

Effectiveness of Promotion on Competitiveness of Private Universities in Nakuru County

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Abstract: *The research investigated the effectiveness of promotion on Competitive advantage of private universities of Nakuru County. The guiding framework reviewed Porter's theory of competitive advantage and Market Based View. The study adopted Descriptive survey design, whereby the sample population was selected from the Private Universities. 233 staff members was purposively sampled and used as sample size from the target population of 5 private universities. This study used questionnaires containing both structured and unstructured questions so as to be able to capture more information and this was for collection of primary data. The questionnaires were pilot tested in order to validate and yielded a Cronbach reliability of 0.83 coefficients. Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, and percentages) was done by use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 for windows, and processed information therefore shown by way of tables, pie charts and graphs. This study showed promotion was effective strategies for private universities' competitive advantage. The researcher recommends that staff in the private universities right from the top management, staff and students to embrace use of promotion tailored to their unique university characteristics to enhance competitive advantage.*

KeyTerms: Promotion, Competitiveness, Competitive advantage

I. INTRODUCTION

The past years have witnessed an upsurge in the number of universities and also a rise in students' registrations. Massification (Nthiiri, 2014) became a term signifying the continuous raise in the learners' registrations devoid without commensurate addition to budgets allocated, ventures on amenities or educational workforce. The huge registration numbers of college learners became the means resulting in founding other communal institution of higher education. This facilitated most middle-level institutions to be closed down in favour of universities (Nthiiri, 2014). Recent inclination in the university is portrayed in difficult rivalry particularly seen in founding of sub- hubs of universities transversely within the state and the employment of diverse strategies to attract potential students (Kaburu & Embeywa, 2014).

Private universities consequently run their programs in similar manner which make a prospective student be spoilt for choice when all other mandatory requirements by the JAB are already met and the student has a financial base to support their application. It becomes the private university's prerogative to therefore bring out the best offer in terms of the suitability of the academic programs, infrastructure to support in terms of the student's life with regards to co-curricular activities. Abdullahi (2000) argue as a consequence, where businesses desire for continued vivacious with long- time success, its obligated to construct brunt evaluation for its peripheral surroundings, particularly the important factors like clientele, opponent, patrons, dealers, merchants with also its political administration.

Effective strategy like the marketing mix could facilitate firms' persuasion of surroundings favourably while protecting the firm from rivalry. Muturi (2003) append hence, with particular modern business focus, presenting a requirement of understanding opponent potency within marketplace along with posing its individual contributions for obtaining lead for flaws by avoiding attacks that don't favour power. He says so as to acclimatize with surrounding transformation, businesses need efficient guidance which agrees with the resource-based theory that organizations like private universities, must lay guiding frameworks to be effective in competitiveness. But in a cut-throat industry, all this tend to

be uniformly given across all private universities giving a prospective student a limited room for comparison of what is offered by the Private universities.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Kenyan universities have witnessed a more competitive environment than they did a few years ago. The overall sustainability of the universities is determined by how well they continually re-position themselves to increase student enrolment in the competitive environment. Many of the universities are hiring Marketing professionals, engaging publicity and advertising firms, investing in technological advances in higher education, adopting the current social media and other emerging platforms to engage prospective clientele. This has led to direct and indirect competition among the universities with private universities being at the losing side of this state of affairs. The negative impacts of competition are caused by ethical and non-ethical collusion and imitations among players in the university sector. And therefore, to gain the competitive advantage, institutions must adopt marketing mix such as promotion to increase student enrolment. The research sought to establish effectiveness of promotion on competitive advantage of private universities in Nakuru County Kenya.

1.2 Research Objective

To evaluate the effectiveness of promotion on competitiveness of private universities in Nakuru county, Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Porter's Theory of Competitive Advantage: The concept on competitive advantage is one of the earliest theories of economics and it has evolved to the theory of absolute advantage by Adam Smith and concept of comparative advantage given by Ricardo. This study taking reference to the concept of competitive advantage, whereby competitive advantage of states gives one refined means to analyse competition including every proposition. Porter's concepts thus add the perceptive of competitive advantage of states for global business and produce (Porter, 1979). The centre, nevertheless, considers each business, or collection of these businesses, whereby, the ideology on competitive advantages were useful just like in the case of private universities (Porter, 1980). Porter's concept starts in single businesses which construct to become a financial system entirely where firms, not states, contend within global marketplace. Porter's case concludes that mother states manipulate the capacity of the businesses' success within specific industries and due to this interrelation, this emerges to portray for competition within a specific sector, being that all specific aspects within competitive diamond of the entire state must be required (Porter, 1985). This is similar in this study context where for effective competition of private universities, all the 4 Ps of the marketing mix must be employed effectively.

The theory therefore propagates that there are determinant conditions that must be met for competitiveness and these conditions are; demand condition, related and supporting industry, structure factor condition, firm strategy & competition. Despite the main component, Porter regarded other extra determinant being less significant than other variables manipulating formation advantageous competition, nevertheless also considerable as a determining course for persuasion. Known as opportunity (events outside a firm's power like inventions plus breakthrough in new technologies) and government (where policies can be a major influence to the entire systems) (Porter, 1996). Private Universities in Kenya gain competitive advantage through continually reconfiguring their internal resources and capabilities to adapt to the national environment in universities in Kenya which are highly influenced via determinants stated in Porter's concept of competitive advantage.

The Resource-Based View (RBV): Penrose (1959) is the genesis of this view and he recommends on assets held, positioned or utilized within a firm is actually significant from industrial structures. The term RBV made afterward by Wernerfelt (1984), who felt that an organization packaged resources attached temporarily with an it. Perception on central capabilities by Prahalad and Hamel (1990) recognized organization's competence for central part of resources to centre of concentration. The view portrays awareness of an organization's interior setting to drive competitive advantage with emphasis on assets which organizations develop when competing within its location. In earlier strategies advanced by Huskisson's et al., (1999) version on establishing designed thought, focal point was interior aspects in an organization.

According to Huskisson et al. (1999), investigators prepared significant assistance for the development of RBV concept. Since 1980, Furrer et al. (2008) focused their investigations changing industrial structures, to SCP model as well as five forces paradigm, thereafter interior structures within an organization, considering assets plus competence as core

essentials for this View. Thus, Hoskisson et al. (1999) and Furrer et al. (2008) reiterates that RBV emerges to be a more acceptable concept for analysing competitive advantage. The argument of regards property as a firm's prime resource for competitive advantage and thus private universities competitiveness can be from within its own well of resources which are areas of human recourse and infrastructural support that enhances the output of the human recourse.

2.2 Empirical Review

The promotional activities as used in marketing literature involve the entire integrated market connections that comprise of ATL and BTL promotion together with trade endorsements. Promotional activity relies much on the pricing and product decision. The marketing and advertising budget, stage the product in its lifecycle. A completely new product requires heavy branding and advertising and product awareness promotions but existing and known products require few promotional activities aimed at reminding the market to continue using the products. Promotional activity also determines the market segmentation, market target and market position of the companies' products. Precise type of promotional activities influences individual marketing mix - product (programs), price (cost of programs) & place (location of campuses). Incidentally, the promotional budget is usually very high for extensive and intensive promotional activities. Promotions activities must be considered as a cost of marketing and they ought to be taken in into consideration when costing a product to be taken to the market.

In a study of private universities in Indonesia, Sama, Brahmasari and Ratih (2017) examined whether 4 Ps marketing affect trust towards the competitive advantage in private universities. The study adopted quantitative approach of data collection and analysis. The study also used simple random sampling. The sample size was four hundred and twenty-five students. The results showed that marketing mix impacted on trust that further affected competitiveness of private universities. Arifin Sumarwan and Najib (2020) examined the causal effect relationship between marketing mix, motivation, brand-image and student decisions in choosing a graduate education. The research used causation research design. Needed data was sourced from two hundred and fifty-five master program students using questionnaire. Structural Equation Modelling was used with findings revealing promotion, products had a major influence on image of the brand.

Syam, Sembiring, Maas and Pranajaya (2019) noted that service marketing mix strategy in higher education are not separable when expounding on promotion, products, prices, places and people. The study examined the predictors of decisions of university student candidates in choosing courses. The study was based on a sample of 74 students with data being analysed based on the Partial Least Squares and structural Equation Model. The study revealed a direct influence of price, products and promotion in choosing a course. Karim, Zafi and Rochimuzzama (2022) examined how to implement marketing mix in Islamic school in increasing competitiveness. The study adopted naturalistic qualitative approach. Data was sourced using observation, interviews and document analysis. The findings revealed that schools carried out socialization activities to attract more students. Several marketing mix strategies including financing, products, promotion, location, facilities were critical in creating competitive and comparative advantages.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design, Population and Sampling

This investigation employed descriptive research design technique which involves collecting data and information by administering a questionnaire or interviewing sampled respondents (Orodho, 2003). In this study, the researcher employed administration of feedback form (questionnaire) to be the tool for information compilation and these guided the researcher during collection, analysis and interpretation of the data to enable a logical conclusion to the subject of study (Mburu, Obuya, & Kamau, 2018). The study targeted staff members in Private University Campuses in Nakuru County who included Academic and Non-Academic Staff members. The private universities in Nakuru County are namely, Mount Kenya, Kabarak, Kenya Methodist, St. Paul's and Presbyterian Universities.

Though the study collected data on competitive advantage from university campuses based in Nakuru County, a complete list (a sampling frame) of academic and non-academic staff in these campuses was compiled for purposes of drawing a sample through stratified random sampling. This study used Yamane (1967) formulae for computation of sampling size with the formulae generating sampling size of 233.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

In analysing any investigation purposes, the researcher developed questionnaires having open and closed ended items. In guaranteeing validity, both content and construct validity were achieved by consulting supervisors (Kathuri & Pals, 1993). Piloting of the questionnaires occurred through sampling 20 staff of Presbyterian University of East Africa (PUEA). This University was therefore not included in this study. A reliability coefficient was conducted and yielded Cronbach's coefficient at 0.83 implying that questionnaires were considered to be reliable and fit for data collection as it was greater than 0.7 that is recommended by (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). The researcher first obtained introduction letter by concerned school (SPGS) after which the letter was used to apply for permit NACOSTI. The permit from NACOSTI together with introduction letter from post graduate school was presented to the management of the private universities to get their approval to collect data in their universities. After getting permission the researcher collected the data from selected respondents using the questionnaires through a drop and pick method after which completed questionnaires were gathered for analysing. Descriptive statistics was applied to summarize the study findings that were presented in frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations to analyze the data in the form of tables, figures, graphs and curves. The Statistical package SPSS version 22.0 for windows was used in the data analysis.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The researcher managed to collect a total of 200 questionnaires out of the administered 233 constituting a response rate of 85.7 % for the study which according to Babbie (2007) , is sufficient to make inferences on the study population. Investigator ascertained the independence of each respondent by gathering information about their distribution in terms of age, gender, working duration in the institutions, academic qualifications and position held respectively. From the study, the employees in private universities are relatively young as majorities (40.5%) are aged 31-40 years and 32.4% were below 30 years. This study therefore established that the private universities attracted younger workforce who were not absorbed by the public universities. Further, the study revealed that the sampled staff members had a proportion of 61% male and 39% female. From the study findings, most of the sampled population (48.6%) had labored within private universities for a period of 1-5 years and 31.1% have worked for 6-10 years. As only 16.2% of the staff members have worked for less than a year, it was evident that there are no high turn-over rates. Moreover, it was found out that a greater part of the respondents (38.4%), had Bachelor's degrees and 32.9% had Masters Degrees. It was also revealed that 17.8% had Diplomas while only 11% were PhD holders. This indicates that majority of the respondents were bachelor's degree holders followed by the Masters' degree holders, with the Diploma holders and PhD's being the fewer participants in this study.

4.2 Effectiveness of Promotion on Competitiveness

The researcher sought to establish the perceived effectiveness of promotion on competitive advantage of private universities. The staff members were required to give their response on a 3-point Likert scale (Effective, Not Effective and Don't Know) and for outcomes represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Perceived Effectiveness of Promotion

Promotion	Effective	Not Effective	Don't Know
Radio Advertisements	64	28	8
Television Advertisement	69.3	18.7	12
Personal Selling	63.9	19.4	16.7
Sales promotions	61.6	27.4	11
Branding	84.9	11	4.1
Informative pamphlets and brochures	78.7	12	9.3
Informative website	74.7	16	9.3
Government collaboration	64.4	24.7	11
Active Alumni Participation	52	33.3	14.7

As documented in Table 1, branding was perceived to be an effective promotion strategy for private universities as pointed out by 84.9%. Pamphlets and brochures were considered to be informative means of promoting private universities effectively by 78.9%. According to 74.7%, 69.3% and 64% of the respondents, the use of informative website, Television advertisement and radio achievement respectively by private universities are promotion strategies perceived

to have effects on their competitive advantage. It was also evident that majority of the respondents, 63.9%, 61.6%, 64.4% and 52% pointed out that personal sales, sales promotions, government collaboration and active alumni participation were considered to be effective promotions for private universities' competitive advantage.

4.4 Strategies Suggested to GOK for Promoting Private Universities Effectiveness

The researcher sought to establish strategies that the government can implement in order to promote the effectiveness of private universities. An open-ended question was asked to gather the respondents' opinions and suggestions and results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Suggested Government Strategies

Strategy	Frequency	%
Setting guiding regulation and standards	48	25.4
Issuance of student loans	31	16.4
Government subsidies	27	14.3
Exchange programmes	23	12.2
Deployment of government sponsored students	16	8.5
Internships	15	7.9
Regular inspections	13	6.9
Promotes innovations through incubation	9	4.8
Approvals and accreditation of courses on offer	7	3.7
Total	189	100.0

The researcher managed to interact with the respondents and solicited their suggestions on what the government ought to do so as to ensure that private universities attain competitive advantage effectively. According to table 2, majority (25.4%) of the respondents stated that the government set regulations and standards that guide private universities so as to ensure the operations are within the stipulated parameters. Government was also requested to issue adequate and timely student loans to facilitate private university students by (16.4%), provision of government subsidies to private universities as cited by 14.3%, exchange programmes between students in private and public universities (12.5%), giving private universities the government sponsored students (8.5%), while providing graduates with opportunities for industrial attachments and internships (7.9%). Also conducting regular inspection to ensure that private universities adhere to stipulated standards (6.9%), promoting innovations through incubations (4.8%) as well as approving and accrediting courses that are offered in the private universities was pointed out by 3.7%.

V. CONCLUSION

The research investigated the effectiveness of promotion on Competitive advantage of private universities of Nakuru County. Private universities were found to apply various techniques to promote themselves through branding, marketing their programmes through websites and pamphlets, running media adverts through TV, radio and newspapers as well as organizing activities like road trips, career and motivational talks where they interact with a wider audience. This plays a key role in ensuring that the public is aware of what they offer and well convinced on why they should choose them in favour over their competitors.

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