EFFECTIVENESS OF EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING STRATEGY ON GRADUATE STUDENT'S RETENTION IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

KINYANJUI SARAH NJERI

REGD NO: 13/ 03062

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA) MARKETING MANAGEMENT OPTION, KCA UNIVERSITY

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NOVEMBER, 2016

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been previously published or submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree. I also declare that this work contains no material written or published by other people except where due reference is made and author duly acknowledged.

Kinyanjui Sarah Njeri   REG. NO. 13/ 03062

Signature: _____   Date: _____

I hereby confirm that I have examined the masters' dissertation of Kinyanjui Sarah Njeri and have approved it for examination

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Dr. Edward Owino

ABSTRACT

Higher education has been identified as a veritable vehicle for the growth of economies and fostering development internationally. Experiential marketing entails customer recognition in purchasing of goods and services from an entity after the stimulation accruing from an emotional interaction. The study sought to carry out an analysis of the effectiveness of experiential marketing strategy on graduate student's retention in Kenya. The objectives that guided the study were: to find out the effects of service quality, experiential learning and alumnae associations on graduate students' retention. The study employed a descriptive design and the stratified random sampling method was used for sampling purposes. The marketing department personnel in the University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University and the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Strathmore University, United States International University and Daystar University served as the respondents. Data was collected by use of questionnaires and it was analyzed by use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found out that: service quality levels were confirmed to have assured the institutions ability to generate optimal referrals. The ability of the institutions to carry out practical learning with a view of enabling the students to acquire the requisite skills was confirmed by most of the respondents. Most of the respondents confirmed that the alumnae associations in their institutions carried out robust activities geared towards raising the profiles of the colleges. The study recommends that the universities should enhance their service quality levels by way of working towards ensuring commitment by the members of staff. Universities should put in place provisions for practical learning and instruction as a medium of knowledge impartation to enhance the student's skills levels. The universities should take cognizance of the essence of alumnae associations as vehicles of propelling activities within the institutions and associations should be encouraged to have regular events to increase their vibrancy and equally attract students from the potential target markets.

Key words: experiential marketing, service quality, alumnae association, graduate student retention

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to my family. What I am today, and the small steps that I have taken in my life, it is all because of them. They have had a profound influence towards my intellectual, professional and personal development. They inspired me to strive for excellence. Whereas I struggled to maintain balance at every step of my life, their unconditional love and support made me handle life's challenges with a greater resilience. Special thanks go to my sweet daughter Liz and lovely son Alex, you have been so understanding the whole time of my study. Thank you for being there for me.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AMA – American Marketing Association

ANOVA- Analysis of Variance

CUE – Commission of University Education

JKUAT – Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

SERPERF- Service Performance Model

SERVQUAL- Service Quality Model

SPSS – Statistical Package for Social Sciences

UoN – University of Nairobi

USIUA – United States International University of Africa

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF SIGNIFICANT TERMS

Customer retention - Mutual attachment between the client and the service provider leading to a situation whereby the needs of the client are effectively met and the service provider benefits from retaining the client (Habley, 2010).

Customer satisfaction – The ability of clients' to give approval for the services provided owing to the benefits accrued from them (Osuegera, 2012).

Experiential learning – Practical exposure and the capacity to have outcomes that are predictable from the experiences accrued (Berger and Lyons 2009).

Experiential marketing – Customer recognition in purchasing of goods and services from an entity after the stimulation accruing from an emotional interaction (Schmit, 2011).

Service quality - Salient satisfaction accrued by a client attributed to the meeting of an intangible need from the consumption of a service (Esghi, Roy and Ganghuli, 2009).

1.1 Background of the Study

Higher education has been identified as a veritable vehicle for the growth of economies and fostering development internationally. No country can develop without appreciating the significance of higher education (Shabban, 2013). Developing and developed countries are working hard to obtain the highest possible quality standards of higher education. This has forced them to enforce strict measures as regards licensing and according charters to the institutions of higher learning (Steinner, 2012). The need for exercise of the requisite standards not withstanding calls for optimal marketing as a measure of ensuring the realization of adequate student numbers. The marketing approaches involved have gradually evolved over the years. The use of print media was the predominant approach in the early years but this has gradually been overtaken by the contemporary approaches entailing online marketing (Ball, 2010).

Online marketing has gradually enforced a change of tact in terms of seeking to appeal to the youth and markets which were previously reached via the traditional mediums. Online marketing has entailed a more direct and highly targeted approach in terms of using personal communication tools (Phillip and Ochs, 2011). The tools have the ability of reaching the smallest niches or individuals. This has seen universities moving away from the mass media and the traditional advertising to a more direct consumer and trade promotion. This has in turn positively affected the student enrollment levels in comparison to the previous years. The co-relation between increased enrollment and the targeted marketing can be linked to the situation of having a more personalized approach as opposed to the mass media which is not segmented to specific niches (Phillip and Ochs, 2011).

Advertising as a marketing approach has evolved in line with time and the emerging technology and resources. The previous practices of having applications carried out in print media have been discarded with emergence of new technology. The current focus is on having marketing carried out from a persuasive front keen on indulging the potential clients and having them get a feel of the products and services first hand (Bagdoneine, 2012). Marketing in higher education has the challenge of product intangibility. This occasions the institutions with the task of having the services enumerated to the target audience and packaged in a manner that will make them appealing. The intangibility of the service marketed brings forth the challenge of having the target consumer appreciate it before hand. It thus calls for innovation as a measure of ensuring apt delivery of the content in a manner that will appeal to the target audience (Sickler, 2011).

1.1.1 Experiential Marketing Strategy

Experiential marketing entails customer recognition in purchasing of goods and services from an entity after the stimulation accruing from an emotional interaction (Schmit, 2011). Experiential marketing inspires the potential client by way of having them register a memorable experience at the back of their minds. The experience triggers them to seek an interaction with the product by way of consuming it thus action in terms of the actual purchase. Experiential marketing thus places emphasis on the entire experience that the client anticipates in the wake of the interaction with the goods and services (Schmit, 2011). The heightened experience that the clients expect triggers a psychological connection thus the expression of feelings and emotions leading to an ingrained attachment to the products and services at the advent of purchase.

Experiential marketing approach has been described by Sullivan, (2012) as a systematic way that companies use to achieve a competitive advantage towards their competitors by way of

producing experiences about the product or service that the organization is about to offer. User involvement in terms of ensuring physical, emotional, spiritual and social interaction with the product or service can equally assure capacity to have a potential client appreciating it (Zarantonello, 2012). Users' co-participation to the products and services offered equally enhances the experiential capacity in terms of availing the ability for interaction and product usage to the extent of aiding in decision making as regards the choice of purchase (Todorovic, 2011).

Zagnolli, (2010) argued that the symbolic value of the products offered enhances the experiential feel. This is in terms of the ability to have the symbolic relationship as the connection between the marketer and the potential client (Zagnolli, 2010). This may enhance the appeal and ability to have the potential client easily connect and identify with the product and services. In the higher education spectrum, the ability of the institution to have its programs in line with the dictates of the market is a tough call for the institutions (Torado, 2011). The ability to have the target audience of prospective students identifying with the programs offered and having prior interaction is sensitive to the accomplishment of the core functions of the institutions in terms of enrollment assurance and student retention (Schmit, 2011).

Rossi, (2014) was of the view that creation of dynamic alumnae associations which have a touch with the institutions programs is critical to the mainstays of the universities in terms of continuous interaction with former students who act as a fulcrum to interact with the potential students. Situations whereby the universities allow students exchange programs and have open days whereby elaborate enumeration of the activities at hand is extolled to the students equally endears them to the external publics. This convergence of interests by virtue of having the institutions pitching for their services and the prospective students interacting with them gives

the ultimate experience to effectively make decisions as regards the programs to undertake (Jaschick, 2013).

1.1.2 Customer Retention

The American Marketing Association (AMA, 2011) defines customer retention as the ability to strike relational chord with the client in the quest of doing business and the relationship created instills a sense of indebtedness in them. This makes the client feel part of the establishment in terms of the capacity to derive benefits from the services provided and always seek perpetuation of the business association. The interrelationship is based on intangible inputs and outputs from the association, mutual interaction, individual judgment by the client, innovation on the part of the service provider and presence of information asymmetry (AMA, 2011).

The higher education sector is very sensitive in terms of having unique selling points which make the institutions attractive to the target audience. The institutions have to give a compelling value preposition to the prospective clients and convince them to take the academic programs (Mulhere, 2014). Different institutions internationally are identified with specific programs which make them unique and identified to them. The universities have to demonstrate and translate it into action when it comes to giving the value preposition to the potential clients and ensure that the goodwill generates results in terms of assured prospects to the students after completion of the academic programs (Tudor, 2014). This ensures that the requisite loyalty is assured and clients continuously identify the institutions with success.

Ultimate loyalty to the academic programs offered by the institutions can be created by way of burden reduction to the students when it comes to mitigating the cost of education. This is because the cost of undertaking an academic program is very integral to decision making on

enrollment (Fend, 2014). Guidance on the way by providing personalized attention to students is a measure of reinforcing the value of the brand. This is attributed to the fact that many students are young adults under the care of parents and the need to ensure utmost care gives comfort to their guardians. This thus builds the requisite loyalty from the parents and enhances student retention levels (DeBrey, 2012).

The ability to differentiate in terms of the programs offered enabling the universities to be unique from the others will always invoke a sense of loyalty from the target audience (Burns, 2015). It gives the institution a strong position by virtue of the knowledge that the audience understands that its programs are different from the rest in the market. The uniqueness is a compelling reason to build loyalty and confidence from the target audience enough to ensure a continuous stream of new students and their retention over the years (Souza, 2015).

Sustainable client loyalty can only be actualized by way of having the universities persuade their target audiences with precision and be true to their word by conferring programs which present value for the student's money (Quinn, 2013). The ability of the institutions to be all over the map instead of carrying out marketing pursuits in their traditional backyards for recruitments also spreads the goodwill potentiated by the gesture. Running predictable models in terms of the academic programs offered is also a sure way of generating loyalty to the target audiences. It ensures that the schools have sustainability and a policy of quality which ultimately encourages repeat buying in the sensitive service provision industry and the ultimate benefit of student retention (Smith, 2014).

1.1.3 Higher Education Marketing In Kenya

The higher education sector in Kenya is rapidly evolving. The growth of public universities has been immense and at present we have 22 fully fledged institutions having been chartered to

provide education services to the public (CUE, 2015). Many other university colleges abound with a current policy provision to ensure that virtually every county will have one. This places the institutions in a precarious position as regards the competition to get students placed in them (Gecaga, Mangurio, Ngari and Kioko, 2015). Private universities are still growing with each institution striving to cut out a niche for itself in the competitive market. It is against this background that the study seeks to carry out a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of the experiential marketing strategy on graduate student retention in select universities in Kenya.

A study by Owino, Kibera Munyoki and Wainaina (2014) on the service quality in Kenyan universities deduced that most of the universities did not meet the requisite thresholds in terms of stakeholder expectations. The failure to meet stakeholder expectations was attributed to low service quality standards especially at the instruction and academic content delivery phase making students disillusioned with the programmes. The study proposed the need to have the institutions scaling up their activities in terms of standards with a need to provide better value to the clients and all consumers of the services provided (Owino *et al,* 2014).

1.1.4 Experiential Marketing Strategy in Public and Private Universities in Kenya

Marketing of the institutions of higher learning has gone a notch higher in comparison to the previous years. This is occasioned by the intense competition that is present in the sector (Sewe, 2014). The need to have the institutions stamp their authority in the growing markets is the defining factor behind the pursuits. The essence of having quality in terms of the services offered being the driving factor behind the uptake of academic programs is also a defining factor (Obwatho, Thuo and Mwiti 2015). This is associated to the growing assertiveness of the target markets in the higher education sector thus requiring strong brand positioning to be the defining factor behind the marketing initiatives.

The allure of the students availed to the public universities by the central placement agency has been their undoing occasioning lethargy in the marketing initiatives. Most of the public universities have failed to aggressively market their academic programs eroding their market positions as pertains to the self sponsored students (Oanda and Jowi, 2013). The need to grow market positions an equally reap benefits from the increased student numbers has been the forte of the private universities (Bowen, Gogo and Maswili, 2014). This has caused a re-engineering of the marketing approaches causing them to engage in highly targeted pitches. Developed online abilities facilitating tutorials, interactive access to the virtual academic facilities, robust alumni associations and enhanced goodwill have been the strong selling points of the leading private universities (Nyachoti, 2013). This places the private universities at a more elevated position in terms of the ability to engage in experiential marketing and reap from the initiatives. It is with view of the foregoing that the study sought to carry out a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of the experiential marketing strategy on graduate student retention in selected universities in Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The higher education sector has gradually experienced some exponential growth. This has been occasioned by the rapid population growth and the presence of a more assertive populace which needs to acquire knowledge as a medium of personal development and social transformation. The uptake of education programs has thus been more sustained necessitating the need to open up new institutions and satellite colleges for higher education. This has equally set the pace for competition between the existing institutions in the quest to attract, enroll and retain new students. The need to carry out aggressive marketing cannot thus be underscored. The evolution

of the marketing scene demands greater innovation and fortitude in the wake of getting more students.

The marketing pursuits for the universities and other institutions of higher learning have been gradually evolving with time. This is attributed to the rapidly changing landscape with regard to technology, upgrade of programmes and the need to conform to emerging best practices. This has made many universities to have a change of tact with an aim of ensuring that they get greater number of students in highly competitive business scene (Tudor, 2014). This notwithstanding the need to ensure that the pitches made by the universities are in consonance with the reality on the ground with regard to the delivery of programs cannot be over emphasized. In many cases most of the universities do not meet the stakeholder expectations and the marketing pursuits carried out end up in vain (Tudor, 2014).

The current best practices place an emphasis on the need to have the universities employ patience in the efforts carried out in marketing the institutions. They also demand consistency in terms of the need to adhere to the expected standards in terms of the market positioning, identity, quality and stated goals (Quinn, 2015). The essence of having the best practices as the driving factor behind the aspirations of the institutions is to ensure leverage and realization of the expected fruits from the marketing activities. This is going by the fact that at the advent of delivering on the promises made to potential clients, the universities are bound to experience sustained growth attributed to repeat buying and client retention (Mave and Hayes, 2015).

Burns (2015) accentuated that the ability of the universities to employ multiple angles in marketing activities gives them a head start in terms of the capacity get leverage from all the pursuits carried out. This is occasioned by the fact that when the universities exploit field days,

open days and engagement of the ongoing students with alumnae the institutions are bound to experience ripple effects occasioned by the individual activities. The situation of having branded apparel and related merchandise donned by the members of the community within the institution equally registers a firm imprint in the minds of the target community. This is an avenue which can be adeptly exploited for marketing purposes (Burns, 2015).

Magutu, Mbeche, Nyaoga and Ongeri (2010) were of the view that the prevailing trends in the higher education sector demanded explicit changes in the marketing approaches employed. This was the only way out to ensure that the public universities achieved the envisaged ideals in terms of the quality management practices (Magutu et al, 2010). The study focused on the quality management practices as a factor affecting the creation of goodwill and retention of students in the public universities. This occasioned a gap in the other marketing activities devoid of the program of events as a goodwill generation requisite.

Obwatho, Thuo and Mwiti (2015) focused on the effects of economic trends on the adoption of digital marketing among the public universities in Kenya. The study deduced that the niche markets targeted by the institutions and the costs expended played a significant role in the marketing activities. The emphasis of the study was on the digital marketing approach regardless of the fact that many other approaches still suffice. The policy framework dictating the economic growth and development trends equally came out as a factor affecting the ability of public universities to attract and retain clients (Oanda and Jowi, 2013). The study observed that social development was a factor which affected the growth of the student population accruing from the ability to have government subsidies for education programs and capacity to pay for the academic programs. The study focused on the social economic factors affecting the growth and retention of students in public universities but it did not delve into marketing activities carried

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out to attract self sponsored students. The ongoing discourse presented a vivid knowledge gap in the experiential marketing strategy as a forum which can be employed by universities to ensure graduate students retention in the universities.

Despite the numerous approaches used by the universities to market their academic programs, the sector has been fluid with most of them experiencing fluctuations of the student numbers frequently. The fluctuations may be attributed to the trends in the marketing activities carried out by the universities (Sewe, 2014). These are a pointer to the marketing activities directly impacting on the institutions ability to attract and retain students. The marketing trends point to a profound growth of the online presence as a tool for marketing but a slow uptake of the experiential approach (Nyachoti, 2013). The study thus sought to examine the effectiveness of experiential marketing strategy on graduate student's retention in Kenya.

1.3 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to analyze the effectiveness of experiential marketing strategy on graduate student's retention in Kenya

1.3.1 Specific objectives

a) To determine the effect of service quality on graduate student retention
b) To find out the role of experiential learning on graduate student retention
c) To establish the influence of alumnae association on graduate students retention

1.4 Research Questions

a) What is the effect of service quality on graduate student retention in Kenyan universities?
b) To what extent does experiential learning affect graduate student retention in Kenyan universities?
c) How do the alumnae associations affect graduate students retention in Kenyan universities?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The marketing industry has the challenge of dynamism occasioned by the rapidly evolving trends and practices. The need to have insights as regards programmes and activities undertaken by varying entities and their merits and demerits cannot be wished away. The marketing industry may thus end up benefiting from the results of the study. This is by way of understanding the best approach to employ in the wake of carrying out sales pitches and product promotion activities for higher education programs.

The higher education sector has evolved over the years. It has grown from the situations of only one public university to the current position of twenty two chartered public universities and many private universities. This phenomenal growth can only be associated with the need to meet rising demand in the education sector. The higher education sector may equally benefit from the study by way of getting insights on activities to employ for more effective marketing activities geared towards enhancing the customer retention standards.

The field of marketing and product promotion is evolving and growing. It is gradually attracting more scholarly attention than the previous years. The study will inevitably contribute to the body of scholarly works by way of generating more information that may be of great help to future researchers. This is with a bias to the dynamic aspects of experiential marketing in the higher education sector.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study sought to carry out a comparative analysis of effectiveness of experiential marketing strategy on graduate student's retention in Kenya. The study had a bias on establishing the extent to which the exploitation of alumnae associations, the use of experiential learning and service

quality levels can be used to enhance graduate students retention. The study had a focus on three public universities which were the University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University and the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. They were compared with private universities which were Strathmore University, United States International University and Daystar University. The study was carried out between June and October 2016.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter carries out a review of previous works carried out by other researchers in the field of experiential marketing in the higher education sector. It has the theories on which the study was hinged on. The section critically examined the literature based on its strengths and weaknesses in relation to the present study. It carried out a critical review of the study and gave a summary of the gaps to be filled. It thereafter brought forth a conceptual framework which is the diagrammatic relationship of the variables of the study as well.

2.2 Theoretical Review

The study was guided by three theories which were the relationship marketing paradigm, the experiential learning theory and the student integration theory.

2.2.1 The Relationship Marketing Paradigm

The study was based on the relationship marketing paradigm as postulated by Sheth and Paravitiyar in 1995. The theory argues that the process of establishing and enhancing relations with clients at a profit is of essence for the growth of an enterprise prospects. This is accrued from the fact that the mutual co-existence that comes from the relationship occasioned by the marketing creates additional value beyond the service itself. This has the ultimate effect of creating a strong long term bond with the client encouraging repeat buying and retention for long periods (Braxton, 2006).

The theory applies well to the study which sought to carry out a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of experiential marketing strategy on graduate student retention in Kenyan universities. This was occasioned by the fact that higher education in the republic of Kenya has become very competitive and the need to create relationships which transcend the prevailing situation of students registering for programs and completing them is of essence. The need to provide a barrier to the competition cannot be over emphasized. This is because in the situation of good relations between the university and the students, good relations are bound to be created and the potential for the replication of the process by another institution may be curtailed if a good rapport and long term relationship is created. This may enhance customer retention and building up of loyalty by the institution leading to growth in student numbers and enhanced prospects from the relations created (Freeman, 2007).

Pullins, (2010) was of the view that the creation of relations also reduces the potential of student's dropping out from the institutions. This is because there is mutual attachment between the client and the service provider leading to a situation whereby the needs of the client are effectively met and the service provider benefits from retaining the client. The enhanced relations continuously   attract and motivate creation of more relationships between the students' parents, alumnae and the greater community with the institution (Habley, 2010). This enhances the institutions prospects in terms of earning goodwill and the requisite standing which ultimately translates to growth in the student population. This enhances the stature of the institutions from the salient marketing approach which is cost effective and assures long term growth (Brunson, 2010).

Braxton (2006) opined that the relationship marketing approach has the potential to enhance the levels of student satisfaction, commitment, trust and the ability to develop loyalty. This assures the institutions of a continuous stream of students even without them engaging in expensive pitches in the mass media and related mediums. This is all accrued from the positive experiences that the students had encountered with the institutions. This gives credence for the relationship marketing paradigm as a measure of experiential marketing by the universities and other institutions of higher learning with an aim of sustaining the growth of student numbers Braxton (2006).

2.2.2 Experiential Learning Theory

The study equally drew from the experiential learning theory by Kolbs (1984). The capacity of the knowledge dissemination programs to give students the actual practical exposure was heavily advocated for by the theory. The theory calls for live simulations in the learning process and real planning in terms of idea dissemination before practical exposure of the students. The

experiential learning theory equally posits that learning is a process whereby the knowledge dissemination is not just an outcome but the experiences that the learner is exposed to count the more (Deane, 2011).

The experiential learning theory however has the risk of creating a clash in the minds of the students who were previously exposed to rote learning in the high schools (Herbert and Hauf, 2015). This reduces the potential of the students appreciating experiences accruing from the process owing to the fact that the students attach great premium to the continuous assessment in the periodic tests and marks awarded in comparison to the experiences acquired.

Experiential learning has the imperatives of enhancing the students prospects from the experiences accrued in the learning process. It also draws from the premise that the students learning builds on common ideas which can be integrated with new concepts thus releasing new concepts and topics which enhance the re-learning capacity (Kolb and Kolb, 2005). The experiential learning theory also has the premise that knowledge dissemination engages in conflict resolution which enhances the adaption of new ideas by the students. This facilitates them to engage in new thinking and express their feelings while reflecting over the learning experience (Kolb et al, 2005).

The convergence of the experiences accrued from the experiential learning approach thus enhances the capacity of the students to adapt to the world. This is with regard to the development of feelings, cognitive capacity, behavior and the ability to perceive issues in a new dimension. These results from the synergetic transactions between the students between the students and the college environment in which the knowledge is disseminated (Qualters, 2010). This experience creates well rounded graduates who are able to adapt to the competitive world of

work thus easily assimilated into industry upon graduation. It is a veritable yard stick via which the universities and colleges offering academic programs are able to market themselves going by the success of the graduates from the institutions. This gives the institutions a unique selling prepositions which makes them a must buy in the competitive higher education sector thus translating into assured student population growth and retention (Pink, 2015).

2.2.3 Student Integration Theory

The study was equally based on the student integration theory as premised by Kuh (2006). The theory banks on the interactionalism from a sociological perspective. This is based on the fact that the ability of the university to encourage the student to transit from the former social spheres to the schools setting is integral to their retention. Assimilation into the prevailing social groups in the schools in terms of academia and responsibilities is a critical factor to the sustained retention of students in college and their ability to complete the programs (Culver, 2008).

Hagedorn (2005) espoused that the student integration theory is premised on the congruence between the academic and social integration complimentary. The capacity of the students to adjust to the rules, norms and dominant patterns in the campus makes them well adapted socially within the institutions. The social adjustment provides the students with a psychological safety net. This provides the students with gratification from the knowledge that they have the ability to conform to set standards and obligations pertaining their continued stay in the institutions (Culver, 2008).

Whitt (2008) was of the view that the student integration theory equally comes along with the economic perspective. This entails the cost in terms of the amounts of money expended in retaining the student in school. The monies may be in form of tuition fees, boarding and other

incidental costs. This may play a critical role in influencing the students to continuously stay in school associated with the anticipated future earnings and the capacity to obtain tangible results from the academic programs (Van Stolk, 2007). It identifies well with the human capital model which leads the students to make decisions as influenced by the anticipated economic benefits from the programs they undertake in school (Van Stolk, 2007).

The theory identifies well with the study owing to the fact that the universities have to package themselves in a manner which will make them attractive to the students. This is by way of making a strong pitch to them that they standard a chance of obtaining good opportunities in life upon graduation. The universities should equally provide explicit examples of persons who have excelled in other facets of life after going through academic programs in the institutions. The alumnae associations come out strongly as avenues of interaction between prospective students and the universities. They may act as a fulcrum to influence positive decision making with regard to taking up an academic program.

2.3 Empirical Review

The following section carries out a review of previous works carried out by other researchers and sought to compare it with the current study with a view of examining it according to its strengths and weaknesses.

2.3.1 Service Quality and Graduate Student Retention

Service quality is defined as the salient satisfaction accrued by a client attributed to the meeting of an intangible need from the consumption of a service as premised by Esghi, Roy and Ganghuli, (2009). The encounter between the client and the organization thus brings forth the ability of deduction of the merits and de-merits of the overall experience. The experience plays

an integral role in determination of the ability of the client to engage in mutual association with the service provider in future business endeavors going by the satisfaction accrued (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Customer satisfaction from the quality of services provided is thus dependent on the ability to have the individual encounter providing the client with the feeling of contentment from the association (Kumar and Mashar, 2009).

Customer satisfaction is measured by use of the SERVQUAL and SERPERF modes. The former was postulated by Parasuraman, (1988) while the later was by Buttle, (1996). The SERQUAL model is hinged on the clients' expectations and perceptions about the performance (Adil, 2013). The SERVPERF model on the other hand is based on the clients' perceptions about the performance (Shekardizacheh and Hon-Tat, 2011). Both models have the dimensions of measurement as the tangible outputs which can be realized from the performance, the reliability of the services, assurance about the ability to have the client expectations met and the capacity to assure empathy to the client by the quality of services provided (Shekardizacheh et al , 2011).

Adil, (2013) posited that the SERVQUAL model has been emulated as having capacity to recognize customers' expectations thus ideal for the measurement of service quality. The SERVPERF model has equally been recognized owing to its ability to explain the variance of customer expectations and the overall service quality. The SERVQUAL model has equally been critiqued as been too theoretical and operational thus not practical in terms of giving the envisaged results in terms of service quality measurement. The SERVPERF model has also been criticized as placing too much emphasizes on psychometric and methodological measurement by use of scales in the determination of the service performance standards (Shekardizacheh et al, 2011).

Studies carried out by Magutu Mbeche, Ogeri and Ombati (2010) showed that the service quality levels in the public universities in the republic of Kenya wanted leading to a drawback in their capacity to meet client expectations. This occasioned the inability to have the public universities retain students in a sustainable manner thus impeding their growth levels. Situations of greater satisfaction from private universities were a pointer to the vacuum occasioned by the poor service quality thus curtailing the growth levels of public universities owing to their inability to attract and retain students Magutu et al (2010).

High service quality was commensurate with high client retention and satisfaction. Empirical works carried out by Owino, Kibera, Munywoki and (2014) showed that the levels of clients satisfaction had a large bearing on the ability to attract and retain clients. This impacted positively on the overall performance of the organizations with regard to the ability to generate positive goodwill from the corporate image. There was thus co-relation between the service quality standards and client satisfaction with the resultant positive effects on overall firm performance Owino et al (2014).

Hodum (2007) postulated that measurement of service quality interest is attributed to the relationship between the level of clients' satisfaction and the cost expended to guarantee realization of the requisite satisfaction levels. It is thus imperative that an organization has to invest in the realization of client satisfaction from the services offered to clients (Nera, 2005). This is a measure of salient approval of the services provided and the goodwill generated naturally translates to repeat buying and the capacity to assure increased volumes is thus guaranteed by offering quality services (Osuegera, 2012).

Zwick (2009) opined that service quality in universities accrues from the ability of the student to appreciate the academic programs in place. The students have to strike a chord with the content delivery and identify with the ability of the teaching staff to comprehensively tutor them in class (Purdie, 2009). This ingrains the feeling of satisfaction from the partaking in the programs and assures them of the ability to continuously attend the academic programs passionately accruing from the benefits derived (Siryapit and Parapitiya, 2009). The ability to have teaching staff who are up to the task in terms of meeting students demands may give a re-assurance to the students about their competency and empathy as postulated by Tinto, (2009).

Commitment by staff, their availability for one on one interaction and their capacity to innovate with regard to the instruction mediums of use may equally shore up the client satisfaction levels in a university as premised by Zwick (2009). This is because students are always very keen on the capacity of the staff to be approachable and to provide them with the requisite assistance when they carry out their academic programs. Students equally are very keen on confirming the intuitiveness of the lecturers with regard to the provision of alternatives as pertains the knowledge dissemination processes at hand (Ahmed, Nawaz and Shaukat, 2010).

Tinto (2009) argued that the ability to meet students' expectations and their perceptions about the technical quality of the academic programs offered equally plays an integral role in achieving satisfaction levels in universities. The perceived value of the academic programs offered with regard to their assurance to meet the expectations of the student's ability to be employed after completion equally raises the image of institutions (Ahmed et al, 2010). This enhances client loyalty and makes the ability of the institution to continuously retain the students enhanced. It may positively impact on the overall growth trajectory of the institution.

Siryapit et al, (2009) was of the view that the presence of wide variety of choices with regard to the programs available and the ability to guarantee students job placement and quality education were equally strong selling points for universities in the highly competitive higher education sector. The presence of excellent physical resources in terms of learning amenities was a strong selling preposition for the colleges (Siryapit et al, 2009). This assured them the capacity to retain students enrolled for academic programs and the ability to continuously grow their populations from the ability to stand out as effective institutions.

2.3.2 Experiential Learning and Graduate Student Retention

Hoyt and Winn (2010) were of the view that experiential learning is built upon a foundation of inter-disciplinary and constructionivist learning. Varied approaches have been used to ensure that the learners acquire the requisite experiences in the quest of knowledge acquisition (Hoyt et al, 2010). Situations of learners being placed on attachment to gain the requisite industrial exposure have always guaranteed them ability to acquire the skills before the completion of academic programs. This is occasioned by the fact that compartmentalized learning is not reflective of the real world. This offers theoretical knowledge to the students and occasions the risk of failing to avail practical skills thus disadvantaging the learner at the advent of job placement (Hagedon, 2005).

Berger and Lyons (2009) opined that experiential learning is compared to the ideal environment as pertains to practical exposure and the capacity to have outcomes that are predictable from the experiences accrued. Engagement in purposeful endeavors geared towards providing the learner with known and assured outcomes from the process creates the essence of actual skills impartation. These were considered as integral requisites for experiential learning

(Berger et al, 2009). This calls for relevance in terms of the programs used in learning activities carried out. It thus places an emphasis on the congruence between academia and industry.

Experiential learning has emphasizes on the mixture of content and processes used in equipping the learner with information (Braxton and Hindy, 2010). Engagement in periodical evaluations to gauge the capacity of the processes in terms of guaranteeing the learner the requisite skills is equally an imperative of the experiential learning process. This can only be actualized at the advent of subjecting the learner to constant checks to determine their ability to grasp and effectively carry out tasks in line with the theoretical knowledge acquired from the learning process (Braxton et al, 2010).

Whitt and Kenzie (2012) considered constant evaluation as a means of determining consonance between theory and practice as encouraging acknowledgement of the bigger perspective. This is with regard to the ability of the learner to conceptualize issues. It also encourages fusion of reflection by the instructor to confirm the capacity of the teaching methodologies to impact the requisite skills (Whitt et al, 2012). This enhances the creation of an emotional connection between the learner and the instruction process thus guaranteeing the relevance of the knowledge dissemination process. It enhances the ability of the instruction process to draw the learners from their perceived comfort zones and provoke them to experiment with the knowledge acquired (Whitt et al, 2012).

Pink, (2015) premised the ability of the ongoing students to appreciate experiential learning as a medium of practical skills impartation enhances the stature and profile of the institutions. This plays an integral role in encouraging the students to be retained in the faculties until the completion of the academic programs (Qualters, 2010). It also extends the good will and standing of the institutions to the wider communities encouraging them to enroll new students in

the institutions. This ultimately translates to the growth of student populations and sustainable continuity of programs (Qualters, 2010).

2.3.3 Alumnae Association Activities and Graduate Student Retention

Alumnae associations are made up of individuals who have gone through institutions in the quest of learning and knowledge acquisition. The learning process creates a forum via which the former students associate and take pride in having gone through the learning institution at a particular stage in life (Bowen, Gogo and Maswili, 2014). The alumnae associations act as social forums for integration and interaction by persons who can credit the institution with having given them a chance to meet. The opportunity of partaking the academic programs in the same institutions serves as an avenue of association. The vibrancy of an alumnae association is influenced by the success of the membership attributed to their ability to get placement upon the completion of the academic programs (Bowen, et al, 2014).

Situations whereby individual success of former students can be linked directly to the opportunity of passing through the learning institution gives credence to its position as pertains the ability to mould the students into responsible persons (Ogot, 2010). This gives a sense of pride and great impetus to the institution with regard to its striking identity and ability to assure the learners the potential of openings upon completion of the academic programs. It also serves as a measure of the quality of programs undertaken and a yard stick of capacity to have synergy between the industrial sector yearning for talents to employ and the ability of the institution to provide the same (Walaba, 2010).

The alumnae associations have been used by many institutions as forums to ensure engagement between the students in ongoing academic programs and those who have completed

the programs (Sewe, 2014). It is a critical component of measuring the ability of the programs undertaken to identify with the market needs in terms of the human resource requirements. This is a veritable marketing tool occasioned by the fact that the students in ongoing programs can vividly relate with those who have completed the programs and found a footing in industry (Omboi, 2013). The capacity of the members of the alumnae associations to be successful in life acts as a source of encouragement to the continuing students and it motivates them to work harder in their studies.

Alumnae associations with successful individuals forming the core of the membership are integral to the ability of the institutions to attract and retain students in their academic programs (Ngari and Gichira, 2014). Instances whereby some colleges have been identified with exemplary performance in particular facets of industry and academia have always influenced the uptake of other students in the same academic programs. This has been a good avenue for ensuring continuity in a sustainable manner and enhances the appeal of the programs offered by virtue of the target market being effectively able to relate to the products of the institutions (Nyachoti, 2013).

2.3.4 Experiential Marketing Strategy and Retention of Graduate Students in Public and Private Universities

Pullins, (2010) argued that experiential marketing strategy is the medium of using experiences accruing from the expected satisfaction of a product or service offered by an entity. The marketing approach has been used by universities and other institutions of higher learning to seek out new clients for the academic programs on offer (Berger and Walingford, 2008). The institutions have always employed approaches which ensure that the potential students are involved in terms of their emotional interaction with the programs before they enroll for them

(Wangenge, 2008). This is by way of having them given a sneak preview of what the programs entail to encourage their participation in informed decision making before enrolling for them (Brunson, 2010).

Mweria (2007) was of the view that in the higher education segment experiential marketing seeks to create a relationship between the potential student and the institution. The need to implore on the student to gain confidence with the programs being offered forms the core basis of the interaction (Bowen, et al 2014). It motivates the potential students to yearn to understand the institution in a better manner in terms of the programs offered and their quality. This motivates the potential students to seek prior interaction with the systems in place before making a decision on enrolling for the programs (Chapleo, 2010). The interactions may entail actual physical visits to the institutions, meeting the members of faculty, looking out for the successes of the individual alumnae association members and engaging the institutions through the online media platforms like the interactive websites (Nyachoti, 2013).

Oanda and Jowi (2013) were of the view that the Kenyan situation mirrors low uptake of marketing activities by the public universities. This is occasioned by the situation of assured student placement via the joint admissions board. The need to generate additional revenue for the institutions especially after the advent of the structural adjustment programs has necessitated putting in place of module two programs in most of the universities (Onsongo, 2007). The universities however use rudimentary marketing approaches not in consonance with the present day demands with regard to the evolution of the digital marketing approaches (Aduda, 2014). This makes them handicapped as pertains to their capacity to reach out to the target niches of potential students who technologically savvy. Many of the public universities end up losing out

to private institutions occasioned by the failure to style up and meet the dictates of the business scene (Mweria, 2007).

Mutiga (2015) was of the view that the traditional approaches whereby particular institutions are synonymous with certain programs has equally seen some public universities in the higher education sector within the republic of Kenya greatly lose out to emerging competition. The tradition of having programs like law, medicine and architecture identified with the University of Nairobi has gradually waned with time (Ombamba, 2009). Most of the public universities have taken cognizance of the demand for the said programs and started offering them within the institutions (Oanda et al 2013). This has greatly tilted the scales many at times in favour of the emerging competition. This is attributed to the fact that the rigid approaches which greatly restricted students willing to take up the programs from doing so still hold. Instances of the growth of the middle class and high end economic cadres with high disposable income has motivated many members of the said social status to pay high fees for similar programs in institutions which guarantee them quality (Magutu, et al, 2010).

Private universities are mainly modeled from commercial angles with the core objective of their founders being realization of revenue from the activities after providing quality services to the clientele (Bowen, et al, 2014). The business model forces the private institutions of higher learning to go out of their way and engage in multiple marketing pursuits in the quest of getting new clients. This has seen the institutions invest heavily in online presence to enhance their potential of reaching out to new clients (Oanda, 2013). It has also seen them carry out very vibrant outreach activities to maintain follow up of the students who have left the institutions with a view of having them identify with the alumnae associations (Walaba, 2010). Engagement of qualified faculty members who give personalized attention to individual students in some

institutions ensures that they identify with the pertinent needs of the learners. This has the potential of giving some private universities which are keen on growing their fortunes a head start in comparison to the public institutions which seldom carry out the activities.

The need to have universities seeking to carry out continuous needs assessment before rolling out new programs and expanding the existing ones cannot be over emphasized (Berger et al, 2008). The element of cost also plays a critical role in determining the pricing of the university academic programs. Instances whereby failure to resonate with the market in terms of the cost of programs and the potential of the target market has always exposed some institutions into jeopardy (Ombamba, 2009). This is occasioned by the fact that in some cases the programs are overpriced and some competitors fill in the gaps by way of offering quality and cheaper alternatives in terms of pricing. This has seen some public universities stagnate without any tangible expansion especially for the module two programs while the private counterparts open new campuses nationally and regionally (Chapleo, 2010). The need to have the programs offered identifying with the demands of the market and engaging in market surveys to seize the competition is the only way out for the serious players in the highly competitive higher education sector (Wangenge, 2008).

2.4 Summary and gaps to be filled

The study sought to carry out a comparative analysis of effectiveness of experiential marketing strategy on graduate student's retention in Kenya. The study sought to find out the effects of service quality, experiential learning and alumnae associations on graduate students retention. Previous studies by Magutu et al, (2010) focused on the service quality and deduced that most of the public universities had wanting programs and failed to retain students in a sustainable manner owing to inferior service levels. Empirical works by Owino et al (2014) showed that there was a

correlation between high quality service and client satisfaction. Oanda and Jowi (2013) focused on the effects of government policy on the joint admissions board and the ability to access government subsidy as a factor affecting graduate students retention in public universities. The study sought to fill in the gap of carrying out a comparative analysis of how experiential marketing in public and private universities affects graduate students retention.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1 is a diagrammatic representation of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The independent variables are service quality, experiential learning, alumnae associations and experiential marketing in public and private universities. The independent variables individually influence the dependent variable in an environment facilitated by the intervening variable which is the institutions marketing policy.

Independent Variables

Independent Variables		**Dependent variable**
Service quality		
Experiential learning		Graduate student retention
Alumnae associations		
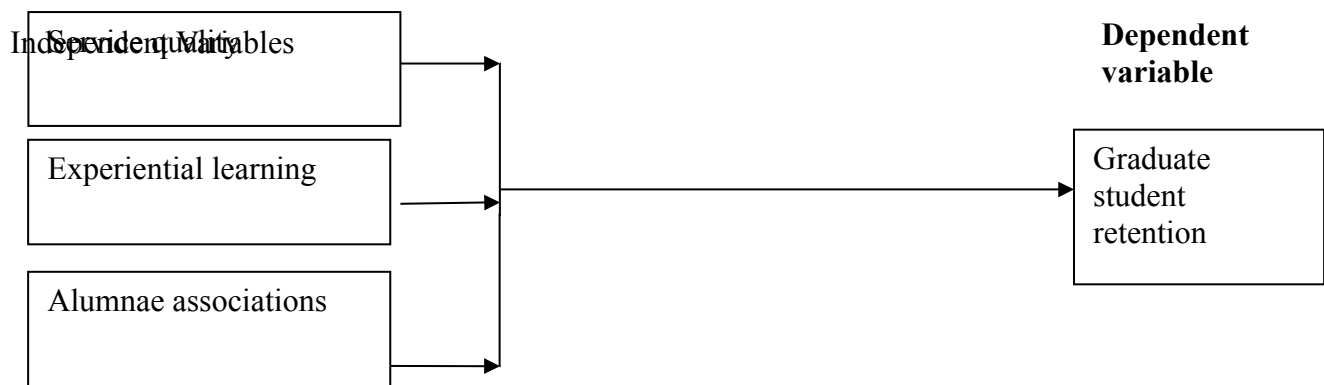
Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

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2.6 Operationalization of Variables

Table 2.6 presents the research variables, there measures, scale and section in the questionnaire that covers them. There are two sets of variables; dependent and independent variables.

Variable	Indicator	Measure	Scale	Questions in Questionnaire
Independent variables				
Service quality	- Client satisfaction from approval of service quality	Repeat buying from same clients and generation of referrals leading to the growth of student numbers	Ordinal Interval	Section B
Experiential learning	- Capacity of university to inculcate practical experiences in the learning process	Highly skilled graduates with practical exposure endearing the institution to potential clients	Ordinal Interval	Section C
Alumnae associations	- Capacity of the old students of the university to have a vibrant association which they can identify with	Having the alumnae association act as a fulcrum between the potential students and attract them to join the university	Ordinal Interval	Section D
Dependent variable				
Graduate student retention	- Capacity to have the graduate students enroll for programs and complete them	Confirmation of student numbers who have faithfully completed programs after enrollment	Ordinal Interval	Section E

2. 7 Hypothesis

The study was guided by the following hypothesis:

H_{01}:   *Service quality has no significant effect on graduate students' retention in universities*

H_{02}:   *Experiential learning has no significant effect on graduate students' retention in universities*

H_{03}:   *Alumnae associations do not significantly affect graduate students retention in universities*

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section describes the research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedures, research instruments, validity of research instruments, reliability of research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research design

The study employed a descriptive survey design to carry out a comparative analysis of how experiential marketing in public and private universities affects graduate students retention. Orodho (2005) postulated that a descriptive survey design is a method of collecting information by administration of questionnaires of questionnaires on selected samples or the conduct of interviews. The method is appropriate for collecting information about people's opinions, habits, attitudes, or any variety of social issues. The research design was considered appropriate for the studies because the researcher sought to collect, analyze and report information as it existed in the field without any undue manipulation of the variables.

3.3 Target population

All people under consideration in any field of inquiry constitute a universe or targeted population (Kombo and Trump, 2006). The study considered all the public universities and the chartered private universities as the target population. According to the Commission for University Education the public universities were 22 in number while the private universities were 17 in number (Appendix 2). The study used the members of staff of the marketing departments in each university as the target respondents.

3.4 Sample size and sampling procedures

The study picked on the University of Nairobi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and Kenyatta University. The private universities were Daystar University, Strathmore University and United States University of Africa. These universities were picked because they had the highest student population and were most proximate to the researcher. The motivating parameter for sampling was the size of the marketing departments in terms of staffing and proficiency as pertains to the exposure. The stratified random sampling was used to reach the individual members of the marketing departments in the different universities. The different institutions served as the stratum. Kombo, (2006), posited that a representative sample of 10% and above is adequate to provide the requisite information in large populations. The researcher picked 50% of the members of staff in the marketing departments in all the six institutions. The researcher picked members of staff in the respective institutions randomly from a list to ensure that all members had an equal chance of participation in the study. The research thus had a sample size of sixty nine respondents randomly picked from the target institutions marketing departments as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Sample size

Institution	No of members of staff in marketing dept	Sample of staff members
The university of Nairobi	28	14
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology	23	12
Kenyatta university	34	17
Daystar university	21	11
Strathmore university	17	9
United states university of Africa	12	6
Total	135	69

Source: Human Resource Departments of Respective Universities (2016)

3.5 Instrumentation

The study employed questionnaires as the instruments for the study. The questionnaire in

Appendix I was used to collect data from personnel in the marketing departments. The

questionnaires were deemed suitable in that they could serve a large group of respondents; they

had the benefit of self administerbility, anonymity and the standardization of questions for the

purpose of easing the data analysis procedures (Orodho, 2005). The questionnaires encompassed

the social demographics section and questions derived from the research objectives. The

questionnaires had both closed and open ended questions.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument

Validity is the degree to which a test measures what it purports to be measuring. Validity can also be said to be the degree to which results obtained from analysis of data actually represent the phenomenon under investigation (Orodho, 2005). The researcher tested the face validity of the questionnaire. Face validity is in relation to the misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the question. This was checked by way of employing the pre-testing method. Prior to embarking on data collection, the researcher pre-tested the questionnaires using Murang'a University of College. This was done to improve the validity of the instruments. Changes were made on the questions deemed appropriate after the pre-test.

Reliability is a measure of the extent to which an instrument will consistently yield the similar results after being administered several times to the same respondents (Orodho, 2005). To establish the reliability of the research instruments, the test retest method whereby the pre-test respondents were issued with questionnaires for them to fill and the same questionnaires were subjected to a re-test to see how the response was. The reliability coefficient was computed using the Cronchbach Alpha method. The procedure was deemed appropriate owing to the fact that it used a polychloric matrix for calculating alpha thus taking due charge of the underlying continuous variables in observed items like the Likert scale. A coefficient of 0.7 or more is considered adequate (Tavakol, 2011). The reliability tests established coefficients of 0.971 for service quality items on the lickert scale, 0.973 for experiential learning, 0.942 alumnae associations and 0.978 for graduate student retention.

3.7 Data collection procedures

The researcher identified the institutions to carry out the study. She visited them and booked prior appointments with the respondents. The researcher thereafter hand delivered the questionnaires to the target respondents and collected them to deter collusion and enhance the

response rate. The researcher always made prior arrangements suitable to the schedules of the officers.

3.9 Data analysis techniques

After all the data had been collected, data cleaning followed for the purposes of identifying any incomplete, inaccurate or unreasonable data. Coding of the data thereafter followed and the codes were entered into a computer for the purpose of analysis. Data analysis involved quantitative procedures. Quantitative data analysis required the use of computer spreadsheets and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. Martin and Acuna (2002) said that the SPSS package is able to handle a large amount of data and given its wide spectrum in the array of statistical procedures which are purposefully designed for social sciences; it was deemed efficient for the task.

The study employed descriptive and inferential statistics. The background information was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis in the form of; mean analysis, mode analysis and measures of standard deviation. The inferential statistics employed included; regression analysis to test causal relationship between the variables as postulated in the research hypothesis and a One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine the existence of a significant difference between the public and private university students.

To address the specific research objectives of determining effectiveness of experiential marketing strategy on graduate student's retention in Kenya, the study adopt regression analysis. Experiential marketing strategy was the independent variable and graduate student retention the dependent variable.

The hypothesized model took the form of equation one below.

$$Y = \alpha_0 + \beta_i X_1 + \beta_{ii} X_2 + \beta_{ii} X_3 + \varepsilon_0 \qquad \text{equation (1)}$$

From the equation (1),

Y = Graduate student retention,

α_0 = constant showing graduate student retention in the absence of experiential learning,

β_i = Coefficient of the independent variables

X_1 = Service Quality,

X_2 = Role of experiential learning,

X_3 = influence of alumnae association

ε_0 = error term associated with the regression model.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The researcher sought to get the consent of the respondents before administering the research instruments to them. The respondents were assured of utmost confidentiality as regards their identities. An assurance that the information provided would be used for research purposes only was also proffered to the respondents.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The study was carried out in select universities encompassing private and private with a view of carrying out a comparative analysis of the experiential marketing strategy on graduate student retention in Kenya. All analysis used descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Frequencies were obtained and expressed in percentage form and varying statistical tests employed. The opinions were interpreted and their content analyzed and described. The same was used to answer the research questions put forth when the researcher sought to carry out a comparative analysis of the experiential marketing strategy on graduate student retention in Kenya.

The study findings may help decipher the prevailing states as regards the experiential marketing strategy on graduate student retention in Kenya. The objectives that guided the study were to determine how service quality, experiential learning and alumnae associations affected graduate student retention in universities in Kenya.

4.2 Demographic data

The study sought to find out the socio-demographic data as regards the members of the university marketing departments' genders, academic qualifications and length of service with an aim of integrating the information provided to experiential marketing strategies used in the universities.

The response which entailed the participation by members of the marketing departments in the universities sampled in the study was as indicated in the Table 4.1. The response can be interpreted to show a willing participation from the sampled respondents owing to the fact that

88% of them filled and returned the questionnaires. It also reflected clear understanding of the thrust of the subject owing to the willing and enormous participation.

Table 4.1 Response rate

Response	Frequency	Percent
Number of questionnaires returned by respondents	56	84
Number of questionnaires not returned	13	12
Total	69	100

The responses as indicated in Table 4.2 show that 60.7% of the respondents were of the male gender. This was reflective of a situation whereby large memberships of the marketing department were male. This may be attributed to the rigours of the activities carried out in the marketing department thus disposition for greater participation by members of the male gender.

The respondents' gender was as shown in table 4.2.

Table 4.2Respondents gender

Response	Frequency	Percent
Male	34	60.7
Female	22	39.3
Total	56	100.0

Table 4.3 shows that 37.5 % of the respondents had post graduate diploma qualifications, 19.6 % had graduate and masters degree qualifications respectively. This was an indication that majority of the members of the marketing departments had sought to acquire greater certification in terms of academic proficiency. This was an indication that they had endevoured to pursue further studies with a view of specializing in areas pertinent to the marketing activities carried out. It can thus be interpreted to mean that the members of the marketing departments had attained the requisite qualifications with regard to academic attainment and were able to respond to the questions in this study.

Responses depicting the highest academic qualifications by the respondents were as shown in table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Highest academic qualification

Response	Frequency	Percent
Tertiary	13	23.2
Graduate	11	19.6
Post Graduate Diploma	21	37.5
MA/MSC/MBA	11	19.6
Total	56	100.0

Table 4.4 shows that 51% of the respondents had served in the respective marketing departments of their institutions for periods of 6 – 10 years, 33.9% for 1-5 years, 8.9% for 11-15

years and 5.4 for less than one year. This was an indication that the members of the marketing departments were experienced with regard to having served for long periods of time. The responses equally denoted varied exposure as pertains to the length of times served with some having served short stints and others lengthy periods. The different experiences predisposed the study to great benefits as pertains to varied levels of exposure thus an indication that it had the opportunity of tapping into diverse tacit knowledge associated with the caliber of the respondents.

The responses on the length of time that the respondents had served in the marketing department were as captured in Table 4.4

Table 4.4 Length of service in marketing department

Response	Frequency	Percent
less than 1 year	3	5.4
1 - 5 years	19	33.9
6 - 10 years	29	51.8
11 - 15 years	5	8.9
Total	56	100.0

4.3 Service quality and graduate student retention

Service quality is defined as the salient satisfaction accrued by a client attributed to the meeting of an intangible need from the consumption of a service as premised by Esghi, Roy and Ganghuli, (2009). The encounter between the client and the organization thus brings forth the ability of deduction of the merits and de-merits of the overall experience. The experience plays an integral role in determination of the ability of the client to engage in mutual association with the service provider in future business endeavors going by the satisfaction accrued (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Customer satisfaction from the quality of services provided is thus dependent on the ability to have the individual encounter providing the client with the feeling of contentment from the association (Kumar and Mashar, 2009). The study sought to find out the effects of service quality on graduate student retention in some select universities in Kenya.

All the respondents affirmed to having service charters in place in their respective universities. This was an indication that the institutions had realized the essence of being accountable to the wider publics that they related with thus the essence of putting in place provisions for specific parameters that would guide the interactions as pertains to service quality. It was also confirmation that the institutions were alive to the reality of the market dynamics which demand and place expectations from the public as pertains to the minimum thresholds of service quality that they should expect. It can be interpreted to mean that the presence of the service charters in the institutions was an explicit indication of the seriousness that they treated expectations from the wider publics and target niche markets with.

This was in sync with the position taken by (Parasuraman, 1988; Buttle, 1996; Adil, 2013) who argued that customer satisfaction is measured by use of the SERVQUAL and

SERPERF modes. The SERQUAL model is hinged on the clients' expectations and perceptions about the performance The SERVPERF model on the other hand is based on the clients' perceptions about the performance (Shekardizacheh and Hon-Tat, 2011). Both models have the dimensions of measurement as the tangible outputs which can be realized from the performance, the reliability of the services, assurance about the ability to have the client expectations met and the capacity to assure empathy to the client by the quality of services provided (Shekardizacheh et al , 2011). The presence of service charters was an indication of the organizational positions with regards to the need to document and affirm the records detailing client expectations. Responses on the presence of service charters in the universities were as shown in Table 4.5

Table 4.5 Presence of service charter in university

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	56	100
Total	56	100.0

Cross tabulation was done between the students retention capacity and attributes on the effects of service quality. The responses were ranked on a scale of 5 with 1 being the least and 5 the highest value. The responses were as shown in Table 4.6

The responses showed that 91% of the respondents confirmed that the institution placed major emphasis on commitment by staff as a measure of enhancing graduate students retention. The responses were a pointer to the situation whereby the institutions had identified the staff as critical cog in ensuring that the programs in place were actualized in an ideal manner. It can thus be interpreted to mean that the universities had identified the teaching and non-teaching staff to

be of great essence in terms of ensuring that the clients were attended to. Situations whereby the respondents felt the levels of commitment by staff were below the expected standards were equally cited by 9% of the respondents. This was an indication that in some of the universities the members of staff did not work with the passion and commitment expected of them.

This affirmed the position taken by Zwick (2009) who was of the view that commitment by staff, their availability for one on one interaction and their capacity to innovate with regard to the instruction mediums of use may equally shore up the client satisfaction levels in a university as premised by This is because students are always very keen on the capacity of the staff to be approachable and to provide them with the requisite assistance when they carry out their academic programs. Students equally are very keen on confirming the intuitiveness of the lecturers with regard to the provision of alternatives as pertains the knowledge dissemination processes at hand (Ahmed, Nawaz and Shaukat, 2010).

The findings showed that 75% of the respondents affirmed that efforts had been put in place to ensure customer satisfaction and this had seen the institution retain graduate students. This was an indication that the universities had employed ways and measures to assure them of the opportunity in tapping into the markets, attaining a segment and retaining it. It can be interpreted to mean that there was evidence of activities which the universities had embarked on to enhance client satisfaction levels as a measure of retaining them in the institutions till the completion of their studies. 25% of the respondents however had contrary opinion. They were of the view that the universities had not made major efforts geared towards assuring them of the ability to retain graduate students. It can be interpreted to mean that despite the competitive nature of the university education sector which requires concerted efforts to assure client satisfaction as a means of their retention some of the universities had neglected it.

The findings identified with the position taken by Zwick (2009) who opined that service quality in universities accrues from the ability of the student to appreciate the academic programs in place. The students have to strike a chord with the content delivery and identify with the ability of the teaching staff to comprehensively tutor them in class (Purdie, 2009). This ingrains the feeling of satisfaction from the partaking in the programs and assures them of the ability to continuously attend the academic programs passionately accruing from the benefits derived (Siryapit and Parapitiya, 2009). The ability to have teaching staff who are up to the task in terms of meeting students demands may give a re-assurance to the students about their competency and empathy as postulated by Tinto, (2009).

Service quality levels were confirmed to have assured the institutions ability to generate optimal referrals by 70% of the respondents. This was evidence of the fact that in the event of meeting clients' demands and assuring them of sustained quality standards enhancement referrals were bound to be generated. It can thus be interpreted to mean that most of the universities had met the thresholds of client expectations as pertains to service quality levels and this had predisposed them to the opportunity of generating the requisite referrals and graduate student retention. Instances of indecision and dissent by 30% of the respondents to the attribute of having high standards with regard to service quality enough to generate optimal referrals was an indication that some of the universities had failed in terms of meeting client expectations. The responses were confirmation that there were cases of failure to retain graduate students attributed to poor service quality levels which affected the clients' perceptions towards the institutions.

This was a contrast to the position taken by Magutu Mbeche, Ogeri and Ombati (2010) which showed that the service quality levels in the public universities in the republic of Kenya wanted leading to a drawback in their capacity to meet client expectations. This occasioned the

inability to have the public universities retain students in a sustainable manner thus impeding their growth levels. Situations of greater satisfaction from private universities were a pointer to the vacuum occasioned by the poor service quality thus curtailing the growth levels of public universities owing to their inability to attract and retain students Magutu et al (2010).

The responses showed that 91% of the respondents confirmed that meeting clients expectations had assured the institutions the ability to continuously retain graduate students. This was a pointer to the essence of fulfilling and assuring the clients that the intended ideals which made them to enroll in the institutions in the very fast instance were bound to be realized. It can thus be interpreted to mean that the universities had put in place mechanisms to assure the clients of the value for the money paid. Cases whereby the 9% of the respondents felt that the universities had failed to meet client expectations were evident. This was an indication of the situation whereby some institutions failed in their mandate of assuring clients that their needs will be effectively met in the course of undertaking academic programs.

The findings confirmed works by Tinto (2009) who argued that the ability to meet students' expectations and their perceptions about the technical quality of the academic programs offered equally plays an integral role in achieving satisfaction levels in universities. The perceived value of the academic programs offered with regard to their assurance to meet the expectations of the student's ability to be employed after completion equally raises the image of institutions (Ahmed et al, 2010). This enhances client loyalty and makes the ability of the institution to continuously retain the students enhanced. It may positively impact on the overall growth trajectory of the institution.

Taking care to meet the communities' expectations in terms of goodwill generation was confirmed by 64% of the respondents to have been a factor that assured the universities the ability to attract and retain graduate students. The responses were an expression of the fact that the universities had taken cognizance of the situation that they needed to satisfy the expectations of the communities which hosted them. It can thus be interpreted to mean that the institutions needed the sustained good will and continuous rapport as a measure of assured growth of the student numbers from the communities around them. The situation of failure to meet community expectation and fail to realize goodwill was however confirmed by 36% of the respondents. This was an indication that some of the institutions did not have very good rapport with the communities around them.

The findings identified with the position taken by Hodum (2007) who postulated that measurement of service quality interest is attributed to the relationship between the level of clients' satisfaction and the cost expended to guarantee realization of the requisite satisfaction levels. It is thus imperative that an organization has to invest in the realization of client satisfaction from the services offered to clients (Nera, 2005). This is a measure of salient approval of the services provided and the goodwill generated naturally translates to repeat buying and the capacity to assure increased volumes is thus guaranteed by offering quality services (Osuegera, 2012).

The ability of the members of staff to embrace and be positively receptive towards the service charter as a measure of ensuring enhanced service quality was confirmed by 73% of the respondents. This was an indication that the institutions had positively rallied the membership towards the ideals of the service charters as a measure of instilling ownership and ensuring the service quality levels were enhanced. 27% of the members of staff were however not very

positively receptive towards the institutions service charters thus derailing the ideals of the institutions. This affected the service quality levels and the capacity to attract and retain graduate students negatively.

The findings were in tandem with the position of Owino, Kibera and Munywoki , (2014) who argued that high service quality was commensurate with high client retention and satisfaction. The empirical works showed that the levels of clients' satisfaction had a large bearing on the ability to attract and retain clients. This impacted positively on the overall performance of the organizations with regard to the ability to generate positive goodwill from the corporate image. There was thus co-relation between the service quality standards and client satisfaction with the resultant positive effects on overall firm performance Owino et al (2014).

Putting in place service charters was confirmed to have affected the ability of the institutions to effectively reach out to the potential markets and retains graduate students by 73% of the respondents. This built client confidence levels in terms of their ability to associate and relate with the institutions in the quest of taking up academic programs. It can be interpreted to mean that putting in place service charters had the ultimate effect of confidence building in the target markets in terms of reinforced assurance of the documented thresholds of the minimum expectations as pertains to service quality. Situations whereby regardless of the presence of service charters the institutions had failed to reach out to potential markets still sufficed as confirmed by 27% of the respondents. This was an indication that the institutions failed to exploit and disseminate information to the wider populace about the essence of the service charters and their ideals.

The position of service charters affirmed previous works by Adil, (2013) who posited that the SERVQUAL model has been emulated as having capacity to recognize customers'

expectations thus ideal for the measurement of service quality. The SERVPERF model has equally been recognized owing to its ability to explain the variance of customer expectations and the overall service quality. The SERVQUAL model has equally been critiqued as been too theoretical and operational thus not practical in terms of giving the envisaged results in terms of service quality measurement. The SERVPERF model has also been criticized as placing too much emphasizes on psychometric and methodological measurement by use of scales in the determination of the service performance standards (Shekardizacheh et al, 2011). The SERVQUAL model and SERVPERF prisms are geared towards ensuring the realization of client expectations with a view of enhancing their retention.

Table 4.6 Responses on Service Quality and Graduate Student Retention

		Percentage	Total
Our institution places major emphasis on commitment by staff thus enhancing the levels of graduate student retention	disagree	5	3
	undecided	4	2
	agree	32	18
	strongly agree	59	33
Total		100	56
Efforts geared towards ensuring	disagree	18	10

customer satisfaction have been put in place and they have seen our institution retain graduate students	undecided	7	4
	agree	41	23
	strongly agree	34	19
Total		100	56
Service quality levels have ensured that our institution generates optimal referrals	disagree	13	7
	undecided	18	10
	agree	29	16
	strongly agree	41	23
		100	56
Total			
Meeting client expectations has the graduate students continuously retained in our school	disagree	5	3
	undecided	4	2
	agree	41	23
	strongly agree	50	28
Total		100	56
Taking care to meet the communities expectations in terms of goodwill generation has ensured that the university attracts and retains graduate students	disagree	20	11
	undecided	16	9
	agree	41	23
	strongly agree	23	13

Total		100	56

The members of staff have been positively receptive towards the charter in place to ensure enhanced service quality	Disagree	13	7
	undecided	11	6
	agree	50	28
	strongly agree	26	15
Total		100	56

The service charter has affected the ability of the institution to effectively reach out to the potential markets and retain graduate students	Disagree	18	10
	Undecided	5	3
	Agree	45	25
	strongly agree	32	18
Total		100	56

The mean analysis showed that the attribute of service quality indicators with the highest mean difference was placing major emphasis by the institutions to ensure staff commitment. It can thus be deduced that the ability to have the staff totally committed as envisaged in the service charters was a prelude to realization of optimal service quality levels. The capacity to have the clients get what they aspired for in terms of the academic programs enrolled for was thus an integral measure of service quality assurance.

Table 4. 7 Means Analysis for service quality and graduate student retention

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
graduatestudentretention	4.0332	.81270	56
taking care to meet communities expectations	3.68	1.046	56
members of staff positive receptive	3.91	.940	56
potential markets and retain graduate students	3.91	1.049	56
efforts geared toward customer satisfaction	3.91	1.066	56
service quality levels for optimal referrals	4.03	.911	56
meeting client expectation	4.36	.796	56
institution places major emphasis	4.45	.807	56

A Pearson moment correlation was run to determine if there was any significant influence of the attributes that the study used to determine effects of service quality on graduate student retention. Graduate students retention was used as the dependent variable while the indicators for effects of service quality were deemed the independent variables. The indicators were commitment by staff, customer satisfaction, referrals generation meeting client expectations, meeting community expectations, the ability of staff to embrace the service charter and the

ability of the service charter to raise the institutional profile in the potential markets. All the indicators of service quality levels had a positive correlation with the capacity to retain graduate students owing to the fact that they had a value of less than one. It can thus be deduced that the service quality levels of the institutions had enhanced their ability to ensure graduate student retention.

Table 4.8 Correlations for service quality and graduate student retention

		Graduate student retention	institution places major emphasis	efforts geared toward customer satisfaction	service quality levels for optimal referrals	meeting client expectation	taking care to meet communities expectations	members of staff positive receptive	potential markets and retain graduate students
Graduate student retention	Pearson Correlation	1	.844**	.959**	.982**	.857**	.938**	.973**	.963**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
institution places major emphasis	Pearson Correlation	.844**	1	.786**	.890**	.936**	.797**	.797**	.778**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
efforts geared toward customer satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.959**	.786**	1	.968**	.788**	.919**	.935**	.984**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
service quality levels for optimal referrals	Pearson Correlation	.982**	.890**	.968**	1	.888**	.950**	.959**	.965**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
meeting client expectation	Pearson Correlation	.857**	.936**	.788**	.888**	1	.773**	.797**	.779**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
taking care to meet communities expectations	Pearson Correlation	.938**	.797**	.919**	.950**	.773**	1	.913**	.917**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
members of staff positive receptive	Pearson Correlation	.973**	.797**	.935**	.959**	.797**	.913**	1	.951**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
potential markets and retain graduate students	Pearson Correlation	.963**	.778**	.984**	.965**	.779**	.917**	.951**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56

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

4.4 Experiential learning and graduate student retention

Hoyt and Winn (2010) were of the view that experiential learning is built upon a foundation of inter-disciplinary and constructionivist learning. Varied approaches have been used to ensure that the learners acquire the requisite experiences in the quest of knowledge acquisition (Hoyt et al, 2010). Situations of learners being placed on attachment to gain the requisite industrial exposure have always guaranteed them ability to acquire the skills before the completion of academic programs. This is occasioned by the fact that compartmentalized learning is not reflective of the real world. This offers theoretical knowledge to the students and occasions the risk of failing to avail practical skills thus disadvantaging the learner at the advent of job placement (Hagedon, 2005). The study sought to relate the ability to undertake experiential learning and graduate student retention.

The responses on the attributes were rated on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being the least and 5 the highest. The responses were as shown in Table 4.9

The ability of the institutions to carry out practical learning with a view of enabling the students to acquire the requisite skills was confirmed by 93% of the respondents. This was an indication that the institutions had gone beyond the spectrums of theoretical and abstract knowledge impartation in the learning activities with a view of ensuring that the students gained actual practical exposure. It can thus be interpreted to mean that the institutions had strived to ensure practical exposure as a basis for skills acquisition in the course of knowledge impartation for the learners. The percentage of respondents which felt that adequate measures had not been put in place to ensure knowledge impartation vie practical exposure was 7%. This was an attestment to the fact that the institutions had keenly placed emphasis on practical learning a

basis of skills acquisition and it was a measure that attracted and retained students to the universities.

The responses confirmed previous works by Berger and Lyons (2009) who opined that experiential learning is compared to the ideal environment as pertains to practical exposure and the capacity to have outcomes that are predictable from the experiences accrued. Engagement in purposeful endeavors geared towards providing the learner with known and assured outcomes from the process creates the essence of actual skills impartation. These were considered as integral requisites for experiential learning (Berger et al, 2009). This calls for relevance in terms of the programs used in learning activities carried out. It thus places an emphasis on the congruence between academia and industry.

Constant interaction between the institutions and industry was confirmed as a premise which the institutions employed to ensure that the academic programs offered were in line with market demands by 84% of the respondents. The responses confirmed that there was synergy between academia and industry as a measure of ensuring that the products of the learning programs fitted well in the job market. This can be interpreted to mean that most of the universities were on a constant exploration to align their academic programs with the dictates of the job markets. This was a basis to attract and retain graduate students owing to the relevance of the academic programs offered. 16% the respondents however had a contrary view. This was an indication that in some institutions the ability to ensure that their academic programs were aligned to the dynamics of industry was not taken into account. This exposed the learners to the risk of taking academic programs which were irrelevant to the emerging trends.

The ability to carry out continuous assessment of the student skills levels as a basis of ensuring that the demands of the academic processes were met was confirmed by 55% of the respondents. This was an indication that the institutions went out of their way to not only test the knowledge of the learners with regard to theoretical exposure and understanding but equally confirm the ability to use the practical skills. It can thus be interpreted to mean that most of the universities had put in place measures to ensure that the skills acquired in the course of undertaking experiential learning were positively utilized for their individual benefit. The levels of indecision and dissent to the ability of the institutions to put in place measures for continuous assessment of the acquired skills were however significantly high at 45%. This was an indication that in some of the academic programs undertaken very little emphasis was placed on confirming the students' skills levels after going through the experiential learning program. This negated the essence of the program owing to the fact that there was need to confirm the ability of the learners to assimilate the skills imparted for posterity.

The study findings confirmed the position taken by Whitt and Kenzie (2012) who considered constant evaluation as a means of determining consonance between theory and practice as encouraging acknowledgement of the bigger perspective. This is with regard to the ability of the learner to conceptualize issues. It also encourages fusion of reflection by the instructor to confirm the capacity of the teaching methodologies to impact the requisite skills (Whitt et al, 2012). This enhances the creation of an emotional connection between the learner and the instruction process thus guaranteeing the relevance of the knowledge dissemination process. It enhances the ability of the instruction process to draw the learners from their perceived comfort zones and provoke them to experiment with the knowledge acquired (Whitt et al, 2012).

Emotional connection between the learning processes and the learners was confirmed by 66%. This was a measure that ensured that the requisite academic achievement was realized. This ingrained a feeling of ownership of the programs carried out and enhanced the level of interaction between the learner and the process of knowledge acquisition. It can be interpreted to mean that in the event of well-structured learning programs eliciting an emotional connection of the learner to the academic activities undertaken the institutions were thus bound to attract and retain graduate students. 20% of the respondents were undecided while others disagreed to the premise of the institutions managing to elicit emotional connection between them and the learners in the course of the instruction. The responses thus denoted presence of abstract mediums of knowledge impartation in some of the institutions. This was a factor which made the learning process routine thus not attracting the requisite levels of appeal from the students. It had the potential of occasioning non retention of graduate students.

The responses affirmed works by Qualters, (2010) who argued that experiential learning also extends the good will and standing of the institutions to the wider communities encouraging them to enroll new students in the institutions. This ultimately translates to the growth of student populations and sustainable continuity of programs (Qualters, 2010).

Online tutorials and simulations were confirmed to have enhanced the ability of the institution to reach the students effectively in an interactive manner by 77% of the respondents. This was indicative of the ability to have online tutorials and practical simulations geared towards enhancing the delivery mediums of the academic programs and equally exploiting emerging technology as an avenue of instruction. It can be interpreted to mean that the universities had appreciated changing technology and adopted it in the quest of making learning convenient and easily taken up by students who had limited time to be physically present in

class. There were however instances of dissent as pertain to the ability of the universities to exploit online tutorials and simulations as a measure of enhancing the ability of the universities to reach students effectively in an interactive manner by 19% of the respondents. It can thus be a pointer to a low level of adoption of technology as a medium of instruction in some of the universities.

The efforts geared towards actual skills impartation impacting positively on the generation of referrals is a measure which many of the respondents confirmed by 79% of the respondents. This was affirmation that the students undertaking academic programs valued the skills acquired thus they went out of their way and referred others to take similar programs. It can thus be interpreted to mean that at the advent of facilitating the students to earn the best levels of satisfaction possible sustained growth of student numbers may accrue based on the referrals generated. The ability to have satisfied students positively generate referrals was however dissented to by 13% the respondents while 8% were undecided. This was a measure which showed that in some instances the students were not very satisfied to the extent of pitching for the programs offered to other potential students.

The ability of experiential learning to enhance retention of graduate students was confirmed by 79% of the respondents. This was reflective of a situation whereby the medium of practical exposure had positive impact on the activities carried out in the universities. This was reflective of a situation whereby the respondents felt that the practical learning activities which entailed creating a positive experience on the learners directly impacted on the ability to retain graduate students. It can thus be interpreted to mean that experiential learning had the potential of enhancing the market positions of the universities in relation to capacity to attract and retain graduate students. Dissent was however evident on the premise of experiential learning at aiding

attraction and retention of graduate students by 21% of the respondents. This was an indication that despite experiential learning taking place there was need to equally satisfy the other parameters which enhanced the students satisfaction levels from the services offered.

The responses affirmed the position of Braxton and Hindy, (2010) who were of the view that experiential learning has emphasizes on the mixture of content and processes used in equipping the learner with information. Engagement in periodical evaluations to gauge the capacity of the processes in terms of guaranteeing the learner the requisite skills is equally an imperative of the experiential learning process. This can only be actualized at the advent of subjecting the learner to constant checks to determine their ability to grasp and effectively carry out tasks in line with the theoretical knowledge acquired from the learning process (Braxton et al, 2010).

Table 4.9 Responses on Experiential Learning and Graduate Students Retention

		Percentage	Total
Our institution has provisions for practical learning enabling the students to acquire the requisite skills	Disagree	3	2
	undecided	3	2
	agree	61	34
	strongly agree	33	18
Total		100	56

	Disagree	7	4
Constant interaction between the institution and industry ensures that the academic programs offered are in line with market demands	undecided	9	5
	agree	55	31
	strongly agree	29	16
Total		100	56
	Disagree	30	17
Continuous assessment to confirm the students skills levels ensures the demands of the academic programs are met	undecided	14	8
	agree	34	19
Total	strongly agree	22	12
		100	56
Emotional connection between the learners and the learning process ensures that the requisite academic achievement is realized	disagree	14	8
	undecided	20	11
	agree	41	23
	strongly agree	25	14
Total		100	56
Online tutorials and simulations enhance the ability of the institution to reach clients effectively in an interactive manner	Disagree	20	11
	undecided	3	2
	agree	45	25
	strongly agree	32	18

Total		100	56
	Disagree	13	7
Efforts towards students' skills impartation have impacted positively on the ability of the institution to generate referrals from beneficiary students	undecided	9	5
	agree	41	23
	strongly agree	37	21
		100	56
Total			
Experiential learning has affected the ability of the institution to retain graduate students	Disagree	13	7
	undecided	9	5
	agree	41	23
	strongly agree	37	21
Total		100	56

The mean statistics showed that the attribute of experiential learning with the highest mean difference was the provisions for practical learning in the universities. This was evidence that the practical learning activities had ensured enhanced attraction and retention of graduate students more in comparison to the other indicators looked at.

Table 4.10 Mean Analysis for experiential learning indicators and graduate student retention

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Graduate student retention	4.0332	.81270	56
continuous assessment to confirm student skills	3.46	1.144	56
emotional connection between the learners	3.77	.991	56
online tutorials and simulations	3.89	1.073	56
online tutorials and simulations	3.89	1.073	56
experiential learning effects	4.04	.990	56
constant interaction between institution and industry	4.05	.818	56
efforts towards students skills impartation	4.07	.912	56
provisions for practical learning	4.21	.680	56

A Pearson moment correlation was run to find out if there was any significant influence by the attributes that the study used to determine effects of experiential learning on graduate student retention. Graduate student retention was primed as the as the dependent indicator while the indicators for effects of experiential learning were presence of practical learning in the institutions, interaction between the institutions and industry, continuous assessment of students skills levels, emotional connection between the learners and the learning process, presence of online tutorials and simulations, generation of referrals from beneficiary students and experiential learning provisions. All the indicators of experiential learning had a positive correlation with the presence of a service charter owing to the fact that they had a value of less

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than one. It can thus be deduced that the conduct of experiential learning had enhanced graduate student retention levels.

Table 4.11 Correlations for experiential learning and graduate student retention

		Graduate student retention	provisions for practical learning	constant interaction between institution and industry	continuous assessment to confirm student skills	emotional connection between the learners	online tutorials and simulations	efforts towards students skills impartation	experiential learning effects
graduatestudent retention	Pearson Correlation	1	.856**	.954**	.875**	.952**	.957**	.943**	.957**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
provisions for practical learning	Pearson Correlation	.856**	1	.894**	.711**	.777**	.779**	.855**	.799**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
constant interaction between institution and industry	Pearson Correlation	.954**	.894**	1	.769**	.890**	.876**	.945**	.895**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56

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continous assessment to confirm student skills	Pearson Correlation	.875**	.711**	.769**	1	.915**	.841**	.770**	.820**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
emotional connection between the learners	Pearson Correlation	.952**	.777**	.890**	.915**	1	.900**	.884**	.898**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
online tutorials and simulations	Pearson Correlation	.957**	.779**	.876**	.841**	.900**	1	.900**	.945**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
efforts towards students skills impartation	Pearson Correlation	.943**	.855**	.945**	.770**	.884**	.900**	1	.944**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
experential learning effects	Pearson Correlation	.957**	.799**	.895**	.820**	.898**	.945**	.944**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56

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

4. 5 Alumnae associations' activities and graduate student retention

Alumnae associations are made up of individuals who have gone through institutions in the quest of learning and knowledge acquisition. The learning process creates a forum via which the former students associate and take pride in having gone through the learning institution at a particular stage in life (Bowen, Gogo and Maswili, 2014). The alumnae associations act as social forums for integration and interaction by persons who can credit the institution with having given them a chance to meet. The opportunity of partaking the academic programs in the same institutions serves as an avenue of association. The vibrancy of an alumnae association is influenced by the success of the membership attributed to their ability to get placement upon the completion of the academic programs (Bowen, et al, 2014). The study sought to find out the role of the alumnae association activities in graduate student retention.

Cross tabulation was done between the presence of service charters and attributes on the effects of service quality on graduate students' retention. The responses were ranked on a scale of 5 with 1 being the least and 5 the highest value. The responses were as shown in Table 4.12.

The findings showed that 91% of the respondents affirmed that the alumnae associations in their   institutions carried out robust activities geared towards raising the profiles of the colleges. This was confirmation that the alumnae associations had programs of events that they undertook in the quest of ensuring that they gave back to the former institutions. It can be interpreted to mean that the activities of the alumnae associations are a key motivation for graduate student retention owing to the aspect of seeking to have them complete programs and join the alumnae associations. Only 9% of the respondents dissented to the premise of the alumnae associations not serving as avenues to ensure enhanced graduate student retention. This

may be attributed to varied factors like not identifying with the cause of the alumnae associations or having those which are moribund with no vibrant activities.

The findings confirmed previous works by Sewe, (2014) who was of the view that the alumnae associations have been used by many institutions as forums to ensure engagement between the students in ongoing academic programs and those who have completed the programs It is a critical component of measuring the ability of the programs undertaken to identify with the market needs in terms of the human resource requirements. This is a veritable marketing tool occasioned by the fact that the students in ongoing programs can vividly relate with those who have completed the programs and found a footing in industry (Omboi, 2013). The capacity of the members of the alumnae associations to be successful in life acts as a source of encouragement to the continuing students and it motivates them to work harder in their studies.

The responses showed that 95% of the respondents confirmed that there were known case studies of the persons who had excelled in different fields who could be reached in the alumnae of the institutions. It was an affirmation of the ability of the individual prowess of former students to motivate the ongoing students to work hard and equally excel. It can thus be interpreted to mean that the activities of the alumnae associations geared towards enumerating and extoling persons who have excelled from the institutions was a positive attribute in terms of attracting and retaining graduate students. This confirmed works by Ngari and Gichira, (2014) who argued that   alumnae associations with successful individuals forming the core of the membership are integral to the ability of the institutions to attract and retain students in their academic programs. Instances whereby some colleges have been identified with exemplary performance in particular facets of industry and academia have always influenced the uptake of

other students in the same academic programs. This has been a good avenue for ensuring continuity in a sustainable manner and enhances the appeal of the programs offered by virtue of the target market being effectively able to relate to the products of the institutions (Nyachoti, 2013).

The ability of the members of the alumnae to have a sense of pride in identifying with the institution and referring potential students to register was confirmed by 93% of the respondents. This was an affirmation that the members of the alumnae had positive association with their former colleges. This was a defining mark in terms of conferring an identity to the members of the alumnae associations which translated into a good marketing premise. It can thus be interpreted to mean that the activities of the alumnae association denoting a sense of ownership and pride in the membership had the potential of attracting more students to the institutions and retaining the ongoing ones.

The study findings mirrored works by Ogot, (2010) who affirmed that situations whereby individual success of former students can be linked directly to the opportunity of passing through the learning institution gives credence to its position as pertains the ability to mould the students into responsible persons This gives a sense of pride and great impetus to the institution with regard to its striking identity and ability to assure the learners the potential of openings upon completion of the academic programs. It also serves as a measure of the quality of programs undertaken and a yard stick of capacity to have synergy between the industrial sector yearning for talents to employ and the ability of the institution to provide the same (Walaba, 2010).

Presence of mentorship programs carried by the alumnae associations which were a good avenue for follow up and encouragement of students to complete academic programs was

confirmed by 86% of the respondents. This was a good avenue to encourage and motivate sustained activities by the students in the universities as motivated by the positive encourage by persons who have gone through similar programs before. It was an indication that the members of the alumnae worked towards making follow-up programs for continuous updates on the ongoing students. This was a factor which has the potential of minimizing instances of non-completion of programs and dropouts for whatever reasons. It can thus be interpreted to mean that the alumnae associations had spotted a gap in the academic programs offered with regard to institutionalization of the follow-up mechanisms and had endeavored to carry out the same as a measure of ensuring that graduate students were retained in the universities. However instances whereby some of the respondents had a contrary opinion equally sufficed. This was an indication that some of the alumnae association members were busy in their activities to make time for follow- up programs.

57% of the respondents heavily dissented to the ability of the members of alumnae associations to scout for potential job openings for offer to the students upon completion of the academic programs. The responses were a reflection of the reality in the job market as regards the potential for openings. It can be interpreted to mean that the alumnae associations in most instances were handicapped in terms of seeking job opportunities for the students undertaking studies in the universities that they attended. Cases of the ability to get job opportunities for students taking university programs were however confirmed from the responses by 43% of the respondents. This was an indication that in some cases the alumnae association members worked towards getting job opportunities for the students and having them realize the benefits of associating with the institutions.

Table 4.12 Responses on alumnae association activities and graduate student retention

			Total
The alumnae association in our institution carries out robust activities geared towards raising the profile of the college	Disagree	3	2
	undecided	5	3
	agree	57	32
	strongly agree	35	19
Total		100	56
Known case studies of the persons who have excelled in different fields can be reached in the alumnae of the institution	undecided	5	3
	agree	31	17
	strongly agree	64	36
Total		100	56
Members of the alumnae always have a sense of pride in identifying with the institution and referring potential students to register	undecided	7	4
	agree	25	14
	strongly agree	68	38
Total		100	56
Members of the alumnae have a program of mentorship which they follow and encourage the students to complete the academic programs enrolled in	Disagree	5	3
	undecided	9	5
	agree	65	36
	strongly agree	21	12
Total		100	56
Members of the alumnae association scout for potential job openings for offer to the students upon the completion of the academic programs	Disagree	34	19
	undecided	23	13
	agree	23	13
	strongly agree	20	11
Total		100	56
The activities of the alumnae association have affected the ability of the university to retain graduate students	Disagree	7	4
	undecided	16	9
	agree	25	14
	strongly agree	52	29
Total		100	56

The mean statistics showed that the attribute of alumnae association activities with the highest mean difference was having provisions for programs of events and activities for the membership.

This was confirmation that in the event of very vibrant alumnae associations the universities were bound to attract and retain graduate students.

Table 4.13 Mean Analysis for alumnae activities indicators and graduate student retention

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Graduate student retention	4.0332	.81270	56
potential jobs openings	3.29	1.140	56
program of mentorship	4.02	.726	56
alumnae association	4.21	.706	56
activities of alumnae association	4.21	.967	56
known case studies of the persons	4.59	.596	56
members of the alumnae have a program	4.61	.623	56

A Pearson correlation was run to find out if there was any significant influence by the attributes that the study used to determine effects of alumnae association activities on graduate student retention. Graduate student retention was used as the as the dependent variable while the indicators for effects of alumnae association were robust activities by the alumnae association, known case studies of persons who have excelled in the universities, sense of pride from alumnae causing referrals generation, mentorship programs and scouting for job opportunities for ongoing students on completion of academic programs. All the indicators of alumnae association activities had a positive correlation with the presence of a service charter because they had a

value of less than one. The study thus deduced that the alumnae association activities had enhanced the potential of graduate students' retention.

Table 4.14 Correlations for alumnae activities and graduate student retention

		graduatest udentreten tion	alumnae associatio n	known case studies of the persons	members of the alumnae have a program	program of mentorshi p	potential jobs openings	activities of alumnae associatio n
graduatestudentret ention	Pearson Correlation	1	.874**	.827**	.842**	.906**	.851**	.916**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
alumnae association	Pearson Correlation	.874**	1	.731**	.732**	.844**	.758**	.784**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
known case studies of the persons	Pearson Correlation	.827**	.731**	1	.928**	.731**	.765**	.881**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
members of the alumnae have a program	Pearson Correlation	.842**	.732**	.928**	1	.739**	.724**	.897**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
program of mentorship	Pearson Correlation	.906**	.844**	.731**	.739**	1	.741**	.772**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
potential jobs openings	Pearson Correlation	.851**	.758**	.765**	.724**	.741**	1	.801**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
activities of alumnae association	Pearson Correlation	.916**	.784**	.881**	.897**	.772**	.801**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	56	56	56	56	56	56	56

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

4.6 Graduate student retention

Pullins, (2010) argued that experiential marketing strategy is the medium of using experiences accruing from the expected satisfaction of a product or service offered by an entity. The marketing approach has been used by universities and other institutions of higher learning to

seek out new clients for the academic programs on offer (Berger and Walingford, 2008). The institutions have always employed approaches which ensure that the potential students are involved in terms of their emotional interaction with the programs before they enroll for them (Wangenge, 2008). This is by way of having them given a sneak preview of what the programs entail to encourage their participation in informed decision making before enrolling for them (Brunson, 2010). The study sought to enumerate the graduate student retention levels in Kenyan universities.

The responses on the ability of the universities to make concerted efforts and ensure that students who enroll for academic programs complete them were as captured in Table 4. 15. 55% respondents confirmed that the universities had earmarked activities in place to ensure that the learners who enrolled for academic program in the universities completed them. This was confirmation that the universities had put in place measures to ensure that they retained the graduate students who undertook the academic programs from enrollment to completion. The responses vindicated the universities with regard to the ability to make follow up on the students enrolling for academic programs to reduce the risks of dropout from them. It can be interpreted to mean that the universities not only placed a focus on enrolling students for academic programs but equally strived to ensure that the students enrolled completed the programs.

Table 4. 15 Concerted activities to ensure students complete academic programs

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very highly	17	30.4
Highly	31	55.4
undecided	5	8.9
Not at all	3	5.4
Total	56	100.0

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Cross tabulation was done between consideration of the universities ability to retain students from enrollment to completion and attributes on graduate students' retention. The responses were ranked on a scale of 5 with 1 being the least and 5 the highest value. The responses were as shown in table 4.16

The responses showed that 86% of the respondents confirmed that their institutions ensured all students derived satisfaction and this saw to it that they completed academic programs without shifting to other colleges. The responses were an indication that the universities placed a premium on the essence of the students completing the academic programs enrolled for thus not interested in only the numbers of the new students without program completion. Situations of undecided respondents and others having a contrary opinion were however significant at 14%. This was however an indication that some of the universities did not make follow up to ensure program completion by ongoing students. The responses can be interpreted to mean that the institutions understood the essence of program completion by the students in totality as a measure of enhancing their profiles and statures thus ensured that the learners effectively completed their academic programs.

The findings showed that 79% of the respondents were of the view that the presence of strong brands that students liked to associate with motivated them to complete the academic programs without shifting to other colleges was a unique selling preposition to their universities. This was a factor which brought to the fore the essence of known and strong brands in particular lines of academia thus elevating the positions of the universities in the mindsets of the target markets. It was an indication that the universities had capitalized on their unique positions as avenues of marketing. It can thus be interpreted to mean that unique and strong brands were a great medium of focus which enabled the universities to tap into their markets. The element of

strong and unique brands however did not apply to all the universities as evidenced by 21% of the respondents thus an indication that in some cases the brands did not tally with the market expectations.

The findings were a contrast to the position taken by Mutiga (2015) whowas of the view that the traditional approaches whereby particular institutions are synonymous with certain programs has equally seen some public universities in the higher education sector within the republic of Kenya greatly lose out to emerging competition. The tradition of having programs like law, medicine and architecture identified with the University of Nairobi has gradually waned with time (Ombamba, 2009). Most of the public universities have taken cognizance of the demand for the said programs and started offering them within the institutions (Oanda et al 2013). This has greatly tilted the scales many at times in favour of the emerging competition. This is attributed to the fact that the rigid approaches which greatly restricted students willing to take up the programs from doing so still hold. Instances of the growth of the middle class and high end economic cadres with high disposable income has motivated many members of the said social status to pay high fees for similar programs in institutions which guarantee them quality (Magutu, et al, 2010).

The ability to have fairly priced academic programs allowing the students to complete the courses enrolled for was equally confirmed by 79% of the respondents as a factor motivating the students not to switch to other universities. The prospective students were attracted to the schools based on the costs of the programs undertaken. It can thus be interpreted to mean that the costs of the studies carried out determined the ability of the students to take up academic programs. 21% of the respondents however dissented to the premise of the costs expended in taking up academic programs as a medium of retention of the students. This was a reflection of the ability to have

other factors other than the costs playing greater roles in the attraction and retention of graduate students in the universities.

The study findings reflected the position taken by Bowen, et al, (2014) who was of the view that   private universities are mainly modeled from commercial angles with the core objective of their founders being realization of revenue from the activities after providing quality services to the clientele. The business model forces the private institutions of higher learning to go out of their way and engage in multiple marketing pursuits in the quest of getting new clients. This has seen the institutions invest heavily in online presence to enhance their potential of reaching out to new clients (Oanda, 2013). It has also seen them carry out very vibrant outreach activities to maintain follow up of the students who have left the institutions with a view of having them identify with the alumnae associations (Walaba, 2010). Engagement of qualified faculty members who give personalized attention to individual students in some institutions ensures that they identify with the pertinent needs of the learners. This has the potential of giving some private universities which are keen on growing their fortunes a head start in comparison to the public institutions which seldom carry out the activities

The goodwill built over the years allowed continuous referrals and ensured students did drop out of the academic programs enrolled for as evidenced from 75% of the respondents. This was an indication that the element of goodwill held major sway on the ability to attract students to the university occasioned by the good names and images that the institutions had cultivated over the years. It can thus be interpreted to mean that in the event of goodwill occasioned by the heritage and history of the institution the universities were bound to attract and retain graduate students. The goodwill on its own was however confirmed not enough to ensure that the students enrolled and completed their academic programs by 25% of the respondents. This was an

indication that in the event of goodwill and rich legacies the students still expected value from the institutions with regard to satisfaction from the ideals of the academic programs taken.

The position of enhancing goodwill as a premise of attracting graduate students was the same as that of Mweria (2007) who was of the view that in the higher education segment experiential marketing seeks to create a relationship between the potential student and the institution. The need to implore on the student to gain confidence with the programs being offered forms the core basis of the interaction (Bowen, et al 2014). It motivates the potential students to yearn to understand the institution in a better manner in terms of the programs offered and their quality. This motivates the potential students to seek prior interaction with the systems in place before making a decision on enrolling for the programs (Chapleo, 2010). The interactions may entail actual physical visits to the institutions, meeting the members of faculty, looking out for the successes of the individual alumnae association members and engaging the institutions through the online media platforms like the interactive websites (Nyachoti, 2013).

All the respondents affirmed that the colleges had unique academic courses and this limited the students from shifting to others because they didn't have choice of similar programs. This was confirmation that in some cases the way universities tailored and structured their academic programs restricted the students from joining other colleges. This was associated with the way the programs were structured and the market position of the institutions in the mindsets of the target clientele. It can thus be interpreted to mean that in the event of very unique academic programs from particular universities there was bound to be limited choice in terms of options for the students thus their ultimate retention in the universities that they have enrolled in.

The findings confirmed the position taken by Berger et al, (2008) who attested that the need to have universities seeking to carry out continuous needs assessment before rolling out

new programs and expanding the existing ones cannot be over emphasized. The element of cost also plays a critical role in determining the pricing of the university academic programs. Instances whereby failure to resonate with the market in terms of the cost of programs and the potential of the target market, has always exposed some institutions into jeopardy (Ombamba, 2009). This is occasioned by the fact that in some cases the programs are overpriced and some competitors fill in the gaps by way of offering quality and cheaper alternatives in terms of pricing. This has seen some public universities stagnate without any tangible expansion especially for the module two programs while the private counterparts open new campuses nationally and regionally (Chapleo, 2010). The need to have the programs offered identifying with the demands of the market and engaging in market surveys to seize the competition is the only way out for the serious players in the highly competitive higher education sector (Wangenge, 2008).

Table 4.16 Responses on graduate student retention

		Percentage	Total
The institution ensures all students derive satisfaction and this sees to it that they complete academic programs without shifting to other colleges	strongly agree	30	17
	agree	55	31
	undecided	10	5
	Disagree	5	3
Total		100	56
Our college has a very strong brand that students like to associate with motivating them to complete the academic programs without shifting to other colleges	strongly agree	36	20
	agree	43	24
	undecided	21	12
Total		100	56
The academic programs are fairly priced and the costs motivate student to complete the academic programs enrolled for	strongly agree	29	16
	agree	50	28
	undecided	5	3
	disagree	16	9
Total		100	56
The goodwill built over the years allows continuous referrals and ensures students don't drop out of the academic programs enrolled for	strongly agree	25	14
	agree	50	28
	undecided	11	6
	Disagree	14	8
Total		100	56
The college has unique academic courses and this limits the students from shifting to other colleges because they don't have choice of similar programs	strongly agree	23	13
	agree	50	28
	undecided	11	6
	Disagree	16	9
Total		100	56
The institution has concerted activities in place geared towards ensuring that all students who enroll finish up the academic programs	strongly agree	52	29
	agree	30	17
	undecided		0
	Disagree	18	10
Total		100	56
The experiential marketing activities in your institution have affected its ability to retain graduate students	strongly agree	52	29
	agree	30	19
	undecided		0
	disagree	18	10
Total			56

The regression equation was based on the assumption of a linear relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables. It was also based on the assumption of homoscedasticity as pertains to the variances along the line of best fit remaining similar.

Model fit for the experiential marketing regression equation

The hypothesized model took the form of equation two below.

$$Y = \alpha_0 + \beta_i X_1 + \beta_{ii} X_2 + \beta_{ii} X_3 + \varepsilon_0 \qquad \text{equation (2)}$$

From the equation (2),
Y = Graduate student retention,
α_0 = constant showing graduate student retention in the absence of experiential learning,
β_i = Coefficient of the independent variables
X_1 = Service Quality,
X_2 = Role of experiential learning,
X_3 = influence of alumnae association

ε_0 = error term associated with the regression model

Table 4.17 Model summary of experiential marketing strategy

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.881[a]	.777	.759	.173	.777	44.349	4	51	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), service quality, experiential learning, alumnae association

The R squared value was 0.777 which indicated that the model provided a good fit attributed to the fact that it had a slope of 77% indicating good gradient

Table 4.18 Coefficients of experiential marketing strategy

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.316	.153		15.106	.000		
	Service quality	-.162	.053	-.371	-3.041	.004	.295	3.391
	Experiential learning	.513	.136	.987	3.775	.000	.064	15.627
	alumnae association	-.041	.135	-.081	-.301	.765	.060	16.570

a. Dependent Variable: capacity to retain graduate students

The regression equation was: - Graduate student retention=2.316-0.162*service quality influence on graduate student retention + 0.513*experiential learning activities on graduate student retention - 0.041* alumnae on graduate student retention. The dependent variable was graduate student retention and service quality levels had insignificant influence at -0.162, the experiential learning activities had significant influence at 0.513 and alumnae association activities had insignificant influence at -0.041. The equation shows that the variable with the greatest significant influence over the dependent variable was experiential learning activities. This denoted the essence of experiential learning as a premise for graduate student retention. The null hypothesis for service quality levels and alumnae association activities was thus confirmed. The null hypothesis for experiential learning influencing graduate student retention was rejected and the alternate confirmed.

Graduate student retention=2.316-0.162* service quality+ 0.513*experiential learning - 0.041* alumnae association activities   equation (3)

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations drawn from the findings in relation to the effectiveness of experiential marketing strategy on graduate student retention in Kenya. The objectives that guided the study were: service quality, experiential learning and alumnae association activities on the retention of graduate students in Kenyan universities.

5.2 Summary of findings:

The summary of findings was as guided by the objectives of the study:

5.2.1 Service quality

79% of the respondents confirmed that the institutions placed major emphasis on commitment by staff as a measure of enhancing graduate students retention. The findings identified with the position taken by Owino, Kibera, Munywoki and (2014) in empirical works showed that the levels of clients satisfaction had a large bearing on the ability to attract and retain clients. High service quality was commensurate with high client retention and satisfaction. The respondents affirmed that efforts had been put in place to ensure customer satisfaction and this had seen the institution retain graduate students.

The findings were in tandem with the position of Kumar and Mashar, 2009 who affirmed that customer satisfaction from the quality of services provided is thus dependent on the ability to have the individual encounter providing the client with the feeling of contentment from the association. Service quality levels were confirmed to have assured the institutions ability to generate optimal referrals by 71% of the respondents. 81% of the respondents confirmed that meeting clients expectations had assured the institutions the ability to continuously retain

graduate students. This gave them the satisfaction accruing from the fact that they got value for money and assurance in terms of achieving the essence of the study programs. The responses notwithstanding, the service quality levels were found to have had insignificant influence on graduate student retention in the regression equation hypothesized in the model. This was confirmation of the null hypothesis espousing service quality as not having significant influence over graduate student retention.

5.2.2 Experiential learning

The ability of the institutions to carry out practical learning with a view of enabling the students to acquire the requisite skills was confirmed by 61% of the respondents. The findings identified with the position taken by Pullins, (2010) who argued that experiential marketing strategy is the medium of using experiences accruing from the expected satisfaction of a product or service offered by an entity. The marketing approach has been used by universities and other institutions of higher learning to seek out new clients for the academic programs on offer (Berger and Walingford, 2008). Constant interaction between the institutions and industry was confirmed as a premise which the institutions employed to ensure that the academic programs offered were in line with market demands. The findings identified with the position of Mweria (2007) who was of the view that in the higher education segment experiential marketing seeks to create a relationship between the potential student and the institution.

The ability to carry out continuous assessment of the student skills levels as a basis of ensuring that the demands of the academic processes were met was confirmed by 75% of the respondents. This confirmed the position taken by Bowen, et al 2014 who attested that the need to implore on the student to gain confidence with the programs being offered forms the core basis of the interaction. Online tutorials and simulations were confirmed to have enhanced the ability of the institution to reach the students effectively in an interactive manner by 76%. The

ability of experiential learning to enhance retention of graduate students was confirmed by 75% of the respondents. Experiential learning was confirmed to have had significant influence on graduate student retention as evidenced in the coefficients for the model. This thus rejected the null hypothesis which vouched for the experiential learning not having any significant influence on graduate student retention.

5.2.3 Alumnae association activities

92% of the respondents confirmed that the alumnae associations in their institutions carried out robust activities geared towards raising the profiles of the colleges. The findings confirmed the position of Ogot, 2010 who argued that situations whereby individual success of former students can be linked directly to the opportunity of passing through the learning institution gives credence to its position as pertains the ability to mould the students into responsible persons.

95% of the respondents confirmed that there were known case studies of the persons who had excelled in different fields who could be reached in the alumnae of the institutions. This was in tandem with the position of Sewe, 2014 who opined that the alumnae associations have been used by many institutions as forums to ensure engagement between the students in ongoing academic programs and those who have completed the programs. The ability of the members of the alumnae to have a sense of pride in identifying with the institution and referring potential students to register was confirmed by 93% of the respondents. Presence of mentorship programs carried by the alumnae associations which were a good avenue for follow up and encouragement of students to complete academic programs was confirmed. This identified with the position of Ngari and Gichira, 2014 who attested that alumnae associations with successful individuals forming the core of the membership are integral to the ability of the institutions to attract and retain students in their academic programs. Regardless of the responses, the alumnae association activities were confirmed to have had insignificant influence on graduate student retention in the

regression equation hypothesized in the model. This was confirmation of the null hypothesis attesting that alumnae association activities did not have significant influence over graduate student retention.

5.3 Conclusions of the study
The study drew the following conclusions:
The study established that the institutions had identified the staff as critical cog in ensuring that the programs in place were actualized in an ideal manner. The institutions had positively rallied the membership towards the ideals of the service charters as a measure of instilling ownership and ensuring the service quality levels were enhanced. Enactment of the service charters had a positive and profound effect on the capacity of the institutions to attract the goodwill from potential markets owing to the fact that the markets were certain about their expectations.

The sampled institutions had gone beyond the spectrums of theoretical and abstract knowledge impartation in the learning activities with a view of ensuring that the students gained actual practical exposure. There was synergy between academia and industry as a measure of ensuring that the products of the learning programs fitted well in the job market. The institutions went out of their way to not only test the knowledge of the learners with regard to theoretical exposure and understanding but equally confirm the ability to use the practical skills. Online tutorials and practical simulations geared towards enhancing the delivery mediums of the academic programs were equally exploited as an avenue of instruction.

Alumnae associations had programs of events that they undertook. The activities of the alumnae associations enabled the universities to build a sense of purpose in terms of the former students. The ability of the members of the alumnae to have a sense of pride in identifying with the institution was a defining mark in terms of conferring an identity to the members and a good marketing premise. Presence of mentorship programs carried by the alumnae associations were a

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good avenue to motivate students in the universities by persons who had gone through similar programs before.

5.4 Recommendations of the study
The study made the following recommendations:-

The study recommends that the universities should enhance their service quality levels by ensuring commitment by the members of staff to infuse efficiency in program delivery within the institutions of learning. It may enhance clients' satisfaction and generate referrals thus growth with minimal expenditure on institutional marketing activities. Preference should be given to measures geared towards attaining international certification on quality standards. Universities should ensure that the ideals of the service charters are met and implemented comprehensively to attract and retain more students.

The study recommends that universities should have provisions for practical learning and instruction as a medium of knowledge impartation to enhance student's skills levels. The universities should forge linkages with industry as a measure of reviewing their curriculums in line with emerging changes and trends. This will ensure that the content delivered captures the expectations of the market. Measures should equally be out in place to ensure that the students are proficient and technically sound by conducting of continuous evaluation of the skills levels. This may enhance the potential of the universities to attract and retain graduate students.

The universities should model alumnae associations as vehicles of propelling activities within the institutions. This is may assure students of role models who they can emulate from the members of the alumnae associations. The alumnae associations should be encouraged to have regular events to increase their vibrancy and equally attract students from the potential target markets. Initiatives geared towards predisposing students to independence on completion of the studies should be carried out. This may raise the universities stature and profile and enhance the

potential of graduate student retention. This is because the universities will be viewed as entities which inculcate individual student responsibility.

5.5 Suggestion for further studies

The study suggests that similar research with a bigger scope like all the universities nationally should be carried out to confirm whether the situation in the six universities identifies with others nationally.

The study equally suggests that research on the organizational factors affecting the marketing of universities should be carried out. This is with an aim of finding out the actual institutional factors affecting marketing programs

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APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PERSONNEL WORKING IN THE MARKETING DEPARTMENTS OF UNIVERSITIES

The study seeks to carry out a comparative analysis of effectiveness of experiential marketing strategy on graduate student's retention in Kenya. Kindly fill in the provided spaces and tick in the answers to the best of your ability. Your participation is highly appreciated and your identity will be treated with utmost confidence.

Section A: Background Information

1. Kindly indicate your gender
   Male   Female
2. What are your highest academic qualifications?
   Tertiary   ☐   Graduate   Post Graduate Diploma
   MA/MSC/MBA
   Any other ☐   ☐   ☐
3. How long have you worked in the marketing department in your institution?
   Less than 1 year   1 – 5 years   6 – 10 yrs
   11 – 15 yrs   Any other
   ☐   ☐   ☐
   ☐

Section B: Service quality

4. Does your institution have a service charter?
   Yes   No
1. Kindly indicate your level of agreement with the following attributes on the effects of the
   ☐   ☐
   service quality on graduate student retention-
   SA – Strongly Agree   A – Agree   U – Undecided
   DA – Disagree   SDA – Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
Our institution places major emphasis on commitment by staff thus enhancing the levels of graduate student retention	5	4	3	2	1
Efforts geared towards ensuring customer satisfaction have been put in place and they have	5	4	3	2	1

seen our institution retain graduate students					
Service quality levels have ensured that our institution generates optimal referrals	5	4	3	2	1
Meeting client expectations has the graduate students continuously retained in our school	5	4	3	2	1
Taking care to meet the communities expectations in terms of goodwill generation has ensured that the university attracts and retains graduate students	5	4	3	2	1
The members of staff have been positively receptive towards the charter in place to ensure enhanced service quality					
The service charter has affected the ability of the institution to effectively reach out to the potential markets and retain graduate students					

Section D: Experiential learning

2. Kindly indicate your level of agreement with the following attributes on experiential learning

   and its effects on graduate students retention in the institution:

   SA – Strongly Agree   A – Agree   U – Undecided

   DA – Disagree   SDA – Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
Our institution has provisions for practical learning enabling the students to acquire the requisite skills	5	4	3	2	1
Constant interaction between the institution and industry ensures that the academic programs offered are in line with market demands	5	4	3	2	1
Continuous assessment to confirm the students skills levels ensures the demands of the academic	5	4	3	2	1

programs are met					
Emotional connection between the learners and the learning process ensures that the requisite academic achievement is realized	5	4	3	2	1
Online tutorials and simulations enhance the ability of the institution to reach clients effectively in an interactive manner	5	4	3	2	1
Efforts towards students' skills impartation have impacted positively on the ability of the institution to generate referrals from beneficiary students					
Experiential learning has affected the ability of the institution to retain graduate students					

Section D: Alumnae associations

3. Kindly confirm your level of agreement with the following attributes on alumnae association

    activities and their effects on graduate students retention-
    SA – Strongly Agree   A – Agree   U – Undecided
    DA – Disagree   SDA – Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
The alumnae association in our institution carries out robust activities geared towards raising the profile of the college	5	4	3	2	1
Known case studies of the persons who have excelled in different fields can be reached in the alumnae of the institution	5	4	3	2	1
Members of the alumnae always have a sense of pride in identifying with the institution and referring potential students to register	5	4	3	2	1

Members of the alumnae have a program of mentorship which they follow and encourage the students to complete the academic programs enrolled in	5	4	3	2	1
Members of the alumnae association scout for potential job openings for offer to the students upon the completion of the academic programs	5	4	3	2	1
The activities of the alumnae association have affected the ability of the university to retain graduate students					

Section E: Graduate student retention

4.   a) Would you consider your institution as having capacity to retain students from enrollment

to the completion of their academic programs?

Yes ☐   No ☐

5. Does your institution have concerted activities in place geared towards ensuring that all

students who enroll finish up the academic programs?
Very highly   Highly   Undecided   Not at all

6. Kindly confirm your level of agreement with the following attributes on marketing programs

carried by the institution and their effects on graduate students retention-
SA – Strongly Agree   A – Agree   U – Undecided
DA – Disagree   SDA – Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
The institution ensures all students derive satisfaction and this sees to it that they complete academic programs without shifting to other colleges	5	4	3	2	1
Our college has a very strong brand that students	5	4	3	2	1

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like to associate with motivating them to complete the academic programs without shifting to other colleges					
The academic programs are fairly priced and the costs motivate student to complete the academic programs enrolled for	5	4	3	2	1
The goodwill built over the years allows continuous referrals and ensures students don't drop out of the academic programs enrolled for	5	4	3	2	1
The college has unique academic courses and this limits the students from shifting to other colleges because they don't have choice of similar programs	5	4	3	2	1
The institution has concerted activities in place geared towards ensuring that all students who enroll finish up the academic programs					
The experiential marketing activities in your institution have affected its ability to retain graduate students					

7. How can experiential marketing with a view of enhancing graduate student retention be done in a better manner? Kindly indicate

_____

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

1) University of Nairobi

2) Moi University

3) Kenyatta University

4) Egerton University

5) Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT)

6) Maseno University

7) Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST)

8) Dedan Kimathi University of Technology

9) Chuka University

10) Technical University of Kenya

11) Technical University of Mombasa

12) Pwani University

13) Kisii University

14) University of Eldoret

15) Maasai Mara University

16) Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology

17) Laikipia University

18) South Eastern Kenya University

19) Meru University of Science and Technology

20) Multimedia University of Kenya

21) University of Kabianga

22) Karatina University

Private Universities in Kenya

1) University of Eastern Africa, Baraton

2) Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA)

3) Daystar University

4) Scott Christian University

5) United States International University

6) Africa Nazarene University

7) Kenya Methodist University

8) St. Paul's University

9) Pan Africa Christian University

10) Strathmore University

11) Kabarak University

12) Mount Kenya University

13) Africa International University

14) Kenya Highlands Evangelical University

15) Great Lakes University of Kisumu

16) KCA University

17) Adventist University of Africa

Source: Commission for University Education (2016)