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# Marketing Strategies for Increasing Latino Enrollment in Higher Education

Melissa Rocio Gomez de la Fuente  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Melissa Gomez de la Fuente

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2016

Marketing Strategies for Increasing Latino Enrollment in Higher Education

by

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MBA, Hult International Business School, 2008

BS, Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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## Abstract

Many leaders of higher education institutions in the United States face changes in student demographics, tightened regulatory environments, and reduced state funding. University leaders have an opportunity to leverage targeted marketing strategies in order to increase their institutions' market share in the Latino student segment. The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that some university leaders use to increase Latino student enrollment in higher education programs. The marketing mix and the Ps of marketing theory comprised the study's conceptual framework. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 3 marketing experts from the higher education sector, who were selected by purposive sampling. Data were audio recorded, transcribed, member checked, and then coded for themes. Emergent themes describe the elements to consider when implementing a comprehensive strategic marketing plan, the challenges marketers face when trying to increase Latino student enrollment, and the importance of selecting and engaging stakeholders during the recruiting process. Marketing managers and practitioners in higher education, organizational strategy leaders, and policy makers may use these findings to understand the needs of Latino students, which may contribute to the growth of Latino student enrollment and the financial viability of the institution. Implications for positive social change include increased educational attainment for Latinos and related impacts for students' communities and society.

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## Dedication

A special gratitude and dedication to my husband David, for through his love and countless hours of support, I have been able to achieve a dream in my education and personal life. To my parents, Norma and Javier, for instilling in me the value of education and always encouraging me to pursue my aspirations.

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	iv
Section 1: Foundation of the Study.....	1
Background of the Problem .....	1
Problem Statement .....	2
Purpose Statement.....	3
Nature of the Study .....	3
Research Question .....	5
Interview Questions .....	5
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Definitions of Terms .....	6
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations.....	8
Assumptions.....	8
Limitations .....	8
Delimitations.....	9
Significance of the Study .....	9
Contribution to Business Practice.....	10
Implications for Social Change.....	11
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature.....	11
Marketing Definitions and Strategies .....	13
The Marketing Mix .....	18
Marketing and Higher Education.....	23



Marketing Initiatives in Higher Education .....	26
Marketing to Latinos.....	30
Motivation and Latino Students.....	33
Latinos in the U.S. Workforce .....	35
Findings in Education in the United States and in Relation to Latinos .....	37
Latinos and Postsecondary Education .....	39
Hispanic-Serving Institutions.....	41
Transition and Summary.....	44
Section 2: The Project.....	45
Purpose Statement.....	45
Role of the Researcher .....	45
Participants.....	46
Research Method and Design .....	47
Research Method .....	48
Research Design.....	49
Population and Sampling .....	52
Ethical Research.....	53
Data Collection .....	54
Instruments.....	55
Data Collection Technique .....	56
Data Organization Techniques.....	58
Data Analysis .....	59

Reliability and Validity.....	60
Reliability.....	60
Validity .....	61
Transition and Summary.....	62
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change .....	64
Introduction.....	64
Presentation of the Findings.....	64
Applications to Professional Practice .....	76
Implications for Social Change.....	79
Recommendations for Action .....	80
Recommendations for Further Study .....	80
Reflections .....	81
Conclusion .....	83
References.....	85
Appendix A: Consent Form .....	106
Appendix B: Interview Questions.....	108

## List of Tables

Table 1. Applicability of Themes to Marketing Mix and Other Marketing Frameworks.77

## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

During the last century, many business leaders applied and tested various marketing principles and frameworks. In introducing the theory of marketing mix in the 1960s, McCarthy identifying four core factors: product, pricing, promotion, and distribution (Shaw, 2012). Since the 1960s, leaders applied variations of the marketing mix framework to increase the consumption of the product or service rendered. Borden (1964) replaced the term distribution with place and coined the term 4 Ps of marketing and marketing mix (Borden, 1964). According to Kotler, Calder, Malthouse, and Korsten (2012), a marketing leader must blend the 4 Ps to create the greatest value, and in consequence, increase sales of a product.

In higher education in the United States, an opportunity exists for universities to capture a larger share of the prospective Latino student market (Torres & Zerquera, 2012). Capturing an untapped market segment can provide a competitive advantage for universities offering degree programs by continuing to increase student enrollment and remaining fiscally viable. The 4 Ps relate to university marketing efforts because for a student to enroll, the university must have the students' preferred academic program offered at an attainable price, and in the favored location.

### **Background of the Problem**

The higher education segment is subject to challenges due to increased competition and tighter regulatory requirements. Krachenberg (1972) introduced higher education administrators to the concept of marketing as a means of assessing the higher education market and external environment. Krachenberg also urged colleges and

universities to embrace marketing as a functional role. As reported by the Council for the Advancement and Support Education (2010), midsize universities in the United States increased their median marketing spending from \$259,400 in 2001 to \$800,000 in 2011. To grapple with the challenges, higher education leaders require an appropriate strategy and many adopted marketing as a recruiting strategy.

The public's entrenched view of colleges or universities as profitable organizations shifted when postsecondary leaders began to see academic programs as products and students as customers (Clagett, 2012). The term *customer* could create the misconception that a degree is a product that is for sale. However, proponents view the student or customer to be paying for a service and the university to be providing an appropriate value proposition for that payment (Durkin, McKenna, & Cummins, 2012). Because academics focus on developing a strong academic culture rather than a service culture, most academics disagree with this perspective (Gibbs, 2011). A marketing strategy is now part of most postsecondary institution's enrollment management plan. When university leaders develop marketing plans, including the Latino student demographic may provide positive market share gain.

### **Problem Statement**

Latinos are the largest growing racial group in the United States (Newman, 2013). U.S. Latinos' purchasing power has increased 50%, from \$1 trillion dollars in 2010 to \$1.5 trillion dollars in 2015 (D'Rozario & Yang, 2012). Latino students in 2011 earned only 8.9% of the total number of bachelor's degrees conferred by U.S. colleges and universities (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The general business problem was

that many university leaders are not planning strategically to attract prospective Latino students to gain market share. The specific business problem was that some university marketing leaders lack strategies for encouraging Latinos to enroll in programs offered by their institutions.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that some university marketing leaders use for encouraging Latinos to enroll in programs offered by their institutions. As part of my research, I asked university marketing experts to share the strategies that they use to gain market share in the Latino student prospective market. Findings from this study may help university officials when implementing marketing strategies targeted to increase Latino student enrollment counts. Enactment of these strategies may have a positive financial impact on higher education institutions. Increased enrollment by Latino students in higher education may increase education levels of Latino-segmented communities in the United States, which may lead to positive social change.

### **Nature of the Study**

I chose to use a qualitative research method because of the exploratory nature of my research study and because of my desire to analyze detailed data (Simons, 2013). According to Coenen, Stamm, Stucki, and Cieza, (2012) qualitative methods can be useful when researchers want participants to share their stories in their own words. I decided to use a qualitative research method because I wanted to investigate a real-world problem

directly with individuals who partake in higher education marketing to explore the research question.

Then, I analyzed the mixed-methods, quantitative, and qualitative methodologies. A mixed-methods approach is increasingly a common research method (Molina-Azorin, 2016). Researchers using this approach collect data by using qualitative and quantitative research methods to build a comprehensive picture of a phenomenon and its relationships to other variables (Molina-Azorin, Bergh, Corley, & Ketchen, 2014). The drawback of using this method is that it requires extensive time and increased financial resources for data collection to yield meaningful results (Azorin, 2016). The next methodology I analyzed was the quantitative method. Simons (2013) defined a quantitative researcher as one who studies a phenomenon to confirm or deny a hypothesis without individual bias. In a quantitative study, data are analyzed using statistical processes. Using a quantitative method can help researchers better understand factors that affect individuals. Therefore, quantitative or mixed-method research methods were not the appropriate approaches for this study.

The goal of researchers using case study designs is to understand the behavior of phenomenon in its environment (Yin, 2014). A case study design allows a researcher to compare across cases as well as understand independent influences (Bennett, Bishop, Dalgarno, Waycott, & Kennedy, 2012). Because a phenomenological design is focused on understanding human experiences (Petty et al., 2012), I did not choose this design. I believe that conducting a qualitative case study was the optimal design to collect in-depth data about marketers who seek to enroll Latino students.

### **Research Question**

The central research question of this study was, What strategies do university marketing leaders use to increase enrollment by Latino students in higher education programs?

### **Interview Questions**

I asked participants the following questions:

1. What are the strategic considerations you make when designing a marketing plan to appeal to the prospective Latino student market?
2. What are the main challenges you have in recruiting Latino students to your institution's degree programs?
3. How does your tuition or pricing strategy appeal to Latino students?
4. How does the physical location or place of your university attract Latino students?
5. How do you promote your degree programs to prospective Latino students?
6. Who do you include during the recruiting process?
7. What strategies have you found to be the most effective in recruiting Latino students for your degree programs?
8. What other information do you consider beneficial to share for this study?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Marketers use different marketing theories in designing their strategies. For this study, I selected McCarthy's marketing mix theory for my conceptual framework. Most businesses across sectors use marketing mix theory, either Borden's original 4 Ps structure or an extended 7 P's framework, which adds people, processes, and physical



evidence to the formulation as part of their marketing efforts (Booms & Bitner, 1981).

With the additional three elements, the extended marketing mix includes intangible services, not only physical products (Booms & Bitner, 1981).

The 7 Ps framework is used to gather information. In discussing the application of this framework to educational markets, Enache (2011) noted that each P has a specific role, and the relationships between the 7 Ps are important. According to my review of the literature, higher education leaders do not have one predefined conceptual framework for attracting Latinos to their programs. However, I believe that the 7 Ps marketing mix theory provided a useful basis for my study. Specifically, I think that it gave me an improved understanding of how marketing leaders in higher education balance the marketing mix so that it meets the needs of their targeted market segment.

### **Definitions of Terms**

*Latino/Hispanic:* People of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish descent who reside in the United States (Compton, Bentley, Ennis, & Rastogi, 2013). The terms Hispanic and Latino origin are interchangeable terms in the 2010 U.S. Census (Compton, E., Bentley, M., Ennis, S., & Rastogi, S. (2013).

*Marketing mix or Marketing Ps:* Dates back to the late 1940s, as a combination of a set of four elements – product, price, place, and promotion (Kotler et al., 2012). The marketer must choose the right mix necessary to control or at least influence an organization to provide the best value. Aghaei, Vahedi, Kahreh, Pirooz (2014) defined the concept as presenting the right product at a convenient location, at the best price, and at the right time.

*People:* Potential interactions between admissions staffers, faculty or university alumni, and prospective students, and how that experience may influence prospective students during the enrollment process (Enache, 2011).

*Physical evidence:* Represents the tangible assets a prospective student would evaluate (Gajic, 2012). Such as, buildings, study rooms, teaching materials, and many others. While Enache (2011) added that the physical evidence may also contribute to the first impression.

*Place:* Refers to the distribution channels that move the product to the targeted customer (Gordon, 2011).

*Price:* The amount a customer is willing to pay for the product or service offered (Gordon, 2011). Prospective students consider price as an important factor when pursuing an educational service. Additionally, price can include the list price, discount, and credit terms (Webb, Ireland, Hitt, Kistruck, & Tihanyi, 2011).

*Process:* Intangible activities that occur, such as admissions, enrollment, registration, financial aid processing, accommodation, etc. that may impact the experience of a prospective student (Gajic, 2012).

*Product:* According to Gordon (2011), product is either a tangible product or service. Webb et al. (2011) mentioned that this category includes product specifications, packaging, brand name, which in conjunction drive customer satisfaction. In the context of this manuscript, the product is a higher education academic program.

*Promotion:* As a component of the marketing mix, Gordon (2011) stated that promotion consists of various aspects of communication that generate product awareness

and knowledge.

*Service marketing:* The service marketing mix as the 7 Ps, which include the traditional 4 Ps plus people, process, and physical evidence which help provide insights about an educational product (Enache, 2011). Each one of the Ps touches the student in several phases of the educational consumption.

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

The content in this section clarifies the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations that may impact the outcome of this qualitative case study. In the assumptions section I explained facts that I assumed to be true; in the limitations section I identified the potential weaknesses of the study; and in the delimitation section I outlined the bounds of the study.

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions in scholarly research are those things that are out of a researcher's control but ensure the study is relevant. Assumptions are also a risk because prior experiences and speculations may creep personal bias. Kirkwood and Price (2013) stated that a researcher's assumptions could influence how research is conducted. I identified two assumptions may influence the results of the qualitative case study. The first assumption is that the marketers identified have confirmed applied experience in the higher education sector. The second assumption is that the case study participants provided accurate and honest responses during the interview.

#### **Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses in a study that are out of the researcher's

control but which can explain how the researcher can deal with the limitation (Connelley, 2013). Qualitative case study research tends to encompass a specific context and setting Sangster-Gormley (2013). This section contains certain limitations in the qualitative case study. First, the population includes three marketing professionals in higher education that target prospective Latino students for higher education programs. Developing a marketing strategy for a university is a requirement to participate in the study. Second, some responses may contain combined experiences because a participant may have had more than one professional experience. The participant is required to answer solely from the perspective of a higher education marketer. Also, because the data is self-reported, it can be vulnerable to exaggeration and intentional falsification.

### **Delimitations**

Madanipour (2013) describes delimitations as the characteristics that limit the area and focus, and outlines the boundaries of a research study. The qualitative case study contains two clear delimitations. First, the targeted population consists of experienced marketers in the higher education sector. Second, the marketers are specialized in recruiting Latino higher education students.

### **Significance of the Study**

This qualitative case study adds value to the business by documenting how marketers balance the marketing mix to attract Latino students to higher education programs. The qualitative case study informs higher education marketing leaders on the findings to potentially increase the Latino student enrollment. Collins (2011) stated that education empowers people, impacts national economic progress, and enriches

democratic ideals. Socially, the study might impact the individual wealth of Latino families and communities, as well as the economy of the U.S. as a whole. Pham (2011) concluded that the university graduates improved the overall quality of the labor force in the United States, and therefore, reaffirmed the impact of education on American society.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

University leaders have a clear understanding of the changing demographic profile of the United States. The leaders of marketing offices are now adapting their marketing strategies and campaigns to attract students using nontraditional communication campaigns such as social media (Constantinides & Stagno, 2011). There are still opportunities to improve these strategies to increase market share within the Latino community. According to Knapp, Kelly-Reid, and Ginder (2012), college enrollments by Latinos represented only 6.3% or 183 thousand students of the total enrollments. To have Latinos equally represented in the university sector as in the U.S. demographic, the marketing department has a large market segment of prospective Latino students to help increase the university's overall enrollment counts.

The information reported in this qualitative case study informs marketing officers to tailor marketing strategies targeted to the specific needs of the growing Latino population. Specifically, the population with exponential purchasing power growth to generate increase enrollment and potential tuition related revenue for the institution to operate. Businesses in the global economy are constantly looking for talent with specific skill sets. Many U.S.-based companies are launching or supporting existing branches in Latin America. Businesses are constantly searching for talent with Latino cultural context

to develop strategies and operational support in Latin American countries and the U.S. Latin American market. As part of recruiting efforts, universities should be prepared to discuss the profiles needed in the U.S. labor market to inform the prospective student better.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The Latino community continues to experience high levels of poverty and low levels of education. According to Aud et al. (2012), 18% of Latino students do not complete high school. The Latino bachelor's degree graduation rate stands at 51% (Knapp et al., 2012). Pham (2011) asserted that people with high school diplomas have a greater opportunity for social and educational growth. By instilling a mindset that values education as a path to gainful employment, high school and college graduation rates may improve, and poverty amongst Latinos could diminish.

This qualitative case study provides significant value to postsecondary institutions, governmental agencies, and not-for-profit organizations that are working constantly on increasing college enrollment, graduation, and other success rates. As President Barack Obama affirmed in his More Perfect Union address documented by Rowland and Jones (2011), America will prosper if we invest in the health, welfare, and education of all children from all demographics and race.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

My goal in composing the following literature review is to provide more understanding about marketing mix elements, marketing as a professional field, marketing in practice, Latino cultural and social aspects, and education and labor trends. I

discuss existing recruiting and marketing strategies in higher education as they pertain to Latino cultural aspects to help identify recruiting opportunities for colleges and universities. In Section 3, my objective is to clarify whether the 7 Ps of the marketing mix has an impact on higher education institutions' efforts to enroll prospective Latino students.

The literature review consists of various sections. The first section addresses the marketing mix and the 4 Ps and 7 Ps, marketing in higher education, general business marketing strategies and marketing to Latino consumers. The second portion of the literature review focuses on the current state of the education system in the United States and the recruitment of Latino students. The final section provides postsecondary education data for Latinos in the workforce. Ninety three percent of the sources cited in the literature review are peer-reviewed articles published within 5 years of the approval of the study.

Research databases, governmental sites, and nonprofit research organizations provided access to articles and statistical data relevant to my qualitative case study. I used databases such as EBSCO Host, ProQuest, ERIC, and SAGE Premiere to access peer reviewed articles. I searched terms such as *recruiting, marketing, marketing mix, 4 Ps, 7 Ps, education, higher education, Latino, Hispanic, HSIs, employment, workforce, parenting, motivation, qualitative, quantitative, research, and case study* helped generate a pool of scholarly works. Most of the articles that I found and ultimately cited were published within the past 5 years. I also searched in reports published by the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department

of Education, U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, Institute for Higher Education Policy, Lumina Foundation for Education, and Pell Institute.

The theories I explored for the qualitative multiple case study included the marketing mix and the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. The SWOT analysis framework is a widely known and implemented tool that helps provide managers with organized qualitative information (Brooks, Heffner, & Henderson, 2014). For example, a SWOT analysis can be used to understand a company's impact using social media. Organizations use it as part of a continuous planning process; the aim is to identify a business strategy that will result in a competitive advantage for the organization (Brooks, Heffner, & Henderson). Both the SWOT analysis and the marketing mix frameworks allow for conceptual modeling by managers and leaders that may be applicable in different business contexts (Gustavsson & Age, 2014). Because the research question posed in this study sought to explore the implemented marketing strategies and not the competitive environment of the universities, I viewed the marketing mix framework as best suited for this study.

### **Marketing Definitions and Strategies**

Rosenbloom and Dimitrova (2011) described marketing as the activities that organizations undertake to identify and develop the products that customers want and the prices that they are willing to pay for them. Strategic marketing targets segments of the population by understanding how different groups think and act (Wright, Chew, & Hines, 2012). Developing and applying a strategic marketing plan explores a holistic approach and views across theories.



The marketing theories and concepts applied in a strategic plan may vary according to the product or service offered by an organization. There are many fields of study and practice within marketing. For example, SWOT analysis, five forces, market research, brand awareness, market segmentation, market orientation, brand equity, relationship marketing, and marketing mix are marketing concepts studied by students at the university level. Corporations also include these concepts in their strategic initiatives related to marketing. Identifying and using the correct marketing strategy is essential for business success (Shaw, 2012).

Additionally, having a process that supports the development of a strategic marketing plan facilitates the completing one. Webb et al. (2011) provided an outline of marketing process steps. These steps included marketing performance, opportunity creation, opportunity recognition, innovation, opportunity exploitation, and dependent variables. Webb et al. defined marketing performance as the dependent relationship that exists between consumer orientation, competition orientation, organization-wide responsiveness, and operational efficiencies to satisfy customer needs. To create products or services that satisfy customers, one must first be aware of customers' need. The organization must then focus on effectively communicating how the product addresses the need and identifying effective promotional messages and distribution channels that will make products accessible to customers (Rosenbloom & Dimitrova, 2011). Use of an effective strategy should result in customer satisfaction, repeated consumption, and increased market share (Webb et al., 2011).

Although some may view corporate brand management and marketing as

incompatible with the core values of higher education institutions, branding is one of a university's most important assets (Curtis, Abratt, & Minor, 2009). Branding also plays a significant role in the decision-making process of many parents and prospective students (Curtis, Abratt, & Minor, 2009). Therefore, having a strong brand helps marketing experts position the university.

Corporate brands are typically a meaningful asset for customers and organizations. Balmer (2012) mentioned that corporate brand management can affect a customer's expectations and perceptions of product and service quality. Similarly, a branded product can enhance an organization's competitive position and increase profitability. On the contrary, Huang and Sarigollu (2012) mentioned that corporate brand awareness does not necessarily correlate with a sale. In a brand awareness study that they conducted, Huang and Sarigollu found that participants were aware of brands such as GE and Cisco. Participants were not direct customers, however. In general, a well-known brand may develop either a good, bad, or just awareness of the product or service.

Similar to corporate brands, university brands should communicate an institution's values, beliefs, and image to customers. For example, the University of Ulster marketing team leveraged the increasing global appeal of animation by developing an animated branding concept for the university (Durkin, McKenna, & Cummins, 2012). Consequently, they were able to connect emotionally with prospective students and positively impact business development and brand likeability (Durkin, McKenna, & Cummins).

Having a strategic brand may help persuade parents and prospective students to enroll. As described by Huang and Sarigollu (2012), the customer may not always be the final consumer, yet the consumer is always a customer. Therefore, even though a parent is not the final consumer, the parent also takes the role of a customer.

A university and another organization that share a similar mission statement can collaborate with one another to create brand awareness. By developing joint local and regional campaigns, they can do at a fraction of what it would cost to do this by advertising. Types of cooperative advertising include sharing of expenditures, sharing of franchising advertising expenses, promoting of a generic brand, and joint decision making regarding the expenditures (Aust & Buscher, 2014). Higher education institutions could pursue cooperative advertising by partnering with an affiliate, promoting different campuses of the same university, and promoting a state-wide institution or a consortium of community colleges.

Digital marketing is a common channel that marketers use to target millennial customers; however, digital marketing must be done correctly to be received positively (Taken Smith, 2012). Taken Smith recommends incorporating graphics, a colorful yet professional look, and updated information. Moogan (2011) said that an approach using mobile phone texting and social networking sites may be effective in communicating specific information to prospective students. The reason is that prospective students prefer to use electronic correspondence to interact with admissions personnel and current students on a regular basis (Moogan, 2011). Similarly, Curtis et al. (2009) recommended that marketing personnel revamp university websites to improve the navigation

experience and provide informative content. Overall, researchers suggest that one of the distribution channels for advertising must be in a digital format.

There is a need for higher education leaders to focus on learning how electronic marketing channels are perceived and performed. Moogan (2011) stated that higher education marketers should strive to promote positive outcomes such as employment rates and alumni career progression within their electronic communication strategies. Tang (2011) compared top university websites in the United States and China and determined the importance of cultural awareness and positioning of images within the context of the targeted market segment.

Segmentation helps marketers understand similarities within a group of consumers (Wright et al., 2012). University marketing professionals can implement market segmentation or niche marketing strategies to promote their institutions or academic programs. According to Toften and Hammervoll (2013), niche marketing helps organizations match a specific set of customer needs. It is successful when the added value perception of a product or service for the customer is high in quality and unique. For example, microbreweries and boutique hotels have managed to remain viable using niche marketing strategies (Murray & O'Neill, 2012). The focus of the niche product offerings is uniqueness that customers can perceive its uniqueness or higher quality standards. I believe that university marketing leaders may be able to use these strategies to develop tailored marketing campaigns to attract Latino prospective students and parents.

The service industry started offering services as an add on premium to the

delivery of products (Ng, Parry, Smith, Maull, & Briscoe, 2012). Extending a manufacturer insurance policy to a tangible good is an example of service as a product. Service theory includes products such as intangible goods, simultaneous production and consumption of services, and coproduction of the service experience as basic elements. In service management, influencing and understanding a customer's expectation is essential (Osborne, Radnor, & Nasi, 2012). This understanding can effect deeply the perceived usefulness and impact of the service (Osborne, Radnor, & Nasi, 2012). Ng et al. (2012) argued that the value of consuming a product by the customer while in use rather than at the exchange of the service was considered the secondary product. Now, a service is not only an add on to an existing product, but the product itself. Therefore, training and motivating service providers is key to positively impacting customer experience (Osborne et al.).

### **The Marketing Mix**

Marketing addresses competition within an uncertain environment. The marketing mix theory aims to identify how marketers can satisfy consumers, ensure long-term business success, and protect physical and sociocultural factors (Pomering et al., 2011). Tapp and Spotswood (2013) described the social marketing mix as how a benefit for a consumer can develop a change in purchasing behavior, how a cost-prohibitive factor may deter the consumer from making this change, what type of problem it is resolving, and how we communicate to our audience. Corporations have embraced marketing as a way to positively impact their bottom line. Advocating for a significant marketing budget during an economic recession has forced organizations to link the marketing efforts to

business performance (Morgan, 2012). As corporations leaders have found, what works for one company may not necessarily work for all industries or fields, however.

Similarly, higher education institutions could consider marketing processes and strategies as best practices in business and transferable to higher education marketing practices to increase enrollment.

The traditional marketing mix strategy is called 4 Ps, which stands for price, promotion, place, and product (Borden, 1964). Marketing efforts help business leaders disseminate an organization's products to current and future customers, communicate differentiating elements of products, and convey how products may satisfy customer needs (Webb et al., 2011). Marketing managers typically control the marketing process, and because of their industry knowledge will add or subtract a P from the traditional 4 P model according to the needs of the product or service rendered (Shaw, 2012).

Many marketing professionals have subsequently adopted a marketing mix designed to their specific product or service needs to attract and retain customers (Shaw, 2012). Behavioral change is a main element of the social marketing activity mix. Tapp and Spotswood (2013), and Sheau-Ting, Mohammed, and Weng-Wai (2013) align the Ps with concepts related to social marketing. For example, the term *product* conveys the benefits that a marketer can create to motivate change in behavior. Price relates to the effort required to enact change in behavior. Place is related to accessibility to a community service provider, and promotion connects bidirectional persuasive communication techniques. Tapp and Spotwood developed a new marketing mix construct. In so doing, they concluded that the 4Ps model is not the sole construct of

social marketing. Sheau-Ting, Mohammed, and Weng-Wai included postpurchase maintenance as an additional attribute to the social marketing mix, which monitors the persistence of the newly adopted behavior. Marketing leaders apply an effective marketing mix strategy when the marketer molds the marketing mix framework to better suit the needs of the organization.

The applicability of the marketing mix theory is present in various industries. Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Morgan (2013) studied how it might be feasible to sustainably implement the 4Ps in firms. First, to attract customers driven by socially responsible organizations, and second, to help support organization's mission to reduce the environmental footprint. Leonidou et al. (2013) concluded that without further evidence of a financial gain, many managers remain unconvinced of the benefit of greening the marketing mix. For example, an organization commercializing organic produce may have a lower profit when compared with a nonorganic produce competitor.

Huan and Sarigollu (2012) studied the marketing mix as an element of creating brand awareness. Promoting a product helps companies create brand awareness. Place or placement of a product in a store can generate exposure to a brand, and price promotion can also steer brand loyal customers to explore new brands. Researchers have not identified a correlation between low or high price and brand awareness (Huang & Sarigollu).

Bag and Biswas (2013) defined a marketing mix model for each of the 4 Ps. The factors comprising a product model include new, eco-friendly, sustainable, and warranty. Within price, the model explores nominal, environment, stabilize, and weighted

variables. The place model considers national and international, weather, social and cultural circumstances, and effective and efficient distribution. Finally, the promotion model relates numberless consistent message, well information, special discount offer, and electronic devices applications as factors to consider. Bag and Biswas concluded that the compass model was designed to capture market share in a globally competitive environment by studying four sections within each P in depth. Defining a model that may work globally is difficult. Bahadir, Baradwaj, and Srivastava (2015) examined how the marketing mix and brand sales performed in global markets. The authors concluded that the marketing mix differs depending on the type of market, either emerging or developing (Bahadir et al.).

The service marketing model was designed for marketers to use when a product is a service, not necessarily a tangible good. Booms and Bitner (1981) developed a service marketing model that extended to 7 Ps. The service marketing model created includes three additional Ps: people, processes, and physical evidence. Within the marketing Ps conceptual frameworks, the 8Ps model has also been used in marketing efforts. Thorat, Kishor, and Meghe (2013) mentioned that the 8 Ps framework focuses on developing a need and sustaining a demand for a product or service by changing the market or even creating a new market. In addition to the traditional 4 Ps, the 8 Ps model includes public, partnership, policy, and productivity and quality as part of the marketing mix.

Other marketing mix models have gained traction. For example, Gordon (2011) challenged the need to include two additional Ps – policy and people – in social marketing research. Pomeroy, Noble, and Johnson (2011), cross-referenced 10 variables



by including six additional Ps in their sustainable tourism research. The prior examples align with Rosenbloom and Dimitrova's (2011) conclusion that it is the marketing manager's responsibility to analyze and understand industry's external environment to satisfy the needs and preferences of its customer and design a strategy that makes sense for the organization.

A study on the performance of the marketing mix activities implemented by organizations is important to help document the impact of marketing strategies. Mintz and Currim (2013) developed a conceptual model that helps an institution leader measure financial and marketing metrics. Both metrics review the marketing mix activity, firm strategy, metric orientation, managerial characteristics, and environmental characteristics. Mintz and Currim found that, with certainty, metrics are associated with both marketing mix and financial performance, which provide clear accountability and focus on results.

Gajic (2012) stated that the primary goal of a higher education institution is to understand the factors and circumstances that create market conditions to enable harmonizing the supply with current demand. As concluded by Enache (2011), in higher education institutions, service marketing helps provide a framework to understand the environment and potential market segments. Universities could develop a customer value proposition by strategically marketing to the Latino market segment the long term value of obtaining a higher education degree. According to Ng et al., (2012), when the organization leaders have clear understanding of the value creating attributes, leaders can better communicate the value proposition to the customer. Before preparing a marketing plan, university marketing experts must also understand student perceptions of the

university, the academic program, and the expected student experience. A service value proposition occurs when the provider and receiver of a service interact to create a co-development (Ng et al.). Similarly, the production and consumption of a service occur simultaneously, and the production itself can affect positively or negatively the consumption experience (Osborne, Radnor, & Nasi, 2012). University recruiters and marketers have an opportunity to educate prospective students concurrently about the value and benefits of obtaining a higher education degree at that institution.

### **Marketing and Higher Education**

When higher education institutions were benefactors of an influx of funds through government grants and private endowments and demand for higher education exceeded supply, marketing was not a valued function (Ramachandran, 2010). However, as state funds dwindled, competition increased, demographics changed, life-long learners emerged, internationalization expanded, and regulatory environments tightened, institutions transitioned from a state dependent to autonomous (Maringe & Mourad, 2012). According to Gibbs (2011), a more sophisticated and knowledgeable consumer demands that higher education institutions provide a more personalized marketing message.

With changes in demographics and technology, there is an opportunity for colleges to benefit from market research (Clagett, 2012). For example, marketing strategies such as social media marketing, interactive and digital media, mobile marketing devices, and other electronic promotional mediums influence millennial generation students (Moore, 2012). Moore added, for colleges and universities to remain

competitive, their recruiting and marketing practices must adopt new technology and non-traditional strategies. To prevent generalizing millennial generation behavior, one should analyze cultural factors when targeting prospective Latino students.

Moogan (2011) studied whether a higher education institution's marketing strategy can improve the student-university match. Moogan suggested that universities develop tailored communication strategies to help segment the marketplace and, therefore, position themselves in the market driven environment. Academics were not initially receptive of this new market-driven mentality because it seemed to run counter to the traditionally academic focused culture of higher education institutions (Gibbs, 2011). Gibbs acknowledged that the consumerism approach of classifying the student as customer and teacher as a service provider could create potential ethical challenges.

Moogan (2011) also portrayed the prospective student as the customer, and compared the decision to enroll in a higher education with the purchase of a service. The concept of student as customer could be misinterpreted to mean a student can purchase a degree. The definition of a customer in a public service context may extend to family or friends seeking information for a consumer, or parents making or supporting a decision in behalf of the consumer (Wright et al., 2012). Marigne and Mourad (2012) suggested a value proposition construct that aligns a university's marketing responsibilities with its transitional role as a knowledge center. The value proposition of a university should convey: enrollment access and availability, the relevance of the program offering, excellence and superiority of the program, and social justice, equity ethics and sustainability (Marigne & Mourad). Furthermore, the goal of marketing in higher

education is to align with the institution's mission and function of providing a service of social benefit through teaching and learning (Gajic, 2012).

Service marketing values in higher education must go beyond a degree certificate, and include such outcomes as mental development and a mastered skillset (Moogan, 2011). Higher education marketing professionals should focus both on the social transformative function of students as well as the economic purpose of the institution (Gibbs, 2011). Therefore, marketing professionals in the higher education sector must demonstrate ethical behavioral characteristics including trustworthiness, integrity, accountability, and a desire for the advancement of others and oneself (Gibbs). These characteristics are even more important as marketing departments increasingly take a leading role within the university and higher education managers recognize the value of marketing activities (Ramachandran, 2010). Marketing departments develop university market positioning strategies. Where positioning supports the communication of benefits as recognized by different market segments (Wright et al., 2012). Additionally, the marketing department helps the institution by providing market research that defines trends in the higher education sector and identifies those academic program offerings that are in high demand (Ramachandran, 2010).

As stated by Enache (2011), a university's marketing strategy is a critical element to entering into new markets by placing special attention on the development of the marketing P factors. Marketing and recruiting strategies are essential components of an effective enrollment management plan to compensate for declining enrollments, increasing competition, and budget limitations (Clagett, 2012). Examples of effective

postsecondary recruiting and marketing strategies are often difficult to obtain because institutions with successful strategies prefer to keep them confidential as a competitive advantage. Universities must determine priorities, goals, and expected outcomes prior to requesting approval for a marketing budget and establishing a marketing strategy just as any other organization. Similar to other industry sectors, defining and outlining an effective marketing strategy is an essential element for success (Shaw, 2012).

### **Marketing Initiatives in Higher Education**

Colleges and universities, both public and private, allocate a significant share of its annual budget to marketing and enrollment management efforts. Postsecondary institutions first started to implement marketing strategies in the 1980s, when enrollment numbers were in a decline (Clagett, 2012). According to the Council for Advancement and Support Education (CASE, 2010), mid-size universities in the United States increased their median marketing expenditures to \$800,000 in 2011 – more than triple the amount spent 2001. Balancing the priority of allocating budgeted resources to marketing as opposed to merit and need-based scholarships or other departments can be conflicting within a university (Hossler & Kalsbeek, 2013). Establishing recruitment channels, strategic recruitment designs, and strategic methods of disseminating recruitment information and communication materials are fundamental for postsecondary institutions to connect with prospective students (Montalvo, 2013).

The quality of recruiters is also a contributing factor towards student enrollment (Montalvo, 2013). Montalvo revealed that the recruiters themselves, along with faculty, staff and administration, should intrinsically be motivated to increase diversity and

should have the ability to connect with diverse ethnicities. Investing in the development and implementation of a tailored recruiting strategy, particularly targeting Latino students, may contribute positively to a postsecondary institution's financial bottom line. Strategically, it makes sense for universities to focus on gaining market share among Latino students.

Many variables contribute to the attainment of higher education. O'Connor, Hammack, Scott (2009) stated that a student's background and organizational characteristics are important variables that impact a prospective student's options. Such variables include socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, prior high school achievements, curriculum, and geography. Pampaloni (2010) identified a shared and consistent belief among prospective students, regardless of demographic factors, that the admissions process is a long, tiresome, and very stressful process. Pampaloni added that the intangible feels right or feels comfortable was a reason consistently given by prospective students for enrolling in a particular university.

Marketing efforts in collaboration with the sales, enrollment, and admissions teams are critical in defining an organizational image, a university brand, and in this day and age, a social networking image that attracts prospective students. Universities use the traditional face to face interviews and campus visits, university website, radio and television spots, and social media. Universities aim to generate an organizational image that represents characteristics most desired by prospective students (Curtis et al., 2009). Pampaloni (2010) concluded that during the decision-making process, having the opportunity to visit a campus plays a major decision factor, especially when financial

constraints limit the number of campuses one can visit. Universities should ensure the campus experience is as optimal and engaging.

The perception of a university brand is typically developed using targeted communication as part of its public relations strategy. Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009) determined that universities should focus on promoting its student support networks, social environment, location, career opportunities available to graduates, and the diversity and inclusion of the nontraditional student body. The scholars identified that the logo of a university has little impact and, that the university mission and vision do not play an important role in the decision-making process of prospective students (Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009). Identifying what strategies are most effective in building a brand will help universities maximize their branding budget.

With the growth of social networking, universities are now using this tool as part of its recruiting strategies by creating an image, measuring conversion rates, and providing resources and materials to the internal and external community. Some universities have been conservative in adopting a social networking strategy (Hayes, Ruschman, & Walker, 2009). Hayes et al., mentioned that some universities purposely avoid social media as part of their marketing strategy. Other universities have focused mainly on tracking what is being said about the university online by using tools that can provide awareness and help create strategies to react to potential issues (Hayes et al.). Constantinides and Stagno (2011) confirm the importance of social media to reach and attract prospective students. Some universities actively participated in this effort by strategically setting up a social media page in outlets where prospective students or

current students are already. Fewer universities created their own social networking sites (Hayes et al., 2009). Social media is an important influence on purchasing behavior (Constantinides & Stagno) and as stated by Thorat, Kishor, and Meghe (2013), a social media campaign should be a key element of the marketing strategy.

Pampaloni (2010) determined that prospective students are interested in visiting websites and receiving materials requested online, and noted that acknowledging random e-mailed materials by the prospective student is not likely. While Clagett (2012), stated that college-bound students prefer receiving brochures and letters in the mail. Although having an online presence is valued by most universities, the level of its social networking presence varies greatly. The three aforementioned strategies need to be aligned and tailored to attract prospective students. To successfully recruit Latino students, universities and colleges should take into account the cultural and linguistic characteristics of Latino students and relate them to its organizational image, brand perception, and social media presence. Adopting a strategy to recruit Latinos without a thorough understanding of Latino family values and the important role they play in the decision-making process will limit a strategy's effectiveness. Universities targeting Latino prospective students need to create an image that is attractive to the family as a whole.

Lastly, with already exorbitant tuition costs on the rise, there is some growing skepticism as to the economic benefit of higher education to succeed (Barrow, Brock, & Rouse, 2013). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013), however, supported the importance of education by confirming a direct relationship between education level, and both salary



and the unemployment rate. Universities could include promoting the financial benefits of obtaining a university degree as part of their recruitment efforts. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013), in 2012, the 25 years and older population with a high school diploma encountered an unemployment rate of 8.3%. Professionals with a bachelor's degree or higher encountered an unemployment rate of 4.5% or lower. Similarly, on average, the 25 years and older demographic with a high school diploma earned 39% less than professionals with a bachelor's degree or higher (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). A strategic communication plan targeting Latino students is imperative to attract this segmented market.

### **Marketing to Latinos**

The traditional marketing model focuses on strategies targeting consumers segmented by socioeconomic class, with less attention placed on marketing to advertise to an ethnic group (Chavez, 2012). As the population and spending power of Latinos continue to grow, advertisers have invested in market research data to help create and implement marketing strategies that effectively promote products and services to Latinos. As described by Alvarez, Dickson, and Hunter (2012), the organizations that segment by ethnic group mainly target the ethnic group as a whole. Industries such as retailers, web-marketing, tobacco and antitobacco, food, and others have analyzed the Latino culture and their consumer behavior to determine marketing strategies. According to Tang (2011), market research for both marketing and advertising indicated that culture is essential to the success of an advertising campaign. Higher education institutions can benefit from learning the consumer behavior of Latinos students attending a degree

program to attract others like them.

A study of Latinos intent to purchase confirmed that the price and the perception of the product were determining factors that drive the intent to purchase (Campbell, 2013). Another study on web-marketing customization identified that the decision whether to use home or host country advertisements should be dependent on the level of acculturation of the targeted audience (Baack, Singh, & Baack, 2013). Kelly, Comello, Stanley, and Gonzalez (2010) researched the advertising effectiveness of anti-tobacco campaigns tailored to Latino youth by examining theme and language. Both Spanish and English campaigns were effective, although Spanish advertisements became less effective as the level of the participant's English proficiency increased (Kelly et al., 2010). Williams, Crockett, Harrison, and Thomas (2012) indicated in their essay that consumers in Latino areas tend to purchase store brand named products, suggesting price sensitivity in the consumer behavior. They recommended using culturally relevant marketing communications campaigns, such as inserting cultural symbols, using linguistic styles, and including Latino music genre when promoting specific food products (Williams, Crockett, Harrison, & Thomas). This last point also aligns with Corona and McCabe's (2011) suggestion to use cultural symbols to entice Latinos to purchase.

Various industries have analyzed the Latino consumer market, yet, there is a lack of research that particularly identifies how universities outreach to Latino prospective students. For Corona and McCabe (2011), it is clear that language, country of origin, and level of education are important factors to consider. Furthermore, when marketing strategies focus on race or ethnicity, using a homogenized strategy may not be sufficient

to attract the entire group. Blas (2013) identified some of the key subgroups: segmentation by level of acculturation, Latino identity, Spanish language and non-Spanish language media, Latino online trends, demographics, income level, consumer behavior, and cultural insight. Similarly, Puente (2012) segmented the Latino market in the following categories: English-speaking, bilingual and Spanish-speaking, educated and uneducated, and assimilated and resistant to mainstream U.S. culture. Therefore, one should consider segmentation by Latino type or status when focusing advertising efforts to attract Latino consumers.

According to Corona and McCabe (2011), the level of acculturation depends on the cultural exposure, socioeconomic, and generation level of the individual. The term acculturation in this study describes the degree in which Latinos have assimilated into the American society. Tsai and Li (2012) based their research on segmenting by levels of acculturation, bicultural, and linguistic factors. The three acculturation level types include assimilated Latino, integrated Latino, and separated Latino segments. The results collected in the study by Tsai and Li demonstrated that the segments had a correlation with a particular type of advertisement. For example, assimilated Latinos responded favorably to Caucasian targeted ads, integrated Latinos responded favorably to bicultural ads, and separated Latinos responded favorably to Latino targeted ads (Tsai & Li, 2012). Marketing to Latinos is challenging because the Latino market evolves constantly due to acculturation level and immigration motives (Puente, 2012). In addition to this categorization, Corona and McCabe concluded that organizations need to better understand the attitudes, behaviors, and the decision-making process of Latinos and how

they impact their selection of a product or service. As part of the formulation of a marketing mix strategy, marketing leaders should observe external factors such as economic conditions, socio-cultural factors, and competition.

### **Motivation and Latino Students**

Understanding the motivations of Latinos is critical to reforming educational policy, increasing achievement, and improving the life and success of students. Rivas-Drake (2008) identified three motivation profiles among Latino college students and used these profiles to better understand the behaviors and beliefs that drive success. The first pattern identified by Rivas-Drake (2008) discussed the economic and social exemption barriers, rather than cultural and social beliefs. This motivational profile group of students mainly associated themselves with the Latino ethnicity group as an affiliation term, although the students, in general, did not socialize with other Latinos outside of their family. The Latinos identified in this motivation pattern did not identify any perceived Latino-specific social barriers as barriers to learning; instead, they identified their family's socioeconomic status as the primary limitation.

The second profile of students, although perceiving the existence of strong social barriers, possessed ethnic identity and drive to help improve the economic situation of other Latinos. In addition to helping other Latinos, this group of students strives to obtain personal, economic, and occupational rewards. In contrast to the first group, these students had daily interaction with other Latinos and were involved in community events and activities (Rivas-Drake, 2008). The students in this group are also intrinsically motivated. Intrinsically motivated students will potentially have a higher graduation

success rate. Furthermore, Gonzalez, Stein, and Huq (2012) concluded that students with greater ethnic centrality report high levels of motivation to pursue academic development, acculturation at school, and self-worth and well-being.

The third group of students had a profile that combined characteristics of the first and second groups. For example, they recognize the opportunity exists to grow and be financially independent, but are of the belief that students cannot make a social impact until they are in a position of power within their profession (Rivas-Drake, 2008). Students in the third motivation profile considered education as the path to a position of power that will enable them to help out other Latinos. These students also interact with other Latino students on a regular basis, with the Spanish language being their main association, not ethnicity.

Latino students fall into various categories. Latino students relate to their ethnic group in different manners, and different factors drive their motivations. Understanding the differences within an ethnic group will help community members, teachers, counselors, and advisors properly support and mentor Latino college students. As concluded by Phinney, Torres Compos, and Padilla Kallemeyn (2011), at-risk Latino students mentored during their freshman year sustained their academic motivation, compared with those not mentored and demonstrated diminished motivation. If a person has an internal drive or desire to complete an everyday task, he or she will reach the goal. Understanding the desire and goals of Latino students could provide a benefit to marketing, recruiting, and admissions leaders to help increase enrollment of the Latino student demographic.

### **Latinos in the U.S. Workforce**

As the Latino population continues to grow, there is a need to ensure the Latino ethnic group is positively contributing to U.S. productivity. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) projects the Latino workforce to reach 30.5 million. The average weekly wage for Latinos in 2011 was \$549, compared to \$615 for African Americans, \$775 for European Americans, and \$866 for Asian Americans (United States Department of Labor, 2012). Below are comparisons of Latinos and other minorities within various workforce sectors.

The union labor force sector is one area in which Latino representation has rapidly increased. Union jobs not only consist of manufacturing positions, but also of positions in education and the public sector. Between 1983 and 2008, the Latino representation grew 6.4%, the Asian American representation grew 2.1%, and the European American share dropped 9.1% in the organized union workforce (Schmitt & Warner, 2010). In 2008, European Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans represented 69.1%, 13%, 12.2%, and 4.6%, respectively, of the organized workforce (Schmitt & Warner, 2010). Wilson (2012) argued that obtaining an unionized or public sector position increases the opportunity to move into managerial roles on average by 24% for African Americans and 18% for Latinos.

An example of a sector of the workforce in which Latino representation is growing at an above average pace is the military. The proportion of Latinos in the military is expected to increase exponentially due to the increasing numbers of second-generation U.S.-born Latinos of recruiting age. Dempsey and Shapiro (2009) found that

50% of Latinos in the armed forces identified a desire to serve one's country as the primary motivation for enlisting. This proportion is significantly higher than the percentage of European Americans and African Americans, which was only 34% and 24% respectively (Dempsey & Shapiro). Dempsey and Shapiro also identified that 75% of Latinos reported having a mentor, which is on par with African Americans and European Americans at 79% and 73% respectively. Latinos are acculturating to the armed forces at a quicker pace than in other sectors. Although strides still need to be made in addressing discrimination (Dempsey & Shapiro, 2009), the military provided a promising professional growth opportunity for Latinos.

The study of cultural differences such as ethnic identity, acculturation, and accents help clarify the factors affecting Latino representation in the workforce. Ethnic identity can have a strong influence on career orientation. One definition of ethnic identity is the means by which people classify themselves as part of a group. One's association with a group's cultural values, norms, and traditions is found to have a direct correlation with job satisfaction (Valdivia & Flores, 2013). Employers should perceive a candidate's strong sense of ethnic identity as a positive characteristic. For example, Hosoda and Nguyen (2012) confirmed that professionals with Spanish accents applying for high-status jobs were perceived to be less qualified for the job than candidates with American English accents. Consequently, a recruiter may unfairly phone-screen an applicant during a preinterview, or a manager may overlook an employee for a promotion. It is important to establish a better understanding of the skill sets Latinos can bring to a corporation. Second language capabilities are considered assets to

organizations; an accent should not degrade the value of that asset. Identifying roles, where a second language or cultural knowledge is of value can create a competitive advantage for any institution.

Overall, businesses in both the private and public sectors should embrace diversity by attracting, recruiting, and hiring Latinos. Developing mentorship programs could help increase the number of Latinos in leadership roles (Page, 2013). Employee job satisfaction is stronger when diversity and organizational fairness exists (Choi & Rainey, 2013). For Latinos, in particular, job satisfaction is not correlated to acculturation, sense of community, language, or wage, as some employers may assume (Valdivia & Flores, 2013). As corporations increase their international operations, there is a need to identify and retain quality employees that also have a diverse background. Having a university degree will help Latinos differentiate themselves in the job market.

### **Findings in Education in the United States and in Relation to Latinos**

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States was the world leader in education, particularly regarding high school and college graduation rates (Collins, 2011). The readiness of the labor force gave the United States a global competitive advantage through both the professionalism and innovation of its workforce. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, high school and graduation rates have not maintained the same global ranking status. Kirwan (2010) confirmed concerns regarding the nation's decline in education, ranking the United States 23<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> among other industrial nations concerning high school and postsecondary completion rates, respectively.

To positively impact the direction of the United States' postsecondary ranking,



the University System of Maryland launched an initiative in January of 2010 (Kirwan, 2010). The initiative *A Matter of Degrees* focused on leading the way to higher college completion rates and strives to be the model for the state of Maryland and the United States. *A Matter of Degrees* focuses on three main initiatives. First, advising middle school students through college preparation programs on course selection, the college admissions process, and how to calculate the amount of financial aid required to fund their college studies (Kirwan, 2010). Second, help students that graduate from less academically rigorous high schools by developing college introductory or remedial courses (Kirwan, 2010). Third, create retention programs with the purpose of reducing attrition rates of students withdrawing from college due to financial constraints (Kirwan, 2010). These aforementioned initiatives are part of what Latino students require to succeed in higher education (Collins, 2011).

The demographic composition of ethnicity in K-12 classrooms is quickly shifting from the European Caucasians majority to becoming a melting pot or amalgam of ethnicities. There is an overrepresentation of Latino youth at 7% if of the U.S. population when compared with European Caucasians youth who represent only 10% of the total U.S. youth population (Nunez & Murakami-Ramalho, 2012). In the two most populous states in the U.S., Texas and Arizona, Latinos represent 50% of the K-12 student population (Nunez & Murakami-Ramalho, 2012).

High school graduation is a primary requirement for applying to a university. Of Latino students that do graduate from high school, many fail to apply to college. The factuality of the increased growth of Latinos in the United States is eminent, and

commitment from national organizations is imperative to address the low level of education of minorities.

The Lumina Foundation reported that the current knowledge and skills of the United States labor force are insufficient and thereby limiting economic growth (Matthews, 2012). National organizations are collaborating and investing in research data to improve professional readiness among the U.S. workforce. The College Board, the Lumina Foundation, the Gates Foundation, and the Obama Administration have all committed to improving the United States higher education graduation rate (Matthews, 2012; Rowland & Jones, 2011). However, time is needed to collect and analyze data from these initiatives to determine the success of these efforts (Kirwan, 2010). The expectation is that the implementation of strategies derived from these studies will benefit Latino and all other ethnicities, ensuring they have the skills and knowledge to help strengthen the U.S. economy.

### **Latinos and Postsecondary Education**

The lack of institutional readiness directly impacts minorities and low-income families, including Latinos, who are typically first generation college attendees coming from a low socioeconomic household. College students starting at a lower level of academic preparedness than their peers are more likely to struggle during the first year of college, potentially forcing them to abandon their studies.

Although college readiness is lacking among many Latino students, many have still demonstrated a desire to pursue higher education. To bridge this progression gap, the education of students, parents, and school staff about the college admissions process and

availability of financial assistance is imperative (Collins, 2011). Latino families require early outreach to ensure the students and parents have ample time to become familiar with the American education system. Compared to other students, Latino students are in greater need of counselors and advisors to set a clearer college path during the postsecondary freshman year. Academic advising is particularly important for Latino students who are typically the first in their family to attend college and therefore do not receive college-level academic guidance from parents (Phinney et al., 2011). Lack of academic mentors can have a significant impact on the overall education success rate of Latino students.

Motivation to pursue higher education aligns with the basic principal of general self-efficacy and is one of the characteristics that predict success. Saklofske, Austin, Mastoras, Beaton, and Osborne (2012) concluded that the quality of the college experience was the most significant characteristic or factor that influences the performance of minority students. Therefore, the quality of the university a Latino or minority student enrolls in is of high importance. There are various type of higher education institutions – community, public, and private institutions. It is important to analyze the type of institutions in which Latinos enroll to understand the level of student support services a typical Latino student will receive. Latinos, when compared with European Americans and African Americans, are over-represented in community colleges (O'Connor et al., 2009). According to the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics (2012), 51% of Latinos enrolled in college in 2009 attended a two-year institution, compared with 34% and 40% for European Americans and African

Americans respectively. For those Latinos attending selective colleges, adaptation to the culture and environment can be a challenge. However, Latinos who had more previous exposure to European American students tended to adapt more quickly (Lopez, 2013). Because national budget cuts have impacted the community college system in the United States, Latino community college students will likely receive a lower quality experience due to the forced reduction of staff and services provided. To provide Latinos with a quality educational experience, institutions should strive to provide programs and services specifically tailored to the needs of the Latino student profile. The community college system as a whole has been through budgetary constraints in the past decade, limiting the support provided to its students (Akers Chacon, 2012). Limited student support can contribute to low retention rates and low transfer rates to 4-year colleges.

Helping to guide Latinos toward institutions that can better serve them will help fortify a prepared workforce in the United States. As Collins (2011) stated, the competitiveness of the United States in a global and diverse market is dependent upon the effectiveness of the educational programs. Given the important role education plays in one's success in the workplace, teachers and mentors should encourage Latino students to pursue an advanced degree.

### **Hispanic-Serving Institutions**

A Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) is a term used for nonprofit public and private institutions with at least 25% of their enrollment consisting of Latino descent students of which at least half receive need-based assistance (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The competitive advantage HSIs have in capturing a significant share

of the Latino student market is their ability to connect with prospective students and their family through word of mouth. Although HSIs play an important role in educating college and university level Latinos (Torres & Zerquera, 2012), an HSI is solely defined by its Hispanic enrollment composition. The specific institutional mission of the HSI is not a factor. In other words, there is nothing necessarily distinct about the colleges themselves, the services they provide, nor the academic programs that they offer that qualify a college to be an HSI. Scholars have studied the Latino student enrollment path towards HSIs (Torres & Zerquera, 2012; Hilmer & Hilmer, 2012). Because HSIs enroll 42% of the entire Latino population (Flores & Park, 2013), identifying why and how Latino students learn about HSIs is important in understanding enrollment patterns.

Living close to family while attending college has been found to be an important factor in the decision-making process. One of the reasons Latinos enroll in HSIs is the proximity to home, especially when paying for college is an obstacle and paying for additional living accommodations is not an option (Torres & Zerquera, 2012). For students who report living close to home as an important personal factor when choosing a college, the selection of an HSI becomes 2.3 times more likely (Nuñez & Bowers, 2011). Those who reported preferring a college close to home also attributed their work opportunities to the social networks they were able to maintain nearby (Hilmer & Hilmer, 2012). Universities can use this information to understand how they can more effectively communicate to the surrounding Latino community.

External factors can motivate prospective students to attend a particular university. Torres and Zequera (2012) confirmed that family members, peers, and social

channels can influence a Latino's decision to enroll in a college. A university can be at a significant disadvantage if marketing materials are not developed with these outside influences in mind (O'Connor et al., 2009). Torres and Zerquera summarized that prospective Latino students tend to obtain college information online rather than visiting a campus. They recommend institutions provide online materials that target both the Latino prospective student and his or her family within a Latino cultural context and with the option to read the materials in Spanish (Torres & Zerquera, 2012).

Students reported having limited access to financial aid and limited social capital (Nuñez & Bowers, 2011). Due to the marketing approach, Latino students may not connect with a college, even when the student qualifies for a top-tier college or university. As the Latino community continues to grow, state and private universities should consider becoming an HSI (Calderon Galdeano, Flores, & Moder, 2012). With an aligned marketing approach, universities and colleges will be able to expand their pool of potential candidates and capture a larger market share based on merit.

This paragraph concludes the discussion on marketing aspects related to the marketing mix, general marketing strategies and in higher education, Latino social and cultural profile, and education and labor trends. The qualitative multiple case study integrated and expanded the marketing mix concept from 4Ps to 7Ps to align with the service marketing mix and higher education marketing activities. As stated by Enache (2011), when evaluating higher education as part of service marketing, the educational product is conformed of characteristics that include intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 1 highlighted the need to incorporate marketing strategies as methodologies to increase new student enrollment. Many researchers identify the limitations Latino's have to obtain a higher education degree. The opportunities identified can be explained by recruiters during the enrollment process. The review also included literature on marketing strategies, the marketing mix, marketing and its relationship with higher education, and marketing initiatives tailored to Latinos. Furthermore, the impacts of financial status, labor force contribution, and motivation, of Latinos were explained.

In section 2, the research project is presented, including details on the participants, research method and research design, ethical research process, data collection process, technique and analysis, and lastly the reliability and validity of the instruments and processes. Section 3 will contain the findings of the research study.

## Section 2: The Project

Section 2 includes a detailed description of my research method and design. I begin by reviewing my purpose statement and discussing my research role. Additionally, I describe my population and sample and discuss issues related to ethical research and my data collection and analysis. To complete this section, I discuss the reliability and validity of the study.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore strategies that university marketing leaders use to increase enrollment by Latino students in higher education programs. I interviewed university marketing experts in the United States to learn about the strategies that they use to gain market share in the Latino student prospective market. The findings of this study may have a positive financial impact on higher education institutions. Using study findings, university marketing personnel may be able to implement more successful marketing strategies and increase their Latino student enrollment counts. More recruitment and subsequent enrollment of these students may result in improved education levels within Latino-segmented communities in the United States, which may result in positive social change.

### **Role of the Researcher**

From my work in higher education, I recognized a need to improve existing marketing strategies to ensure that more students understand the enrollment process. Many prospective students did not have a clear understanding of how to begin the admissions, financial aid application, and other enrollment processes. Although a



relationship with the topic exists, I believe that bias is prevented by implementing and using a study design to guide an impartial research process. To avoid bias, Yin (2014) recommends that researchers pay particular attention and listen when receiving large amounts of information. Cronin (2014) also reinforced that case study research demands good listening by investigators. Yin also recommends that researchers report information honestly.

I kept an audit trail of data that I collected and documented the decisions and steps that I took in a reflexive journal. As part of the inquiry process, I followed ethical principles and guidelines to protect human subjects as described in the Belmont Report. According to the Belmont Report, ethical research involving human subjects necessitates autonomy, justice, beneficence, and a commitment to do no harm or nonmaleficence on the part of researchers (Cross, Pickering, & Hickey, 2014). These include boundaries between practice and research, fundamental ethical principles, and applications.

### **Participants**

In this section, I discuss the eligibility criteria for study participants, outline the process of gaining access to participants, and identify strategies for establishing a working relationship with participants. Eligible participants were university marketing leaders at a university targeting Latino students. To gain access to participants, I attended a college exposition targeting Latino students, where I networked with marketing professionals from higher education institutions from the United States. During the conference, I asked the marketing professionals if they would like to have their institution participate in the case study. After I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval

from Walden University, I approached attendees who had expressed interest in participating in my study and requested that they sign the consent form (see Appendix A) to participate in the study.

Participants were three marketing experts from three universities that attract Latino students. According to Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen, and Kyngas (2014), participants must have an understanding of the research topic. Purposive sampling is a strategy used to ensure that, within a universe population of categories, the inclusion and representation of a specific category of people is in the final sample of the research process (Robinson, 2014). The marketing leaders whom I purposively selected for this study have experience in implementing marketing strategies to attract Latino students, which is relevant to the research question. Therefore, my sample comprised of participants who are knowledgeable of the research problem and best represent the population of experienced higher education professionals (Elo et al., 2014). Rubin and Rubin (2012) advise that participants should be made to feel comfortable during their interviews; doing so helps researchers establish a working relationship with participants. I provided and secured an open forum for the participants to express themselves. Additionally, the participants participated in the review of the transcript to validate the focus group conversation.

### **Research Method and Design**

In this section, I provide a description and justification of the research method and research design for this study.

## **Research Method**

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches each encompass a distinct approach to research and could yield conflicting interpretations of the results. A qualitative researcher focuses on either exploring a problem or describing an identified phenomenon (Vaitkevicius & Kazokiene, 2013). I reviewed correlational research, pretest--posttest, and experimental studies that were conducted by quantitative researchers. Using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies may provide a more thorough understanding of a phenomenon. According to Fielding (2012), a mixed methods study includes comparing different sources of data and helps reach convergent validation. After reviewing and evaluating the three research approaches, I determined that a qualitative method using a case study design would be more suitable for my study. Below, I describe how other researchers have evaluated each method and why I chose a qualitative research method.

When using a mixed-methods approach, a researcher combines qualitative and quantitative research in the same study (Murphy et al., 2015). Mixed-methods methodology involves philosophical assumptions that guide the collection and analysis of the data. The methodology focuses on the collection, analysis, and the combination of both qualitative and quantitative data in the study (Vaitkevicius & Kazokiene, 2013).

According to Barnham (2012), quantitative research results are widely used to propose solutions and make industry decisions. This method focuses on measuring social reality. Simons (2013) stated that a quantitative researcher studies variables to confirm or deny a hypothesis without individual bias. For example, quantitative research can apply

mathematical analysis and hypothesis to explain the correlation between variables (Vaitkevicius & Kazokiene). Where correlational research evaluates the relationship between variables without directly interfering with the variables and measures the pattern of responses across variables (Field, 2013). As discussed by Hemingway, Clifton, Stephenson, and Edward (2014), quantitative studies can compare results by using a pre-test and post-test questionnaires. Durante, Putterman, and Van Der Weele (2014) discussed that experimental research establishes a cause and effect relationship by controlling all, except one of the variables. The quantitative methodology can serve to understand factors that affect individuals.

Qualitative research focuses on in-depth, open-ended questions during interviews with individuals or groups (Barnham, 2012) whereby the participants may share their stories with the researcher (Coenen, Stamm, Stucki, & Cieza, 2012). Additionally, the qualitative method provides the forum for the participant to express a detailed experience in their words (Coenen, Stamm, Stucki, & Cieza).

### **Research Design**

The purpose of this Doctorate in Business Administration study is to research a problem that affects marketing leaders in the higher education industry. The evaluation of two main inquiry approaches defined the research design: phenomenology, and case study. The first design, phenomenology, is focused on understanding the experiences lived by the individuals (Petty et al., 2012). Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2015) described the main emphasis of phenomenology as the way to interpret human experiences through data collection techniques that allow obtaining information of ordinary experiences

within an explanatory paradigm.

Case study design aims to understand the behavior of phenomena in a real-life setting (Yin, 2014). Moll (2012) described that case studies are especially suited for investigating a research question that requires understanding about social or organizational processes. Case studies allow the study of real-life situations in a systematically and rigorous manner by using various methods to validate data and reinforce the conclusion of the findings (Cronin, 2014), and offer a level of flexibility that grounded theory, or phenomenology do not (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014). Moll added that an advantage of case study design is getting close to the practitioner within a workplace setting that allows for meaningful, complex, and relevant day-to-day work related data extrapolation.

Based on evaluating the possible research designs, the researcher identifies the most appropriate methodology based on the type of research questions posed, the level of control the investigator has over the events and their behaviors, and if it is a current or historic phenomena (Yin, 2014). Therefore, a case study research design is best suited to explore the research question due to the type of problem, the lack of control the researcher has over the events, and because of the contemporary nature of the phenomena proposed for the study (Singh, 2014).

There exists direct involvement between the concept of data saturation and sample size. Although, the definition of saturation in qualitative research does not have concrete guidelines (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Walker (2012) described two types of saturation: data and theoretical. Elo et al. (2014) stated that the

sample should comprise of participants that have the most knowledge on the topic. While Marshall et al. identified a minimum four interviewees and four interviews in their evaluation of 83 qualitative studies, Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick and Robertson (2013) used a single case study design with time-bounded guidelines, and nursing's best practice guideline. Boblin et al. wanted to depict a holistic case study analysis of the experiences of three individuals at three different hospitals. To reach theoretical saturation, no new themes should emerge (Walker). Walker suggested that saturation achievement or not must be stated by the researcher, along with a statement of how it was determined. I included the details of meeting or not meeting saturation in the results section.

Elo et al. (2014) added that because there is no concrete guideline on sample size and saturation for qualitative studies, the optimal size depends on the purpose of the study, the research question, and the level of the profoundness of the data. Robinson (2014) stated that qualitative projects include both theoretical and practical considerations, and providing an approximate range is applicable. Elo et al. also mentioned the need to openly include the limitations of the study, clearly define the research process followed, and sufficiently describe the data collection process. In this study, because the approach is to integrate the complex and variable phenomena of implemented marketing strategies at three universities into a holistic one narrative report, three participants conformed the sample, aligned with Boblin et al. (2013). Similarly, Robinson stated that having a one case study due to the ability or trait of the participants allows for a more integrative view. Additionally, clear communication of the limitations, research process, and data collection is established to openly share the reach of the study,

aligned with Elo et al.

### **Population and Sampling**

In this section, I identified the sampling method, described the number of participants, determined the criteria for selecting participants and ensured the interview setting is appropriate. The research design is a qualitative multiple case study concerning three marketing leaders in three higher education institutions. The sample included marketing experts who demonstrated significant participation in the marketing and recruitment of Latino students. The sampling method is purposeful by selecting participants based on the criteria of being a marketing leader in three distinct higher education institutions. The case study participants consist of three experts dedicated to attracting Latino students at higher education institutions. A second criterion, the participant has experience within a marketing team at a higher education institution, aligned with the overarching research question. Being the head of the department was not necessarily a condition for participation because managers or other similar roles may lead the marketing initiatives and provide greater context to explore the subject in depth.

O'Reilly and Parker (2013) stated that the appropriateness of the data, rather than the number of participants, determines the size of the sample. The research size stated aligns with Yin's (2014) assertion that case study sample size is not a critical issue. Therefore, this research was limited to three marketing experts in the higher education field. Because the participants are experienced marketers at a higher education institution, I used non-probabilistic purposeful sampling for this qualitative multiple case study. Purposeful sampling is a type of sampling method used to identify and select rich

information related to a phenomenon of interest (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2013). Purposeful sampling collects data from participants that are the most knowledgeable about the topic of study (Elo et al., 2014). According to Yin (2012), in qualitative case studies, purposive sampling procedures are more appropriate than random sampling method.

According to O'Reilly and Parker (2013), the sample should be large enough to answer the research question, but small enough to obtain relevant data. The data collection process reaches saturation when it no longer generates new information relevant to the topic (Dworkin, 2012). As Walker (2012) described, theoretical saturation is reached when no new themes emerge. Additionally, the researcher's responsibility is to state if saturation was or was not met (Walker). I included the details on the outcome of data saturation in the results section of the study. According to O'Reilly and Parker (2013), the objective of reviewing and assessing saturation is to disseminate if the phenomena explored reached saturation or additional research is required.

The interview setting for the research study was audio conferences. Petty et al. (2012) stated that interviews can be conducted face to face, via phone, or online. Video conferences allow for observation data analysis and are considered an important source of information in cases studies (Singh, 2014). Additionally, Hamilton (2014) stated that using conferencing tools are an option for researchers to combine participant time and location convenience. I recorded the audio files of the online conferences.

### **Ethical Research**

Ethical attitude as a research competency is an important behavior in scholarly



research (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012). Protecting participants from harm is important. Whiteley (2012) stated that it is imperative to protect human subjects in any research study. The participants received a consent letter (see Appendix A) explaining the purpose of the study and assuring its confidentiality. The letter included the name of the researcher, the topic, and a summary of the study. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without recourse. An email or verbal notification from the participant will suffice to withdraw from the study. Participants did not receive compensation.

I recorded and transcribed the interviews. To protect the rights of the participants, I will keep the audios and transcripts stored for 5 years in a secured safe to which only I will have access. After 5 years, the recordings and transcriptions will be shredded and electronically erased. The doctoral manuscript includes Walden's IRB approval number. Confidentiality is defined as the information kept hidden from everyone except the research team members (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2014). I coded the names of the participant and name of the universities to protect both the participant and organization names.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection section covers the data collection instrument, data collection technique, and the data organization techniques. The data collection instrument will describe the instrument and process. The data collection technique section explains step by step the technique used to collect data. Lastly, the data organization technique describes the systems used to keep track of data and the emerging understanding of the data.

## **Instruments**

For this study, I served as the primary data collection instrument. Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Miller-Day (2012) stated that in a qualitative case study using semi-structured interview method; the researcher is the main data collection instrument. When using interviews as the data collection method, the researcher is the active data collection instrument and makes numerous decisions throughout the data compilation and evaluation process, affecting the trajectory of the study (Yin, 2014). I used the interview protocol. Interviewers use a semi-structured interview guide to remain flexible to explore new themes, as well as provide a greater comfort level with the participants (Tucker et al., 2014). Case study researchers use the focused, also known as semi-structured, interview format to inquire about participant perceptions and observations of a prior event or activity (Yin). The semi-structured or focused interview format allows the researcher to refocus questions, ask for additional information when something new or interesting is brought up (Baskarada, 2014). I prepared a predetermined list of interview questions and according to respondent answers, I incorporated follow-up questions.

Fielding (2012) reviewed triangulation as a method used in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research to reach convergent validation and compares different sources of data. Denzin (2012) defined triangulation as the use of various methods to allow for a deep understanding of the phenomena studied. I included university documents, archived marketing materials, and marketing data. The data comparison technique improves the quality of the collected data, and strengthens the validity of the data (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012).

Houghton et al. (2013) discussed the need for researchers to ensure rigor in qualitative case study research by using a strategic framework that helps confirm credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. To augment the reliability and validity of the collection process, I conducted thorough note taking during the interview process, and maintained a journal to contextualize ideas, assumptions, and conclusions. I neatly organized my documentation for disclosure if required by university officials. Houghton et al. stated these practices allow readers to assess the alignment and usefulness of instrumentation for capturing a holistic view of the case study elements. The semi-structured interview instrument is readily available (see Appendix B). I will provide access to interview transcripts, audit trail, reflexive journal, and university documents used for methodological triangulation as requested by university officials.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Yin (2014) attributed the effectiveness of semi-structured interviews to the researcher's ability to guide participant dialogue through predetermined interview questions. I developed an interview protocol guide with semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix B). Upon receiving IRB approval, I used this protocol to guide the interview process. First, I contacted the participant and request filling out the participation consent form. After the participant had signed the consent form, I scheduled the conference calls at an agreed time and date. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. I recorded the audio of the interviews using an online conferencing tool. Hamilton (2014), confirmed the usefulness of a conferencing tool as an option for researchers to combine participant convenience. At the beginning of the scheduled

interview meeting, I communicated the consent letter participant rights. Wahyuni (2012) discussed that a researcher should start an interview by explaining the purpose of the interview, confirm confidentiality, and the element of voluntary participation. I noted key comments during the interview (Wahyuni). At the end of each interview, I requested the participant to send relevant university documents and marketing materials. After the interview, I transcribed the interview data within a word processing document. Prior to analyzing the data, I shared the transcripts with the participants to corroborate the accuracy of the scripts and validate the content using member checking (Boblin et al., 2013). Member checking is the process of taking descriptions back to the interview participant for their accuracy perception (Whitely, 2012). I kept a copy of the original transcripts and if changes were requested by the participants, a second copy with the recommended modifications.

Boblin et al. (2013) suggested collecting data from different sources and Whiteley (2012) to constantly compare and combine research elements to increase the data collected via interviews. The study included analyzing university documents, archived marketing materials, and marketing data as part of the methodological triangulation process. I sorted the information collected in the documents by topical areas. According to the topics identified in the documents and the interview topics identified, cross-referencing of the data occurred. Additionally, I stored detailed notes in an audit trail, and a reflection journal. I stored the audio recordings, interview transcripts, audit trail, reflection journal, and university documents, and archived marketing materials on a secure hard drive to which I only have access.

## **Data Organization Techniques**

Defining data organization techniques are an important part of the research process. A clear data organization technique helps provide confidentiality of the participant and the organization the participant represents. Gibson, Benson, and Brand (2013) noted that generic coding helps achieve confidentiality. Yin (2012) recommends note taking throughout the data collection process. Preferably, note taking should occur during the interview and immediately after the interview to avoid losing valuable information (Yin). I recorded the audio conference interviews using a tool that supports audio and video recordings (Cooper, 2014). I transcribed all interview data within a word processing document. I saved and stored each interview within one designated folder per participant on my personal computer. Each folder contained the transcribed interview, the audio conference recording, detailed notes were taken during and immediately after the interview stored in the audit trail, and the reflexive journal. As described by Houghton et al. (2013), collecting and organizing data is imperative to confirm the reliability and validity of a study.

I kept and organized all electronic and physical elements associated with each interview. I organized the audit trail document and reflexive journal in an electronic filing structure to ensure order and data availability. A coded filing system in my hard drive organizes individual interview folders containing relevant documentation. The relevant information per participant included university documents, archived marketing materials, and marketing data. The filing system included the university documents and data analysis files. In addition to storing the files on my personal computer hard drive, I also

transferred all electronic files to an external hard drive at the conclusion of the study. I stored the hard drive containing all files associated with the research in a locked safe in my home for 5 years. After 5 years, I will destroy all retained data.

### **Data Analysis**

The use of methodological triangulation in qualitative research is used to explore validity through the use of data from different sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Carter et al. mentioned that methodological triangulation includes interviews, observations, and field notes. I used methodological triangulation for this qualitative multiple case study to check the consistency of findings generated with information collected via interview, university documents, archived marketing materials, and marketing data. According to Chenail (2012), the qualitative analysis process includes coding, identifying themes, and categorizing. For qualitative case studies, there is no predetermined software or method for data analysis like there is with quantitative software tools (Yin, 2012). Yin mentioned that software programs are tools to help analyze the data, but that software programs are not designed to produce definitive results.

Manual data coding or mind mapping is required to identify themes. According to Yin (2014), the manual coding process includes creating matrices, tables, or charts to help sort recurring themes. Yin mentioned that researchers identify commonalities by classifying data according to themes observed for each interviewee and then analyzing the data. I coded the interview data based on repeated words, concepts, or phrases identified in the audit trail, reflexive journal, and interview transcripts. Additionally, to

ensure confidentiality, I used the auto-coding feature in a software designed to organize qualitative research data. The NVivo software is used to help create themes based on the interview syntax (Vaitkevicius & Kazokiene, 2013). Houghton et al. (2013) confirmed this software is a useful tool that provides an inclusive audit trail, serves as a data management tool, and supports decision-making document creation. The researcher needs to program how to run the data in the software and then analyze the results produced by the program. After I had analyzed the data, I reviewed recently published studies to correlate my study's key themes and findings to the literature.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Researchers must follow qualitative standards of reliability and validity for any instrument used. According to Wahyuni (2012), reliability refers to consistent indicators that allow for replication of the study and validity to the reach for generalization of the phenomena studied. In qualitative studies, the traditional reliability and validity concepts differ. Four criteria measure trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability and dependability (Wahyuni). Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) concluded that credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability strategies should be in place to ensure research rigor in a case study.

### **Reliability**

Houghton et al. (2013) and Wahyuni (2012) indicated that reliability parallels with dependability and confirmability. Houghton et al. stated that both dependability and confirmability refer to the data stability. While Wahyuni related the term dependability with replicability and Elo et al. (2014) described it as data stability over time. Elo et al.

referred to confirmability as the potential for two or more distinct individuals to find congruence in the data's accuracy, relevance, or significance. Elo et al. described confirmability as an accurate data representation of the information supplied by the participants.

To confirm dependability and confirmability, I presented quotation examples in the documentation of the findings, as well as created an audit trail outlining the decisions and rationale for data interpretation. Audit trails and thorough descriptions are essential elements in case study research to establish reliability and validity (Houghton et al., 2013). An audit trail may inform theoretical sensitivity as identified by the researcher and allows documenting activities, dilemmas, decisions taken, and even unsuccessful communications with participants (Whiteley, 2012). To meet dependability I recorded in an audit trail with the steps and decisions made during the data collection and analysis processes (Wahyuni, 2012). I also kept a reflexive journal to document my thoughts and ideas and thereby enhance the transparency of the process. The reflexive journal helped ensure confirmability by recording how I arrived at my decisions (Houghton et al.), the challenges confronted during the research process, and how my personal awareness helped avoid researcher bias (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

### **Validity**

The role of the researcher is to ultimately achieve validity (Cronin, 2014). To meet validity, I used methodological triangulation to confirm validity through the use of data from different sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Credibility and transferability help support validity in qualitative research (Wahyuni,



2012). Credibility reflects how the research findings are perceived by outsiders (Schreiber, 2013) while transferability refers to the ability to generalize the findings to other situations or groups (Elo et al., 2014).

Credibility, analogous to internal validity, is concerned with whether the study measures or assesses data relevant to the phenomena studied (Wahyuni, 2012). To ensure credibility, member checking occurs when participants evaluate the researcher's interpretation of data (Boblin et al., 2013; Houghton et al., 2013). Member checking or peer debriefing helps confirm the consistency of the data and ensure information was not erroneously recorded (Wahyuni, 2012). I provided the participant with relevant sections of the research data and invited the participant to comment on the accuracy of the interpretation of the data.

Transferability parallels external validity and is described as the applicability of the results in other settings or groups (Elo et al., 2014). I met transferability by including thick descriptions (Houghton et al., 2013), outlining the potential for extrapolation, and providing clear descriptions regarding the culture, setting, selection, and characteristics of the participants (Elo et al., 2014). The description helps the reader understand if the results apply to their environment and presents a framework for further research. According to Schreiber (2013), thick descriptions provide a clear narrative of the setting, the events, the participants, and the process followed during the research activities.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 provided a summary of my purpose statement and included additional information supporting my decision to choose the research method and design. I

presented the participants, sample, and population, as well as a description of the ethical process. I also included the data collection processes, as well as the reliability and validity of the study. Section 3 presents the findings, the applicability of the findings, the social impacts of improvements to individuals, communities, and organizations, as well as a list of recommendations to improve business practices.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

In this qualitative multiple case study I explored the strategies that some university marketing leaders use to attract Latinos to enroll in higher education programs. To answer the research question, I conducted three semistructured interviews with three experts. Participants shared their experiences and insights about effective marketing strategies for increasing enrollment by Latino students.

In analyzing my findings, I identified seven themes related to the marketing strategies used by participants. These themes include the elements of a strategic marketing plan, marketing challenges faced in trying to grow Latino student enrollment, physical location and its impact on enrollment, promotional channels, selection and engagement of stakeholders during the recruiting process, identification of the most effective strategies, and an understanding of how Latino culture and background affect the recruitment process.

The participants also discussed the importance of connecting with the community, the impacts of prestige or the ranking of a university on the recruitment process, and the importance of bilingualism and the involvement of English Language Learning departments. Additionally, the participants explained how U.S. Department of Education policy changes may affect the status quo and how essential it is to listen to what prospective students need and want regarding program offerings and student services.

#### **Presentation of the Findings**

The overarching research question posed during my study was, What strategies do

university marketing leaders use to increase enrollment by Latino students in higher education programs? To answer this question, I used multiple data sources as part of my multiple case study. I conducted semistructured interviews with participants and analyzed institutional documents to confirm the experiences shared by the participants. To improve the validity of my findings, I incorporated member checking into my research protocol. I also took thorough notes in a reflection journal to document the decisions that I made. I used NVivo software to help organize and analyze interview data. After analyzing and synthesizing data, I provided participants with a copy of their responses for them to assess my interpretation of their responses. The participants were invited to make corrections or include additional information on the interview transcripts. I took notes during the interviews and reviewed the organizational materials provided by the participants to ensure credibility.

Additionally, I provided descriptive information regarding the participants to enable transferability. Participants had unique work experiences due to their location and personal familiarity with the Latino population. Participants 1 and 2 work at two different state universities located in the midwestern United States; neither is Latino. Participant 3 works at a private university in Northern California and has a Latino background. The dependability and credibility verification for this study emerged from the data analysis outcomes: quotes from participants, audit trail notes of the steps taken during the data analysis process, and documentation in a reflexive journal of the decisions and challenges confronted during the research process. The steps to verify dependability and credibility provided the required data infrastructure to complete the theme identification process.

**Theme 1: Elements of the Marketing Plan**

Participants identified the following factors that marketers should consider when developing a marketing plan aimed at prospective Latino students: segmentation, the program of interest and the type of program, geographic location, and prospective student. Segmentation helps define the targeted segment. Recent high school graduates, community college transfer students, and working adults who are seeking a college degree are examples of targeted segments.

Furthermore, target segments are defined by academic program levels such as undergraduate, postgraduate, and certificate programs. Participant 3 stated that a student's "program of interest will also determine the strategy you implement and how you build the marketing plan." Depending on the audience, the communication, marketing, and recruitment strategies should be adjusted. An additional level of market segmentation is the modality through which instruction occurs. Examples of modality identified by the participants include face-to-face classroom interaction and online educational instruction. Dennis, Papagiannidis, Alamanos, and Bourlakis (2016) stated that marketing leaders and managers should consider segmentation-based strategies for higher education institutions because students do not represent a homogenous cohort. The objective of universities and colleges should include having cohorts of students with a similar composition as the communities in which they operate.

The three participants identified geographic location as an important factor. The breadth of the marketing leaders' focus, whether locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally, will determine the overall market size. The dollars allocated must be

appropriate to the market size to develop an effective campaign. Participant 1 developed specific marketing initiatives to attract Puerto Rican prospective students. Participant 2 cited geographic location as an inherent advantage he or she intended to leverage, stating that “We've found that many prospective Latino students do prefer to live relatively close to family when they go to college, so just being accessible to their home community I think is important.” Reasons for preferring to stay close to home include minimizing expenses, a desire to spend time with family, and the ability to maintain a current job. The importance of a university’s location will differ based on the target segment that the institution is trying to attract. Therefore, this item in the marketing plan ties well with the marketing mix *P place* variable in that it highlights that the physical location of the campus greatly influences one’s decision to enroll at a university but is dependent on the targeted market segment.

A prospective Latino student’s acculturation also plays an important factor in the marketing plan. For example, some prospective students are second or third generation Latinos, while others may be recent immigrants. Acculturation is the process of integrating within a culture and understanding behaviors and beliefs within that culture (Obeng, Emetu, & Bowman, 2015). Depending on the level of acculturation to the United States lifestyle, there could be different recruiting efforts applied. For example, it is important to anticipate whether a prospective student or his or her parents require Spanish materials or a translator when speaking with admissions counselors. Participant 1 shared that the admissions website at his or her institution is available in Spanish. The reason was to provide information that is also suitable for parents who may not have high levels

of English reading proficiency. Also, the immigration status of a prospective student may necessitate changes to the strategy altogether. Participant 2 mentioned that “out-of-state tuition is about three times as expensive as in-state tuition, and of course no state or federal aid is available to undocumented students, and that is a difficult burden for them to overcome.” Therefore, an undocumented student that self-identifies as an international student is required paying international student fees.

### **Theme 2: Marketing Challenges to Grow Latino Student Enrollment**

The three participants identified various factors as challenges to increasing Latino student enrollment. Market size, competition, program offerings, brand awareness and brand identity, and affordability are some of the factors identified by participants. The latter two factors were a major focus of the discussion with each of the three participants.

In general, the Latino market size is growing across the country; consequently, the expanding Latino student market is an opportunity within higher education (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). Although the college-eligible market may be expanding, that is not necessarily reflected in the percentage of the Latino population attending college. A problem that many universities face is overestimating their market size by underestimating the importance of its proximity to a Latino student’s place of residence or work. For example, Participant 3 defined the university’s targeted segment as those prospective students residing within a 20-mile radius. Participant 3 also added that the university’s biggest initial challenge was incorrectly basing their enrollment goals and projections on a much larger regional market size.

Where competition exists within defined market boundaries of a targeted market

segment, large universities with a variety of program offerings and a strong brand have a significant advantage. Smaller schools with limited program offerings had more difficulty providing academic path options that aligned with the student's goals. This element highlights the importance of the marketing mix *P product* variable. Without the specific product or bachelor program offering desired by the prospective student's, it is difficult to capture enrollment if such desired options are made available by the competition.

Brand reputation and brand awareness are also factors in one's enrollment decision. According to Wright (2015), many prospective students' perception of the educational quality of a university is based on the university's reputation ranking. In contrast, Nguyen, Yu, Melewar, and Hemsley-Brown (2016) believed that brand reputation is less important, but that brand performance and brand image do play major factors. Wilkins and Huisman (2015) added that brand image could improve through positive word of mouth and development of a strong brand. Participant 3 mentioned that the lack of a strong brand was a hindrance for smaller colleges. Additionally, Participant 3 added that brand identity is important to prospective Latino students, noting that "Do I belong here? Can I trust this institution to invest in my future?" are questions many prospective students ask themselves when evaluating a university.

Affordability was a common factor identified by the participants. With rising tuition cost, it is important that prospective students are made aware of potential grants or federal financial aid packages that are available to them. Participant 2 stated that some students do not know they may qualify for more financial aid or scholarship funds and therefore end up matriculating to a 2-year college instead. Participant 1 detailed a



program called 21<sup>st</sup>-century scholars, in which “students are able to sign up in middle school, and as long as they follow certain rules like staying drug-free, they graduated, and they committed to going to a state institution, they basically were able to receive full tuition and fees.” Participant 3 identified lack of financial awareness as a significant challenge because many individuals excuse themselves of the opportunity because they think they cannot afford to pay for college.

The practice of generating awareness of the different enrollment processes, including how to apply for funds, aligns with the marketing mix *P process* variable. Having clear processes and providing awareness of the processes can encourage the prospective student to apply to the university. Schuetz, Rosenbaum, Foran, and Cepa (2016) also added the importance of focusing on one’s career progression, including reviewing program options, describing coursework, and the possible employment opportunities. Providing tools and sharing processes to inform prospective students and parents will better aid in the enrollment process.

Tuition cost is a factor in one’s decision to enroll. Compared to private universities, in-state public universities are considered more affordable options. However, a Latino student’s immigration status can significantly affect their ability to afford in-state public universities due to having to pay out of state tuition. Private universities have the flexibility to create a pricing strategy to convert applicants into students. According to Participant 3, blending strategies is the right approach. For example, providing more affordable options to Latino students through financial aid, scholarships, and tuition discounts during certain enrollment periods may help attract Latino students. To

command tuition rates that are significantly higher than community colleges and state universities, it is essential that private education possesses the perception of value that is also significantly higher. However, tuition still needs to be affordable for the Latino population. The type of university, whether state or private, will impact the degree of influence the marketing mix P *price* variable plays in the enrollment decision-making process. When students lack financial literacy, it can lead to students enrolling in part-time classes and relegating themselves to part-time enrollment.

### **Theme 3: Physical Location and the Likelihood to Enroll**

As mentioned in theme 1, the geography of the university was identified as an important factor by each of the three participants. According to Hillman and Weichman (2016), place matters even more to today's college students due to either full-time work commitments, family responsibilities, or close social ties to one's community. The participants indicated that Latino students prefer to live relatively close to family when they attend college. In some cases, just being close to their family and home community is important. For others, living cost is a factor and staying at home may be the best option. The participants identified public transportation as important for student mobility to the university, and access to well-paid jobs while going to college as very attractive as well. Overall, location can provide a competitive advantage for colleges by addressing the needs of Latino prospective students, and consequently, the marketing mix P *place* is considered an important marketing mix factor.

### **Theme 4: Promotional Channels**

The participants identified various methods implemented to reach prospective

Latino students. For example, ample field work, printed materials, non-traditional marketing, and social media campaigns were highlighted as utilized methods. In general, Latinos are a high-touch audience. The marketing mix P *promotional* variable is an important factor due to the university's need to consistently communicate and generate awareness of the different program offerings that may appeal to prospective students. The three participants recommended extensive field work, such as attending Hispanic college fairs, visiting high schools, collaborating with community organizations, and hosting open houses. This theme also touches on the marketing mix P *people* due to the need to not only establish relationships with high school personnel and community leaders, but also with university staff who support promotion efforts during open houses. The three participants also recommended producing printed materials both in English and Spanish. The participants recommended that the materials target both the prospective students and their families. It is highly likely that the Latino students will share and obtain feedback from their family. The non-traditional marketing channel described by participant 3 included advertising on light rail, billboards, and mall displays. The three participants identified social media channels like Facebook and Twitter as inexpensive options that can help engage and inform prospective students, but did not consider them high enrollment conversion channels.

#### **Theme 5: Stakeholders Involved in the Recruitment Process**

The number of individuals involved in the recruiting process is quite extensive and consists of both external and internal partners. Building relationships is paramount, especially with external partners. Key stakeholders identified by the participants are

community organizations, community college staff, family and parents, high school teachers, counselors and principals, and external vendors such as advertising agencies. Having all of these various stakeholders engaged strengthens the network of possible sponsors of a university. These stakeholders are potential influencers in the prospective student's decision-making process. Wilkins and Huisman (2015) recommended communicating frequently and efficiently with stakeholders by establishing an integrated communications strategy. The marketing mix *P people* variable is key in this theme. Without support from the various stakeholders, a full-range marketing strategy may be limited.

University staff typically involved in the recruitment process include faculty department chairs, financial aid officers, English teachers and interpreters (if needed), Latino specialized recruiters, enrollment advisors, admissions counselors, current students, on-campus personnel, and marketing and product development staff. Faculty and department chairs can help develop a relationship and provide in-depth details about a particular program of interest. Financial aid officers are indispensable in their ability to provide accurate information and guidance on how to obtain federal aid and other grant monies. English as a second language teachers and translators are very helpful if Spanish is the language in which the family feels most comfortable communicating.

The three participants also highlighted the importance of having recruiters who are bilingual and understand the Latino culture to connect better with the student and his/her family. The recruiters, enrollment advisors, and admissions counselors are the frontline officers who typically garner feedback from schools, teachers, and communities

that can help strengthen the university's connection to the market. Current students, especially those with a Latino background are essential assets because they provide a credibility that helps strengthen the university brand. Administrative and facility staff are an extension of conveying an inspiring student experience during a campus visit, and therefore should participate in planning sessions. Marketing staff is responsible for equipping the frontline teams with all the necessary printed and electronic materials to share with the prospective students and families. Lastly, the frontline staff must continually inform the product development team with market feedback to continue meeting both prospective students and employers academic program demands and expectations.

#### **Theme 6: Most Effective Strategies**

When leaders use an integrated marketing approach, the marketing plan is more effective. Building community relations and trust within the community is key to creating a strong brand. For instance, building strong relationships at high schools can assist in creating a feeder program that may help develop brand loyalty. A presence at well-known expos and cultural events can contribute to building and strengthening ties with the community. Developing strong mentoring programs that provide support to prospective students and parents and help them understand the admissions and enrollment process makes a significant positive impact. Hosting events such as on-campus visits, high school field trips, overnight stays, and open houses are proven strategies that allow prospective students to experience on-campus student life and help them to envision themselves as enrolled students. Considering the concerns of parents and family during the recruitment

process is time well-invested. Developing an endowment to fund an impactful scholarship initiative may help convert those students with financial constraints. Lastly, the participants identified having Latino student and alumni testimonials available to share as a very effective way to convey the marketing message to prospective students and family members. Theme 6 helps highlight that an effective marketing plan requires more than just a marketing mix strategy. Other marketing conceptual frameworks should be included to develop an integrative marketing approach.

### **Theme 7: General Latino Culture and Background**

Understanding the differences among Latinos is sometimes an unconsidered factor. In the United States, there are Latinos at different levels of acculturation to the American culture. Although the prospective student may have acculturated, the parent or family members may not. Understanding and perceiving the differences is essential when speaking with Latino students. The type of conversation and level of support needed will differ as a result. The immigration status of the prospective student is also a sensitive topic that may influence one's likeliness to enroll. Universities that have staff that understand the legal implications of enrolling undocumented students and how to manage such cases may help in creating a trusting environment. Overall, having staff who understand or are culturally aware of detecting these differences could make a positive impact during the recruitment effort. The marketing mix conceptual framework does not seem to apply directly to this theme due to the nature of the culture context, but the *people* marketing P suggests a need to understand our customers. I do not recommend disjointing the sociocultural aspect of working with certain demographics in an attempt to

specifically target the Latino student market.

Overall, the marketing mix framework was uncovered in themes one through seven. Of the marketing mix 7Ps services model, which include place, price, product, promotional, people, processes, and physical evidence, only the marketing P *physical evidence* did not tie with any of the findings. The findings may apply directly only to the three universities participating in the case study, but transferability is viable.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

This study's findings were significant to the professional practice of marketing in higher education. Business scholars and practitioners have struggled with the concept of marketing in higher education as a widely-applied practice. There is a need to address education as a global service delivered by organizations operating in a complex and competitive marketplace (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016).

The interview instrument provided a questionnaire structure to capture the positive experiences and opportunities encountered by professionals in the field. During the interviews, seven themes emerged. Six of the seven themes are related to marketing strategies used by leaders working with Latino prospective students. (See Table 1 for an illustration of how each theme relates to the Ps in the marketing mix framework and other marketing frameworks.)

Table 1

*Applicability of Themes to Marketing Mix and Other Marketing Frameworks*

Themes	Narrative Related to Business	Applicable Marketing Mix P	Other Marketing Frameworks
Elements of a strategic marketing plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Segmentation by type of student, preferred modality of either face to face or online, and degree level.</li> <li>2. Geographic reach of the market, local, regional, national, or international.</li> <li>3. Level of acculturation in the United States.</li> </ol>	Place	Market segmentation
Marketing challenges to grow Latino student enrollments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Market size</li> <li>2. Competition</li> <li>3. Programs offered</li> <li>4. Brand awareness and identity</li> <li>5. Affordability and financial literacy</li> </ol>	Product, Price, Process	Five forces, Branding, SWOT analysis
How the physical location affects the likeliness to enroll	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public transportation</li> <li>2. Commute and distance between campus and home</li> <li>3. Access to well-paying jobs</li> </ol>	Place	Not applicable
Promotional channels used	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ample field work</li> <li>2. Printed materials in English and Spanish</li> <li>3. Non-traditional marketing</li> <li>4. Social media campaigns</li> </ol>	Promotional, People	Social media marketing, interactive and digital media, mobile marketing devices, and other electronic promotional mediums



Themes	Narrative Related to Business	Applicable Marketing Mix P	Other Marketing Frameworks
Stakeholders involved in the recruiting process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Internal partners: Faculty department chairs, financial aid officers, English teachers and interpreters if needed, Latino specialized recruiters, enrollment team, admissions counselors, current students, facilities, marketing, and product development</li> <li>2. External partners: community organizations, community college staff, family and parents, high school teachers, counselors, and principals.</li> </ol>	People, Process	Not applicable
Most effective strategies	<p>Integrated marketing plan including the development of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community relations</li> <li>2. Strong mentoring programs</li> <li>3. On-campus events</li> <li>4. Parents and family engagement</li> <li>5. Endowment scholarship initiatives</li> <li>6. Peer to peer promotion</li> </ol>	People, Process	<p>SWOT analysis, five forces, market research, brand awareness, market segmentation, market orientation, brand equity, relationship marketing, goods and service dominant theory, etc.</p> <p>Not applicable</p>
Culture as a factor during recruitment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Level of acculturation</li> <li>2. Immigration status</li> </ol>	People	Not applicable

In general, universities should focus on developing and adding value to the communities they serve, and managing relationships with its stakeholders. To enable continued investments in academic and social improvements, university leaders should continue building a sustainable organization by implementing marketing strategies that support enrollment growth. Understanding how to compete in the higher education sector is imperative to running a sustainable university.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Implications for social change include making education more attainable for Latinos, increasing the growth potential of Latino communities and societies, and creating a culture of respect through the understanding of cultural differences. The Latino community continues to experience low college attainment rates, which have remained stagnant over the last 25 years (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). The findings of this research provide a great opportunity for constructive social change by sharing the marketing strategies implemented by other universities and allowing other marketing leaders to assess how to build on and implement these strategies according to individual university needs.

Contreras and Contreras (2015) highlighted the risk Latino communities face in becoming an expansive low socio-economic segregated class with limited financial mobility and community sustainability options. This qualitative case study provides significant value to postsecondary institutions, governmental agencies, and not-for-profit organizations that are focused on increasing college enrollment, graduation, and other success rates to create a student body population that looks more similar to the

communities and workplaces in the United States.

### **Recommendations for Action**

As the researcher, I am committed to sharing with marketing experts the findings of this study as they plan to implement marketing practices of their own in higher education institutions. Each university is unique and has a different mission, vision, and goals. Marketing leaders should align their marketing strategy and plan with the overarching goals of the institution. The findings of this study will help leaders ask the appropriate business questions for their organization.

The following recommendations for action are intended as a starting point for marketing experts to consider when formulating marketing plans to attract Latino students. It is important to use various marketing frameworks to develop a comprehensive strategic marketing plan, invest time in developing strong ties with the Latino community entities, understand one's customer, rethink traditional marketing frameworks, and include non-traditional marketing frameworks.

This study's findings are important to leaders in the higher education industry who are interested in serving the Latino student market. I will disseminate the results of the study via a scholarly journal. Additionally, I may provide the results of the research at conferences and training seminars for marketing and enrollment management leaders who are interested in attracting Latino students to enroll in a higher education program.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

In this study, I investigated the marketing strategies universities use to attract Latino students. Due to the importance of marketing in higher education and the fact that

research focused on attracting Latinos to college is still in its infancy, I recommend areas for further study. This study was limited to three unique universities in different geographic locations with various types of customers and outreach. As such, results can only be transferable in general terms to the broader university population (Yin, 2014).

First, I recommend performing a larger quantitative study. The more extensive quantitative study should consider the interview questions posed in this study to complement the qualitative results further and address the limitations of sample size, type of university, and geography. Second, I recommend including other frameworks such as SWOT analysis, five forces, market research, brand awareness, market segmentation, market orientation, brand equity, relationship marketing, and goods and service dominant theory, to provide a comprehensive view of possible marketing practices applicable in higher education. Lastly, because the research model does not consider individual level variables such as academic performance, grades, and ambitions, I recommend having direct input from prospective students and parents to hear the voice of the customer and better understand their needs and other aspects that influence prospective student enrollment.

### **Reflections**

The Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) experience was an exciting learning journey. The different stages of the DBA allowed time to learn from colleagues, expand my research capabilities, understand and apply various research methodologies, and discover how scholarly research may have an effect on an industry pathway. My interest in understanding the marketing strategies to attract Latino students to enroll in

higher education began when I worked for a Latino-serving institution. Even though I was not involved in the business or marketing side of the university, I observed various strategies the teams implemented to attract Latino students. At that time, our efforts to attract Latino students were not successful. Having information regarding the experiences of others in the field may have aided the institution's leaders to improve the planning and marketing strategies.

The requirements of the doctoral study along with my curiosity in the topic compelled me to conduct a comprehensive review of the literature to broaden my knowledge of the challenges facing Latino student enrollment in higher education. I did not bring particular bias to the research process and followed the interview protocol strictly to ensure consistency. My focus and motivation were to better understand the strategies implemented by marketing leaders to attract Latino students. The opportunity to conduct the study in an approved format by an accredited academic institution provided the appropriate forum to obtain rich data with straightforward input from the participants. The participants responded openly and candidly, sharing both the marketing strategies implemented and the subsequent outcomes. I expected participant responses to focus on marketing themes during the interview sessions. I quickly recognized the connection between culture and community. For example, I learned the importance of bilingualism during recruitment, the affect of dependencies and constant policy changes by the Department of Education on the status quo, and the importance of listening to the needs of the prospective students and their families.

## **Conclusion**

Marketing strategies can help shape businesses by measuring attitudinal, behavioral and financial performance indicators. However, in higher education, the concept of thinking of a student as a customer or faculty and university staff as a service provider generates questions about ethical behavior. A dichotomy exists in higher education between providing access to education and managing a financially sustainable university. The overall goal and focus of marketing in higher education should align with the university mission and provide a service of social benefit through instruction (Gajic, 2012).

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that some university marketing leaders use to attract Latinos to enroll in higher education programs. Therefore, I set out to answer the question: what marketing strategies do university marketing leaders use to attract Latinos to enroll in higher education programs? To answer this question, I studied three universities with diverse profiles, yet similar marketing needs. The experiences of the interviewees provided rich context that other marketing professionals can apply in the higher education sector.

In addition, while changes in the demographic population of the United States are evident, and many businesses are targeting Latino customers to gain larger market share than its competitors, the higher education segment is still trying to understand how to manage this change. The cultural context findings also reinforce the notion that Latinos are at a disadvantage when it comes to exposure to college attainment. It has also highlighted that a competitive market in higher education exists. Therefore, it is critical to

have a comprehensive marketing strategy in place.

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## Appendix A: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of the role of marketing leader in a higher education institution. The researcher is inviting marketing experts specialized in the Latino student market to participate in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Melissa Rocio Gomez de la Fuente, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to understand what marketing strategies are marketing leaders implementing to attract Latinos to enroll in higher education programs.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Sign the consent form
- Participate in an interview (face-to-face or via telephone; maximum length of one hour). Interviews will be audio recorded.
- Review a transcript of the interview to ensure accurate representation of responses. You will have five days to review the transcript.
- Review of formal study findings at the end of the study (also called Member Checking). You will have three days to review the study findings.

Here are some sample questions:

1. What are the strategic considerations you made when designing a marketing plan to appeal to the Latino prospective student market?
2. How do you promote your degree programs to Latino prospective students?
3. Who do you involve during the recruiting process?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

**Conflicts of Interest:**

A potential conflict of interest may exist for participants who have an existing professional relationship with the researcher. Participation in the study is voluntary, and the participation decision will not impact the current or future professional relationship a participant may have with the researcher.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this type of study does not involve significant risk. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or well-being. The benefit of participating is the possible identification of solutions to apply marketing strategies to attract Latino students to a university.

**Payment:**

There will be no form of compensation for participation in the study.

**Privacy:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure in a locked safe. Data will be kept for a period of 5 years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or e-mail at [redacted]. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. \_\_\_\_\_. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is x-xxx-xxx-xxxx ext. xxx from within the USA, xxx-xxx-xxx-xxxx from outside the USA, or email address irb@waldenu.edu. Walden University's approval number for this study is \_\_\_\_\_ and it expires on \_\_\_\_\_.

You may return this signed form to Melissa Gomez de la Fuente via traditional mail (redacted), or electronic mail (redacted). You will receive a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Consent \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What are the strategic considerations you made when designing a marketing plan to appeal to the Latino prospective student market?
2. What are the main challenges you had recruiting Latino students to your institution's degree programs?
3. How does your tuition or pricing strategy appeal to Latino students?
4. How does the physical location or place of your university attract Latino students?
5. How do you promote your degree programs to Latino prospective students?
6. Who do you involve during the recruiting process?
7. What strategies have you found to be the most effective in recruiting Latino students for your degree programs?
8. What other information do you consider beneficial to share for this study?