



Marketing Mix and Students' Enrolment in Private Universities in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study aimed at presenting an acceptable marketing mix for private universities in Kwara State. The study observed the increasing number of applicants and relates this to the not too impressive patronage of these admission seekers to private universities. The study adopted a survey research method and used a research questionnaire titled “Marketing Mix Services and Students Enrolment”. The data collected were analysed using means, t-test and Pearson product-moment correlation statistics. The findings revealed that marketing mix can increase student enrolment and that the application of marketing mix is still low for private universities in the state. It was therefore concluded that marketing mix adoption would significantly boost students' enrolment for these universities. Hence, the study recommended that the universities identify the marketing mix that suits their situation. The universities are also urged to use price and promotion to enhance their student population and, by so doing, enhance their income base.

Keywords: Marketing mix; Enrolment; Price and promotion.

1 Introduction

Every society strives to provide educational service to its citizens. Efforts to ensure that citizens get good education stem from the public view on education as a society leveller and instrument that can be used to close the gap between the haves and have not in the society. In Nigeria, the general population explosion experienced has led to demand for the establishment of more schools in the country. The resultant expansion in the primary and secondary school population today poses demand for the establishment of more institutions of higher learning to accommodate leavers of the lower level schools seeking higher educational qualifications. Over the years, there has been increasing demand for university

admission through the Joint Admission and Matriculation Examination (JAMB). The population of students seeking university admission through JAMB is massive for equal entrance opportunities to public universities. The situation has necessitated private participation in the establishment of universities to provide university education for deserving students.

1.1 Private University Education in Nigeria

The history of private universities in Nigeria can be said to have evolved in two historic phases of: One, during the Second Republic political administration of President Shehu Shagari (1979-1983); two, during the Fourth Republic political administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo, (i.e.,) 1999 to 2007, (Belfield and Lewin, 2003). The first phase did not record as many significant breakthroughs as the second phase, when in the words of Oladimeji 2017, necessary machineries were put in place for proper take off of private universities. At this time applications seeking for the establishment of private universities were submitted by individuals, religious bodies and corporate organizations.

The first sets of private Universities approved by Nigerian Government in 1999 are Igbimiedion University, Okada, Edo State; Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo, Ogun State; and Madonna University, Okija and Anambra State. These approvals, according to Obasi (2006), were as a result of the failure of public universities to absorb the increased number of applicants. Today, private universities operation in Nigeria is a huge business enterprise, though plagued with its own associated problems of legal status, quality assurance, and cost of service (Oladimeji, 2014). Despite the problems, Oladimeji still believed that these private Universities possess better equipment, newer buildings and better facilities than their public counterparts. The number of officially approved and operational private universities in Nigeria as at 2015 was 61 (Oladimeji, 2017), offering various courses in Sciences, Medicine, Law, Technology, Social Sciences and Humanities among others. These universities also play the role of ensuring improved access to University education. The presence of these Universities means a more aggressive publicity, general communication about the institutions' values, prospects and quality of service if they are to enroll the number of student needed for the substance of these institutions steaming from public confidence.

1.2 Educational Marketing Mix

The concept of educational markets was first conceived among Western Countries between 1980 and 1990 (Mehrda, Ali, Reza and Seyyed, 2012). This snowballs into the existence of competition for service provision among schools.

As unique and important this marketing is to institutional growth, topics on institutional marketing are rarely discussed, may be as a result of lack of awareness on the parts of school administrator. However, the current trend of low enrolment in most of the private secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis, due largely to economic situation has made the scramble for the patronage of the few students whose parents are ready to pay the fees become very intensive. Hence, the consideration of mechanisms that would enhance public/ parent confidence in these schools.

1.3 Concept of Marketing

Marketing is a regular management process that identifies customer needs and wants (Foskett, 1992). Hence, identification of the basic school-service needs of the parents and the communication of the services and image of the school to the parent is the basic task of educational marketing. Educational marketing has no effect without its ability to have transferred the image of the school to the society (Oplaka & Jane, 2004). Educational marketing is designed to communicate and deliver educational programs in a way that it appropriately recognized the needs of the people and present a service aiming towards the satisfaction of these needs. It is a means through which the school develops ways of communication with its environment to promote public awareness about its image, goal, value and services among students, their parents and the general public.

However, it is worthy to note that the needs and wants of parents are the most important component for recognition in any educational marketing programme. Also, since these parents do not necessarily share similar needs, it is important to recognize and analyse the behaviour of the parent in relation to the priorities of the school. Pardey (1991) and Hanson (1996) also believe in the interrelationship between parents' behaviour analysis and school priorities. Most marketing experts and researchers (e.g. Davids & Ellison, 1997; Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 2001; Hansons 1996; Kotler & Armstrong, 1999; Mehrdal et al., 2012) propose that schools should follow several stages when analysing their marketing strategies. These stages include: marketing research and analysis of the marketing environment; formulating a marketing plan and strategy; implementing the marketing plans; and evaluating the marketing process.

1.4 Marketing Mix

Marketing mix or services are some kinds of controllable tool that producers or venders use to attract appropriate response from target beneficiaries of their product or service. However, according to Kotler and Keller (2009), the market place is not what it used to be. Today, the market place has radically changed as a result of some major and sometimes interlinking societal forces of; Network

information technology, globalization, deregulation, heightened competition, consumer resistance and disintermediation. All these have created new behaviours, new opportunities and new challenges for marketing.

It should also be noted that these variables of market behaviours, opportunities and challenges remain the major intervening circumstances that stand to determine the success of any marketing strategies. Therefore, for private universities to fully benefit from the opportunities available through marketing strategies, they should interlink the variables of marketing mix which Ivy (2008) describes as the 7P: price, people, promotion, physical evidence, place, product and process. These elements according to Chung-ken and Chia-Hung (2008) have a positive impact on consumers' product loyalty.

Price: This is the amount of money that the beneficiary of educational services pay to the institution for service provided. Price according to Soedijati and Pratminingsih (2011) involved all issue about tuition fee and other related payments.

People: This relates to all the individuals in the school who officially provide services for the students (Mehrdael, et al., 2012). Soedijati and Pratminingsih (2011) opined that the ability, skills, experiences and knowledge of the academic personnel are some of the most important factors that provide parental satisfaction when considering the choice of school for their children.

Promotion: This is the key element of marketing mix. It includes all the marketing efforts made to arouse the interest of the public towards enrolling their children into a school. Uchendu, Nwafor and Nwaneri (2015) opined that, the efforts include the use of social media, websites, face to face talk and media adverts as a communication link between the school and the target market. Bellend (2002) believed that most schools in the world use promotional activities of public relations (PR). That television and press advertising are not too common in the educational sector. Mehrdach et al (2012) noted that such mechanism as PR, expos and brochure and some other relevant promotional items used by the school for public advertisement.

Physical Evidence: This includes all school physical resources available for use by the school in providing student services and in carrying out day-to-day teaching learning activities. The intensity of school student services could be reduced by this physical evidence. Mehرداد et-al maintains that university facilities and buildings can be considered as available physical evidence. Whereas, Ivy (2008) considered video projector and other facilities necessary to present lectures in classrooms as physical evidence. Hence, the first image of the university that comes to mind would be shaped by these physical realities.

Place: This variable of marketing mix relates to the actual location of the school. It is projected by such variables as distance, comfort and the extent to which it is ideal for teaching and learning activities. Leckhart (2005) believed that prospective parents choose a school which is located near their home. To

this, Yoo, Donthus and Lee (2000) believed that the reduction of travelling time to school could lead to a positive perception and thus has positive impact in improving the school image in the parent mentality.

Product: This, according to Mechardad et al (2012) relates to school facilities such as workshops, laboratories and libraries. These elements are similar in consideration to physical evidence. However, the peculiarity of this factor is that its availability is relatively linked to the courses available in the university. Thus, they are programme specific. Hence, price is the major factor of selecting university by prospective students (Matzorf & Agathi, 2003).

Process: This includes all the administrative functions of the University. It includes registration patterns, courses evaluation, examination procedures, result communication and student graduation (Mehardad et al, 2012; Ive, 2008). Also the teaching learning processes and school relaxation policy are some of the processes that could be used to project the image of the university.

The focus of this study is to examine the various marketing mix in ensuring positive enrolment increase among private universities in Kwara State. The study reviewed all the relevant means of advertisement as considered in the 7P of service marketing mix. However, the necessity of school maintenance of website is one factor that enhances school contemporary advertisement. This is because school and organisation websites mostly express the purpose, product and vision of the institution (Rayport & Jaworski, 2001). Since the target parent in the society today belongs to a generation that is active on social media (Konnel, 2014), there is the need for school to stamp its presence on social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, twitter, YouTube, etc.

It is worthwhile to note that the relevance of marketing mix and application of different types of media should not be overlooked by the educational institutions especially the private universities if they must create a lasting impression that could facilitate and attract parents and prospective students to them. Hence, creating awareness about the school program, product and physical evidence in terms of sufficient modern teaching equipment, social networking and a school website would go a long way in facilitating student enrolments (Uchendu et al., 2015).

1.5 Specific Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify the marketing mix that is deemed relevant and effective for increasing students' enrolment in private universities in Kwara State.
2. Determine the extent to which the private universities in Kwara State employ marketing mix in enhancing students enrolment
3. Find out if the marketing mix relate significantly with student enrolment in private universities in Kwara State

1.6 Research Hypotheses

HO₁: Marketing mix adoption by the private universities in Kwara State is not significantly low.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between marketing mix and student enrolment in private universities in Kwara State.

2 Methodology

The study followed a survey design. It was carried out in Kwara State Nigeria. There are six universities in the state but only the four private universities of the six constituted the population of this study. Eleven participants (i.e. the registrar and ten students) were selected from each of the four universities. The students were randomly selected. A questionnaire titled “Marketing Mix and Student Enrolment” (MMSSE) was used. The questionnaire was subjected to both validity and reliability tests and adjudged suitable for the study. The data collected were analysed using means, t-test and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

3 Findings

Table 1 shows the marketing mix that is deemed effective for increasing student enrolment in private universities in Kwara State.

Table 1: Effective Marketing Mix that Increases Student Enrolment (% , N=44)

Marketing Mix	Agreed %	Mean	Disagreed %	Mean	Rank
Price	97.2	.972	2.8	.028	2 nd
People	88.1	.881	11.9	.119	6 th
Promotion	98.2	.982	1.8	.018	1 st
Physical Evidence	96.3	.963	3.7	.037	3 rd
Place	90.6	.906	9.4	.094	5 th
Product	96.3	.963	3.7	.037	3 rd
Process	87.5	.875	12.5	.125	7 th

From Table 1, it can be seen that of the seven elements of marketing mix, the respondents are of the opinion that good advertisement strategies (Promotion) which include television and radio adverts, social media and national dailies, are likely to increase student enrolment in the private universities. Therefore, if these universities can utilize in great proportion all the different means of advertisement and operate on good tuition system with very good infrastructure,

there is likelihood of increase in student enrolment. However, the marketing mix of people and process are of less significance in emphasis when considering marketing mix that can increase student enrolment as both place and process have the least mean percentages of .881 and .875 respectively.

Table 2: One Sample T-test of the Level of Marketing Mix

Marketing Mix	X	SD	t-calculated	Sig
Price	6.06	1.22	4.941	.000
People	5.88	1.02	4.682	.000
Promotion	6.13	1.13	5.638	.000
Physical Evidence	5.81	1.60	2.881	.039
Place	4.94	1.85	-.191	.850
Product	5.81	2.12	2.172	.038
Process	4.81	2.21	-.481	.634

N=44; df = 43; Critical t=2.806

Table 2 shows that the calculated t-values for five of the seven elements of marketing mix are greater than the critical t-value of 2.806 at the 0.05 level of significance. With these results, the respective null hypothesis that says the marketing mix adopted by the private universities in Kwara State is low and therefore rejected.

The implication of this outcome is that, if adequately utilized marketing mix of price, people, promotion, physical evidence and product, adoption by the private universities in Kwara State would enhance students' enrolment. At present adoption of the five marketing mix of price, people, promotion, physical evidence and product is significantly low.

Table 2 further indicated that the observed mean is less than the expected mean in two items. The calculated t-values were less than the critical t-value of 2.806 at the respective degrees of freedom and level of confidence. Therefore, the null hypotheses that stipulated that marketing mix adopted by the private universities in Kwara State is low was accepted.

The hypothesis that "there is no significant relationship between marketing mix and student enrolment in private universities in Kwara State" was tested as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Marketing Mix and Student Enrolment

Marketing Mix	X	SD	Sig
Price x1	19.076	.902	.000
People x2	19.068	.893	.002
Promotion x3	19.100	.892	.001
Physical Evidence x4	19.300	.907	.000
Place x5	15.301	1.062	.531
Product x6	19.300	.891	.004
Process x7	14.281	7.627	.612
Student Enrolment y	20.000	.627	.000

Table 3 shows that at .05 significance level and 42 degree of freedom, the marketing mix of price (x1) with the p-value of p-value of .000 is less than .05 thus shows a significance relationship. Also the marketing mix of people (x2), promotion (x3), physical evidence (x4), product (x6) have a p-value of less than significance level of .05 (i.e., .002, .001, .000 and .004 respectively). These also shows levels of significance, hence there is a relationship between marketing mix of price, people, promotion, physical evidence and product and student enrolment in private universities in Kwara State.

Additionally, table 3 also reveals that the marketing mix of place (x5) and process (x7) with p-value of .531 and .612 respectively are greater than the .05 level of significance. This shows that there is no relationship between the marketing mix of place (x5) and process (x7) and student enrolment in private universities in Kwara State.

4 Discussion

Generally the finding of this study revealed that marketing mix can increase student's enrolment and that, the extent of the application of this marketing mix by the private universities in Kwara State is still low. The data collected showed that some marketing mix that can be adopted in the private universities to increase students' enrolment in their order of perceived effectiveness (Table 1). This means that using the marketing mix adequately (especially the higher ranked ones) would significantly increase students' enrolment in universities in the state. This would increase the institutions' income base and enhance their sustainability and quality of service delivery and improved institution effectiveness.

The result of the first hypothesis (H_{01}) revealed that the extents of adoption of marketing mix by private universities in Kwara State is still significantly low in most of the elements of marketing mix considered. However, if the institution adopted adequately, the advantage provided by the current information age, the school would have spent less but achieve much in information dissemination thus

portray the image and programme of the institution especially through the various advertisement outfits available on the social media network. This would significantly enhance student enrolment increase. This will also encourage students from diverse backgrounds as against the present situation where the patronage is limited to reaching the immediate surroundings.

The result on the second hypothesis (H_{02}) revealed that there is significant relationship between marketing mix items of price, promotion, people, physical evidence and product and student enrolment in private universities in Kwara State. By implication, if the universities can adopt adequately these marketing mix items it would adequately attract students' enrolment to the institutions. However it may not be necessary that all the marketing mix would to be adopted simultaneously. The university management should find the perfect match between what is obtainable in the current situation in their surrounding with the marketing mix that would be adopted to ensure that it effectively yields the expected result of going to boost students' enrolment to the university.

The findings in this study agreed with the findings of Medred et al. (2012) whose study provides among others that teachers in the institution can be of high influence in attracting parents to enroll their children in a school. Also those product factors (i.e. laboratories, workshops, libraries, etc.) would increase the service delivery ability of the lecturers and thus related positively to increasing student enrolment. Additionally, Kennedy (2014) is also of the opinion that the use of social media and other ICT driven advertisement can enhance student enrolment. This same opinion of the effectiveness of promotional factors was equally shared by Kotler and Keller (2009) and Uchendu et al. (2015).

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed that some 7p marketing mix, if adopted as ranked in their order of perceived preference would bring about increased student enrolment. This study also shows that the level of adoption of the items of the marketing mix considered by the study was significantly low in most items. Therefore, the need to increase the intensity of the adoption of this marketing mix so as to enhance student enrolment. It was, therefore, concluded that marketing mix adoption would significantly boost student enrolment in private universities in Kwara State. It should be noted, however, that if there is tremendous increase in student enrolment, the universities' income base would also improve, thereby improving sustainability and quality assurance. Above all, this would reduce student competition for public universities which mostly have to grant admission to students beyond their carrying capacity. Therefore, it is recommended that:

1. Private universities in Kwara State endeavour to recognize and adopt the perfect marketing mix that is relevant for enhancing their students' enrolment. This will enhance increase in student enrolment as low income parent will take the advantage of friendly fees payment to enroll their children in the university. This would lead to student population increase and increase income base thus enhancing institutional sustainability and quality service delivery and general institutional effectiveness in the universities.
2. Private universities in Kwara State make provisions for promotion (advertisement) and continued infrastructure development in their annual budget. Also to include clearly the timelines and implementation strategies of such items for enrolment increase and general institutional effectiveness.

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