
Marketing: An Effective Tool for Managing Secondary Schools in Nigeria

By

Ojador, Unuwhezi Jimmy

Library, National Open University of Nigeria

Headquarters, Jabi, Abuja, Nigeria.

Email: jimmylix382@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper focused on the use of marketing ideas as a vital management and business tool for effective operations of secondary schools in Nigeria. The study was aimed at making school managers to understand that school is a business and must require application of marketing insights and skills for effectiveness. Moreover, the work is to provide the blue-print for school managers to purposefully introduce marketing strategies into school management. The study unveiled that schools are naturally practicing marketing unconsciously thus marketing is relevant to its activities. Marketing strategies that can be adopted and utilized in school management includes-market environment analysis, market segmentation, product/service design, price decision, promotion activity, place (distribution channels), people, process, coordinated marketing and marketing audit. The study highlighted that school managers can wisely blend the marketing strategies to improve on their planning, performance and profitability, and adequately satisfy education needs of students (target market). The research concluded by enlisting the following recommendations-school managers and staff should be trained on marketing principles/customer service, a marketing officer should be hired to manage all marketing programmes in collaboration with school managers, qualified staff and students must be employed and admitted respectively, needs of students and societal trends should inform design of curriculum, policies, fixing of chargeable fees, etc.

Keywords: Market, Marketing, Skills, Managing, Schools, Business, Tool, Customer.

INTRODUCTION

Managing a school is a serious business activity. There is currently keen competition in the school industry, especially, in the secondary level in Nigeria. As a result, school managers will certainly require deliberate use of marketing ideas and skills to obtain a large market share, competitive advantage over others, improve on academic performance of students and profits.

Marketing scholars had argued that marketing is both a planning and business tool available for school managers to maximize and achieve desired goals. Armstrong & Kotler (2017) defined marketing as the process of planning and implementing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchange that satisfy customers' needs while

achieving organizational objectives. Supporting the above view, Kotler & Kartajaya (2016) described marketing as management process which identifies, anticipates, and supplies customers' requirements efficiently and profitably.

Schools supply education services at secondary stage to satisfy education, skills and leisure needs of students. Education services supplied by schools include but not limited to teaching, use of instructional resources, policies, boarding facilities, curricular (national/international), library services, guidance/counseling, skills acquisition, etc. The students who benefit from the school education services constitute the target market. The satisfaction of the needs of the students should be the utmost priority of the school industry. The level of performance and profitability of the

school industry largely depends on the level of satisfaction of education needs of the students. Perreault & Cannon (2016) observed that the satisfaction of students' needs is the economic and moral justification for the existence of the school. Moreover, to adequately satisfy education needs of the students, application of marketing ideas and skills is inevitable.

Against this background, this paper is aimed at assisting school authorities to whole-heartedly accept and use marketing as both a planning and business philosophy to efficiently serve their customers, improve performance and obtain competitive edge.

MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS

Management is essentially associated with decision-making at the various levels of an organization, namely, strategic, operational and tactical for the purpose of defining a specific goal. In other words, it is a formal process of using available resources judiciously to achieve set organizational goals at a given period. For school managers, management means the proper utilization of teachers, administrative staff, funds, instructional materials, policies, etc., to achieve desired goals for the school proprietors. And to effectively make decisions and arrive at intended end, relevant and accurate information about students (actual & prospective), community, parents, government regulations, competitors, and societal trends provided by marketing ideas must be used as input resource (Kotler & Keller, 2015).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Kotler & Keller (2015) stressed that non-commercial enterprises (Schools) do practice marketing unconsciously and use some methods (marketing strategies) to effectively serve their target market (students). Similarly, Pride and Ferrell (2017) affirmed that as long as schools offer education services to satisfy knowledge, skills and leisure needs of students they are involved in exchange transaction- that is, marketing. Moreover, Kotler (2014) described

students as the target market of schools. There exist, therefore, an exchange relationship between the school and the students who consume its services. Also the recruitment and training of teachers, awareness activities, inter-house sports, graduation ceremonies, school tour, use of uniquely designed uniforms, vests, etc. ,should be termed marketing strategies (Kotler,2014). According to some authorities, Kotler & Keller (2016), marketing is a societal and management process by which customers (students) obtain their education needs and wants through school offerings that can be exchanged for value. In addition, Kotler & Armstrong (2015) defined marketing as managing beneficial customer relationships. The primary marketing task for school managers, therefore, is to establish profitable relationships with students, attract new ones and sustain the same by consistently providing superior services.

Marketing cannot be done by chance, it must be properly planned and executed via marketing strategies so as to achieve set goals. Perreault & Cannon (2014) viewed marketing strategies as the numerous activities embarked upon by marketers (schools) to effectively reach out to target markets (actual and potential students) for the purpose of establishing beneficial relationships. Also, they posited that marketing strategy is a big picture of what a firm will do in a particular target market. School managers should craft an insightful and goal-driven marketing strategy outlining which students (real and prospective) to serve and the know-how to create value for them and the school.

FORMULATION OF MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS

The school administrator should formulate an appropriate marketing strategy to effectively serve the students (real & intending) while realizing set goals (Mullins & Walker, 2010). The school manager should first of all embark on market- environment analysis (internal & external) to identify potential customers (students) and their education needs, competitors (other schools), their marketing strategies

and offerings to enhance evolving of a workable marketing plan. Following the above, the school administrator must carry out market segmentation. According to Armstrong & Kotler (2016), market segmentation is the art of dividing the market into fairly homogenous parts and selecting any part or parts as target market/s to be served with a specific marketing mix. Market segmentation had been viewed as a crucial modern marketing activity whose significance must not be over-looked by school managers.

Marketing strategy design will follow marketplace analysis and market segmentation processes. Marketing strategy had been described as a detailed business plan that will assist schools to optimize a specific business opportunity in the school-market and obtain overall strategic mission. Essentially, it is a game-plan for achieving set marketing aims. School administrators should formulate the right marketing strategy bearing in mind to blend discipline and flexibility. School authorities must endeavor to adhere to the marketing strategy but should also devise new means to periodically improve on it.

MARKETING MIX

The marketing mix consists of an integrated marketing program by which schools will actually deliver the right education services to students. Armstrong & Kotler (2014) asserted that marketing mix is a set of marketing tools used by firms to pursue marketing goals in a target market. The marketing tools include – product, price, promotion, process, people, place and physical evidence. The school manager must judiciously combine the 7ps of marketing into an integrated marketing program to translate the marketing strategy into action and efficiently reach out to target students, (Pride, 2016).

PRODUCT STRATEGY

Education services offered by schools may be described as intangible products/ goods. A product can be anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption which

might satisfy a need or want. Product/service decision is considered as the most vital component of marketing mix for schools. As a result, Mullins & Walker Jr. (2010) affirmed that product planning should be student- focused and based on continual survey of school- market trends as it will assist managers to develop more superior services than what is currently available. Product planning may include introduction of new or repackaged services, such as, policies, better approach to lesson-notes preparation and lesson presentation, use of national and international curricular, skills acquisition, introduction of new subjects, highly subsidized textbooks, school fees (tuition & boarding) and transport service to foster better relationships with students and parents.

PRICE STRATEGY

Price relates to defining the value obtained in an exchange. It is the total cost a student incurs to obtain or consume school services. Price may be used as a competitive element and is one of the marketing mix variables that can be manipulated easily to respond to changes in a market-place and in poor economies. It is used for economic and psychological reasons. When considered from an economic perspective, it is associated with costs and profits. But from psychological point of view, it may indicate quality. Essentially, in the service industry, such as, school, the psychological role is most relevant because parents, students and the public depend on school fees as the sole indicator of service quality.

School managers should utilize price strategically to gain a large market share, huge turnover and competitive advantage. For instance, school authority may reduce tuition fees, boarding charges, and other financial aspects to retain old students and attract new ones.

PROMOTION STRATEGY

Promotion otherwise described as marketing communications is referred to as the marketer's "bag" of tools for communicating with customers and other

stakeholders (Kotler & Keller, 2015). It consists of inter-dependent tools consisting of advertising, public relations, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing, events and experiences, and interactive marketing. Some scholars described it as the “voice” of an organization. Promotion aims at informing, persuading and reminding customers of existence of an organization and its products/services. It also assists organizations to establish brand in memory, create a brand image, drives sales and affect shareholders’ value.

Marketing scholars advocated that schools should adopt advertising, sales promotion and personal selling to create awareness, enhance corporate image and establish loyal relationships with parents, students and prospects. Some good sales-promotion strategies school may adopt are scholarship to best student, career-talk and periodic rebate on tuition fees, etc.

PLACE STRATEGY

Pride & Ferrell (2014) viewed place as distribution channels through which education services are made available sufficiently and continuously to satisfy as many students as possible. In distributing school services, the right service at the right time and in a convenient location must be critically considered. Schools must be located where access and security are not issues. Also, school managers should endeavor to provide purpose-built structures and conducive learning environment in all ramifications.

PEOPLE STRATEGY

In services marketing, such as, school services, people (service- agents) are involved. The satisfaction of customers’ (students) needs is informed by the quality of interaction with the service agents (teachers, principal, administrative staff, drivers, etc). The teaching and learning process connotes a high level of contact whereby the learners ought to feel comfortable with the service -experience and thereby enhance a good rapport. School managers and teachers should adopt relationship

marketing to explore the existing high level interaction with students and gain customer retention, loyalty, improved performance and competitive advantage.

PROCESS STRATEGY

The marketing of services entails processes which may not be necessarily consistent. School administrators and teachers should carefully plan school services delivery processes taking into cognizance the adequate satisfaction of students’ needs. Administrative and teaching- learning processes which forms the core of school services must be student-friendly.

CO-ORDINATED MARKETING STRATEGY

Kotler & Keller (2015) proposed that marketing should be well coordinated in such a way that all departments of the school are involved in marketing. He further argued that marketing does not work when it is merely a department. It only thrives when the principal and all employees appreciate the effect they have on students’ satisfaction. Coordinated marketing consists of internal and external marketing. Internal marketing, for schools, involve hiring qualified staff, motivating, training and retraining them to deliver efficient services to the students. External marketing entails providing superior services to loyal students, attracting new ones, maintaining same and reaching out to the community. It makes no meaning to promise excellent services before employees are ready to serve the students.

MARKETING AUDIT (EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK) STRATEGY

Marketing audit is a process of measuring or evaluating the school’s activities and level of performance with a view to plan better for the future (Rowley, 2001). It assists the school manager to gather current information about the school-market, competitors and societal changes so as to anticipate emerging problems and quickly resolve them. Marketing scholars regarded marketing audit as a “mirror” which reflect on the total plans, programmes

and performance of a school. They suggested that it should be systematic, comprehensive and may be done annually (Ferrell & Pride, 2015). School authorities should measure their teaching-learning processes and other activities from time to time using appropriate criteria to enable them re-think for better performance.

BENEFITS OF USING MARKETING STRATEGIES

Schools that deliberately adopt marketing strategies in their planning and programmes will harvest the under-listed benefits.

1. Students' education needs and performance will be adequately satisfied and improved respectively.
2. School 'services will be student-oriented and not method-oriented.
3. School's corporate image will be boosted in the minds of the students and parents, public and government
4. Increased profitability and timely achievement of missions.
5. Decision-making processes will be greatly enhanced as relevant information is regularly gathered from the market (students, public, and parents).
6. Retention of students and attraction of new ones

CONCLUSION

Marketing is so basic that school managers must consciously utilize it in their planning and programmes. The study discovered that schools are involved in marketing (though passively) as they provide education services to satisfy students' education needs. Marketing cannot be done haphazardly but must be carefully planned. Therefore, school managers should deliberately and regularly survey and use school-market information to effectively plan for their activities with a view to improve on students' performance, obtain competitive edge over competitors and achieve organizational goals adequately.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are suggested for school managers to attempt.

1. A marketing expert may be hired to plan and implement all marketing plans and programmes.
2. School managers and teachers must be trained on marketing principles or customer service.
3. Schools should employ qualified staff and motivate them for higher productivity, and practice all-inclusive decision-making process involving students, parents and the community.
4. Students' education needs and societal trends should inform schools strategic decisions and design of teaching – learning processes.

REFERENCES

- Armstrong, G. & Kotler, P. (2014). *Marketing: An Introduction*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson.
- Armstrong, G. & Kotler, P. (2017). *Principles of Marketing*, Upper Saddle River: Pearson – Prentice Hall.
- Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. (2015). *Principles of Marketing*, Upper Saddle River: Pearson – Prentice Hall.
- Kotler, P. & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing Management*, London: Pearson Prentice – Hall, (chap 4)
- Kotler, P. (2014). *Kotler on Marketing: How to Create, Win, & Dominate*, N.J.: Eagle Wood Cliffs,
- Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. (2015). *Principles of Marketing*, N. J.: Prentice-Hall
- Kotler, P. (2015). *Marketing Management (Global Ed.)* Singapore: Pearson Education, (chap 2)
- Mullins, J. W. & Walker, O. C. (2010). *Marketing Management: A strategic Decision-Making Approach*. N.J.: McGraw-Hill.
- Pride, W. M. & Ferrell, O. C. (2014). *Foundations of Marketing*. West: SWestern College

Pride, W. M. (2016). *Mind Tap Access Code for Marketing*. West: SWestern College

Ferrell, O. C. & Pride, W. M. (2017). *LMS Integrated Mind Tap Marketing*. West: SWestern College

Perreault, W. D. & Cannon, J. P. (2014). *Essentials of Marketing: A Global Management Approach*, Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Perreault, W. D. & Cannon, J. P. (2016). *Essentials of Marketing: A Global Management Approach*, Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Rowley, J. (2001). *Information Marketing*. Aldershot: Ashgate.