



MARKETING MIX AND STUDENTS' ENROLMENT IN PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE IN THE ERA OF DIGITAL ECONOMY

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Abstract

Education consumers in the society today belong to a generation that is active on social media hence there is the need for schools to stamp their presence on social media. In view of this, the study investigated marketing mix and students' enrolment in private secondary schools in Nnewi Education Zone, Anambra State in the era of digital economy. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Three research questions were raised to guide the study. The study population was five hundred and twenty-four (524) school administrators in 524 private secondary schools in Anambra state. Purposive sampling was used to draw a sample of eighty-six (86) administrators for Nnewi Education Zone. Data were collected using a 24-item research questionnaire titled "Marketing Mix and Students' Enrolment Questionnaire" (MMSEQ). The collected data were analyzed using SPSS. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions. The results revealed that there are various marketing mix elements meant for service industries like secondary school which when properly applied will help to boost enrolment in private secondary schools within the zone. This will in turn lead to greater survival of the schools. It also indicated that the extent private secondary school administrators adopt these marketing practices to enhance their survival is significantly low in most of the studied school. Based on the findings, it was concluded that secondary schools should adopt marketing mix to ensure their survival of the organization. The study recommended that these private secondary school should adopt marketing mix that are suitable to their needs and possibly subsume them into the existing management practices as modern means of communicating values of the school to the public.

Keywords: marketing mix, enrolment, private secondary school, digital economy.

Introduction

Population explosion in the 21st century has led to constant increase of private schools to augment existing public schools. As such, these educational institutions need better strategies to achieve their objectives, remain relevant in this era and overtake their competitors. Such strategies are embedded in the image of the school to the public and how far the school is able to sell its services. One of such strategies is through school or educational marketing. Marketing according to Kotler (2006) is identifying human needs or wants, convert them into business opportunities, creating satisfaction for the consumers and profit for the organization. On this note, schools, especially secondary schools can engage in school or educational marketing. One of the main aims of educational marketing is to outsmart others in the private school business in the area of increased enrolment.

It is important to note however that some of these private schools in Nnewi Education Zone, Anambra State rate highly as they possess good educational facilities but some others exhibit poor characteristics that



does not augur well in the present digital economy. For example, some of these private schools, especially those with low fee payment do not possess facilities or equipment necessary for effective instructional delivery. The school environment and the general school plant are either non-existence or in very poor state. Odeleye and Odelami (2012) opined that some private schools Nigeria are sited in either private homes or make shift buildings and do not have capacity for further expansion in the nearest future. The provisions of sporting facilities, library, convenience, dispensary, etc. are functions of space. Some have the capacity to expand as a result of their fair school environment but do not know how to run the operations to increase the number of students hence the need for school marketing to make them more visible.

Schoolmarketing is an indispensable managerial function withoutwhich private secondary schools will not survive in a competitive environment. School marketing is defined as the means by which a school actively communicates and promotes its purpose, values and products to learners, parents, staff and the wider community (Oplatka, 2002; Sferleet al. 2012,). There is a widely held view that administrators and/or school owners are expected to incorporate marketing techniques and strategies into their roles in order to effectively cope with the new school environment (Oplatka, 2002). Therefore, identifying the basic needs of the education consumers and the communication of the services and image of the school to the parent and/or wards is a major task of the school administrator and/or school owners, and by extension, a task of educational marketing. Educational marketing has no effect without its ability to have transferred the image of the school to the society (Oplatka&Hemsley-Brown, 2012). 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. Such ways include but not limited to marketing mix.

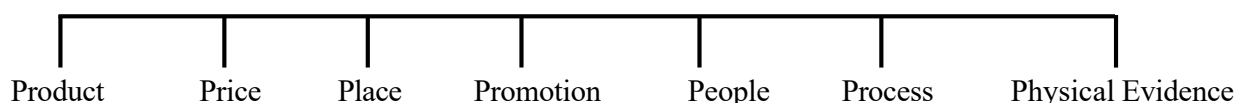
The term marketing mix was first coined by a once president of American Marketing Association in 1953 by Neil Borden. In his presidential address, he defined marketing mix as “the apportionment of efforts, the combinations, the designing and the integration of the elements of marketing into a programme or mix which on the basis of an appraisal of the marketing forces will best achieve the objectives of an enterprise at a given time (Crotts& Wolfe,2011).Marketing mix are some kinds of controllable tools that producers or venders use to attract appropriate response from target beneficiaries of their product or service (Tukur et al, 2019). For goods manufacturing organizations, the marketing mix elements are product (market offering) price, place (distribution) and promotion in that order. They are usually referred to as 4Ps of marketing using the first letters as acronyms. Service organizations, that is, those who deal with intangible products such as ideas, knowledge and experience among which schools fall into have realized that these four element are necessary but not sufficient in the marketing of services. Hence, there is additional three mix elements important in the marketing of services. These are people, process and physical evidence as posited by Ivy (2008). On the whole, there are seven marketing mix elements which the author describes as the 7Ps: price, people, promotion, physical evidence, place, product and process for service marketing which are applicable to educational sectors, and by extension private schools.

These days, a significant portion of education marketing activities are digital. Schools that wish to increase their enrolment will need to work on their online image as they place great importance on digital competency. This is because everyone goes online to search for information on whatever product or service they are interested in, instead of relying on word of mouth or billboard advertisement as was hitherto the case. As such, it is very important for private secondary schools to take advantage of the opportunity to offer the best version of themselves in response to these searches.

Literature review

Concepts of marketing mix

Every school make conscious effort to increase the number of students. This is done through the various means such as flyers, word of mouth and sign posts at the rudimentary level. However, there are other digital means cloned as elements of marketing mix namely product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence through which schools can market their services.



Elements of marketing mix



Product as earlier mentioned could be anything that satisfies consumer needs. It is a series or a bundle of satisfaction. Product include goods (tangible/physical objects) events experiences, services, ideas, persons, organizations, places or a combination of any or all of these (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). The authors further posit that services on the other hand are forms of product that consists of activities, benefits or satisfaction offered for sale that are mainly intangible in nature and do not result in the ownership of anything. Examples include educational services, services rendered by barbing saloons, hotels, transportation companies and so on. Hence, it could be seen that schools fall in the category of the organizations offering services as products. The main concern of the private school here is that they must ensure that the products offered are of quality, meeting the tastes and needs of their customers. Dissatisfaction of the products in meeting the consumers' needs may result in outright rejection or reduction in patronage of such products/services.

There are several things that make up a school product notably, the environment, the decoration of the school building, the uniform, games equipment, school bus and so on. All these form what the parents (as users of educational products/services) look out for, especially in private secondary schools where it is believed to be their consolidation stage. The more decent and attractive they are, the more appealing they will be to the parents. Attraction will determine the price pegged on the product/service.

Price is generally understood as money charged for a product or service. Kotler and Armstrong (2008) defined price as the sum of all the value that consumers exchange for the benefits of having or using a product or service. Price is an important marketing mix element which surrounds every human activity. Price is said to be the element that produces revenue while all other elements are cost (Kotler & Keller, 2009). In the school system, price comes in form of fees. In other words, school fees and other related fees are paid as price for the educational services rendered. School fees bill may comprise of tuition, examination fees, computer fee, school uniform, medical fee, Parents Meeting Association fee, coaching and a host of others. Where the responsibility lies on such schools is that a great care must be exercised in ensuring that the fees either each or the total are not overcharged to avoid the competitor overtaking the educational consumers or undercharged that they will not be able to cover expenses or break even. Barusman (2019) posited that prices for education services are strongly influenced by the quality of the products offered. As in the case of all services organizations, the major factor to consider in determining the price of educational services is the channel of distributing the services which in marketing terms is called place (Kotler & Keller, 2008).

Placing the product is a major aspect of marketing mix elements because it affects every other marketing decision of the organization. It is carried out through the channel of distribution established by the organization. Jaas (2022) defined place as a set of interdependent organizations involved in the process of making a product or service available for use or consumption by the consumer or business user. In school setting, in order to provide place, bringing a product or service close to the customer doorstep is done through certain services. Some schools add transport services so as to bring and return the students to their respective destinations especially for those who live away from school. Others ensure the location of the school is in a serene environment free from the hassles of the city.

Beyond the channel of distribution in the school system, the school's location and school's appearance must be a major concern of the administrators. It must be in line with what clients or prospects expect. It should be a goal in any marketing plan to go beyond the industry norms and then communicate these improvements to the customers so that outdoor signage, landscaping, building architecture, cleanliness of grounds, and the appearance of surrounding properties should reflect the school's marketing efforts (Horner, 2006).

The outdoor signage has to do with creating awareness for the product/services. Such awareness in form of promotion will help the prospective buyers/users to know about the product/service and then seek for it in the market. Promotions here refer to the entire marketing communications. Kotler (2006) see promotion as the coordinated efforts initiated by the seller to establish channels of information and persuasion to foster the sale of goods or services or the acceptance of ideas or point of view. Promotion is an activity to convey the benefits of a product and persuade customers to buy it (Mehrdach, Ali, Reza & Seyyed, 2012). It is a means of making your product/services known to the public. Many organizations including schools have more qualitative products/services than others, but because they do not make themselves and their products known to the public, they find it difficult to survive or rather they are operating in silence. For private schools, it goes to reduce their enrolment.

Enrolment of students in private secondary schools may depend on selection of a promotion mix consisting of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, use of letters, telephone, fax, e-



mail, or the internet to communicate directly with customers (digital, direct & online marketing) (Hossain et al., 2020). All these are very vital for a private secondary school which intends to succeed and remain in school business.

In school businesses, people function as service providers and greatly influence the quality of services provided. Decisions in the "people" factor relate to the selection, training, motivation, and management of human resources (Napitupulu, Kumoro, Asbari, & Nadeak, 2023). Therefore, the school staff/personnel who provide the services must be qualified, properly selected, well trained and motivated to give a relationship building, top quality service to the customer. They must have courtesy, well groomed and presentable. They must understand the supremacy of the customers and always emphasize relationship management in the teaching-learning process.

The process as an element in the marketing mix within the school system includes registration patterns, lesson evaluation, examination procedures, result communication and student graduation as well as the general teaching-learning processes and school relaxation policies (Ivy, 2008). All these could be used to digitally project the image of the school to attract clients.

The physical environment in which the school operates must be such that it should also attract clients. The environment must be conducive, inviting and of good aesthetics. The school environment must not be bushy, littered with papers, or full of broken bottles and the like. All the pits must be leveled or covered so as not pose danger to the learners. Toilets must be kept clean. Again, since the target parents in the society today belong to a generation that is active on social media (Tukur, et al., 2019), there is the need for schools to stamp their presence on social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, twitter, YouTube, etc with the ulterior motive of increasing their enrolment.

Statement of the Problem

The relevance of marketing mix to private secondary schools is understood and appreciated by just a few. Marketing mix is mentally restricted by some people to goods and not services. Even those who relate it to services are so narrow-minded that education is not reckoned with, most especially in a country like Nigeria where education is mainly catered for by the government at all levels. This narrow view about products/services and marketing make many institutions particularly private secondary schools appear to play non-challant attitude towards their customers which include the learners, parents and the community at large. The continuous need for enrolment of learners seems neglected. The image of the school is only often reflected on their sign posts or billboards, or in most cases the uniforms of the students and word of mouth. It becomes difficult for those in need of these services to truly obtain information on the service they are interested in. Again, it seems that the enrolled population are not properly catered for as these schools are often interested in getting the students but not adequately catering for their educational needs. Enrolment rate need to be commensurate with the carrying capacity of the school. Most private schools seems to have lost sight of this fact and absorb as many students as are willing to be enrolled into their various schools and classes who eventually withdraw when their needs are not met. Therefore, there is need to harmonize marketing mix and students' enrolment in private secondary schools in Nnewi Education zone, Anambra State Nigeria in this era of digital economy.

Purpose of the Study

The generally purpose of this study is to investigate marketing mix and students' enrolment in private secondary schools in Anambra State in the era of digital economy. Specifically, the study sets to:

1. Find out the various marketing mix available for enrolment in private secondary schools in Nnewi Education zone, Anambra State;
2. Ascertain the usage of marketing mix by administrators of private secondary school to enhance students' enrolment in Nnewi Education zone, Anambra State.
3. Determine the ways marketing mix can promote secondary school students' enrolment in this digital erain Nnewi Education zone, Anambra State.

Research Questions

The research questions postulated to guide the study are:

1. What are the various marketing mix available for enrolment in private secondary schools in Nnewi Education zone, Anambra State?



2. In what ways do administrators of private secondary schools use marketing mix to enhance students' enrolment in Nnewi Education zone, Anambra State.
3. In what ways can marketing mix promote secondary school students' enrolment in this digital era in Nnewi Education zone, Anambra State?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Nworgu (2015) defined descriptive survey research design as the one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few people or items considered to be the representative of the entire group. Three research questions were posed to guide the investigation. A total of 524 administrators of private schools from the six education zones in Anambra State formed the target population of the study. A purposive sample size of 86 respondents, 35 male and 51 female administrators represented sample size which are the registered private school administrators in Nnewi Education Zone. Data were collected using a 24-item research questionnaire titled "Marketing Mix and Students' Enrolment Questionnaire" (MMSEQ). The instrument was assigned a four-point response scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) which has corresponding numerical values of 4, 3, 2 and 1. The instrument was validated by two experts outside the area of study notably Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and trial tested on 20 respondents via face-to-face delivery. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha method and it yielded a coefficient index of 0.86. Mean ratings and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. The data decision was based on mean score of 2.50 as cut-off point. That is to say that any item with value less than 2.50 was regarded as 'Disagree' while items with mean values of 2.50 and above were regarded as 'Agree'. This was computed thus:

$$\frac{4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{4} = 2.50 \text{ (cut-off point)}$$

Results

Table 1: Mean responses on the various marketing mix available for private secondary schools in Nnewi Education zone, Anambra State.

S/N	Items	Male (35)			Female (51)		
		Mean	SD	Dec.	Mean	SD	Dec.
1	Marketing mix is all about satisfaction of customers.	3.65	0.54	A	2.59	0.80	A
2	Qualified teaching staff and effective instructional delivery are major products of a private school.	3.14	0.36	A	3.22	0.78	A
3	Administrators need to possess creative skills in order to sell their services well.	2.66	0.76	A	3.09	0.30	A
4	Private secondary school administrators need proper pricing for their services.	3.86	0.42	A	3.09	0.48	A
5	Private secondary schools need to consider place so as to attract clients and increase enrolment.	3.94	0.24	A	3.82	0.30	A
6	Promotional activities are essential for the growth and development of private schools.	3.77	0.43	A	3.94	0.24	A
7	Facilities such as school van, steady electricity, computers and so on contribute to the growth of private schools.	3.94	0.24	A	3.78	0.42	A
8	A fine school structure and neat premises attracts more clients.	3.82	3.38	A	3.90	0.30	A
9	Effective use of educational resources and instructional delivery are major factors clients consider for satisfaction.	3.06	0.64	A	3.52	0.50	A
10	Proper marketing mix eliminates unhealthy competition among schools	3.11	0.58	A	3.01	0.14	A
Aggregate mean		3.49	0.46	A	3.39	0.44	A



The table above presents the mean response of male and female administrators responses on the various marketing mix available for private secondary schools in Nnewi Education zone, Anambra State. From the data presented, it was observed that both the male and female administrators agreed on all the items on the table with the mean score above the criterion of 2.50. The aggregate mean scores of 3.49 and 3.39 for the respondents respectively indicate that both male and female administrators has the same view on the various marketing mix available for private secondary schools in Nnewi Education zone of Anambra State.

Table 2: Mean responses on the usage of marketing mix by administrators in private secondary school to enhance students' enrolment in Nnewi Education zone, Anambra State.

S/N	Items	Male (35)			Female (51)		
		Mean	SD	Dec.	Mean	SD	Dec.
11	Proper identification of school products.	3.76	0.43	A	2.96	0.85	A
12	Good pricing techniques – affordability and slow to increase.	1.94	0.60	D	2.18	0.84	D
13	Conducive and serene place for instructional delivery and other school activities.	2.79	0.14	A	3.00	0.45	A
14	Regular promotional activities.	2.15	0.36	D	2.34	0.43	D
15	Employing the right set of people for academic and non-academic activities.	2.29	0.46	D	23.5	0.87	D
16	Innovative and creative instructional delivery	1.88	0.32	D	3.86	0.35	A
17	Attractive physical environment	2.56	0.49	A	2.90	0.41	A
Aggregate mean		2.48	0.40	D	2.79	0.60	A

The table above presents the mean response of male and female administrators on the usage of marketing mix by administrators in private secondary school to enhance students' enrolment in Nnewi-North Education zone, Anambra State. From the data presented, it was observed that the male administrators agreed on item 11, 13 and 17 only and disagreed on items 12, 14, 15 and 16. This goes to say that male administrators do not make use of good pricing techniques – affordability and slow to increase fees, regular promotional activities, do not employ the right set of people for academic and non-academic activities and lack innovative and creative instructional delivery as means of enhancing enrolment of students. The female administrators on the other hand agreed on items 11, 13, 16 and 17 and disagreed on items 12, 14 and 15. This indicates that female administrators do not make use of good pricing techniques which has to do with affordability and slow to increase fees, regular promotional activities and do not employ the right set of people for academic and non-academic activities.

Table 3: Mean responses on the ways marketing mix can promote secondary school students' enrolment in this digital erain Nnewi Education zone, Anambra State.

S/N	Items	Male (35)			Female (51)		
		Mean	SD	Dec.	Mean	SD	Dec.
18	Good reputation/image of the school	3.14	0.60	A	3.75	0.44	A
19	Quality education at affordable prices	3.54	0.70	A	3.73	0.45	A
20	Internet connectivity with available school website for online location/place.	3.43	0.78	A	3.76	0.43	A
21	Regular and continuous use of online learning strategies for teaching all subjects.	3.06	0.24	A	3.67	0.43	A
22	Engaging high competent teachers for instructional delivery.	3.80	0.41	A	3.88	0.33	A
23	Engaging Internet Service Providers (ISP) to offer useful contents for different subjects.	3.20	0.41	A	3.86	0.35	A
24	Implanting more technologies into the classroom to make for attractive physical environment.	3.26	0.44	A	3.24	0.42	A
Aggregate mean		3.35	0.51	A	3.70	0.41	A

The table above presents the mean response of male and female administrators on the ways marketing mix can promote students' enrolment in this digital era in Nnewi Education Zone of Anambra State. From the



data presented, it was observed that both the male and female administrators agreed on all the items with aggregate mean of 3.35 and 3.70 respectively. This depicts that these administrators have similar views on the ways marketing mix can promote secondary school enrolment in this digital era in Nnewi Education zone of Anambra State.

Discussion

The result obtained from research question one above shows that marketing mix is all about satisfaction of customers and that various marketing mix available for private secondary include product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical environment. This is in line with Neil Borden who reported in his presidential address that the combinations, the designing and the integration of the elements of marketing into a programme or mix which on the basis of an appraisal of the marketing forces will best achieve the objectives of an enterprise at a given time (Crotts & Wolfe, 2011). Ivy (2008) equally concurred that the marketing mix elements are product (market offering) price, place (distribution) and promotion in that order plus people, process and physical evidence are available for service organizations, that is, those who deal with intangible products such as ideas, knowledge and experience among which schools fall into.

The result obtained from research question two above shows that the usage of marketing mix by administrators in private secondary school to enhance students' enrolment in Nnewi Education zone, Anambra State is minimal. The findings depict that marketing mix is not fully applicable in private secondary schools to enhance their enrolment. For example, administrators do not make use of good pricing techniques – affordability and slow to increase fees. They do not engage in regular promotional activities and do not employ the right set of people for academic and non-academic activities. They equally lack innovative and creative instructional delivery as means of enhancing enrolment of students. The findings in this study agreed with the findings of

Oplatka (2002) who opined that there is a widely held view that administrators and/or school owners are expected to incorporate marketing techniques and strategies into their roles in order to effectively cope with the new school environment. As such, identifying the basic needs of the education consumers and the communication of the services and image of the school to the consumers and clients of education will help boost students' enrolment. Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown (2012) equally opined that educational marketing has no effect without its ability to have transferred the image of the school to the society.

The result obtained from research question three above shows that marketing mix can promote secondary school students' enrolment in this digital era in Nnewi Education zone, Anambra State through internet connectivity with available school website for online location/place and continuous use of online learning strategies. This result concurs with the findings of Hossain et al. (2020) who stated that enrolment of students in private secondary schools may depend on selection of a promotion mix consisting of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, use of letters, telephone, fax, e-mail, or the internet to communicate directly with customers (digital, direct & online marketing). This is also in line with the submission of Tukur, et al. (2019) that there is the need for schools to stamp their presence on social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, twitter, YouTube, etc with the ulterior motive of increasing their enrolment.

Conclusion

Secondary schools that adopt proper marketing mix will enjoy the advantage provided by today's digital age that will assist the schools to portray their image and programs via the various advertisement media available on the social media network. This would significantly increase student enrolment as well as encourage students from diverse places and backgrounds as against the present situation where the patronage is limited to reaching the immediate surroundings.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following were recommended:

1. Private secondary schools should adopt marketing mix that are suitable to their needs and possibly subsume them into the existing management practices as modern means of communicating values of the school to the public.
2. There should be proper training for both teaching and non-teaching staff of the school to ensure smooth running operation of marketing mix.



3. Communication lines should be left open within the organization for both employees and clients.
4. Promotional activities such as excursions, inter-house sports, holiday trips, holiday coaching and others should be encouraged as a way of communicating the image of the school to the public and increasing enrolment.
5. Secondary schools' administrators should ensure effective feedback system from both staff and customers of the school to make for effective operation of marketing mix.

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