choice of universities and courses. Thirdly, Universities need to guide and inform career counselors in primary and secondary schools on specialized programmes to particular universities, structure of time of study, flexibility in fee payment among others which in turn influence their choices. The factors studied had a strong implication of attracting more students to the universities and reducing inter-university transfers.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Demand for higher education all over the world is drastically increasing due to its vital importance for equipping learners with new skills, knowledge and ideas which aid in economic, social and political development in each individual country (UNESCO, 1998). This has led to great diversification in higher education with universities providing an attractive environment for learning.

Over the past two decades, the market for private middle level colleges in Nairobi has expanded extensively resulting in increased competition amongst the competing colleges in the city (UNESCO, 1998). There has been competition between public and private middle-level colleges in the country, universities and foreign colleges through affiliate colleges which has led to exodus of students to colleges outside the country, and the emergence of global online competition.

Therefore, these private colleges have to fight it out for the best “position” in the minds of their consumers so as to win over more students to join their colleges. This calls for the use of positioning strategies which are widely used as seen from previous studies done.

Bochert, (2002) in his research paper notes that as students graduate from secondary colleges successfully, they are faced with the challenge of having to
decide on future career paths. This decision to continue with higher education and
the choice of an institution to attend are significant decisions they have to make at
this time of their lives (Johnson & Chapman, 1979). Understanding the choice
process of a university is an instrument with high potential for developing
universities’ marketing strategies.

Students considering attending a university whether public or private prioritize
higher education in their earlier stages of life by perceiving universities and
university life positively. The decision is reached after a close examination of
various factors. However, universities are putting various measures to influence
their choices. This has led to a lot of competition among the universities for
students.

Oketch (2003) asserts that the key determinants of success in universities remain
the ability to attract and retain students. In order to attract students, institutions of
higher education need to understand how students select colleges and universities
(Kotler & Fox, 1995). Some of these factors accrue to the governance of
individual universities such as cost of programs offered, flexibility in fee
payment, the strategies universities use to make their universities marketable, its
geographical location as well as personally- oriented such as student’s academic
performance, influence of significant others, type of institution among others
(Wagenaar, 1987).

These factors explain the reason behind the variations in student enrollment
among the 22 public universities in Kenya which constitute their admissions and
inter-university transfers. Students, who are the key consumers of education, should make informed choices since investing in education is of high risk to the students. Hayton and Paczuska (2002), describes the choice of university education as risky due to the financial implications involved; students should therefore make informed choices. Students’ appropriate selection of a university and his or her successful completion of the programme enrolled in determine the economic survival of a university.

Globally, universities faces the challenge of competing for students thus measures which give them competitive advantage are highly considered. For instance, a study of undergraduate prospectus for 2013 admissions shows factors University of Edinburgh in Europe highlighted in order to attract and retain its students (www.ed.ac.uk). Factors such as accessibility to the university, its library and Information Technology resources; presence of accommodation, cost and payment plans; flexible learning; flexibility of paying tuition fees and marketing strategies such as open days, guided and self-guided tours were considered important determinants of influencing students choice of the university in the year 2013. The average grade is 81 divided by 8, which equals 10.1 (approximately 10.0 points) which is Grade B+ according to the grading system. This student qualifies to join one of the Public Universities for his good score. Training institutions and faculties and departments determine their own minimum entry requirements. Students who manage a grade of C+ qualify to do a degree course at the university. Owing to competition and fewer places at the University, those
with B and in a few cases B-, and above are taken for degree courses at the public universities and benefit by paying government-subsidized fees. The rest join private universities or middle-level colleges.

Interestingly, the number of students admitted to public universities through Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Services depends on the total number of beds available in all the public universities. Nonetheless, those who miss out but attained the minimum university entry mark of C+ or C with a relevant diploma certificate are admitted through the parallel degree programmes (module II) if they can afford the full fees for the course. This has been the subject of much discussion with people questioning the rationale and morality of locking out qualified students from public institutions yet still admitting those who come from financially able families.

At regional level, most universities, especially private universities, are faced with a challenge of competing for students with the public universities due to cost sharing mechanism of financing higher education as was noted by Ngolovoi & Marcucci (2006). According to Makinde (1984), many secondary school students face the tremendous problems when dealing with the choice of an institution of higher learning where to pursue their degree courses after graduation from secondary school, even when they do not have the necessary aptitude and capacity for demands of such careers and institutions offering them. This has led to the drastic establishment and growth of universities as others decentralize in order to
address the increasing demand of higher education in both urban and rural areas. Uganda, for instance, had 44 universities at the end of the year 2013 constituting of 9 public, 31 private, 6 military and 3 degree awarding-non-university institutions.

University choice process among the students in Africa is more or less the same. In Uganda, higher education admission process takes place in two ways. First, all students who wish to be considered for admission under government sponsorship to public universities fill out the Public Universities Joint Admissions Board (PUJAB) application form stating their institutions of preference. Their scores on the various subjects are then weighted based on the requirement of individual programs within faculties and the top-scoring students are admitted as well as Kenya. To earn a government sponsorship, students need to be outstanding. Second, students who do not get a government sponsorship are invited to put in applications under the Private Entry Scheme (PES) which was started at Makerere but all public universities now have similar programs (Ngolovoi & Marcucci, 2006).

Differences in governance of the universities determine the choice a student is going to make during the selection process. For instance, the policy of fee payment at Kampala International University that it must be paid in full at the beginning of each semester differs from that of Kampala University where students are allowed to pay it in installments (www.kiu.ac.ug). This also explains
why the former is dominated by privately-sponsored students than the latter. Ugandan universities therefore have been striving competitively to attract and retain students as the craving of higher education increases.

Naris and Ukepere (2010), observe that every educational institution wants to have a competitive edge in order to attract more students and potential employees. Other factors of significance are geographical location and accessibility of the universities, faculty requirements as per courses desired, affordability of tuition fees and cost of living (for international students), accommodation to special needs students and student’s loan scheme which was approved by the Uganda government to assist students in both private and public higher education institutions accredited to the Uganda National Council for Higher Education (UNCHE).

UNESCO (1998) in its World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century Article 3 emphasizes equity in access to higher education which should be linked up with all other levels of education. In Kenya, students who qualify for university education choose universities of their choices but are selected to join public universities whose fee is subsidized by the government. The selection is done through Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) formerly JAB, whose mandate was granted in 2012. The placements are done depending on their choices. Where vacancies for particular course
depending on academic qualification are inadequate, students do revise their choices.

Students who do not meet the specified qualifications seek vacancies in universities of their choices. This study aims at identifying the governance factors that students consider important while making decision for a suitable public university for higher education in Kenya. A comparative study of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University was done to highlight the items graduates of secondary colleges consider when making choices on universities to attend. The study will compare the named universities to represent the other 20 public universities. University of Nairobi has been chosen to represent universities fully developed and located in urban areas while South Eastern Kenya University represents the recently established and rural universities.

From the Universities’ website (www.uonbi.ac.ke, 2014), it was noted that University of Nairobi was established by an Act of Parliament Cap 210 of the laws of Kenya in 1970, having been growing as a college since 1956, as the pioneer institution of university education in Kenya and the region in order to address the increasing demand in man power training at national, regional and the whole of Africa. University of Nairobi has recently experienced tremendous growth into seven campuses located in the capital city and its environs. This has facilitated easy access to the university making it a centre of excellence in academic activities. The university admits both government-sponsored (module I)
and privately-sponsored (module II) students who enroll in either regular or evening and weekend programmes with classes being conducted at the University’s Extra Mural Centres located at the country’s county headquarters. The university’s academics range from certificate courses to post-graduate programmes.

South Eastern Kenya University came into being as a constituent college of University of Nairobi but is now a fully-pledged university which was awarded a Charter in 2013. The University is located in Kwa Vonza in the Lower Yatta District in a serene environment hence conducive for learning (www.seuco.ac.ke, 2014). The university is steadily growing and currently offers various certificate, diploma, undergraduate and post graduate programmes. It has six campuses: Machakos Town, Kitui Town, Wote Town, Nairobi Central Business District, Tala Town and Mwingi Town campuses. Similarly, it admits both government- and privately-sponsored students.

1.2 Statement of the problem
Against the background of a growing number of qualified students seeking higher education, there is a stiff competition amongst the universities in attracting students. Therefore, universities have to develop governance factors that attract students in order to maintain or increase their enrolment. Secondary colleges in Kenya fall into three categories – government-funded, harambee and private. Government funded colleges are divided into national, provincial and district
levels. Harambee colleges do not receive full funding from the government and private colleges are run by private organisations or individuals. After taking the primary college leaving exam and successfully passing, government funded colleges select students in order of scores.

Students with the highest scores gain admission into national colleges while those with average scores are selected into provincial and district colleges. Harambee colleges accept students with low scores. Students who fail examinations either repeat the final college year or pursue technical and vocational education. The latter is divided into technical secondary college (lasting 4 years) and apprenticeships solutions. Since 2010, technical secondary college students can have access to university programs. A number of students also drop out of college by choice due to poor scores.

Under the current system, students attend secondary college for four years before sitting for the college leaving exam at the end of the fourth year. The first class or year of secondary college is known as form 1 and the final year is form 4. At the end of the fourth year, from October to November students sit for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination. In 2008, the government introduced plans to offer free Secondary education to all Kenyans.

Historic prestigious national high colleges include Mang'u High College, Alliance High College (Kenya) and Starehe Boys' Centre and College. Private secondary colleges in Kenya are generally high cost, offering students an alternative system
of education with better or more luxurious facilities compared to public colleges. They are often favoured for prestige.

Most private colleges in Kenya offer the British system of education which includes “O-levels” and “A-levels”. Very few offer the American system of education and a good number of them offer the Kenya system. Some of the oldest private schools in Kenya include Loreto Convent Msongari, Nairobi (1921), St. Mary's College, Nairobi, Braeburn College, Consolata College, Strathmore College, Oshwal Academy, Rift Valley Academy, Aga Khan Academy, Kenton College and Brookhouse College.

While a number of universities attract large numbers of students such as University of Nairobi, enrolment growth for South Eastern Kenya University is erratic even though there is an increase in enrolment. Through an interview of personnel in the admissions office, it was noted from the admissions records that during the 2013/2014 academic year, 1646 students were admitted to South Eastern Kenya University through Joint Admissions Board (JAB) to various faculties but 1214 enrolled for studies. The difference includes some of who transferred to other universities. 57 students enrolled for module II (self-sponsored) programme. In the previous academic year, 992 students admitted through Joint Admissions Board were enrolled while 143 were enrolled in the module II, therefore, a drop in 2013/2014 academic year.
Contrastingly, in 2013/2014 academic year University of Nairobi enrolled 90 students in the module II programme for the College of Education (data obtained from College of Education admissions office, Main Campus). This figure far exceeds the total enrolment for module II at South Eastern Kenya University. Very little research has been done on the governance factors that influence students’ choice of universities in Kenya. This study seeks to address these factors that make students to choose a given university for their study.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate factors influencing the choice of universities having South Eastern Kenya University and University of Nairobi as points of reference.

1.4 Research objectives

The objectives of the study were:

i. To determine the influence of university accessibility on students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University.

ii. To establish the extent to which university’s flexibility in fee payment influence students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University.

iii. To determine the marketing strategies influencing students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University.
iv. To establish the extent to which geographical location influence students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University.

1.5 Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

i. To what extent does accessibility of a university influence students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University?

ii. To what extent does university’s policy on flexibility in fee payment influence students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University?

iii. Which marketing strategies influence students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University?

iv. To what extent do geographical locations influence students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University?

1.6 Significance of the study

This study has a highly practical significance in that its results may trigger off insight into the importance of marketing strategies different universities use such as media, internet and brochures and dissemination of information by the institution to students in and off secondary school who aspire to join universities in order to attract them.

The personnel working with students during the selection process should be aware of the process and the influential factors to their choice of universities and courses
which is aim of this study. This information will aid them in assisting them in advising the students to make appropriate choices.

Higher learning institutions may be less or more involved in the selection process. Through Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement service (KUCCPS) they will be able to give guidance and information to secondary college students on courses offered, structure of time of study, flexibility in payment of fees and accessibility of venues for study among others. However, students make their final decision after wide analysis of both institutional and individual factors and consultation with people who influence their decisions to choose a university for study as outlined in the study as well as others like such as accreditation, academic reputation, courses offered among others.

1.7 Limitations of the study

According to Orodho (2004), limitation is an aspect of study the researcher knows may adversely affect the results of general ability of the study but over which he or she has no direct control over. The limitation to the study is that it was not possible to meet the respondents at the scheduled time, the actual respondents of the questionnaires were not known. The results of the study might have been subjective since respondents gave information voluntarily hence a lot of biased responses might have been recorded. To overcome this, descriptive survey design was employed. Respondents were randomly sampled and each administered with a questionnaire and collected from the sampled proportion of respondents.
1.8 Delimitations of the study

According to Orodho (2005), delimitations are those characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of one’s study. The study involved undergraduate students in their first year of study in University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University.

1.9 Assumption of the study

The study was carried out on the basis of the following assumptions:

i. The respondents gave genuine, truthful and honest responses to the questionnaires.

ii. There was no intra and inter transfers of students within the duration of study.

iii. Students had opinions about who is influential in their decision to choose their current university for study.

1.10 Definition of significant terms

Factors refer to determinants of a student’s decision to make preference out of university options to undertake a study, course or academic programme from.

Accessibility refers to ease with which a university is reachable by the students from their areas of residence or places of work using various means of transport.

Flexibility in fee payment refers to mode of paying fees where students who cannot meet the full fees are allowed to pay it in installments within a semester.
**Geographical location** is where a university is found on the map of an area either in urban or rural area in relation to offering an attractive environment for learning.

**Marketing strategy** is a process that can allow a university to concentrate its limited resources on its greatest effort to make it highly recognized and valued in order to attract a pool of students in relation to others such as university open days, exhibitions and advertisement.

1.11 Organization of the study

This study comprises of five chapters. Chapter one gives an introduction to the topic of the study. A summary of the entire study is given exploring how students make choices for universities at global, regional and local levels. Chapter two gives a review of the existing literature on the topic under study which include both theoretical and conceptual framework. It points out the agreement and disagreement between various studies on factors influencing students’ university choice. Chapter three discusses the research methodology which includes design used for the research, target population, sampling techniques and sample size, research instruments which were used for the study; their validity and reliability, procedure which was used in data collection and the techniques which were used to analyze the data. The chapter also explains how the research was done; identify target population and the instruments to use to collect data. Chapter four highlights the results of the study by outlining how the data was analysed, presented, its interpretation and discussions which were made from the findings of
the study. Chapter five gives a summary of the study which was done, conclusions which were drawn from the findings and recommendations to address the gaps which initiated the study. The chapter ends by giving suggestions for areas of further study which need to be addressed in relation to the topic.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the findings of the literature review of data related to the research topic. Information for the relevant review was obtained from articles, books, journals, websites, and comments from persons. The chapter also contains works of other researchers which were considered relevant to the research topic. Campus accessibility, geographical location, flexibility in fee payment and university marketing strategies are factors reviewed in this area. Other areas addressed in this chapter are conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the study.

2.2 Concept of university choice on students’ influence in choosing it

Higher education, and particularly university education is recognized as a key force for modernization and development (UNESCO, 1998). This has caused an increase in the demand for its access, accompanied by a number of challenges. Minimal research on factors influencing choice of university among students has been done. Aaker, Batra and Myers (1996) define a brand's position as, the set of associations the consumers has with the brand, and these may cover physical attributes, lifestyle, or use of occasion or user image. In this case a brand refers to the university and the set of association refers to the attributes which make the university attractive to the students.
Kotler and Armstrong (1992) add a product position is, the way consumers on important attributes define the product; the place the product occupies in consumers’ minds relative to competing brand associations. Here, the product refers to the courses offered, their competitiveness in the labour market in relation to other universities. Therefore, Aaker (1992) notes, a well-positioned brand will have a competitively attractive position supported by strong associations. A competitive university will rate highly on a desirable attribute or occupy a distinct position from that of universities competing with it.

Aaker (1992) adds a brand image is a set of associations usually organized in a meaningful way. Thus associations summarize a set of facts that otherwise would be difficult for the consumer to process and access. Based on the desired or chosen service or brand associations and image, university managers can chose a strategy or strategies to use to make the university highly competitive thus attracting a pool of students. Below is a discussion of these strategies.

2.3 Campus accessibility and students’ choice of university

Campus or university accessibility refers to the ability of a campus to be at easily reached by the students, staff and other stakeholders. An education institution should be located close to target market to attract and retain potential and current students. For instance University of Nairobi is located within the heart of Nairobi town which has made it easier for students within the town to reach it unlike South Eastern Kenya which is 13 kilometers off Nairobi-Kitui Road
David Anderson (1996), in his article notes that students will be attracted to a university which is easily accessible to them especially those undertaking part-time courses because less time and funds will be consumed on reaching them (www.studyusa.com/en/a/2/choosing-a-collegeintheusa). Some students also are not accommodated at the universities’ hostels since they prefer staying with their families.

Kotler and Keller (2006) define positioning as the act of designing the company's offering and image, to occupy a distinct place in the mind of the target market. According to Kotler and Armstrong (1993), a products' position is the complex set of perception, impressions and feelings that consumers hold for the products compared with competing products. Burnett (2002) defines a position as, the image that the product projects in relation to the images projected by competitive products and by other products marketed by the company. Positioning strategy, as explained by Schuffman and Kanuk (2007) is the essence of the marketing mix as it complements the company's definition of competition, its segmentation strategy and its selection of target markets. Thus, creation of a position is the first task in the positioning of a product, followed by the development of a strategy on how to represent or communicate the chosen position.

To identify a service’s existing or desired position, a university needs to understand the service it offers (in terms of its function, social use, and its human emotions desires or behavior connotations) and the consumer, (Burnett, 2002). In
addition, a university can identify and select a position as providing superior value or providing more benefits to gain a competitive advantage, (Kotler et al, 2001). Sengupta (2001) adds that positioning is the pursuit of competitive advantage, (Sengupta, 2001).

2.4 Flexibility in fee payment on choice of the University

Universities and other tertiary institutions need funding to mobilize physical and human resources. Funding of universities is a cost-sharing venture involving both government and the students. In Kenya, payment of fees by those pursuing degree programmes was introduced as part of the efforts by government to transfer the cost of financing university education to the beneficiaries. To cushion the poor against adverse financial difficulties, and to ensure that no eligible students dropped out of university due to inability to finance their education, the loan and bursary schemes were introduced to benefit all university students who could not fully finance their education.

The government established the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) in July in 1975 to improve both loans’ disbursement and recovery. However, the loan and the bursary is awarded to the applicants who meet the requirements stipulated by the board (Njeru & Odundo, 2003)

Students admitted to universities through the Joint Admissions Board, the government subsidizes by paying their tuition fees and they are left to cater for the other services such as accommodation, medical, library among others. The
promptness of this payment by both government and self-sponsored students depends on the availability of the funds among the students. Due to this reason, university governors have come up with a policy on flexibility of fee payment.

While private universities insist on full payment of the fees at the onset of a semester due to their elitist nature, most of public universities allow students to pay fees in installments provided the full payment is made before beginning of end of semester exams, for instance, University of Nairobi. Mutula (2009) observes that the tuition for private universities is far beyond the reach of an average citizen.

Kilemi (2006) pointed out that since private universities rely heavily on tuition and fees for income, the flexibility and stability enjoyed by these institutions becomes an issue of concern. He further cautions that, an institution’s overall revenue structure reflects its diversity of funding sources. It is generally believed that an institution that derives its revenue from several independent sources enjoys greater flexibility and stability in financial capital as is the case of public universities. The policy on flexibility of fee payment is a key factor of consideration among outstanding students from families of low income status.

2.5 University marketing strategies on choice of the University

Many post-secondary college students are highly influenced by the information and products sold to them regarding a given university. A combination of
marketing strategies is better placed for effectiveness to create an impact and desired response to increase student enrollment (Mok, 2000).

Different strategies are used for different publics. Some strategies like open days, higher education exhibitions, direct mail and advertising are used by universities to inform remind and persuade prospective students to select their institution (Maringe, 2004).

Marketing units should reach prospective students from their early stages of planning for higher education institutions. They should be informed how and why personal aptitude, interest, ability and resource should be evaluated before choosing the programme, regardless of how popular and prospective it is.

Through marketing, students are also informed on the enrollment process which is well explained by the purchase behavior of consumers’ model of decision making by Kotler (2003). The process comprises of four stages namely: Pre-search behavior, search behavior, application and registration. Pre-search behavior involves early thoughts about their future where students passively register the existence of information about higher education to which they are exposed. Universities take advantage of this early decision making since some of the lasting attitudes and views are often developed during this stage. At search behavior stage, applicants having shortlisted potential universities begin using a variety of sources of information to make up their minds while looking for data relating to a wide range of decision criteria. In application stage, students submit
their applications to the selected universities. Kotler (2003) adds that universities deal with the applications. The sooner a university responds to communications, the more advantage it gains. Students then make choices from the multiple offers. Lastly, a student turns up for registration but often some turn the offer down after a few days in the university (inter-university transfers).

For students to choose a university, its marketing must be enormously done. The increasingly important role that marketing plays in student recruitment has been recognized by many scholars including showcasing its image, values and beliefs with an aim of capturing the attention of many students. Marketing in higher education is also done, for instance in Indonesia, to mitigate the effects of decreasing government funding and increase competition.

2.6 Geographical location influence on choice of the University

Geographical location involves how a firm avails its products and services to the final consumer. Services are inseparable from the service provider and this poses a challenge in marketing education services.

Location must give the customer accurate clues about the service offering. This means that the location of an education institution should be close to target market to attract and retain potential and current clients (Tinto, 2004). Location of university determines how conducive the place is for learning. While some universities are located in quite environment that is required for learning which is
lacking in the University of Nairobi, Main Campus because it is located at the heart of a noisy and busy town.

Mingchu, Vieweg and Schreek (2006) note that studies and literature investigating the influence of geographic characteristics on persistence to study in a given university are limited. Because of lack of information and research effort, many questions remain unanswered regarding the influence of geographical location hence need for more research which this study aims to achieve (www.ocair.org/files/presentations/papers 2006).

Accordingly, positioning is widely used in both the service and tangible product industry in Kenya. On positioning of health insurance cover services, Kisyoki (2005) confirms, extensive use of personnel, and physical environment as positioning strategies by health maintenance organizations as for use of positioning strategies in the detergent market.

Mulei (2005) adds that positioning by product benefit was the most important positioning strategy influencing consumer choice. However, in developing a positioning program for marketing of services is much the same as for goods, but it takes into account the special characteristics inherent in services (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2007).
2.7 Summary of literature review

In this section of the report the researcher has reviewed the literature on factors that influence the choice of universities by graduates of secondary schools and middle-level colleges. Previous research considered geographical location as an important factor (Lewis & Paton, 2004; Wagner & Fard, 2009) as well as institutional characteristics such as teaching quality, prestige, infrastructure, library, computer facilities, location, quality of the curricula, administrative support, extracurricular factors and availability of exchange programs with other foreign universities (Tavares, Tavares, Justino et al., 2008).

However, a wide range of research strongly discusses the enormous effect parents have on a student’s choice of a university (Moogan and Baron, 2003; Raposo and Alves, 2007; Yamamoto, 2006). Studies on Asian countries at a large extent found that reference groups such as siblings, peers, friends, relatives, respondents and other influential people influence a student’s choice of a university (Ceja, 2004; Ceja, 2006; Yamamoto, 2006).

Many scholars have investigated the influence of cost in the choice of a university (Domino, Libraire, Lutwiller et al., 2006; Wagner and Fard, 2009; Beneke and Human, 2010). However, Domino et al. (2006) found that cost was the most important factor from parents’ point of view rather than a student’s perception.

Although it was found that there are numerous important factors considered by students when selecting a university these factors have a different level of
importance for each country and each student. Therefore this research will
determine the most influential factors that first year undergraduate students at
University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University considered when
selecting the University for higher learning.

2.8 Theoretical framework of the study

A number of authors have used different approaches to theories to explain the
factors influencing students’ choice of universities. This study mainly focuses on

Glasser postulates that all we do is behave, all we do is chosen, and we are driven
by our genes to satisfy five basic needs: survival, to belong and to be loved by
others, power and importance, freedom and independence, and fun. In his ten
axioms notes that, a person’s behavior is inspired by what that person wants or
needs at that particular time, not an outside stimulus. He notes that all living
creatures control their behavior to fulfill their need for satisfaction in one or more
of the named needs. He states that every individual has the power to change their
lives for the better based on the choices they make.

Chapman (1986) notes the use of Behavioral Theory to explain college selection
as important by outlining the down-top selection process students engage in when
choosing a college of study. He sequentially models the five stages students
involve in while choosing a college such as Pre-search behavior, Application
decision, Choice decision and Matriculation decision. Kotler (2003) supports
Chapman (1986) in pre-search behavior stage, search and application stages which begins when a student recognizes the need and desirability of college education up to when he or she submits an application to the selected university. Chapman adds that matriculation stage is important because students are given allowance to make adjustments to the choices made on courses and colleges to attend after selection has been done.

The theory as he notes is quite rigid because it focuses on down-top fashion unlike choice theory whereby the fashion is usually top-down as universities sell information on their products and services to students in lower levels of education. It is later followed by down-top fashion where students engage in Kotler’s model and his five stages to determine their choices.

Choice Theory becomes more advantageous over Behavioral Theory due to its flexibility. Choice Theory applies in the study of students’ university choices in that, first it explains the importance of considerations students make when choosing universities for their study and calls for their freedom to choose them since the choices they make influence their future lives. Secondly, students should be given power and freedom to make their choices on courses to pursue and at a university which well fits their choice as Glasser (1998) notes in his principles guided by the various factors they consider important to them. Students become responsible for their behavior in choosing a university suitable for them. In addition, students need to be loved and feel belonging to a group which loves them back.
Kotler (2003) and Chapman (1986) agree that university choice and selection for students should be procedural and that the stages are equally influential to students’ future life in and out of the university. Students need to be guided on the choices they make by people of significant such as parents, peers, career counselors but they have the overall responsibility of the choice they make. Choice Theory is also recommended to students over other theories because students learn what they want out of many options. Glasser notes that students need to make a good choice for themselves. However, this theory has its disadvantages though lesser than merits. Younger students may not be aware of the consequences of every choice in behavior they make and therefore may not choose wisely. Secondly, the stakeholders involved in their education may not know every action in order to react when need be therefore if untrained and uncontrolled they may lose control of their both social and education life.

2.9 Conceptual framework

Figure 2.1 below shows the relationship between the independent variables (input) and the dependent variables (output). The input represents the factors students consider while making a choice for a university to attend. The items in the process indicate the stages students go through in order to come up with a choice which is the output.
Figure 2.1 Interplay between factors influencing student choice and the choice of the university.

These stages develop at primary school level through secondary level. For instance, the choice of a particular university will depend on how knowledgeable a student is about the university. This knowledge can only be achieved through proper marketing of the university to make it competitive. This is usually done through exhibitions, brochures sent to secondary colleges, university websites and media among others.

University’s policy on fee payment attracts students and motivates parents to pay the fees as per stipulated installments. This makes learning affording to students from low income earning families.

Some students choose a university which is located in a quiet environment where rural or urban based depending on their desires. This factor attracts or discourages some students due to individual differences.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on research methodology under the following sub headings: Research design, target population, sampling procedure and sampling size, research instruments, instrument validity and reliability, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques.

3.2 Research design

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research designs are used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow the researcher to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification (Orodho, 2002).

On the other hand, Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) give the purpose of descriptive survey research as determining and reporting the way things are. Borg and Gall (1989) noted that descriptive survey research is intended to produce statistical information about aspects of education that are of vital importance to policy makers and educators. The study fitted within the provisions of descriptive surveys research design because the researcher collected data and report the way things are without manipulating any variables.
3.3 Target population

Target population is defined as all the members of a real or hypothetical set of people, events or objects to which a researcher wishes to generalize the results of the research study (Borg & Gall, 1989). The target population for this study consisted of the 1214 first year undergraduate students in South Eastern Kenya University Main Campus who was admitted through Joint Admissions Board (SEKU Admissions office, 2014). The population also included 996 first year undergraduate students in the College of Education, University of Nairobi whereby 143 are module II students and 853 are enrolled in module I (UoN admissions office, 2014). Therefore the total population for the study was 2210 subjects. Questionnaires were administered to the sampled students to collect data.

3.4 Sampling techniques and sample size

Sampling means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as a representative of that population. Any statement made about the sample should also be true about the population (Orodho, 2002). The larger the sample, the smaller is the sampling error (Gay, 1992).

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a sample size of between 10 and 30 percent is a good representation of the target population. Simple random sampling was used to select 30 percent of the total population to participate in the study. The method was advantageous since the data to be obtained from the selected
representative sample was a fair reflection of the characteristics of the entire population and every respondent had an equal chance of being selected.

The sample size for this study was obtained using a formula,

\[ \text{Sample Size} = \frac{(Z\text{-score})^2 \times \text{Std Dev} \times (1-\text{Std Dev})}{(\text{margin of error})^2} \]

Where Standard Deviation (Std Dev) shows how much variance one expects. To ensure the sample is large enough, 0.5 Standard Deviation was chosen. Confidence level (CL) is chosen at a 95 percent. At this level the Z score is usually 1.96. The margin error (CL +/- 5%) of 5 percent was selected. Typical surveys designs have margins of error ranging from less than 1percent to the order of 10 percent which gives an assurance to the researcher that the answers reflect the views of the population.

\[ S = \frac{((1.96)^2 \times .5(.5))}{(.05)^2} = \frac{(3.8416 \times .25)}{.0025} = 0.9604 / .0025 = 384.16 \]

Thus 385 respondents consisting of first year undergraduate students from both universities were involved in the study.

### 3.5 Research instruments

The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three subsections: demographic information of the respondent such as gender, course of study, age and the questions in group of various study variables such as students’ goals and values in university education and factors likely to influence students’ choice.
When used in data collection a questionnaire offers considerable advantages to the researcher. Instrument reliability was achieved by presenting similar questions and statements to each participant across the respondents. Use of questionnaires allowed data to be collected from a large target population. Using closed items allowed the questionnaire to explore a wide range of factors influencing students’ choice of a university in one study.

The questionnaire items were measured using a four-point Likert rating scale ranging from “Highly influential” (4) to “No influence” (1) on sources of information and influence and “Very important” (4) to “Not Applicable” (1) for the choice factors. Data was also obtained through analysis of various documents in the universities studied, for instance, enrollment trends.

3.5.1 Instrument validity

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument collects data that measures what it was intended to measure. Orodho (2000) notes validity as the degree to which the empirical measure or several measures of the concept, accurately measure the concept. All assessment or validity are subjective opinions based on the judgment of the researcher (Wiersma, 1995). A pilot study was done to improve the face validity of the instrument. According to Orodho (2002) content validity is improved through proper assessment of the relevance of the content used in the questionnaire by competent judges. Experts’ advice was sought from supervisors to improve the content validity of the data collection instruments.
3.5.2 Instrument reliability

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) defined reliability as a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. Orodho (2000) supports it as a degree to which particular measuring procedure gives similar results over a number of repeated trials.

The Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient of co-relation formula to compute co-relation coefficient was used so as to establish the extent to which the content of the questionnaire produced same responses.

The computation of Pearson’s co-relation co-efficient (r) between scores of two halves of a test will be employed as shown in the formula.

\[
r = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{n \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2} \cdot n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2}
\]

Where,

\( r \) = Pearson correlation coefficient

\( x \) = is the sum of scores in x distribution

\( y \) = is the sum of scores in y distribution

\( x^2 \) = the sum of square scores of x distribution

\( y^2 \) = the sum of square scores of y distribution
xy= is the sum of product of paired x and y scores

n = is the number of paired x and y scores

To correct the $Re$ computed coefficient, the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula was used.

$$Re = \frac{2r}{1+r}$$

Where Re = reliability coefficient between two halves.

If the value of Re equals or exceeds 0.82 then the research instrument ought to be reliable to carry out the study (Cronbach, 2008). Otherwise the researcher would need to improve the research instrument before carrying out data collection.

### 3.6 Data collection procedure

A research permit was obtained from the National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NaCoSTI). A copy of the permit was submitted to the Registrar (Administration) at South Eastern Kenya University and Registrar (Administration) at University of Nairobi to authorize the researcher to collect data by administering questionnaires to the students.

Questionnaires were then administered to the sampled students. The respondents were assured that strict was to be maintained in dealing with the responses. The respondents were given adequate time to fill in the questionnaires after which the filled-in questionnaires were collected for analysis.
3.7 Data analysis techniques

The data was analysed using descriptive statistics utilizing the frequencies distributions, percentages and averages. This is because the study generated both quantitative and qualitative data. Data obtained through questionnaire was processed through editing, coding and entering it into computer for analysis using descriptive statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17. The statistical package offered extensive data handling capabilities and numerous statistics analysis procedure that analyses small to very large data statistics (Bell, 2007). Frequencies and percentages were used to present all questions that had quantitative score while tallying was used to analyze the numbers of similar responses. Results of data were presented using frequency distribution tables.
CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study by demographics and further by the four objectives of the study. The results are presented in simple descriptive tables comprising of frequencies and percentages.

4.2 Questionnaire return rate

Questionnaire return rate is the proportion of sample that participated as intended in all the research procedures.

In this study out of 2210 students, 385 undergraduate students were sampled and questionnaires administered to each of them. The return rate of the questionnaires from respondents from University of Nairobi was 102 while that of SEKU was 98 making a total of 200. Gay (1992) recommends that when the target population is small, a minimum sample of 20 percent is adequate for educational research. The study involved a large proportion of sample therefore higher than 20 percent. The return rate was favourable for data analysis since the number of questionnaires returned marked 51.9 percent of the number issued to the respondents.
Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) propose a questionnaire return rate of 50 percent as suitable for a study. This was achieved through use of personal administration of the questionnaires with assistance of a research assistant.

4.3 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Since the study involved two categories of the respondents, their demographic characteristics were presented in same tables for the purpose of comparison. Each demographic characteristic was represented alone. The characteristic analyzed were gender, age and course of study.

4.3.1 Gender of the students

In this section the study sought to explore the aspect of gender of the respondents in order to compare the preference of a university by sex. This is because it was noted that those universities which offer science-based courses attract more males than females. The distribution of the responses is as shown in Table 4.1

**Table 4.1 Gender of the respondent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>UON</th>
<th>SEKU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>102</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results from the Table 4.1 show that in University of Nairobi College of Education, females constituted most of the respondents while males were minority. Normally, the population of females in Kenya is higher than that of males hence consequently the situation may as well be the same for college respondents.

Lizarraga, Baquedano and Cardelle-Elawar (2007) note that females are more aware of the constraints that the setting and close persons put on them and their emotions are more important to them in decision making process on the choice of university to attend. They add that men assign more importance to the analysis of the information required to carry out the decision and to the definition of the goals or purposes of the decision.

The study also established that males in South Eastern Kenya University were the majority while female members were the minority. This difference is attributed by the fact that South Eastern Kenya University is predominantly Science-based. York (2008) notes that females are more interested in subjects relating to the humanities and social sciences while males show a higher level of interest in engineering, physical and health sciences. Female students also tend to choose less selective colleges.
4.3.2 Distribution of students by their age groups

The study sought to find the age distribution of the respondents. This is because different age groups have different degrees of maturity. An older age group is most likely to make a wiser career choice than its counterparts. The study realized the results as shown in the Table 4.2 for University of Nairobi respondents and those of South Eastern Kenya University respectively.

Table 4.2 Distribution of students by age groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 18years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20years</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>95.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that most respondents being within the age bracket (below 18 years) formed the minor group. This is attributed to the fact that 95.6% in this group were directly admitted to the university by Kenya Universities and Colleges Placement Service (KUCCPS). This group was closely followed by those whose ages lie within the age bracket (36-40 years). This group constitutes of those who made decision on enrolling in the universities based on their current jobs or careers they aspire to join. Respondents aged within the range (18-20) were the
majority. This is because most of students under this group made their personal decisions or were influenced by significant others to choose to be in their current university.

4.3.3 Distribution of students by courses of study

The study sought to evaluate the academic qualification of respondents in order to ascertain the reason of them being in that particular university. Those universities whose courses are Science-oriented tend to attract a pool of male students than Arts-based universities and colleges. From the study it was noted that the difference in selection of the courses in the two universities was gender oriented. Most male students had enrolled at South Eastern Kenya University than University of Nairobi since it mostly offers Science based courses. Therefore, academic reputation played a significant role in attracting students. The results of the study are shown in the Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Course of study of the student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Freq(SEKU)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Frequency(UoN)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. Sc</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Ed</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The study found out that majority of respondents in University of Nairobi was pursuing Bachelor of Education while at South Eastern Kenya University majority was pursuing Bachelor of Science due to the nature of course offered in the university. This finding supports York (2008) who notes that females are more interested in courses related to humanities and social sciences while males show a higher level of interest on science-based courses.

4.4 Research objectives

The study aimed at arriving at four objectives whose findings are as discussed below.

4.4.1 Influence of accessibility on students’ choice of university

The study sought to determine the extent to which university accessibility influence students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University. Sampled students in both universities were studied in order to rate the influence accessibility had in determining their choices for university of study. The results of the study are as shown in the Table 4.4
Table 4.4 Influence of accessibility on students’ choice of university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of accessibility</th>
<th>Frequency (UoN)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency (SEKU)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial e.g. Bursaries</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-financial e.g. transport</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the results in Table 4.4 students indicated that university accessibility was a major consideration in their decision to choose the suitable university for study. They further categorized the mode of accessibility to the university into financial and non-financial. Majority of them identified non-financial mode of accessibility such as availability of transport to and from the university as the key determinant with University of Nairobi contributing 75% while South Eastern Kenya University having 69%. A small percentage indicated some students were beneficiaries of the university bursaries which assisted them in accessing the university.

The study supports Anderson (1996) who in his article notes that students will be attracted to a university which is easily accessible to them. Therefore university accessibility plays a key role in enhancing student attraction, motivation and retention.
4.4.2 Influence of flexibility in fee payment on students’ choice of university

The study sought to establish the extent to which university’s flexibility in fee payment influence students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University. The aim of the study was to highlight the difference in enrollment among universities self-sponsored students’ programme. Students were studied and the findings were rated in a four point Likert scale as shown in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5 Influence of flexibility in fee payment on students’ choice of university**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flexibility of fees payment</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Fairly important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UoN</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEKU</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the results in Table 4.5, flexibility in fee payment among universities was identified as key factor. Students at south Eastern Kenya University reported the variable as an “Important” factor while those of University of Nairobi rated it as “Very Important”. This finding was more pronounced among the self-sponsored
students than the regular students who are partly sponsored by the Government of Kenya through Higher Education Loans Board. The aspect was noted to be creating reputation of the institutions especially to students whose background was poor. Flexibility of fees payment among universities was identified as a good way of motivating them.

Domino et.al. (2006) note that cost incurred in universities and flexibility of meeting the cost affected parents hence a factor in choosing a university. Availability of scholarships was not important consideration while choosing the university. This is because the respondents believe that the available scholarships are few and the probability of getting one is very low.

4.4.3 Influence of marketing strategies on students’ choice of university

The study sought to determine the marketing strategies influencing students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University. Students were studied on the source of the prior information they had about the university which had affected their attraction, motivation and retention to the university. Students were asked to rate on a scale five statements relating to the source of prior information. The results are shown in Table 4.6
Table 4.6 Influence of marketing strategies on students’ choice of university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing strategy</th>
<th>Highly influential</th>
<th>Influential</th>
<th>Little influence</th>
<th>No influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career counselors</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University representative</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former graduates</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and relatives</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>136</strong></td>
<td><strong>131</strong></td>
<td><strong>123</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the study in Table 4.6 above indicate that career counselors influenced highly the respondents in decision making on matters concerning their choice. This is due to the fact that they spend most of their time with the career counselors while in secondary school. The career counselors obtain information on various universities and middle level colleges from the universities during universities’ open day, free booklets from the formerly students’ admission body, Joint Admission Board, brochures from the universities and also through mass media.
Peers, parents and relatives were mentioned as being influential because they have a direct financial implication in wholly or partially meeting students’ university education costs. University representatives who according to this study include both academic and subordinate staff had little influence on students’ choice of the university. This is attributed to the fact that by the time they join university they had made their choices.

However, former graduates had no influence to most of the students because university selection is currently mainly done at secondary school level and before or immediately after students complete their Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination.

4.4.4 Influence of geographical location on students’ choice of university

This study sought to establish the extent to which geographical location influence students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University. The study was aimed at finding out if geographical location attracts and helps retain students in universities.

University of Nairobi is located at the heart of noisy Nairobi city therefore urban-based while South Eastern Kenya University is rural-based in a quiet environment. The study was aimed at relating location of a university to an attractive environment of learning and if it affected students’ choice of the university. The results obtained from the study are as shown in the Table 4.7
Table 4.7 Influence of geographical location on students’ choice of university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency(UON)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Frequency(SEKU)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 4.7 above, University of Nairobi students, 62.5% were highly affected and influence by the universities location and reported that an attractive environment was available for learning due to the proper location of the hostels. College of Education for the University of Nairobi students studied is located at Kikuyu town which is far from the city centre. South Eastern Kenya University students indicated that they were provided with free or subsidized hostels in their university which made it convenient for learning. Being a new university there are few hostels available. Majority of the students, 69% did not consider geographical location of the university but the courses offered at the university.

In University of Nairobi, most students received free or subsidized hostels a factor which has enabled to utilize effectively the advantage of university’s location near the city in finding part-time jobs and other short-term courses for study.
4.5 Motivation to students

The study sought to investigate ways in which South Eastern Kenya University and University of Nairobi attracted and ensured that students join them. The universities have a role to play towards ensuring good performance in their campuses. Their role is entirely liaising with their secretaries (principals) to ensure respondents are motivated. There are several ways of motivating as well as establishing ways of promoting high student retention. The results are shown in Tables 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11 and 4.12.

Table 4.8 Criteria for incentive to students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incentives</th>
<th>UoN Frequency</th>
<th>UoN Percent</th>
<th>SEKU Frequency</th>
<th>SEKU Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participatory dialogue</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement terms</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promises</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>98</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>102</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results from Table 4.8 show that majority of students in both universities reported that the universities used all participatory dialogue in deciding on the criteria to use in giving incentives to motivate students. Students were consulted on matters which can attract and ensure retention of students to the universities. This was highly achieved through Students’ Council and also questionnaires
administered to them randomly during lectures. Other members said they used agreement terms with students and rest said they used promises. These incentives improve the morale of the students in learning from the universities.

**Table 4.9 How South Eastern Kenya University recognizes students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition measures</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offering the student support</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting the student as an example to others</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commenting students for the good work during graduation</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>98</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 4.9, South Eastern Kenya University mostly uses a way supporting the students as a way of recognizing them. This was mentioned by 62.5% (30) of the respondents who indicated that the physically challenged students were treated equally by being provided with learning devices and being represented in the student council. Other ways in which South Eastern Kenya University recognized respondents were suggesting students to others as an example 18.8% (9) for instance in times of job offerings and commenting respondents for good work during graduation.
From Table 4.10, incentive is ranked the best way of motivating respondents with 66.7% (32). Recommendation for employment was ranked second with 20.8% (10) and recognition third with 12.5% (6). This means in most cases the South Eastern Kenya University management prefer to offer rewards with tangible and immediate benefit to students like recreational trips and even cash rewards.

### 4.6 Influence of implementation of recommendations by South Eastern Kenya University on respondents’ attraction and retention

In order for this study to fully establish how often recommendations implemented by South Eastern Kenya University was being done and how it was affecting the students’ attraction and retention, respondents were asked to rate on a scale five statements relating to how often such recommendations were being done.
From this variable, the study aimed to establish the efforts the universities were putting in place to retain their already enrolled students who can influence the decisions of graduating secondary students to choose the university. The results of the findings are as shown in Table 4.11

Table 4.11 Frequency of student recommendations by South Eastern Kenya University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency on statements</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation for employment</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availing timely information and examination results to students</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving assistance and professional services</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance and counseling</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous evaluation of the students</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the study from Table 4.11 indicate that recommending respondents for employment by South Eastern Kenya University was always done. The respondents are attracted to a university that recommends them for employment, scholarships or attachment. This means recommendation letters from South Eastern Kenya University to respondents were boosting their morale to study from the university.

Availability of timely information and examination results played a key role in motivating them. This ensures that the respondents complete their studies within the shortest time possible. Giving assistance and professional services and guidance and counseling was never implemented though a very vital recommendation.

Table 4.12 South Eastern Kenya University’s suggestion for improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions for improvement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involving respondents in discussions</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving feedbacks to queries</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering some fund to assist</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>98</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Table 4.12 above South Eastern Kenya University indicated involvement of respondents in discussions as the best way among other of improving respondent motivation. This was mentioned by 62.5% (30). Giving feedback to queries in time 23.9% (11) while 13.6% (7) remaining mentioned offering some funds to assist.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a summary of the study, discussion of the findings and conclusions drawn from them, recommendations and suggestions for further research on the area studied.

5.2 Summary

The personnel dealing with students’ selection of universities claim that various considerations ought to be done by students before making their choices on the universities likely to attend.

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors influencing students’ choice of universities having University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University as the areas of focus.

The objectives of the study were to determine the influence of university accessibility, flexibility in fee payment, marketing strategies employed and university’s geographical location on students’ choice of a university.

Research question one sought to examine how accessibility to a university influenced its student’s choice. Research question two aimed at establishing how university’s policy on flexibility in fee payment influenced student’s choice of a university. Research question three sought to identify the marketing strategies
universities employ to influence student’s choice while research question four sought to determine the extent to which geographical location of university influence its student’s choice.

The study used descriptive survey design in which it targeted 2210 undergraduate students in both South Eastern Kenya University and University of Nairobi out of which 385 had questionnaires administered to. The data was collected by use of questionnaires. Data was later analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

5.3 Discussion of the study

This sections looks into the factors students consider important when choosing a university for study. The study was guided by four objectives whose findings are as discussed below.

Study on influence of university accessibility on students’ choice of universities established that it was the major factor students considered while choosing the universities. Accessibility was explained in two forms: financial and non-financial.

Majority of students in University of Nairobi, 69 % and South Eastern Kenya University 69% were highly attracted to non-financial form where transport was given as the main point of reference alongside provision of free or subsidized hostels. Financial assistance to students by the universities had little influence on students’ choice with University of Nairobi recording a positive response of 29% while at South Eastern Kenya University only 29% of students considered it important.
The findings of this study concurs with David Anderson (1996) and Sengupta (2001) who note that students are attracted to a university whose reach is easy thus saving time, money and energy therefore, a competitive advantage to the university.

The second objective the study aimed to achieve was establishing the extent to which university’s flexibility in fee payment influence students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University. While students at University of Nairobi considered flexibility of fee payment “very important” students at South Eastern Kenya University identified it as “important” factor which influenced their choice. However, 21% of students from both University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University felt it was “not important” to attract them to the university but other factors.

Kilemi (2006) supports the findings by stating that public universities students enjoy greater flexibility because the universities have several independent sources of generating revenue thus financially stable. The study differs with Domino et al. (2006) who see cost and related factors as important aspect from parents’ point of view than a student’s perception.

The third objective of the study was aimed at determining the marketing strategies influencing students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University. Majority of students identified prior information about the university through career counselors as a “highly influential” factor which determined their university choices. The findings of this study concur with Maringe (2004) who
advocate for marketing of universities through higher education exhibitions, advertising, direct mail, open days; which career counselors offer to graduating secondary school students. Majority of students said that former graduates had no influence on their choice of university.

This study was also aimed at establishing the extent to which geographical location influence students’ choice of University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya. The study established that majority of students in University of Nairobi were highly influenced by geographical location of the university (62.5%) while majority in South Eastern Kenya University (70.8%) were not influenced. Students at South Eastern Kenya University identified courses offered as their main consideration science they were science-based.

The study analysis on gender established that females constituted most of the respondents at University of Nairobi with 66.1% (67), while males were minority with 33.9% (35). Most respondents were within age bracket (18 – 20) years 95.6% (191) comprising of students from both University of Nairobi and South Eastern Kenya University.

Reputation of the university came out as another institutional factor that attracts, motivates and retains students in their university. Students had chosen the university based on how reputable it was. This was achieved through intensive marketing of the universities through brochures, newspapers and university booklets which were availed to their secondary schools.
Free or subsidized hostels were rated to be fairly important in determining student’s choice of a university. Availability of scholarships was an important consideration while choosing the university in order to supplement the tuition fee among needy students.

Recommending students for employment by South Eastern Kenya University and continuous evaluation of the students at the university were key motivators with thirty six respondents citing “always” and “sometimes”. Forty four respondents indicated that South Eastern Kenya University availed information on vacancies arising and this was playing key role in motivating them. A reasonable number of respondents, 13 and 30 said were “always” or “sometimes” got assistance and encouragement from South Eastern Kenya University respectively.

Involving respondents in decision making on matters concerning them was the best way of recognizing them with 61 respondents being highly motivated while 24 others were being just motivated. Recognition of work well done in the university and being good at giving noble feedback to respondents by the South Eastern Kenya University were mentioned by 61 and 23 respondents respectively as highly motivating. Recognizing views and opinions of respondents was also found to be highly motivating by 13 respondents and as motivating 28 other respondents.

Most South Eastern Kenya University members 54.5% (55) said they used all participatory dialogue in deciding on the criteria to use in giving incentives while
University of Nairobi marked 53.6% (53). It was also indicated by 70.8% (34) that they were providing free or subsidized houses in their colleges for respondents. Only 29.2% (14) of the South Eastern Kenya University respondents said they didn’t provide. Most South Eastern Kenya University managers use a way of supporting the respondents as a way of recognizing them. This was mentioned by 62.5% (62) of the South Eastern Kenya University respondents. Other ways in which South Eastern Kenya University recognized respondents were; suggesting respondents to others as an example 18.8% (18) and commenting respondents during graduation ceremony for good work 18.8% (18).

Giving incentives was ranked the best way of motivating respondents with 66.7% (65), recommendation for student employment second with 20.8% (20) and recognition third with 12.5% (13). Involvement of respondents in discussions was mentioned as the best way among other of improving respondent attraction and retention the universities.

5.4 Conclusion

The study therefore made the following conclusions in relation to study objectives which were studied. University accessibility to students was identified as a key way of attracting, motivating and ensuring student retention in the university. However, accessibility was highly considered by females unlike males who were noted to have had critical examination of various factors and assigned more
importance to the analysis of the information required to carry out the decision and to the definition of their decision to join the university.

Universities need to put in place policies giving guidance on fee payment in order to cater for low-income earners and students from poor background. Private universities can borrow the revenue generating enterprises from the public universities in order to make fee payment flexible which in turn make the fees affordable and attract a pool of students.

The study puts emphasis on use of university marketing strategies and employing those strategies to attract the students to study in the university. Universities need to use various ways to advertise its products for it earn a greater competitive advantage. Students need to be enlightened on the affordability of courses offered in various universities, the study programmes, cluster points for each course in different universities, its accessibility, special programmes or courses in a particular university. This information should be availed in all secondary schools so that students are informed earlier even before choosing their special subjects.

Geographical location, though important, should not be a limiting factor for student when making a suitable choice of a university. Students should be carefully guided on making university choices to put various factors into consideration instead of focusing on few aspects. For instance, institutional reputation may motivate the respondent more to choose a suitable university for study in relation to flexibility in fee payment.
5.5 Recommendation

Motivation to university education is important as it helps improve employees’ concentration and sacrifice. As such even in universities as education hubs respondents are students who constantly need to be motivated to boost their academic performance and make their stay and learning in the university comfortable. University Council as the governance of universities has a role creating an environment of activeness in universities. One of the ways of doing this is through motivating students. University council through the secretary is able to identify a hard working respondent and recommend the respondent for recognition.

University Council should avail easier and convenient ways for students to access the university. This will attract a pool of students to enroll for study after work or even be able to do part-time jobs as they learn. Transport should be availed to students to enable them save time and energy thereby improving their academic performance.

Flexibility in fee payment being a key factor should be borrowed by all universities in order to make learning affordable even to needy students. This aspect can also be borrowed by private universities to attract a large proportion of students.
Students should be encouraged to focus on academic performance instead of a university’s geographical location as long as the learning environment is attractive.

5.6 Suggestions for further research

This study found the need for further research to be carried out and find other factors influencing the choice of university for respondents that may not be institutional and individual based for instance governance structure of the university. Other factors do influence student choice and are well deemed important.
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APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Jacqueline Mbatha Mulonzi
P. O Box 92,
Kikuyu, Kenya.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS’ CHOICE OF UNIVERSITIES IN TWO SELECTED UNIVERSITIES: SOUTH EASTERN KENYA UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, KENYA.

I am a student currently pursuing a Master’s degree in Corporate Governance at University of Nairobi, College of Education, Kenya. As part of the requirements for the degree, I am required to carry out a research project on the title: Factors influencing students’ choice of universities in two selected universities: South Eastern Kenya University and University of Nairobi, Kenya. Your university has been selected to participate in this study and consequently, you have been selected as a respondent through a random sample from your university.

You are kindly required to fill the questionnaire. I also do assure you that the information you provide will only be used for academic purposes and your identity will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Thank you for your assistance,

Jacqueline Mbatha Mulonzi
APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

You are requested to provide answers to these questions with honesty. Responses to these questions will be treated with confidentiality therefore your name is not required anywhere. Please tick (√) where appropriate or fill in the required information on the space provided.

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Please, indicate your gender: ( ) male         ( ) female

2. Indicate your age category:
   ( ) below 18 years     ( ) 18-20 years     ( ) 21 and above

3. What is the highest level of formal education achieved by your parents?

   Mother                          Father

   a. Primary          ( )            ( )

   b. Secondary        ( )            ( )

   c. Tertiary: Certificate ( )          ( )
       Diploma             ( )            ( )
       Degree              ( )            ( )
       Postgraduate        ( )            ( )
SECTION B: GOAL AND VALUES

4. At what level of education did you first consider attending a university?
   
   i. Primary college ( )
   
   ii. Secondary college ( )
   
   iii. Post secondary ( )

5. Was your choice of program (e.g. education, arts, commerce etc) affected by your knowledge of future employment opportunities? ( ) yes ( ) no

6. Which course are you pursuing in the university? ( ) B.Sc ( ) B.Ed ( ) Others

SECTION C: INFORMATION ON STUDENT CHOICE OF A UNIVERSITY

The following is a list of persons or contacts which may have influenced you when making a choice of a university to attend. Please indicate the degree of importance of each item by placing a checkmark on the appropriate number according to the following scale

4- Highly influential 3- Influential  2-Little influence 1-No influence
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Highly influential</th>
<th>Influential influence</th>
<th>Little influence</th>
<th>No influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school counselors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious advisors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former student recommendations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University representatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College representatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If others (please specify)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Fairly important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition fee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility of fee payment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation of the institution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation of the programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of living</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized programs offered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of scholarship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for your cooperation
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MISS JACQUELINE MBATHA MULONZI
of UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, 0-90200
Kitui, has been permitted to conduct
research in Kitui, Nairobi Counties

on the topic: FACTORS INFLUENCING
STUDENTS CHOICE OF UNIVERSITIES IN
TWO SELECTED UNIVERSITIES: SOUTH
EASTERN KENYA UNIVERSITY AND
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, KENYA

for the period ending: 5th December, 2014

Signature

National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation

Applicant

National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation

Secretary

National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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When replying please quote

Ref: No.  

Date: 10th November, 2014

NACOSTI/P/14/9316/3817

Jacqueline Mbatia Mulonzi
University of Nairobi
P.O. Box 30197-00100
NAIROBI

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on “Factors influencing students choice of universities in two selected universities: South Eastern Kenya University and University of Nairobi, Kenya,” I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Kitui and Nairobi Counties for a period ending 5th December, 2014.

You are advised to report to the County Commissioners and the County Directors of Education, Kitui and Nairobi Counties 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.

DR. S. K. LANGAT, OGW
FOR: SECRETARY/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
The County Director of Education
Kitui County.

The County Commissioner
The County Director of Education
Nairobi County.
The Vice Chancellor
South Eastern Kenya University.

The Vice Chancellor
University of Nairobi.
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: JACQUELINE MBATHA MULONZI - REG. NO. 33587/1798/2011

This is to certify that Jacqueline Mbatha Mulonzzi is our Master of Education student in the Department of Educational Administration and Planning of the University of Nairobi. She is currently doing her research on "Factors Influencing Students’ Choice of Universities in two Selected Universities: South Eastern Kenya and University of Nairobi, Kenya".

Any assistance extended to her will be highly appreciated.

[Signature]

DIAG. GRACE NYAMBUI
CHAIRMAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND PLANNING