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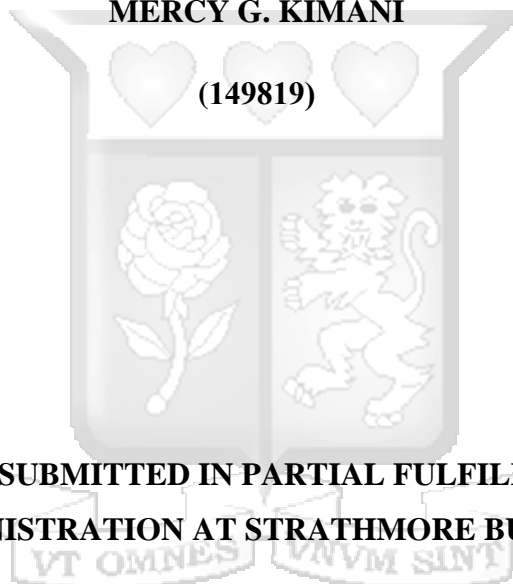
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**THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES ON CONSUMERS
PURCHASE DECISIONS FOR POST-GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN PRIVATE
UNIVERSITIES IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA**

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(149819)



**A RESEARCH THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF MASTER OF
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AT STRATHMORE BUSINESS SCHOOL**

NAIROBI, KENYA

MAY, 2024

DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not been previously submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the document contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the research concept itself.

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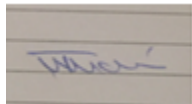


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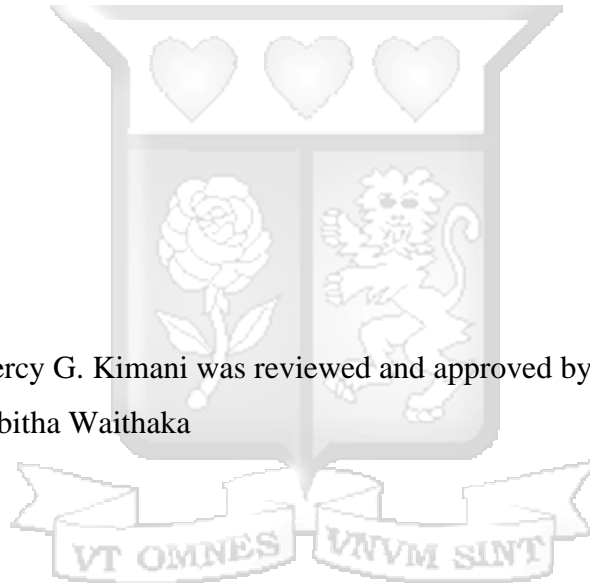
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ABSTRACT

Globally and locally, competition for post-graduate students is increasing. As a result, universities need to think of strategies that can help influence enrollment choices for their post-graduate programs. One such strategy is digital marketing. In this respect, the primary objective of the current study was to evaluate the influence of digital marketing on consumer product choice for post-graduate programs in Nairobi County. The specific objectives of this study were to investigate the influence of social media marketing, email marketing and website marketing on purchase decisions for post-graduate programs. The theories that underpinned this study were the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Learning Model of Consumer Decision Making. Positivism was used in this research. The research method adopted for this research was the descriptive cross-sectional design. Judgmental sampling was used to obtain the views of respondents, who consisted of post-graduate students in private universities in Nairobi. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires that were administered using a fill-and-wait strategy. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (means and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (multiple linear regression). Findings suggest that digital marketing strategies – social media marketing, email marketing, and website marketing – have positive and significant influence on consumer purchase decision. Therefore, this concludes that social media marketing, email marketing, and website marketing are significant predictors of consumer purchase decisions for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi. Website marketing had the strongest effect of the three strategies. Therefore, this research recommends leveraging these digital marketing to drive postgraduate enrollments with particular focus on website marketing for optimal results. Also, since this research focused on only three digital marketing strategies, further research is needed on other types of digital marketing.

Keywords: consumer purchase decision, social media marketing, email marketing, website marketing



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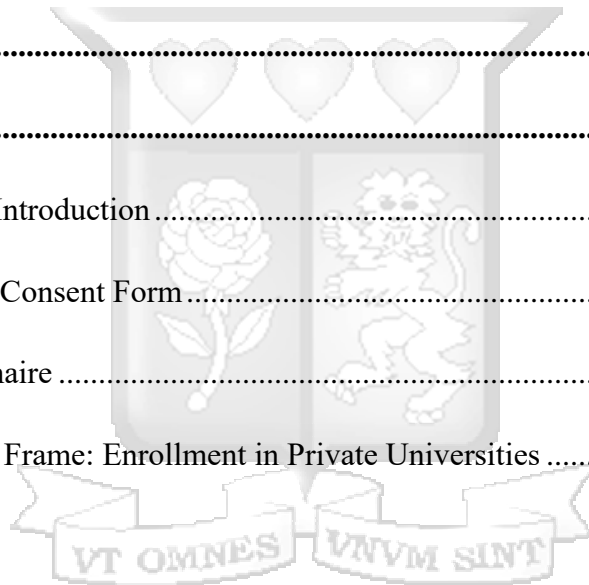
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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CUE	Commission for University Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
ROI	Return on Investment
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action



DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Email Marketing

Email marketing is a type of digital and direct marketing that entails using emails to promote products and services and educating customers on the value of the brand (Hanlon, 2019)

Purchase Decision

Wankhede and Rajvaidya (2021) described purchase decisions in terms of actual buying behaviour, which was adopted for this study.

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is a type of digital marketing that entails leveraging social media networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, to achieve branding and marketing goals (Hanlon, 2019)

Website Marketing

Website marketing entails using a business website for promotional purposes with the goal of attracting more visitors who are likely to buy the products/services of the firm (Zahay, 2020)



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the topic of the study. The specific aspects discussed in this chapter are the background of the study, including the concepts and context of the research, statement of the problem, main and specific objectives of the research, research questions, and significance and scope of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

The internet is increasingly revolutionizing the approach to marketing across all sectors and educational institutions are not being left behind. Forward-thinking institutions leverage digital technologies to come directly into contact with their prospective customers and get them the information they want. According to Bohara et al. (2022), this is because these institutions realize that in today's digital age, prospective students often turn to the internet to explore their educational options. Therefore, digital channels serve as valuable sources of information about the reputation, accreditation, cost, acceptance, support services, etc. making sure students seek out programs and universities that align with their goals (Bohara et al., 2022). The value and growth of digital marketing is becoming even more apparent as competition intensifies in the higher education sector.

Leveraging digital technologies, such as search engines, social media, mobile devices, apps, websites, and other digital platforms for promoting and selling their products and services is seen as key to gaining competitive advantage. Digital marketing became popular in the 1990s following the adoption of the Internet (Keller, 2008). The Internet altered the way businesses utilized technology for marketing purposes. Today, digital technologies are integrated into the everyday lives of consumers, which provides unique marketing opportunities for businesses to engage in effective marketing strategies, such as display advertising, data-driven marketing, content automation, influencer marketing, search engine marketing, and search engine optimization, just to name a few (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018). Today, data suggests that digital marketing accounts for 72 percent of overall marketing budgets (Marino, 2023). Additionally, 55 percent of marketing activities are conducted on digital platforms (Marino, 2023).

One of the sectors where digital marketing is of utmost importance is higher education because universities need to appeal to the ever-increasing and diverse student base amidst growing competitive pressure. As Mogaji et al. (2021) observed, universities are constantly looking for novel methods and opportunities to engage with prospective students. Additionally, Peter and Donnelly (2018) noted that universities need to leverage digital marketing strategies to help them attract students whom they could otherwise not reach if they depend only on traditional marketing strategies.

The goal of any marketing strategy, whether traditional or digital, is to favourably influence consumer purchase decisions (Peter & Donnelly, 2018). Effective marketing strategies cause consumers to react to them by talking about them and discussing brands and products, which increases the likelihood of purchasing them. In digital marketing, there are numerous marketing strategies; therefore, according to Keller (2008), the challenge for organizations is to select the right digital marketing mix elements that elicit the most optimal response from consumers.

Researchers have varied takes on the effect of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase decisions. For instance, Balakrishnan et al. (2014) produced evidence suggesting that online marketing promotes brand loyalty and purchase intention among Generation Y. Duffett and Wakeham (2016) also found that social media marketing has a significant positive effect on Millennials' attitudes, citing that social media sites generate awareness and provides information that favours the decision to a purchase. In their study, Nawaz and Kaldeen (2020) found that, besides social media marketing, email marketing is a strong predictor of purchase intention. The researchers explain that email marketing is a highly responsive tool for carrying out promotions and building interactions at a low cost. Sharing similar sentiments, Omar and Atteya (2020) find a significant positive correlation between email marketing and buying decisions in Egypt.

In addition, Hidayanto et al.'s (2015) research is proof that the quality of a university's official websites can be used as an extrinsic attribute to signal the quality of education at the university. A quality website, in this case, encompasses the design, ease of use, and accuracy of information, which, according to the researchers. Therefore, prospective students can infer the quality of education a university offers based on the quality of its website (Hidayanto et al., 2015). Elsewhere

in Nigeria, Jenyo et al. (2015) observed that online marketing strategies reflect positively on consumer purchase decisions.

The relationship between digital marketing strategies and consumer purchase intention has also been explored in Kenya. A study by Nungari and Obuba (2023) suggests that social media, in particular Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, play a crucial role in consumer decision-making. According to the researchers, these platforms enable consumers to access information, interact with brands, have their queries answered, and analyze product reviews, thereby influencing their decision-making process. Savino (2021) observed that direct email marketing is a significant predictor of student enrollment in the higher education sector. Similarly, Adhan (2021) produced evidence suggesting that e-marketing strategies shaped prospective students' attitudes and, consequently, their decision to enrol at the University of Nairobi. It is worth noting that whereas studies on digital marketing strategies have been done, there seem to be scanty studies that have been done specifically looking at the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase decisions, particularly with a focus on universities; hence, there was the need for the current study.

1.1.1 Digital Marketing Strategies

Scholars have conceptualized digital marketing strategies differently. Hanlon (2019) defined digital marketing as the use of online-based digital and internet technologies, such as mobile phones, computers and other digital platforms and media, to promote products and services. Keller (2008) described digital marketing as a means of promoting and selling services and products using mobile devices, the internet, search engines, social media, and other digital strategies for promoting and selling products and services. As Keller (2008) explained, digital marketing follows the same principles as traditional marketing. It is usually adopted to complement companies to better understand the behaviour of customers and approach them. According to Maklan and Stan (2019), digital marketing comprises all marketing efforts, irrespective of their format, that are conducted over the internet. Digital marketing has also been described as the use of diverse marketing technologies and tactics designed to reach consumers via the Internet. In this study, digital marketing was conceptualized as the use of the internet to promote and sell products as well as reach customers (Hanlon, 2019).

In existing studies, digital marketing has been operationalized using different indicators, leading to different aspects of digital marketing being studied due to the broad nature of the topic. Peter and Donnelly (2018) operationalized digital marketing in terms of social media, email, website, search engine optimization, content marketing, banner advertising, display advertising, affiliate marketing and search engine marketing as indicators. Assimakopoulos et al. (2017) operationalized digital marketing using social media, especially Facebook. Balakrishnan et al. (2014) also operationalized digital marketing using social media platforms. Similar indicators of digital marketing using social media platforms were also used by Laksamama (2018) and Pandey et al. (2018). Jiang et al. (2010) and Wells et al. (2011) measured digital marketing in terms of website marketing. For Savino (2021) and Yang et al. (2019), digital marketing was operationally defined as the use of direct email marketing, especially personalized messages. From the existing literature, it is evident that digital marketing strategies are broad and differ based on the industry where they are used. For purposes of this research, the concept of digital marketing strategies was narrowed, and the indicators used to measure digital marketing were social media marketing, email marketing, and website marketing (Hanlon, 2019; Pandey et al., 2018). The reason for choosing these elements was because they are commonly used as marketing tools by higher education institutions (HEIs) (Mogaji et al., 2020).

Social media marketing is a type of digital marketing that entails leveraging social media networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, to achieve branding and marketing goals. This marketing approach also entails paid social media advertising in which a business pays for its advertisements to be visible to targeted users (Hanlon, 2019). The measures of social media marketing that were used include electronic word of mouth, entertainment information, interactivity, and peer interactions (Laksamana, 2018). Email marketing is a type of digital and direct marketing that entails using emails to promote products and services and educating customers on the value of the brand (Yang et al., 2019). The measures of email marketing that were used in this study were responsiveness, periodic email updates, personalized emails, and interactivity. Website marketing entails using a business website for promotional purposes with the goal of attracting more visitors who are likely to buy the products/services of the firm (Keller, 2008). The measures for website marketing that were used in this study are website design and layout (ease of use of the website), context (use of multimedia), community (website permits communication between users),

communication (website allows communication from users) and relationship (links to other websites) (Zahay, 2020).

1.1.2 Consumer Purchase Decisions

The consumer purchasing decision is an important step in the customer decision journey, which entails choosing a product/service after evaluating various options being offered (Zahay, 2020). The purchasing decision signals the buying behaviour of consumers in terms of their intent, preferences, attitudes, and decisions to make the final purchase. Considering the importance of the consumer purchase decision, marketing literature has placed considerable emphasis on conceptualizing this concept as well as how businesses can influence consumers to choose their products/services over available alternatives. Prasad et al. (2019) described the consumer purchase decision process as comprising five steps, including need/problem recognition, information search, comparison of alternatives, final purchase, and post-purchase behaviour. Prasad et al. (2019) defined consumer purchase decisions with respect to purchasing intent – the degree to which a customer is inclined and willing to purchase a particular product/service – that, in turn, positively influences the actual purchasing behaviour. Wankhede and Rajvaidya (2021) described consumer purchase decisions in terms of the actual buying behaviour, which was found to be higher in consumers with a higher intent to buy a product/service in comparison to those with low or no intent of buying. In the context of higher education, Mogaji et al. (2021) defined consumer purchase decisions as selecting and enrolling in a university of choice that meets their needs. Flannery (2021) posits that a consumer purchase decision is a thorough process that involves identifying a need, generating alternatives, and selecting a specific brand. For this research, the purchase decision was conceptualized as selecting a product or service from various alternatives (Wankhede & Rajvaidya, 2021).

In existing studies, consumer purchase decisions have also been operationalized differently. Yang et al. (2019) measured consumer purchase decisions using the intention to purchase and the level of customer involvement. Prasad et al. (2019) and Wells (2011) measured consumer purchase decisions using the intention to purchase a product in the future. The operationalization of consumer purchase decisions as the intention to buy a product or service was also used by Pandey et al. (2018) and Nawaz et al. (2018). Wankhede and Rajvaidya (2012) measured consumer

purchase decisions in terms of consumer preferences, buying habits, satisfaction, and perceptions of a brand. The indicators of purchase decisions used by ElJali et al. (2018) included consumer preference and purchase frequency. Other indicators used for consumer purchase decision variables include choice of brands in terms of trust and brand popularity (Onana, 2021), purchase amount and purchase experience (Hu et al., 2016). In this study, consumer purchase decision was measured using product choice and brand choice. Brand choice was defined as the choice of a university, while product choice was defined as the choice of the program offered by the university (Flannery, 2021)

1.1.3 Private Universities in Kenya

The context of this study was private universities in Kenya. Universities constitute an important element of the Kenyan education sector. Kenya has 74 universities, 37 of which are public and 37 private universities, and these are regulated by the Commission for University Education (CUE). Private universities have 57 PhD programs and 222 Master's Programs (CUE, 2019). The latest data by CUE (2019) acknowledges the importance of increasing enrollment in universities to enable the country's development agenda by ensuring there is an educated workforce in Kenya's economy. The CUE (2019) reported that there were 28,22 and 10,727 students enrolled in PhD and Master's programs, respectively, in private universities. In terms of enrollment by county in private universities, Nairobi City County leads with 21,681 enrollments, which accounts for 31.9% of the students enrolled in private universities (CUE, 2019).

Competition for post-graduate students is increasing; thus, there is a need for universities to think of strategies that can help influence the purchase decision for the choice of their programs. This is particularly a concern for private universities since public universities get the most share of postgraduate enrollment. For instance, in 2017, public universities and their constituent colleges had a total of 68,579 postgraduate enrollments, 406.16% more than the collective enrollment of private universities at 13,549 (Commission for University Education, 2019). In addition, the CUE (2019) report also emphasizes the importance of increasing university enrollment if Kenya is to achieve its development agenda. The current study, therefore, aimed to investigate the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase decisions for post-graduate programs in private universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Enrollment for post-graduate programs globally, as well as in Kenya, is declining, which is increasing the competition for students. Data published by the Ministry of Education indicated that the number of students taking PhDs and master's programs in Kenyan universities reduced to 28539 in 2018 compared to 67,407 reported in 2017, which represents a decrease of 36.09% (Gicobi, 2017; Mwadinze, 2021). In 2018, the lowest enrollment in post-graduate programs was witnessed since 2013. The drop in enrollment in post-graduate programs, coupled with heightened competition in Kenya, hurts the financial position of Kenyan universities, which are already cash-strapped (Jowi, 2019). Private universities are struggling with dwindling revenues due to decreasing enrollments (Mutua, 2021). Because of the increased competition, universities need to think of strategies that can help influence enrollment choices for their programs. One such strategy is the use of digital marketing.

Despite the decline in postgraduate enrollment, the expenditure on digital marketing strategies is increasing. Data by Statista (2024) showed that companies worldwide spent \$626 billion, which is projected to increase to \$835 billion by 2026. Digital marketing strategies are considered more effective compared to traditional marketing strategies (Nungari & Obuba, 2023). Digital marketing strategies also thought to provide a higher market reach, cost-effectiveness, measurable outcomes, and targeted engagement with the audience. Digital marketing strategies are not yielding the desired results for educational institutions in terms of realizing an increase in the number of students enrolling for postgraduate programs. Investing in digital marketing should be a data-driven decision, which calls for empirical evidence on the specific digital marketing strategies would produce the optimal results in postgraduate enrollment.

The insufficiency of empirical evidence on the topic is notable. At the same time, available research studies are not without limitations. For instance, studies explored in this research such as Balakrishnan et al. (2014), Duffett and Wakeham (2016), Hidayanto et al. (2015), Nawaz and Kaldeen (2020), Jenyo et al. (2015), and Omar and Atteya (2020) provide great insights into the topic. However, they were conducted outside Kenya, meaning findings from these studies cannot be generalized to Kenya's private universities. Not only that, methodological, conceptual, and contextual gaps were identified in these studies. While the likes of Nungari and Obuba (2023),

Savino (2021), and Adhan (2021) focus on Kenya's higher education sector, the effect of social media, email, and website marketing strategies on the enrollment of postgraduate students in private universities is not well brought out. Therefore, this study sought to address the problems above by examining the effect of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase decisions for post-graduate programs in private universities in Nairobi City County.

1.3 Main Objective of the Study

This research was steered by a principal objective and three specific objectives as outlined below:

1.3.1 Main Objective

The main objective of the current study was to evaluate the influence of digital marketing on consumer purchase decisions for post-graduate programs in private universities in Nairobi County.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives for the current research were:

- i. To examine the influence of social media marketing strategies on consumer purchase decision for post-graduate programs in private universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya.
- ii. To determine the influence of email marketing strategies on consumer purchase decision for post-graduate programs in private universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya.
- iii. To investigate the influence of website marketing strategies on consumer purchase decision for post-graduate programs in private universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What is the influence of social media marketing strategies on consumer purchase decision for post-graduate programs in private universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya?
- ii. What is the influence of email marketing strategies on consumer purchase decision for post-graduate programs in private universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya?
- iii. What is the influence of website marketing strategies on consumer purchase decision for post-graduate programs in private universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya?

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 Significance to Policymakers

For policymakers, the result could be useful in the formulation of policies and guidelines for digital marketing, especially those conducted by universities. The results of this study are expected to form the basis for policy recommendations regarding social media, email, and website marketing.

1.5.2 Significance to Practice

Marketing managers in Kenyan universities may also benefit from this study in terms of understanding the effectiveness of various digital marketing strategies. The findings from this research reveal which digital marketing strategies have the most impact on the choice of universities and postgraduate programs. From these findings, marketers can develop effective digital marketing strategies to drive enrollment into their post-graduate programs. Moreover, this finding aims to help enhance the effectiveness of universities' marketing campaigns by recommending the most effective forms of digital marketing for reaching prospective postgraduate students.

1.5.3 Significance to Theory

Lastly, academicians and researchers can benefit from this research in terms of a better understanding of the factors that influence the decision to enroll in postgraduate students. The findings of this study expand the existing literature regarding the influence of digital marketing on purchase decisions. In particular, this research produces evidence on how and the extent to which social media marketing, email marketing, and website marketing reflect on the choice for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi.

1.6 Scope of the Research

The study focused on examining the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase decision for postgraduate programs in private universities. The conceptual scope of the study was social media, email, and website marketing strategies as the independent variables and consumer purchase decision as the dependent variable. TRA and the learning model for consumer decision-making made for this study's theoretical framework. The methodological scope that made

for this research was a cross-sectional research design. Contextual scope included the choice for postgraduate programs in private universities. Geographical scope for this research was limited to private universities in Nairobi County. This research was conducted and published in May 2024.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the background of the study, including the variables and the context of the research. The general and specific objectives, research questions, problem statement, scope and significance of the research have also been discussed.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the extant literature on the impacts of digital marketing on consumer purchase decisions is reviewed. First, the theoretical foundation for this research is discussed, which is the theory of reasoned action (TRA). Empirical literature related to the objectives of this research is also reviewed. In addition, research gaps are identified, and a conceptual framework for the research is presented.

2.2 Theoretical Review

This section discusses the theories that underpinned this research. These theories are the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which was used to explain consumer purchase decisions, and the Learning Model of Consumer Decision Making, which was a framework for digital marketing strategies.

2.2.1 Theory of Reasoned Action

Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein formulated the theory of reasoned action (TRA), which is a consumer behavior theory focusing on the relationship between marketing and the influence of consumers' attitudes on their purchasing behaviors and decisions. TRA focuses on an individual's decision to behave in a particular way. In this case, decision/action is defined as the likelihood that a person will exhibit a particular behavior in a particular situation (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015). This theory postulates that behavior is influenced by behavioral intentions, which in turn are influenced by subjective norms and attitudes (Ajzen, 2018). Attitudes refer to salient beliefs regarding the likely outcomes associated with performing a target behavior while subjective norms are the perceived social pressure for performing a target behavior. Behavioral intentions denote the likelihood of engaging in a target behavior (Ajzen, 2018). In other words, attitudes towards engaging in a behavior determine behavioral intent for enacting the said behavior; thus, in turn, predicting the actual behavior. Subjective norms regarding the behavior of others also predict behavioral intent.

A strength of TRA is that it has been applied in numerous studies across various fields and has been accurate in predicting human behaviour and choices (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015). This theory is valid and applicable across various cultures despite variations in social attitudes and social norms across cultures. However, a drawback of this theory is that it is not capable of explaining the influence of emotion on human action. This theory also does not explain habits (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015).

In the context of this study, TRA was used to examine the concept of the decision to enrol in a post-graduate program as a form of consumer behavior. In terms of consumer behavior, intent refers to the willingness and readiness of a consumer to buy a specific product or service (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015). TRA posits that consumers tend to act on behaviors that they believe will produce a given outcome; as a result, purchasing decisions are attributed to rational decision-making processes (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015). The concept of consumer behavior is based on the importance of specificity rather than obtuseness. Simply put, a consumer might only adopt a specific action if he/she is given a reason that a specific desired outcome will be realized.

This theory also maintains that a consumer can change his or her mind in the course of making a decision. An implication of TRA is for marketers to move consumers through the sales pipeline instead of keeping them idle, wherein they might decide to change their minds (Ajzen, 2018). TRA was used to hypothesize the relationships between variables in the study. The goal of marketing is to elicit favorable attitudes from prospective and existing consumers to influence their purchase decisions (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015). Thus, exposure to various forms of digital marketing is hypothesized to have a positive impact on the enrolment decisions of undergraduate students. TRA has been used in studies that examine consumer purchase intention (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015). For this study, TRA was the anchoring theory.

2.2.2 The Learning Model of Consumer Decision Making

The learning model of consumer decision-making, developed by Walters and Bergiel (1989), emphasizes the role played by past experiences and learning in influencing the purchasing decisions of consumers. This model posits that consumers gain knowledge by interacting with marketing messages, services, and products, which in turn informs their decision-making process (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018). According to this theory, firms need to offer informative resources and

content regarding their services and products. This model also posits that consumer decisions can be influenced by building brand awareness, consistently messaging consumers, and offering positive customer experiences. In addition, this model argues that follow-up communications and programs can be used to reinforce learning and encourage repeat purchases in consumers (Maklan, 2019).

The learning model of consumer decision-making has a number of strengths. A strength of this theory is that it looks at purchase decisions from the perspective of consumers, which makes it ideal for this study, considering that the unit of analysis consists of individual students who are the customers (Maklan, 2019). A weakness of this theory is that it does not address the underlying motivations and reasons associated with consumer behavior and the complexity and diversity of consumer attitudes and preferences (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018). Moreover, while this theory emphasizes the importance of informing and engaging with customers, it does not specify the approaches, whether traditional or digital, that the organization can use to achieve customer awareness and engagement (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018).

For this study, the learning model of consumer decision-making provided an explanatory framework for the link between features of digital marketing strategies and customer purchase decisions. This theory forms the basis for the digital marketing strategies that companies can use to engage and interact with their customers. The learning model of consumer decision-making was the supporting theory for the study.

2.3 Empirical Review

This section examines the literature on the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase decisions; the focus was on social media marketing, email marketing and website marketing and how they influence consumer purchase decisions.

2.3.1 Social Media Marketing Strategies and Consumer Purchase Decisions

Social media marketing is a type of digital marketing that entails leveraging social media networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, to achieve branding and marketing goals. This marketing approach also entails paid social media advertising in which a business pays for its advertisements to be visible to targeted users (Hanlon, 2019). The benefits of social media marketing are well-

documented in the literature, and they include humanizing the business, driving traffic, generating leads and customers, increasing brand awareness, and building customer relationships (Parkin, 2016). Through social media marketing, businesses can create an approachable person with whom customers can connect and familiarize as well as trust. Additionally, social media marketing is a useful tool for increasing traffic to a business website where visitors can be converted into customers. Another beneficial impact of social media is the ability to generate leads and customers directly. Since social media is primarily visual, it is an effective marketing tool for building brand awareness (Parkin, 2016). Additionally, social media marketing facilitates two-way communication between businesses and customers, which is key to building customer relationships.

In Malaysia, Balakrishnan et al. (2014) conducted a descriptive study to assess the influence of social media marketing on purchase intention and loyalty. Social media marketing was measured using electronic word of mouth; online communities and online advertisement were positively associated with buying behavior. The findings reported the positive influence of social media marketing on purchase decisions amongst Generation Y consumers in Malaysia. In India, Pandey et al. (2018) conducted a descriptive survey study to assess the influence of social media marketing on Millennials purchase intention. In this study, social media marketing was measured using electronic word of mouth, peer communication/online communities and social media advertising – these indicators were found to be positively linked to purchase behavior amongst millennials. The positive effect of social media marketing was also reported in another explanatory study by Laksamana (2018), who measured social media marketing using entertainment information (fun or interesting social media content), interactivity (communicating with the business via social media) and electronic word of mouth (learning about the brand from other social media users). The findings from this research showed that all these indicators positively affected purchase intention. In the United States, a descriptive survey by Spackman and Larsen (2017) found that entertaining, interactive, and electronic word of mouth (sharing content by users) via Facebook marketing was positively associated with enrollment decisions in terms of online course registration.

The influence of digital marketing was also demonstrated in a South African study conducted by Duffett & Wakeham (2016). These authors examined the effect of social media marketing on

purchase decisions operationalized as consumer attitudes towards the brand. Using a descriptive design, Duffett & Wakeham (2016) showed that social media marketing had a significant positive influence on Millennial consumers' attitudes towards brands. In Nigeria, Ogunyombo et al. (2017) examined the influence of social media advertisements on purchase decisions in undergraduate students. The findings showed that social media advertising positively influenced exposure to brand messages as well as purchase decisions. In the Rwandan hospitality industry, Nyetera (2021) performed a descriptive survey that reported the positive influence of social media advertising on customer engagement, customer retention, and brand advocacy.

Kwamboka and Owino (2024) examined the influence of social media marketing on purchase intention. Social media marketing was measured in terms of trust and the importance of online reviews found on social media. Kwamboka and Owino (2024) reported the positive effect of social media marketing on consumers' purchase decisions. In another descriptive study, Nungari and Obuba (2023) showed that interactive social media pages have a positive influence on consumers' purchase decisions. An explanatory study by Glendah et al. (2019) identified social media marketing as one of the significant predictors of customer loyalty at Safaricom Plc.

2.3.2 Email Marketing Strategies and Consumer Purchase Decision

Email marketing is a type of digital and direct marketing that entails using emails to promote products and services and educate customers on the value of the brand. Email marketing is also a powerful tool for engaging customers between customers (Hanlon, 2019). The beneficial impacts associated with email marketing have been reported in the literature, which include increasing brand awareness, generating leads, increasing customer engagement, building customer relationships, and driving traffic to the business website (Parkin, 2016). The significance of email as a marketing tool is attributed to the superior conversion rates compared to other communication channels. Moreover, with the proliferation of smart-phones, people tend to check their emails frequently (Zahay, 2020). Overall, email marketing constitutes one of the most effective forms of digital marketing strategies.

Nawaz & Kaldeen (2020) conducted an explanatory study examining the relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention among customers from a Sri Lankan ICT company. The aspects of email marketing that increased purchase decisions in the study included responsiveness

from the company, appropriate information communicated via email, and completeness of information communicated via email – all these dimensions were positively linked to purchase decisions. In another study conducted in Malaysia, Dastane (2022) examined the influence of email marketing, including prompt response, periodic email updates regarding services and products, and personalized emails, on purchase decisions. The results showed that these dimensions of email marketing were positively associated with the purchase decisions of e-commerce consumers in Malaysia. In the US hospitality industry, Yang et al. (2019) performed an explanatory study to assess the influence of email marketing on purchase decisions. The specific constructs of email marketing positively impacted visit decisions, including personalization, interactivity, promotions, and illustrations. Personalization was defined as an email with a recipient's name and other personalized information. Interactivity was defined in terms of links to the hotel's website, social media platforms and feedback page. Promotions are defined as special offers or discounts. Lastly, the illustration was operationalized using images in the email. This study showed that these features of email marketing positively influenced purchase decisions in terms of customers' intention to visit the hotels.

In South Africa, de la Roche et al. (2022) examined consumer perceptions of email marketing and its influence on purchase decisions. The authors used a descriptive survey design. The findings showed that consumers who had positive attitudes towards email marketing had a higher intent to buy the brand and make repeat purchases. In Nigeria, Onana (2021) examined the influence of digital marketing, especially email marketing, on brand equity in micro-enterprises. Onana (2021) adopted an explanatory design. The findings showed that email marketing was a significant predictor of brand equity; however, mobile and social media marketing did not predict brand equity. Another descriptive study conducted in Egypt also reported the positive influence of email marketing on purchase decisions in terms of information search about a product/brand and making the actual purchase (Omar & Atteya, 2020).

In Kenya, a descriptive study by Adhan (2021) examined the relationship between email marketing and enrollment decisions. Adhan (2021) reported that interaction with email adverts and personalized emails positively influenced the enrollment decision of University of Nairobi students at Kisumu Campus. Kamande and Maina (2019) conducted a descriptive study to assess the relationship between direct marketing strategies and purchase decisions in deposit-taking savings

and credit cooperative societies in Nairobi. The findings from this research showed that email marketing, mobile marketing and social media marketing strategies had a positive influence on consumer purchase decisions. Another descriptive research study by Rotich and Mukhongo(2015) showed the positive effects of internet marketing strategies, including email marketing, on the purchase decisions of consumers of communication services.

2.3.3. Website Marketing strategies and Consumer purchase Decision

Website marketing entails using a business website for promotional purposes with the goal of attracting more visitors who are likely to buy the firm's products/services. Increasing visitors to the website increases the chances of converting potential customers. Websites are considered the gold-standard in the marketing world since they present a one-stop shop for all information regarding the firm (Zahay, 2020). Business websites that are ranked highly on search engine results pages are more visible, which can be achieved through social media engagement, content marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO) (Keller, 2008). Nowadays, the company's website constitutes the primary channel through which users can gain information regarding the brand. Inbound digital marketing strategies adopt a funnel approach, wherein customers using the internet are utilizing search engines and apps; thus, the marketer has to attract potential customers towards the company's website, where they can access information and make a purchase decision (Parkin, 2016).

An explanatory study conducted by Jiang et al. (2010) in China showed that interactivity and quality of websites positively impacted the purchase decision. The attributes of website marketing that were reported to positively influence purchase decisions included design and layout (ease of use of the website), context (multi-media), community (website permits communication between users), communication (website allows communication from users), and relationship (links to other websites). In a descriptive study, Hu et al. (2016) examined the effect of website marketing on purchase decisions. The findings showed that the attributes of websites that are positively linked to purchase decisions on social shopping websites included a message box for two-way communication, word of mouth (such as testimonial reviews, ratings, and comments of others), and personalization. Similar findings have been documented in terms of enrollment decisions in universities. Among Indonesian university students, Hidayanto et al. (2015) studied the influence

of the perceived quality of websites on enrollment intentions. This study reported that prospective university students' perception of the quality of the website influenced their perceptions regarding the quality of education, which in turn affected their enrollment decisions.

In Nigeria, Okon et al. (2016) examined the determinants of the effectiveness of website advertising in the context of online shopping. Using a descriptive survey design, the findings from the study showed that the ease of accessing the website, the content of the website and users' surfing skills were significant determinants of successful website advertising. In South Africa, Hung and Cant (2017) investigated the effect of the quality of information on a shopping website on consumers' purchase decisions. The aspects of quality of information studied were personalized content, completeness, relevancy, ease of understanding and secureness. All these dimensions of website marketing were found to have a positive effect on purchase decisions. In Egypt, ElJalil et al. (2018) investigated how website marketing affects online purchase intention in travel agencies. The findings showed a positive relationship between website factors, including reliability, privacy, security, information design and navigation design, and online purchase intention.

A descriptive study by Kwamboka and Owino (2024) examined the influence of digital marketing on purchase intention. Website marketing was defined in terms of online reviews, such as testimonials. The findings from this study showed that website marketing positively influenced purchase decisions. Nungari and Obuba (2023) showed that interactive website pages have a positive influence on consumers' purchase decisions. Using Jumia as a case study, a descriptive study by Njoki and Mwikya (2019) identified transaction and ordering procedure, site content and visual design as determinants of purchase decisions.

2.4 Research Gaps

While studies have been conducted on the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase decisions, concepts, contexts, and methodologies vary. The concepts of purchase decisions and digital marketing have been conceptualized and operationalized differently, with most studies focusing on social media marketing (Balakrishnan et al., 2014; Duffett & Wakeham, 2016). Methodologies in existing studies also vary, consisting of explanatory (Jenyo et al., 2015) and descriptive studies (Adhan, 2021; Savino, 2021; Nawaz & Kaldeen, 2020). The contexts for existing studies also differ. In light of the conceptual, methodological and contextual gaps, the

current study focused on the influence of digital marketing on purchase decisions for post-graduate programs in private universities in Nairobi, Kenya. Table 2.1 shows the research gaps.



Table 2. 1: Summary of research gaps

Study	Focus of Study	Findings	Research Gap	Focus of current study
Balakrishnan et al. (2014)	To assess the impact of social media marketing on purchase decisions	Findings showed the positive impact of social media marketing on purchase decisions amongst Generation Y consumers in Malaysia.	Contextual – study was conducted in Malaysia. Conceptual – The study only focused on social media	The context of the current study was in Kenya. The current study also examined other aspects of digital marketing – email and website marketing
Pandey et al. (2018)	To assess the impact of social media marketing on purchase decisions	The constructs of social media marketing, including electronic word of mouth, peer communication/online communities and social media advertising were positively linked to purchase behavior amongst millennials	Contextual – study was conducted in India Conceptual – study only focused on social media	The context of the current study was in Kenya. Study also focused on other digital marketing strategies including email and website marketing
Nawaz & Kaldeen (2020)	To assess the impact of email marketing on purchase decisions	Responsiveness from the company, appropriate information communicated via email, and completeness of information communicated via email positively affected purchase decisions	Contextual – study was conducted in an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) company in Sri Lanka	The context of the current study was in Kenya. Current study also examined other aspects of digital marketing including social media and website marketing

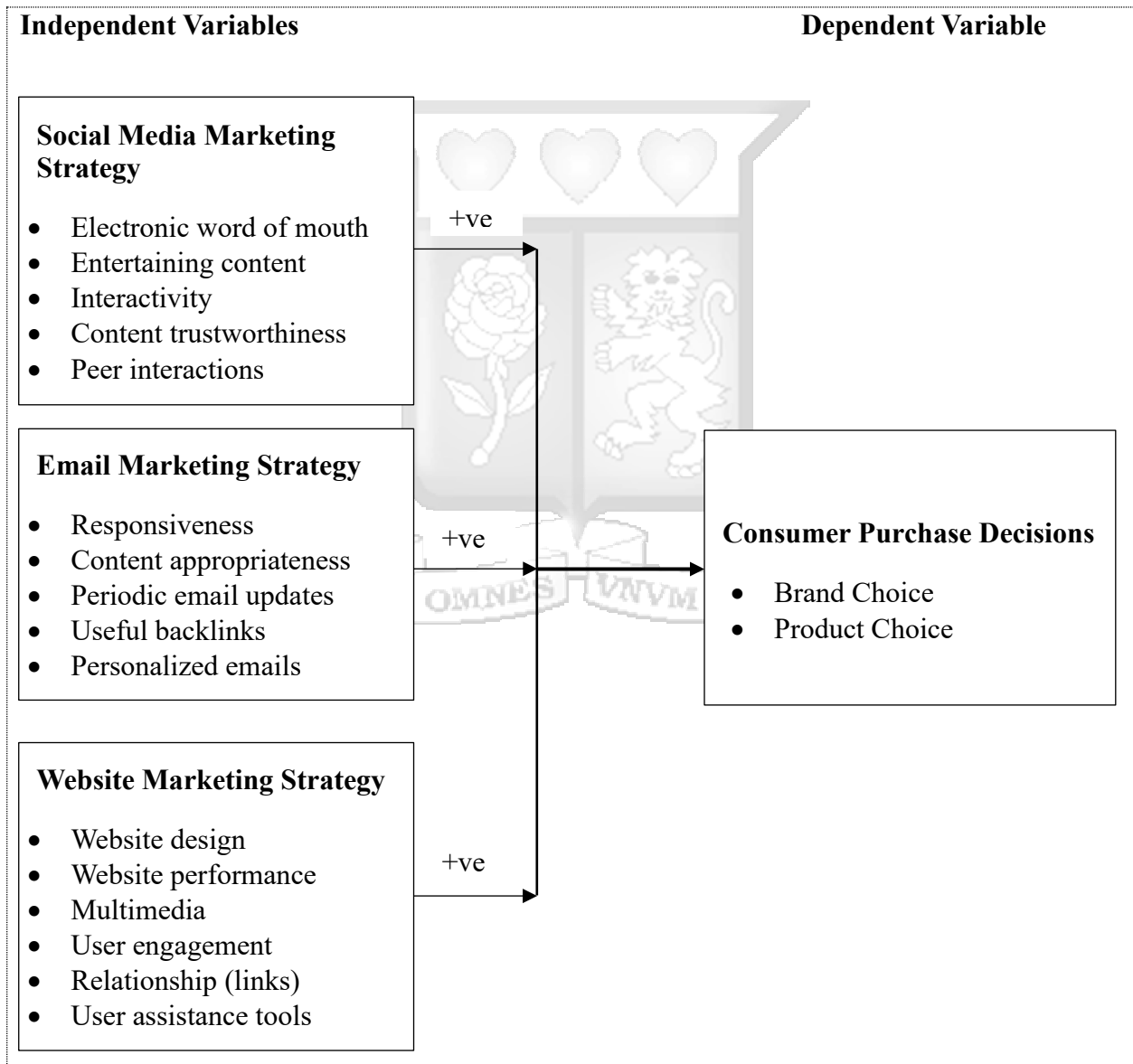
Dastane (2020)	To assess the impact of email marketing on purchase decisions	Prompt response, periodic email updates regarding services and products, and personalized emails positively influenced purchase decisions	Contextual – study was conducted in Malaysia Conceptual – study only limited to email marketing	Current study also examined other aspects of digital marketing – email and website marketing on the Kenyan context
Yang et al. (2019)	To assess the impact of email marketing on purchase decisions	Personalization, interactivity, promotions, and illustrations had a positive impact on purchase decision	Contextual – study was conducted in the hospitality industry in the US Conceptual – study only focused on email marketing	The context of the current study was in Kenya. Study also focused on social media and website marketing
ElJalil et al. (2018)	How website marketing affects online purchase intention in travel agencies.	The findings showed a positive relationship between website factors, including reliability, privacy, security, information design and navigation design, on online purchase intention	Contextual – study was conducted in Egypt Conceptual – study only focused on website marketing	Current study was conducted in Kenya Current study also looked at email and social media marketing
Jiang et al. (2010)	To assess the impact of website marketing on purchase decisions	The attributes of website marketing that were reported to positively influence purchase decision included design and layout (ease of use of the website), context (multi-media),	Contextual – study was conducted in China Conceptual – study only focused on website marketing	Current study also examined other aspects of digital marketing – email and website marketing

			community (website permits communication between users), communication (website allows communication from users), and relationship (links to other websites)		Study was conducted in Kenya
Hung and Cant (2017)	The effect of the quality of information on a shopping website on consumers' purchase decision	Personalized content, completeness, relevancy, ease of understanding and secureness in websites positively influenced purchase decision		Contextual – study was conducted in South Africa Conceptual – study only focused on website marketing	Current study also examined other aspects of digital marketing – email and social media marketing Study was conducted in Kenya
Jenyo et al. (2015)	The relationship between online marketing and purchase decision	Online marketing had a significant positive influence on the purchase decisions of Nigerian consumers		Contextual – study was conducted in Nigeria Methodological – study used an explanatory design	Current study was conducted in Kenya using a descriptive design

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in in Figure 2.1 shows the association between digital marketing strategies and consumer purchase decisions. The independent variable is digital marketing strategies, which consist of social media marketing, email marketing, and website marketing. The dependent variable is consumer purchase decision, which consists of university choice and post-graduate program choice.

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual framework



Source: Researcher (2024)

Hypotheses:

H1: Social Media marketing strategy has a positive influence on consumer purchase decision

H2: Email marketing strategy has a positive influence on consumer purchase decision

H3: Website marketing strategy has a positive influence on consumer purchase decision

2.6 Operationalization of the Study Variables

The operationalization of the study variables is shown in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2. 2: Operationalization of variables

Variable	Indicators	Measurement	Literature source
Social media marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Electronic word-of-mouth• Entertaining content• interactivity• Content trustworthiness• Peer interactions	Five-point Likert scale	(Balakrishnan et al., 2014; ElJalil et al., 2018; Pandey et al., 2018)
Email marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsiveness from the university• Content appropriateness• Periodic email updates• Useful backlinks• Personalized emails	Five-point Likert scale	(Nawaz & Kaldeen, 2020)
Website marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Website design• Website performance• Multimedia• User engagement• Relationship – links to relevant information• User assistance tools	Five-point Likert scale	(Hu et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2019; Jenyo et al., 2015)
Consumer Purchase decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brand choice: University• Product choice - postgraduate program	Five-point Likert scale	Prasad et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2019; Pandey et al., 2018)

Source: Researcher (2024)

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the theoretical and empirical literature regarding the influence of digital marketing strategies on purchase intention. In addition, the research gaps have been identified. The conceptual framework and the operationalization of variables have also been discussed.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology, indicating how the research was carried out. The specific aspects of the research methodology addressed in this chapter are the research philosophy, research design, population and sampling, methods of data collection, data analysis approaches, quality research, and ethics.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is concerned with the development, nature and source of knowledge, which simply represents the beliefs and assumptions that a researcher has regarding the manner in which data on a specific phenomenon should be gathered, analyzed, and applied (Aityan, 2022). In the realm of business research, four primary options for research philosophies exist – positivism, interpretivism, realism, and pragmatism. The selected philosophy for this research is positivism, which is based on the view that trustworthy knowledge is factual and obtained via observation. Positivism requires the researcher to be objective in collecting and interpreting data (Aityan, 2022). This philosophy requires the use of a highly structured quantitative methodology to produce objective, generalizable findings. Positivism philosophy serves the aim of explaining and predicting phenomena using objective, quantitative data obtained from large samples (Aityan, 2022). For this study, the intention was to conduct purely objective research and derive generalizable conclusions that can be applied to the broader higher education sector in Kenya. Additionally, positivism requires the researcher to be independent from the research and focus on facts.

Interpretivism, realism and pragmatism were not aligned with the researcher's worldview and intentions for this research. Interpretivism is subjective and focuses on deeply understanding human nature instead of focusing on facts. Using this philosophy does not produce generalizable knowledge. While realism produces objective findings, this philosophy considers the role of historical causal explanations (changing social world) in understanding the phenomenon being studied. Pragmatism emphasizes the use of research methods that can produce findings to inform

action or formulate solutions to problems. Pragmatism is suitable for action research, which entails testing problem-solving actions that have been implemented. This research is not action-oriented. Thus, of the four philosophies, positivism was deemed the most appropriate since it resonated with this researcher's worldview and intentions for this research – to produce generalizable findings that can be applied to the private universities in Kenya. Positivism has been used in similar studies on consumer purchase decisions (Hu et al., 2016; Okon et al., 2016).

3.3 Research Design

Research design refers to the general strategy used to execute the study. It outlines a logical plan to address the research questions. The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive cross-sectional research design, which was used to describe phenomena in the population being studied. This design is also used to investigate relationships between variables by employing statistical analysis, which was aligned with the aim of this research, which sought to assess the relationship between digital marketing and purchase decisions. In this research design, there is no manipulation of variables. The cross-sectional research design has high validity and conclusion that can be generalized to the wider population (Aityan, 2022). Similar studies on determinants of purchase intention have also employed the descriptive design (Hu et al., 2016; Okon et al., 2016).

3.4 Population of the Study

A research population refers to the collection of elements (objects or people) having a common attribute of interest to a researcher (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In this research, the population consisted of post-graduate students enrolled in Masters and PhD Programs in 18 private universities in Nairobi (Appendix IV). The latest data from CUE (2019) reported that there were 2,822 and 10,727 students enrolled in PhD and Master's programs, respectively, in private universities, which brings the total population to 13,549 postgraduate students.

3.5 Sampling Design

The study adopted a judgmental sampling technique, a non-random sampling technique whereby a researcher carefully chooses and picks respondents. Judgmental sampling technique was appropriate for this research since the study chose respondents who were deemed to have the information needed for this research, which in this case were postgraduate students enrolled in

programs in private universities in Nairobi. The sample size for this research was established using Yamane's method, which is given by the formula:

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

Where;

n = appropriate sample size

N = size of the target population

e = margin of error (5%)

Therefore;

$$n = \frac{13,549}{1 + 13,549(0.05)^2}$$

Sample size was = 400 postgraduate students

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Primary data for the research study was collected using structured questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A collected the respondents' profiles. Section B contained questions on digital marketing strategies. Section C contained questions on consumer purchase decisions. The items in the questions made use of a Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) and (5) strongly agree.

The questionnaires were administered via the fill-and-wait strategy. They were distributed to private universities in Nairobi, Kenya. Trained research assistants were used to enhance the response rate.

3.7 Research Quality

The quality of this study was established by assessing the validity and reliability of the research instruments.

3.7.1 Validity

Internal validity denotes the degree to which the findings are consistent with the reality of the population being studied (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The questionnaire was developed under the guidance of a supervisor at Strathmore University. A pilot study was used to improve the validity of the questionnaire. A pilot survey was administered to 40 respondents comprising Strathmore University students to determine if they understood the questions (Cooper et al., 2018). Based on the feedback from the pilot study, the research instrument was refined to increase its validity.

3.7.2 Reliability

Reliability is about the consistency of the findings (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). For this study, the questionnaire was designed using simple language to minimize misinterpretation of questions. Also, the internal consistency coefficient for the questionnaire was calculated after collecting data using Cronbach's alpha. A Cronbach's alpha of at least 0.7 is considered satisfactory by Bell et al. (2022). Sekaran and Bougie (2016) deemed a Cronbach's alpha of <0.6 as unacceptable, 0.6-0.7 is deemed minimally acceptable, and >0.7 as acceptable. For this study, the range of 0.7-1, as recommended by Bell et al. (2022), was satisfied for all constructs, as shown in Table 3.1

Table 3. 1: Reliability Tests

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Social media marketing strategy	.883	6
Email marketing strategy	.915	6
Website marketing strategy	.761	7
Consumer purchase decision	.820	6

3.8 Data Analysis

Before analyzing the data, the collected questionnaires were checked for completion. Missing data was addressed using the process of listwise deletion, which involved removing respondents with missing data from the dataset. After cleaning the data, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to describe the

data. Inferential statistics, using multiple linear regression, was used to analyze the relationship between digital marketing strategies and consumer purchase decisions. Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The following regression equation was applied.

$$CPI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SMM + \beta_2 EM + \beta_3 WM + \epsilon$$

Where:

CPI = Consumer Purchase Intension

SMM = Social Media Marketing

EM = Email Marketing

WM = Website Marketing

ϵ = Error Function

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The ethical issues that were considered in this research were ethical clearance, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity of respondents. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethical Review Committee at Strathmore University and the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Informed consent means that participation in the study was voluntary (Cooper et al., 2018). Prospective respondents were given sufficient information about the research to make informed choices on whether or not to participate. Confidentiality was guaranteed by keeping the collected data in a secure computer (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Anonymity was guaranteed by not collecting any personal information that could be used to determine respondents' identity, such as their names and contact information.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter describes the methodology used in this study. The aspects covered in this chapter are the research philosophy, design, population, sampling, data collection and analysis, research quality, and ethical considerations.



CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the presentation of findings. Primary data on the variables of the study was collected using questionnaires. The completed questionnaires were gathered, sorted, organized, and cleaned for analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Findings are presented in this chapter using tables and figures.

4.2 Response Rate

A sample of 400 respondents was recruited for the study and asked to fill out the questionnaire. 293 of them completed the questionnaires and returned them on time for the analysis. These questionnaires were sorted, organized, and checked for completion and errors. Six questionnaires were eliminated for errors and incomplete responses. As such, 287 of the completed questionnaires were usable for the analysis, which implies that this study had a 71.75% response rate, as illustrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4. 1: Response Rate

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Responded	287	71.75%
Non-response	113	28.25%
Total	400	100.0%

4.3 Respondents Profile Information

Data about the demographic characteristics of the research participants was gathered. Findings as shown in Table 4.2 show that the majority of the respondents were male (53.7%), were aged 26-35 years (57.1%), were pursuing master's degrees (90.9%), and were influenced by digital marketing strategies when choosing university and program (70.4%).

Table 4. 2: Respondent Profile Information (n=287)

Characteristics	Distribution	Frequency	Percentage
Please indicate your gender	Male	154	53.7%
	Female	133	46.3%
Please indicate your age in years	<25	12	4.2%
	26-35	164	57.1%
	36-45	82	28.6%
	46-55	18	6.3%
	50>	11	3.8%
Indicate the course/program you are taking at the university	Masters	261	90.9%
	PhD	26	9.1%
Please indicate whether you were influenced by digital marketing strategies when choosing the university and program.	Yes	202	70.4%
	No	85	29.6%

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

The study performed descriptive statistical techniques – measures of central tendency, measures of frequency, and measures of distribution – for the purpose of summarizing, organizing, and describing the main qualities of the data set.

4.4.1 Social Media Marketing Strategy

Data on the social media marketing strategy was collected using various indicators. Respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements about social media marketing strategy on a five-point Likert scale where SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neutral; A = agree; SA = strongly agree. Table 4.3 summarizes the main characteristics of the responses.

Table 4. 3: Social Media Marketing Strategy

	N	Mean	STD
I learned about the University from other social media users, who also influenced my choice of the program	287	2.422	1.296
The content on the university’s social media platform was entertaining and fun, which encouraged me to choose its program	287	3.341	.9418
I communicated with the university via its social media platforms, which was beneficial in making a decision on the choice of program	287	2.422	1.404
I interacted with other students at the university’s social media	287	2.233	1.144
The university’s social media content was relevant, which I found beneficial in helping me decide to choose the program	287	3.289	1.134
I trusted the communication posted on the university’s social media platform, which influenced my choice of the program	287	3.652	1.217
Overall Mean		2.893	1.189

An overall mean of 2.893 at a 1.189 standard deviation was observed for the social media marketing strategy. This finding implies a general sentiment of disagreement among the respondents regarding the influence of social media marketing strategies adopted by private universities in Kenya. The item “I trusted the communication posted in the university’s social media platform, which influenced my choice of the program” had the highest mean score of 3.652 at a 1.217 standard deviation. This implies that respondents were undecided on the trustworthiness of communication posted on social media platforms. The item “I interacted with other students at the university’s social media” had the lowest mean score of 2.233 at a 1.144 standard deviation. This result suggests that respondents disagreed with the idea that they interacted with other students on social media channels owned by the universities.

4.4.2 Email Marketing Strategy

The study gathered data on the email marketing strategy using various indicators. Respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements about

email marketing strategy on a five-point Likert scale where SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neutral; A = agree; SA = strongly agree. Table 4.4 summarizes the main characteristics of the responses.

Table 4. 4: Email Marketing Strategy

	N	Mean	STD
The university responded to email inquiries that informed my choice for the program	287	3.836	1.000
The university sent me updates about the program frequently, which influenced my choice of the program	287	3.631	.9679
The emails from the university contained my name in the subject line that informed my decision to choose its program	287	3.592	.8333
I found the content of the emails appropriate, which influenced my decision for the program	287	3.617	.8792
The email from the university contained links to its website and social media platforms that I found helpful in informing my choice	287	3.812	.8752
The emails from the university contained information about educational programs being offered that were helpful in choosing the program	287	3.990	.9388
Overall Mean		3.746	.9158

The overall mean for the email marketing variable was 3.746 at a 0.9158 standard deviation, suggesting a notion of neutrality among the respondents on the influence of email marketing strategy. As findings further suggest, respondents were undecided on all the statements: universities responding to email inquiries (M=3.836, SD=1.000), universities sending updates about programs (M=3.631, SD=0.9679), emails from universities containing names in the subject line (M=3.592, SD=0.8333), appropriateness of the content in the emails (M=3.617, SD=0.8792), emails from the universities containing links to website and social media platforms (M=3.812, SD=0.8752), and emails from the universities containing information about educational programs being offered (M=3.990, SD=0.9388).

4.4.3 Website Marketing Strategy

The study sought to collect data on the website marketing strategy using various indicators. Respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements about website marketing strategy on a five-point Likert scale where SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neutral; A = agree; SA = strongly agree. Table 4.5 summarizes the main characteristics of the responses.

Table 4. 5: Website Marketing Strategy

	N	Mean	STD
The university’s website was attractive, appealing and easy to use	287	3.969	.6267
The university’s website opened and loads faster	287	3.923	.5971
The university’s website contained multiple media, such as images, video, and text, which provided the information I needed to make a decision on the program I chose.	287	4.237	.6409
The website allowed users to comment (has a comment section), which helped me inquire more about its program	287	3.763	.6188
The website had a feedback form for seeking clarifications about its program	287	3.868	.5568
The website had links to other relevant resources or information, such as events and the university newsletter, that provided the information I needed to make a decision	287	4.091	.5134
The website had a live chat function that provided immediate assistance, which was helpful in making a decision to choose the program	287	3.244	.6217
Overall Mean		3.871	.5965

The overall mean for the website marketing strategy was 3.871 at a 0.5965 standard deviation. This result suggests neutrality among the respondents on their view of the influence of website marketing strategy. However, the item, “The university’s website contained multiple media, such as images, video and text that provided the information I needed to make a decision on the program

to choose” had the highest mean score of 4.237 at a 0.6409 standard deviation. In other words, most respondents were of the idea that the university’s website contained multiple media that aided their decision-making process. Respondents also agreed that the university’s website had links to other relevant resources or information, as indicated by a mean score of 4.091 at a 0.5134 standard deviation. They were, however, neutral on the rest of the items.

4.4.4 Consumer Purchase Decision

The study sought to collect data on the consumer purchase decision as the dependent variable using various indicators. Respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements about their choice for the university and/or program on a five-point Likert scale where SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neutral; A = agree; SA = strongly agree. Table 4.6 summarizes the main characteristics of the responses.

Table 4. 6: Consumer Purchase Decision

	N	Mean	STD
My choice of this university was influenced by information posted on the university’s social media pages	287	2.923	1.009
My choice of this university was influenced by the emails the university sent	287	3.537	1.018
My choice of this university was influenced by the information on its website	287	3.979	.9142
My choice of the post-graduate program was influenced by information posted on the university’s social media pages	287	3.418	1.019
My choice of the post-graduate program was influenced by the emails they sent	287	3.659	.8317
My choice for the post-graduate program was influenced by the information on its website	287	3.930	1.108
Overall Mean		3.574	.9834

The overall mean for the consumer purchase decision was 3.574 at a 0.9834 standard deviation, suggesting that respondents were undecided on their choices for university and/or program being influenced by digital marketing strategies. For instance, they disagreed with the view that their choice of university was influenced by information posted on social media, as proven by (M=2.923, SD=1.009). They were neutral on the rest of the statements: university choice influenced by emails (M=3.537, SD=1.018), university choice influenced by information on website (M=3.979, SD=0.9412), choice of program influenced by social media (M=3.418, SD=1.019), choice of program influenced by emails (M=3.659, SD=0.8317), and choice of program influenced by information on website (M=3.930, SD=1.108). However, as the findings further suggest, a significant number of the respondents' choice of university was influenced by email marketing, and a significant number of the respondents' choice of program was influenced by information on the university's website.

4.5 Inferential Statistics

For the purpose of approximation, generalization, and drawing conclusions about the population based on the sample data, inferential statistics was performed. In particular, correlational analysis and regression analysis were conducted. It is also worth noting that a normality test was carried out to determine whether to proceed with parametric or nonparametric tests for inferential statistics.

4.5.1 Normality Test

The study performed a normality test to determine whether or not the dataset followed a normal distribution. The general rule is that when the dataset is normally distributed, parametric tests follow; otherwise, nonparametric tests apply if data is not normally distributed. The normality test that was performed was the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test due to the sample size (i.e., >100). All the constructs are not statistically significant (Sig. < .05), as shown in Table 4.7; as such, the constructs were not normally distributed. Further analysis also reveals that all the constructs were skewed. Therefore, nonparametric tests were performed.

Table 4. 7: One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	K-S	Asmp. Sig.
Social media marketing strategy	287	2.893	.95316	.388	-.702	.160	.000
Email marketing strategy	287	3.746	.77057	-.378	-.430	.123	.000
Website marketing strategy	287	3.871	.38419	1.123	2.925	.249	.000
Consumer purchase decision	287	3.574	.71753	-.611	1.006	.223	.000

4.5.2 Correlation Analysis

The research performed correlational analyses to determine how and the extent to which the independent variables (i.e., social media marketing strategy, email marketing strategy, and website marketing strategy) correlate with the dependent variable, consumer purchase decision. In particular, due to the normality test above, the study performed Spearman's rank correlation analysis, a nonparametric test. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4. 8: Spearman's Rank Correlation

		Spearman's rho	Social media marketing	Email marketing	Website marketing
Consumer purchase decision	Correlation Coefficients		.354**	.233**	.451**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N		287	287	287

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of the analysis show a moderate, positive correlation between social media marketing and consumer purchase decisions, which was statistically significant as denoted by ($r=.354$, $p<.01$). This finding implies that increasing social media marketing efforts results in a moderate increase in consumers deciding to enrol for postgraduate programs in private universities in Kenya.

The research found a weak, positive correlation between email marketing and consumer purchase decisions, which was statistically significant as proven by ($r=.233$, $p<.01$). The positive correlation suggests that increasing email marketing efforts lead to an increase in consumer purchase decisions in favour of postgraduate programs in private universities in Kenya.

The study found a strong, positive correlation between website marketing strategy and consumer purchase decision, which was statistically significant as denoted by ($r=.451, p<.05$). The finding means that improving website marketing strategy would lead the target consumers enrolling more for postgraduate programs in private universities in Kenya.

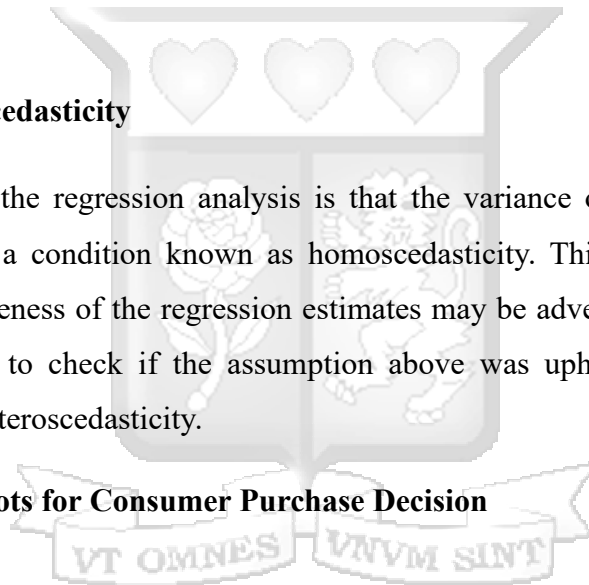
4.5.3 Diagnostic Tests

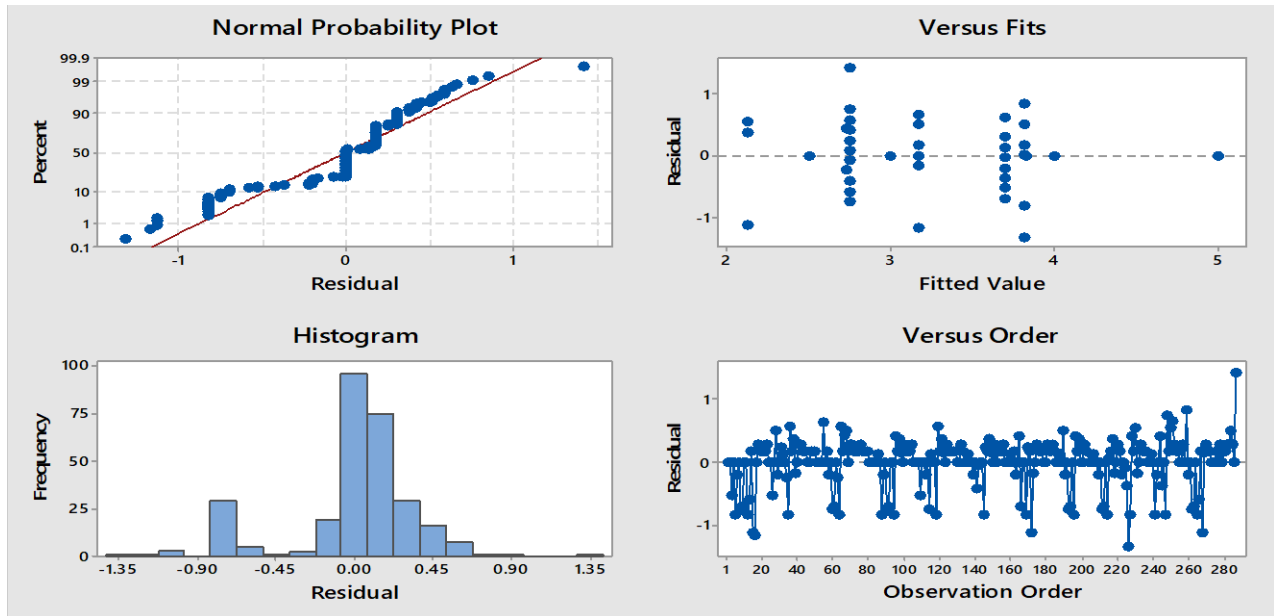
The research conducted diagnostic tests before proceeding to regression analysis. This was done to check for the validity of the regression model, i.e., to check if the underlying assumptions for regression analysis are upheld. The regression diagnostic tests performed include the test for heteroscedasticity, the test for normality, the test for autocorrelation, and the test for multicollinearity.

4.5.3.1 Test for Heteroscedasticity

The first assumption of the regression analysis is that the variance of residuals (or errors) is unknown but the same, a condition known as homoscedasticity. This assumption must hold; otherwise, the appropriateness of the regression estimates may be adversely affected. Therefore, this test was performed to check if the assumption above was upheld. Residual plots were generated to check for heteroscedasticity.

Figure 4. 1: Residual Plots for Consumer Purchase Decision



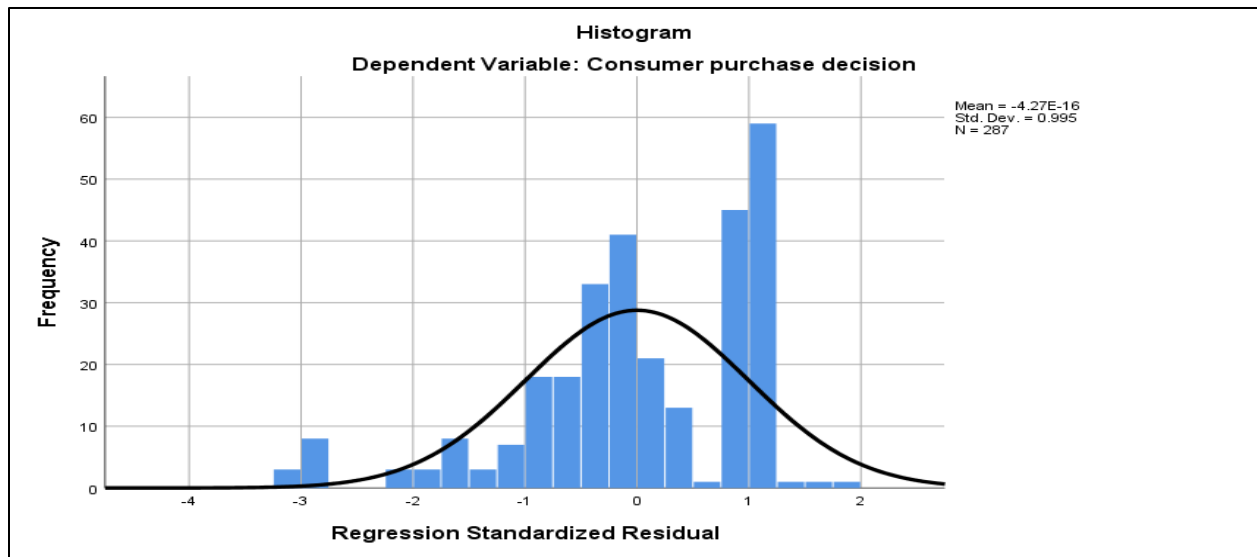


As shown in Figure 4.1, error terms are normally distributed as shown in the top-left plot, a flatter line in the top-right plot, variance is normally distributed as shown in the histogram, and evenly distributed residuals in the bottom-right plot. Therefore, heteroscedasticity was not a concern.

4.5.3.2 Test for Normality

The second assumption of the regression model is that residuals (errors) should be normally distributed. This assumption was tested by generating a histogram (P-P plot) to have a visual portrayal of the distribution of the residuals. As shown in Figure 4.2, the residuals follow normal distribution since the histogram is covered by the normality curve.

Figure 4. 2: Test for Normality



4.5.3.3 Test for Autocorrelation

The third assumption of the regression analysis is that independent variables are not highly correlated. The Durbin-Watson (D-W) statistical test was performed to check if this assumption holds. The test usually produces a DW statistic that ranges from 0 to 4. The rule of thumb is that a value of between 1.5 and 2.5 denotes no autocorrelation. Values below 1.5 denote a positive autocorrelation, and those above 2.5 indicate a negative autocorrelation. As illustrated in Table 4.9, a DW statistic value of 2.036 was observed. Also, $(4 - D) > D_U$; therefore, no correlation exists

Table 4. 9: Test for Autocorrelation

Alpha	.05
D-stat	2.03687
D-lower	1.804
D-upper	1.817
Sig	No autocorrelation

4.5.3.4 Test for Multicollinearity

The fourth assumption is that there should be the absence of multicollinearity. In other words, Data is not ill-conditioned. The variance inflation factor (VIF) was performed to check if this assumption held, i.e., detect multicollinearity and its statistical significance. The rule of thumb is

that if the VIF value is less than 10, the presence of multicollinearity is not statistically significant. As illustrated in Table 4.10, $VIF < 10$ implies that multicollinearity was not statistically significant.

Table 4. 10: Test for Multicollinearity

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constance)		
Social media marketing strategy	.392	2.552
Email marketing strategy	.366	2.732
Website marketing strategy	.563	1.776

a. Dependent Variable: consumer purchase decision

4.5.4 Regression Analysis

The research study performed regression analysis to determine the relationship between the independent variables (i.e., social media marketing strategy, email marketing strategy, and website marketing strategy) and the dependent variable, consumer purchase decision.

4.5.4.1 Social Media Marketing and Consumer Purchase Decisions

Regression analysis was computed to determine the relationship between social media marketing and consumer purchase decisions. A model summary of the analysis was generated to understand how much variance in the dependent variable is attributed to the independent variable. Results are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4. 11: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.544 ^a	.296	.294	.60290

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social media marketing

The results above show that a portion of variance ($R\text{ Square}=.296$) in the dependent variable is attributed to the independent variable. This means that social media marketing strategy explains

29.6% of consumer purchase decisions for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi County.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine the statistical significance of the regression model. Results are published in Table 4.12.

Table 4. 12: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43.653	1	43.653	120.095	.000 ^b
	Residual	103.594	285	.363		
	Total	147.248	286			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer purchase decision

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social media marketing

The results above confirm the relationship between social media marketing and consumer purchase decisions is statistically significant, as proven by ($F(1,285) = 120.095, P < .01$). The finding means that social media marketing is a reliable predictor of consumer purchase decisions.

A regression coefficient was generated to predict the value of the dependent variable based on the values of the independent variable. Results were published in Table 4.13.

Table 4. 13: Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.388	.114		20.968	.000
	Social media marketing	.410	.037	.544	10.959	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer purchase decision

A significant positive relationship was discovered between social media marketing and consumer purchase decisions as denoted by ($B = .410, p < .05$). The finding indicates that a unit increase in

social media marketing effort would increase consumer purchase decisions by 0.410 units. Therefore, social media marketing positively affects consumer purchase decisions.

4.5.4.2 Email Marketing and Consumer Purchase Decision

Regression analysis was carried out to determine the relationship between email marketing and consumer purchase decisions. A model summary was generated to understand how much variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4. 14 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.422 ^a	.178	.176	.65150

a. Predictors: (Constant), Email marketing

A portion of the variance (R Square=.178) in the dependent variable is attributed to the independent variable, as shown above, meaning email marketing explains 17.8% of consumer purchase decisions for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi County.

The ANOVA analysis was computed to determine the statistical significance of the regression model. Results are published in Table 4.15.

Table 4. 15: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	26.278	1	26.278	61.910	.000 ^b
	Residual	120.969	285	.424		
	Total	147.248	286			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer purchase decision

b. Predictors: (Constant), Email marketing

The results above indicate that the relationship between email marketing and consumer purchase decisions is statistically significant, as proven by ($F(1,285) = 61.910, P < .01$). The finding means that email marketing is a reliable predictor of consumer purchase decisions.

A regression coefficient was generated to predict the value of the dependent variable based on the value of the independent variable. Results were published in Table 4.16.

Table 4. 16: Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.101	.191		10.987	.000
	Social media marketing	.393	.050	.422	7.868	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer purchase decision

A significant positive relationship was revealed between email marketing and consumer purchase decisions as denoted by ($B=.393, p < .05$). The finding confirms that a unit increase in email marketing would increase consumer purchase decision by 0.393 units. As such, email marketing translates positively on consumer purchase decision.

4.5.4.3 Website Marketing and Consumer Purchase Decision

Regression analysis was computed to assess the relationship between website marketing and consumer purchase decision. A model summary was generated to assess how much variance in the dependent variable is caused by the independent variable. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4.17.

Table 4. 17: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.605 ^a	.366	.363	.57255

a. Predictors: (Constant), Website marketing

A significant portion of the variance (R Square=.366) of the dependent variable is attributed to the independent variable, as shown above, meaning website marketing explains 36.6% of consumer purchase decision for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi County.

The ANOVA analysis was generated to measure the statistical significance of the regression model. Results are published in Table 4.18.

Table 4. 18: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	53.822	1	53.822	164.187	.000 ^b
	Residual	93.426	285	.328		
	Total	147.248	286			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer purchase decision

b. Predictors: (Constant), Website marketing

The results above indicate that the relationship between website marketing and consumer purchase decision is statistically significant, as proven by ($F(1,285) = 53.822, P < .01$), implying that website marketing is a reliable predictor of consumer purchase decision.

A regression coefficient was generated to predict the value of the dependent variable based on the value of the independent variable. Results were published in Table 4.19.

Table 4. 19: Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.796	.343		-2.232	.000
	Website marketing	1.129	.088	.605	12.814	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer purchase decision

The analysis found a significant positive relationship between website marketing and consumer purchase decision as denoted by ($B=1.129, p < .05$). The finding confirms that a unit increase in

website marketing would increase consumer purchase decision by 1.129 units. As such, website marketing is a significant predictor of consumer purchase decision.

4.5.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

The overriding objective of the study was to determine the effect of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase decision on consumer purchase decision for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi County. Therefore, multiple regression analysis was relevant to this study since it featured multiple independent variables (i.e., social media marketing strategy, email marketing strategy, and website marketing strategy) and a single dependent variable.

A model summary was generated to determine the extent to which the three independent variables explain the variation of the dependent variable. A significant portion of variance (R Square = .430) in consumer purchase decisions was attributed to digital marketing strategies, as shown in Table 4.20. Put simply, social media marketing strategy, email marketing strategy, and website marketing strategy collectively explain 43.0% of consumer purchase decisions for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi, Kenya.

Table 4. 20: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.656 ^a	.430	.424	.54456	2.036

- a. Predictors: (Constant), social media marketing, email marketing, website marketing
- b. Dependent Variable: consumer purchase decision

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also generated to model the relationship between the variables and determine the strength of the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. In other words, this analysis was performed to determine whether or not the relationship was statistically significant. The result confirms the relationship between consumer purchase decisions and digital marketing strategies is statistically significant, as proven by ($F(3,286) = 71.183, P < 0.01$).

Table 4. 21: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	63.326	3	21.109	71.183	.000 ^b
	Residual	83.921	283	.297		
	Total	147.248	286			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer purchase decision

b. Predictors: (Constant), social media marketing strategy, email marketing strategy, and website marketing strategy

In addition, the regression coefficients were generated to measure the statistical relationship between the dependent variable (consumer purchase decision) and the three independent variables (social media marketing strategy, email marketing strategy, and website marketing strategy). Put simply, the coefficient analysis was performed to determine the degree to which each of the independent variables influences the dependent variable. Table 4.22 shows the regression coefficient of the variables.

Table 4. 22: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.143	.348		.410	.682
	Social media marketing	.300	.054	.398	5.555	.000
	Email marketing	.179	.069	.192	2.590	.010
	Website marketing	.909	.112	.487	8.143	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer purchase decision

The study found that all the variables had a significant positive impact on consumer purchase decision. However, the degree of impact varied between the variables. For instance, website marketing had the strongest influence, which is significant as denoted by (B=.909, $t=8.143$, $p<.05$). This means when private universities improve website marketing efforts, purchase decisions will increase by 0.909 units. Social media marketing had a positive influence on purchase

decision, as shown by ($B=.300$, $t=5.555$, $p<.05$), meaning a unit increase in social media marketing efforts would increase purchase decision by 0.300 units. Lastly, email marketing had a significant positive effect on consumer purchase decision ($B=.502$, $t=8.067$, $p<.05$), meaning an increase in email marketing efforts would increase enrolment for postgraduate programs by 0.179 units.

In light of the above, the regression equation for the study is as follows:

$$\text{Consumer purchase decision} = 0.143 + .300X_1 + .179X_2 + .909X_3$$

Where;

X_1 = Social media marketing strategy

X_2 = Email marketing strategy

X_3 = Website marketing strategy

Based on the above equation, if the values of all the digital marketing strategies (i.e., social media marketing strategy, email marketing strategy, and website marketing strategy) are equal to zero, the consumer purchase decision would only be 0.143.

4.6 Chapter Summary

The focus of the chapter is the presentation of the study findings. As the results show, a sufficient response rate was achieved. The majority of the respondents were male, young adults, and pursuing master's degree programs. Descriptive statistics show that respondents remained neutral on consumer purchase decisions, email marketing, and website marketing but disagreed with the views of social media marketing. Inferential statistics demonstrate that social media, email, and website marketing strategies are all significant predictors of consumer purchase decisions for postgraduate programs in private universities in Kenya.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This section builds up on the previous chapter by providing a summary of the study accompanied by a detailed interpretation and discussion of the findings presented in the previous chapter. The section also provides the overall conclusion of the study, recommendations for practice, limitations encountered in completing the study, and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The goal of the study was to determine how digital marketing strategies influence consumer purchase decisions for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi, Kenya. The research focused on social media marketing, email marketing, and website marketing as elements of digital marketing strategies, which constituted the independent variable, with consumer purchase decision being the dependent variable. The research was underpinned in the theory of reasoned action as the anchor theory and the learning model of consumer decision-making as the support theory. A cross-sectional descriptive research design was adopted. Postgraduate students in private universities in Nairobi County were targeted, and a sample of 400 respondents was selected using judgmental sampling.

A sufficient response rate was achieved. Most respondents were male, were aged 26-35 years, and were pursuing master's degree programs. Overall mean and standard deviation values were as follows: social media marketing (M=2.893, SD=1.189), email marketing (M=3.746, SD=.9158), website marketing strategy (M=3.871, SD=.5965), and CPD (M=3.574, SD=.9834). Results from correlation analysis were as follows: a significant positive correlation between social media marketing and CPD ($r=.354, p<.05$); a significant positive correlation between email marketing and CPD ($r=.233, p<.05$); and a significant positive correlation between social media marketing and CPD ($r=.451, p<.05$). Results from the regression analysis shows that all the variables – social media marketing ($\beta=.300, p<.05$), email marketing ($\beta=.502, p<.05$), and website marketing ($\beta=.909, p<.05$) – have positive and significant effect on CPD.

5.3 Discussion of the findings

The discussion of the findings is presented according to the specific objectives of the research study.

5.3.1 Social Media Marketing Strategy and Consumer Purchase Decision

The first objective of the study was to determine the influence of social media marketing strategy on consumer purchase decisions for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi. Descriptive statistics show that respondents disagreed with the usage of social media marketing strategies among private universities. For instance, they disagreed with the notions of learning about the universities from social media users, communicating with universities on social media platforms, and interacting with other students on social media. They remained neutral on universities' social media content being engaging, relevant, and trustworthy. An explanation for this phenomenon is provided by Kimani and Obwatho (2020) and Ndung'u et al. (2023), who suggest that despite social media marketing becoming more widespread, the use of social media marketing among higher learning institutions in Kenya is still underwhelming.

The study also found that social media marketing has a moderate, significant effect on consumer purchase decisions. This observation means that increased adoption and usage of social media marketing strategies among private universities would increase consumer purchase decisions for postgraduate programs. The study, therefore, supports the operational hypothesis that states social media marketing has a positive influence on purchase decision. Furthermore, the research supports the theory of reasoned action and the learning model of consumer decision-making. In other words, social media marketing tactics influence consumers' behavioural intentions, leading them to decide what postgraduate program to pursue and from which private university (Ajzen, 2018; Kumar & Reinartz, 2018). This is because content published on social media platforms by the universities has an effect on the subjective norms and attitudes consumers may have toward postgraduate programs and the universities that offer them.

The finding of the study also corroborates findings from previous empirical research, including Balakrishnan et al. (2014), Pandey et al. (2018), Laksamana (2018), Spackman and Larsen (2017), Duffett and Wakeham (2016), Nyetera (2021), Ogunyombo et al. (2017), Kwamboka and Owino

(2024), Nungari and Obuba (2023), and Glendah et al. (2019) who found that social media marketing is a predictor of consumer purchasing decision. Social media sways purchasing decisions in a variety of ways, including exposure to universities and programs they offer, user reviews and experiences, recommendations, and more (Spackman & Larsen, 2017; Pandey et al., 2018). As far as higher education is concerned, social media is a hotbed of social proof where consumers gauge the relevance, credibility, and popularity of learning institutions and their programs.

5.3.2 Email Marketing Strategy and Consumer Purchase Decision

The second objective of the study was to determine the influence email marketing strategy has on consumer purchase decision for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi. According to descriptive statistics, respondents were undecided on the use of email marketing strategies among private universities. They were neutral on universities responding to email inquiries, sending updates about programs, emails containing names in subject lines, appropriateness of email content, and links attached to emails. The finding suggests that email marketing, as a form of digital marketing, is not widely used by private higher learning institutions in Nairobi, Kenya.

Findings from inferential statistics showed that email marketing has a significant positive influence on consumer marketing decisions. This means that increased investment in email marketing will drive the choice of postgraduate programs and private universities. Therefore, the findings support the study's operational hypothesis that stated that email marketing has a positive influence on consumer purchase decision. In addition to this, the theory of reasoned action and the learning model of consumer decision-making are both supported by the findings of this research study. In other words, the more private universities engage in email marketing strategies, the more they shape consumer attitudes and beliefs, consequently influencing consumer purchase decisions.

The findings are also in agreement with those of Nawaz and Kaldeen (2020), Dastane (2022), Yang et al. (2019), de la Roche et al. (2022), Onana (2021), Adhan (2021), Kamande and Maina (2019), and Rotich and Mukhongo (2015) who found a positive association between email marketing and consumer purchase decision. The effect of email marketing can be attributed to the fact that email

marketing strategies are mostly targeted at consumers with greater potential to make a purchase. It is a perfect opportunity for organizations to target, connect, and build loyalty through tailored messages. However, due to its very nature, email marketing does not present opportunities for reviews, and thus, consumers are likely to be influenced by negative reviews. At the same time, if an email marketing strategy is not well designed, it may not produce the desired results, which is why email marketing has the least impact on consumer purchase decision.

5.3.3 Website Marketing Strategy and Consumer Purchase Decision

The final objective of the study was to determine the influence website marketing strategy has on consumer purchase decision for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi. The general sentiment among the respondents was neutrality on the strategic use of website marketing. However, they indicated that the media featured in websites influenced their choice of postgraduate programs and that the links (internal and external) incorporated in those websites were resourceful in influencing their decisions. Website marketing is a common marketing strategy in Kenya's higher learning institutions since universities today have and use websites for various purposes. According to Perna et al. (2021), websites have become a more enduring form of communication.

Inferential statistics revealed that website marketing has a significant positive influence on consumer purchase decision. This means that when private universities invest more in website marketing, more people will enrol in postgraduate programs. As such, the operational hypothesis of the research that stated website marketing has a positive influence on consumer purchase decision was approved by the findings. Also, both the theory of reasoned action and the learning model of consumer decision-making are both supported by the findings of this research study. Put simply, the stimuli received and processed from website marketing can influence the attitudes and beliefs of the target consumers, prompting them to make a purchasing decision.

The findings are also consistent with those of previous empirical investigations, including Jiang et al. (2010), Hu et al. (2016), Hidayanto et al. (2015), Okon et al. (2016), Kwamboka and Owino (2024), Nungari and Obuba (2023), and Njoki and Mwikya (2019) who found a positive correlation between website marketing and consumer purchasing decision. In fact, website marketing explains most of the consumer purchase decision of the three digital marketing

strategies. Website marketing influences consumer behaviour in a variety of ways, including delivering consistent brand messages, enhancing brand visibility, facilitating engagement through content, and guiding customers to make a purchase with call-to-action (Hu et al., 2016; Nungari & Obuba, 2023). Digital marketing encompasses a broad range of different tactics and techniques that all drive traffic and leads to the website, which is why, as this study confirms, website marketing is the most important strategy.

5.4 Conclusion

This research aimed to determine the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase decision for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi. The study found that digital marketing strategies influence consumer purchase decision. For instance, social media marketing had a significant positive effect on consumer purchase decision, proving that social media marketing is a significant predictor of consumer purchase decision. Secondly, the significant positive association found between email marketing and purchase decision confirms that email campaigns are reliable predictor of the choice of postgraduate programs in private universities. Lastly, the research discovered a significant positive relationship between website marketing and purchase decision. Interestingly, of the three digital marketing strategies, based on regression coefficients, website marketing had the strongest effect, explaining the most variance in consumer purchase decision. Therefore, research arrived at the conclusion that website marketing is the most important digital marketing strategy. Overall, this research concludes that social media marketing, email marketing, and website marketing are significant predictors of enrollment for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya.

5.5 Recommendations of the Study

This research section delves into the policy, practical, and theoretical implications of this research study.

5.5.1 Policy Recommendations

The findings of the study suggest that social media marketing, email marketing, and website marketing are all significant predictors of consumer purchase decision for postgraduate programs.

According to the study, the three digital marketing strategies explain 43.0% of consumer purchase decisions in private higher learning institutions in Nairobi. This is significant, implying that private universities should pay attention to and invest more in these digital marketing strategies to attract more postgraduate students. Therefore, at the policy level, the Ministry of Education and concerned stakeholders should design policies aiming to promote the adoption of digital marketing practices, i.e., social media marketing, email marketing, and website marketing strategies in private universities. Government policies should specially focus on website marketing out of the three digital marketing strategies due to the varying degrees of impact.

5.5.2 Managerial Implications

This research has demonstrated the significance of digital marketing strategies on consumer choice for postgraduate programs in private universities in Nairobi County. Therefore, it has major implications for practice. This research urges private universities to invest more in and adopt sound digital marketing strategies to drive enrollment for postgraduate programs. It is also worth noting that since the degree of impact varies between the digital marketing strategies, private universities should channel more resources into website marketing. This study approves the conventional wisdom that digital marketing efforts point to an organization's website. So, no matter how prospects discover the website, be it search engines, social media, or even email campaigns, if they are met with an unresponsive and poorly designed website, then it is all for nothing. A website serves a wide array of roles, chief among them being acting as a digital point of sale. Therefore, private universities' marketing departments should consider allocating more resources to ensure their websites are well-designed and polished to create a lasting impression and excellent user experience.

5.5.3 Theoretical Contributions

This research also has major theoretical implications. It adds to the body of empirical research on consumer purchase decisions in the private sector of higher education. In particular, this research highlights the effect of digital marketing strategies on the choice of postgraduate programs in private universities, validating the theory of reasoned action and the learning model of consumer decision-making as a result. This research, therefore, recommends improving digital marketing

efforts, i.e., social media marketing, email marketing, and website marketing, to influence the choice of postgraduate programs in favor of private universities.

5.6 Study Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The survey targeted postgraduate students in private universities in Nairobi County. Identifying postgraduate (masters and PhD) students in 36 private constituent and private chartered universities across Nairobi County and recruiting them for the study was a time- and resource-consuming process. Even though data-driven recruitment methods were employed to ensure the right participants were selected for the study and that proper planning was implemented for data collection, the process took longer and incurred more resources than expected.

This research focused only on three digital marketing strategies: social media marketing, email marketing, and website marketing. It was discovered that these strategies explain 43.0% of consumer purchase decision. This means that the rest of the percentage (or 57.0%) is explained by digital marketing strategies not covered in this study. Examples include search engine optimization (SEO), pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, influencer marketing, content marketing, etc. Researchers in future should focus on the strategies not studied in this research to determine how they influence the choice of postgraduate programs and/or private universities in Nairobi's higher education sector.

Additionally, it is worth noting that this research was based on the digital marketing trends at the time of the research. Digital marketing is constantly evolving due to changing technologies and consumer behavior. As new-age and ultramodern innovations continue to emerge, the digital marketing landscape is expected to transform. For instance, augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence (AI), video search optimization, virtual reality (VR), and the Internet of Things (IoT) are poised to shape the future of digital marketing. That said, it is crucial for future researchers to further the discussion by capturing the digital marketing trends in the future.

5.7 Chapter Summary

The chapter presents an overview of the study, accompanied by a comprehensive discussion of the findings. It has also provided the conclusion of the study as well as its policy, practical, and

theoretical implications. The shortcomings encountered, and recommendations for further research are also outlined.



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter of Introduction

You are being invited to take part in a research study titled, “The Influence of Digital Marketing Strategies on Consumers Purchase Decisions for Post-graduate Programs in Private Universities in Nairobi County.” Mercy Kimani of Strathmore University, (Email address: kimani.gathoni@strathmore.edu, Phone Number: 0723 445223) is conducting this research.

The goal of this research is to examine the effect of digital marketing strategies on the decision to enroll at your university and the choice of the post-graduate program offered at your university. Your participation will help universities to better market their programs. You can reach out to the researcher using the supplied email address or phone number to discuss any issue concerning this study. You must be enrolled in a post-graduate program in a private university to participate in the study.

If you choose to participate, you will fill in a questionnaire that will take about 10-20 minutes to complete. Any information you provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality and privacy and will not be revealed to anyone under any circumstances. This research is purely for academic purposes.

Your decision to participate in this research is completely voluntary. You are not required to answer all the questions.

If you have any questions regarding the research, contact the researcher, Mercy Kimani at 0723 445223 or send an email to kimani.gathoni@strathmore.edu

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form

▲ THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES ON CONSUMERS PURCHASE DECISIONS FOR POST-GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY

SECTION 1: INFORMATION SHEET

Investigator: Mercy G. Kimani

Institutional affiliation: Strathmore Business School (SBS)

SECTION 2: INFORMATION SHEET–THE STUDY

2.1 : Why is this study being carried out?

The goal of this research is to examine the effect of digital marketing strategies on the decision to enroll at your university and the choice of the post-graduate program offered at your university.

2.2 : Do I have to take part?

No. Taking part in this study is entirely optional and the decision rests only with you. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire to get information on the effect of digital marketing strategies on your decision to enroll at your university. If you are not able to answer all the questions successfully the first time, you may be asked to sit through another informational session after which you may be asked to answer the questions a second time. You are free to decline to take part in the study from this study at any time without giving any reasons.

2.3 : Who is eligible to take part in this study?

- Post-graduate students
- Those in private universities
- Those aged 18 and above

2.4 : Who is not eligible to take part in this study?

- Those in Public universities
- Those aged below 18 years
- Those undertaking undergraduate programs

2.5: What will taking part in this study involve for me?

You will be approached by Mercy Kimani and requested to take part in the study. If you are satisfied that you fully understand the goals behind this study, you will be asked to sign the informed consent form (this form) and then taken through a questionnaire to complete.

2.6: Are there any risks or dangers in taking part in this study?

There are no risks in taking part in this study. All the information you provide will be treated as confidential and will not be used in any way without your express permission.

2.7: Are there any benefits of taking part in this study?

The information will be used to improve the marketing initiatives by private universities

2.8: What will happen to me if I refuse to take part in this study?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Even if you decide to take part at first but later change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time without explanation.

2.9: Who will have access to my information during this research?

All research records will be stored in securely locked cabinets. That information may be transcribed into our database but this will be sufficiently encrypted and password protected. Only the people who are closely concerned with this study will have access to your information. All your information will be kept confidential.

2.10: Who can I contact in case I have further questions?

You can contact me, Mercy Kimani, at SBS, or by e-mail (kimani.gathoni@strathmore.edu), or by phone (0723 445223). You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Tabith Waithaka, at the Strathmore Business School, Nairobi, or by e-mail (twaitthaka@strathmore.edu) or by phone (0722 793036)

If you want to ask someone independent anything about this research please contact:

The Secretary–Strathmore University Institutional Ethics Review Board, P. O. BOX 59857, 00200, Nairobi, email ethicsreview@strathmore.edu Tel number: +254 703 034 375

I, _____, have had the study explained to me. I have understood all that I have read and have had explained to me and had my questions answered satisfactorily. I understand that I can change my mind at any stage.

Please tick the boxes that apply to you;

Participation in the research study

I AGREE to take part in this research

I DON'T AGREE to take part in this research

Storage of information on the completed questionnaire

I AGREE to have my completed questionnaire stored for future data analysis

I DON'T AGREE to have my completed questionnaire stored for future data analysis

Participant's Signature:

Date: ____/____/____

DD / MM / YEAR

Participant's Name:

Time: ____/____

(Please print name)

HR / MN

I, _____ (Name of person taking consent) certify that I have followed the SOP for this study and have explained the study information to the study participant named above, and that s/he has understood the nature and the purpose of the study and consents to the participation in the study. S/he has been given opportunity to ask questions which have been answered satisfactorily.

Investigator's Signature:

Date: ____/____/____

DD / MM / YEAR

Investigator's Name:

Time: ____/____

(Please print name)

HR / MN



Appendix 3: Questionnaire

Section A: Respondents Profile Information (Please mark below the appropriate box)

1. Please indicate your age in years

Below 25	26-35	36-45	46-55	Above 55

2. Please indicate your gender.

Male	Female

3. Indicate the course/program you are taking at the university.

Master's	PhD

4. Please indicate by ticking below whether you were influenced by digital marketing strategies when choosing the university and program for post-graduate. If yes, proceed with the survey.

Yes [] No []

Section B: Digital Marketing Strategies

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements regarding social media marketing strategy, email marketing strategy and website marketing strategy

SD – strongly disagree, D = disagree, N = Neither disagree nor agree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly agree

	SD	D	N	A	SA
Social Media Marketing					
I learned about the University from other social media users who also influenced my choice of the program					
The content on the university's social media platform was entertaining and fun, which encouraged me to choose its program					
I communicated with the university via its social media platforms which was beneficial in making a decision on the choice of program					
I interacted with other students at the university's social media					
The university's social media content was relevant, which I found beneficial in helping me decide to choose the program					
I trusted the communication posted in the university's social media platform, which influenced my choice of the program					

	SD	D	N	A	SA
Email Marketing Strategy					
The university responded to email inquiries that informed my choice for the program					
The university sent me updates about the program frequently that influenced my choice of the program					
The emails from the university contained my name in the subject line that informed my decision to choose its program					
I found the content of the emails appropriate that influenced my decision for the program					
The email from the university contained links to its website and social media platforms that I found helpful in informing my choice					
The emails from the university contained information about educational programs being offered that were helpful in choosing the program					

Website marketing strategy	SD	D	N	A	SA
The university's website was attractive, appealing and easy to use					
The university's website opened and loads faster					
The university's website contained multiple media, such as images, video and text that provided the information I needed to make a decision on the program to choose.					
The website allowed users to comment (has a comment section) that helped me inquire more about its program					
The website had a feedback form for seeking clarifications about its program					
The website had links to other relevant resources or information such as events and university newsletter that provided the information I needed to make a decision					
The website had a live chat function that provided immediate assistance which was helpful in making a decision to choose the program					

Section C: Consumer Purchase Decision

Please indicate extent to which you agree with the following statements

SD – strongly disagree, D = disagree, N = Neither disagree nor agree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly agree

	SD	D	N	A	SA
My choice of this university was influenced by information posted on the university's social media pages					
My choice of this university was influenced by the emails the university sent					
My choice for this university was influenced by the information on its website					

My choice of the post-graduate program was influenced by information posted on the university's social media pages					
My choice of the post-graduate program was influenced by the emails they sent					
My choice for the post-graduate program was influenced by the information on its website					



Appendix 4: Sampling Frame: Enrollment in Private Universities

Annex 13: Enrolment by Gender and Academic Level in Private Chartered Universities

University	Doctorate		Masters		Postgraduate Diploma		Bachelors		Diploma		Total	Total	Grand
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Adventist University of Africa	110	13	484	43	0	0	0	0	0	0	594	56	650
Africa International University	37	13	171	68	5	3	416	259	24	49	653	392	1045
Africa Nazarene University	18	2	228	225	9	11	942	1350	199	291	1396	1879	3275
Catholic University of Eastern Africa	113	67	353	396	8	12	2339	2516	140	136	2953	3127	6080
Daystar University	17	52	208	480	0	0	1469	2231	137	178	1831	2941	4772
Great Lake University of Kisumu	1	3	45	46	0	0	527	444	0	0	573	493	1066
Kabarak University	77	53	47	44	0	0	3443	2963	343	308	3910	3368	7278
KAG University	0	0	40	13	0	0	110	77	0	0	150	90	240
KCA University	0	0	399	262	9	1	3727	2789	0	0	4135	3052	7187
Kenya Highlands Evangelical	0	0	11	3	0	0	315	242	30	64	356	309	665
Kenya Methodist University	903	794	1392	1314	0	0	2283	1739	0	0	4578	3847	8425
Mount Kenya University	16	5	530	298	184	97	15513	11292	0	0	16243	11692	27935
Pan Africa Christian University	46	49	73	79	2	2	287	241	569	903	977	1274	2251
Scott Christian University	0	0	30	13	0	0	282	226	33	18	345	257	602
St Pauls University	24	18	78	71	0	0	1574	2016	0	0	1676	2105	3781
Strathmore University	34	25	508	395	0	0	2116	2174	0	0	2658	2594	5252
United States International University	47	77	611	936	0	0	2803	2837	0	0	3461	3850	7311
University of Eastern Africa, Baraton	27	12	38	34	0	0	1337	1297	90	79	1492	1422	2914

Annex 14: Enrolment by Gender and Academic Level in Private Constituent Colleges

UNIVERSITY	Doctorate		Masters		Postgraduate Diploma		Bachelors		Diploma		Total	Total	Grand
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Hekima University College	0	0	15	5	1	0	116	3	0	0	132	8	140
Marist International University College	0	0	17	10	0	0	178	111	123	126	318	247	565
Tangaza University College	46	22	130	129	0	0	739	288	0	0	915	439	1354
Uzima university	0	0	0	0	0	0	277	209	60	56	337	265	602

UNIVERSITY	Bachelors		Diploma		Doctorate		Masters		Total Male	Total Female	Grand Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female			
Aga Khan University	7	58	5	24	0	0	73	67	85	149	234
AMREF International University	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	6	9
GRETSA University	522	488	398	424	0	0	0	0	920	912	1832
International Leadership University	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kiriri Women's University of Science and Technology	0	1753	0	984	0	0	0	0	0	2737	2737
Lukenya University	331	299	0	0	0	0	0	0	331	299	630
Management University of Africa	1108	1183	28	22	72	29	172	120	1380	1354	2734
Pioneer International University	312	258	0	0	0	0	0	0	312	258	570
Presbyterian University of East Africa	349	373	72	77	0	0	0	0	421	450	871
RAF International University	26	18	5	7	0	0	0	0	31	25	56
Riara University	1114	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1114	0	1114
The East African University	482	265	35	41	0	0	0	0	517	306	823
UMMA UNIVERSITY	467	216	0	0	0	0	3	20	470	236	706
Zetech University	579	412	670	754	0	0	0	0	1249	1166	2415

Source: CUE (2019)

