

**STRATEGIC MARKETING IN EDUCATION SERVICES
THE CASE OF A PRIVATE TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN GHANA**

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Abstract

Driven by the increasing numbers of higher education services in Ghana, the study sought to examine the marketing orientation and strategic marketing practices applied in tertiary institutions. The convenient sampling method was used to select the case specific institution and 25 management staffs with specialized knowledge were identified and sampled. The findings of the study were mainly reported using descriptive statistics. The research findings indicate that the respondents agreed that the institution is market focused and 96% said a strategic marketing plan exists which it uses. Both long and short term plans are used and a marketing plan drives the institutions' activities. As to the marketing mix variables application, it was realised that not all 7p's are used in sync and this has an impact on the institution's performance. Private tertiary education institutions in Ghana need to re-examine their marketing task if they must survive in this competitive sector.

Keywords: Education services, Tertiary institution, Strategic marketing, Marketing mix, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

In the present era, human capital development through education and training is a prerequisite to economic growth. Education plays an important role in economic development and the market for education services has increased tremendously, worldwide. This makes the establishment of education services and the demand for it highly competitive especially in the developing countries. Most countries in Africa have liberalized education services increasing the influx of foreign education providers. Education services can be categorized into four main components – Basic education, secondary (high school) education, higher (tertiary) education, and professional and specialized skills acquisition. The tertiary education sector has witnessed an alarming increase in foreign participation making marketing activities a necessary agenda. The increased competition is driving the local, private and public tertiary institutions to improve on the services they provide and this has a positive effect and implications for economies in Africa. Also it provides individual students with a yardstick to measure and apply to choice

institutions. For many tertiary education institutions, ensuring the quality of education provided is the main factor that sustains and promotes its performance. Dessus (2001) adds that infrastructure and performance are now the differentiating factors for tertiary institutions. And Levy (2006) calls for country specific and institution tailored marketing programmes that best serve the needs of the establishment. With the liberalization and quest for human capital development, there is the need for educational service providers to strategize and employ service marketing programmes to strengthen the competitive position of institutions.

In Ghana, the current competition in the tertiary education sector is driving institutions to turn to services marketing and look for unique selling proposition to promote and increase student inflow. Such marketing activities should consider education services itself which is intangible and build differentiating factors for the institution. This raises the question of marketing education services. Newman, Couturier and Scurry (2004), Bok (2003) and Bartlett et al. (2002) have all debated on the issue of marketing education services. Gibbs and Knapp (2005) and others have opined that education should not be marketed so as to make it available for all (Holbrook, 2005; Sharrock, 2000; Pierre, 1995). But liberalization and competition makes such opinion idealistic. The proliferation of tertiary institutions in Ghana (57 Universities) make marketing of education services necessary (Agasisti and Catalano; 2006; Drummond, 2004). The public universities in Ghana are on subventions from the government therefore education is free but there is partial marketing of activities like the private universities in certain programmes and activities. The government subventions are not adequate to run the institutions hence some services are commercialized and that pave the way for marketing activities.

Interestingly, the need to 'market' services has not really been an issue for the public universities. Year in and year out, these public institutions face heavy demand such that marketing of their services is not a preferred option. But the landscape for tertiary education is fierce and the private institutions are confronted with the question of being able to create awareness while embarking on strategic marketing to position itself. Thus, this research investigates the marketing of education services at the Zenith University College, a private educational institution in Ghana.

This paper discusses and situates the need to examine the marketing of education service in a private tertiary institution in the introduction. The problems relating to the issue of marketing education services, the rationale for the study and the role of marketing education is highlighted in the next two subsections. The next theme highlights prior literature and empirical studies on the need to use strategic tools, the strategic marketing framework and education services in Ghana. The methodology and research approach adopted is provided followed by the findings of the study with the discussions from the findings. The conclusion containing the implication, limitations and areas for future research is captured in the last paragraph.

Marketing education services

Education services' marketing is not a priority in most developing countries because the question of demand and supply favours most institutions. A number of countries are faced with more demand than they can manage therefore the need to market institutional activities did not exist. The liberalisation and introduction of private higher education institutions and the influx of foreign renowned universities in various countries have made the privately owned setups especially to consider differentiation of their services. This has led to the extension of programmes, diversification and integration of practical and entrepreneurial courses to enhance and position such institutions. The basic concern for private tertiary institutions is with building and maintaining a reputation that would lead to a pull factor to position them favourably. And this is moving such institutions to imbibe marketing of their services on a higher level.

Education as a service calls for fulfilling student needs for acquiring knowledge through learning of specific and specialised programmes that fits industry requirements and satisfies the consumer. The consumer or students' needs are the primary focus hence all marketing activities should be directed at them. But education services are intangible with no ownership rights and it should be instrumental in fulfilling a gap in industry or country. There is the need to strategically plan marketing and management of tertiary institutions taking cognisance of the nature and characteristics of services and its implication for the education sector. Also marketing plans should be directed at building reputation and boosting student inflows. Marketing of education services should be given priority if private institutions in Africa should match the performance and student inflows of the public and foreign institutes especially in Ghana.

The dilemma of private tertiary education institutions in Ghana has just begun. With 57 tertiary institutions making up 18 public and 39 private higher education institutes, the competitive environment is driving them to recognize the growing importance of marketing education services. The National Accreditation Board in 2013 quotes 140 accredited institutions both public and private offering four (4), three (3) and two (2) year programmes (degree and diploma). This makes the education services industry in Ghana a competitive sector for providers. The study therefore attempts to investigate a current education marketing situation to fill the gap in research. Some studies have been done in these areas but none focus on the Ghanaian situation (Bartlett et al., 2002; Tooley, 2007). This study intends to provide useful insights from a case specific point that would benefit private tertiary institutions and impact on theory of marketing education services. The study therefore will fulfil the following objectives:

- 1) to determine the marketing orientation of the institution
- 2) to investigate the role and use of strategic marketing in an educational services,
- 3) to ascertain the marketing mix variables which is utilised

The rationale of the study

Various researchers have discussed marketing of educational services from different perspectives. Ivy and Naudé (2004) emphasized the need for marketing education services to bring efficiency and performance. Laurer (2006) and Shoemaker (1999) call for proactive and strategic programmes that identify students and focuses marketing activities directly to them. According to Oplatka et al. (2002) and Ball (2009) lack of adequate marketing management programmes and strategies are the critical barrier in promoting continual growth of private tertiary institutions. Also given the high level of competition in the sector, Farr (2003), Turner (2002) and others point to the need of marketing strategies, tools and models to enhance and promote education services. A number of studies have advanced arguments that education services especially in the private sector should focus on specific marketing and strategic approaches. Farr (2003), Rindfleish (2003) and Turner (2002) have observed that the lack of marketing techniques make it difficult and challenging for tertiary education providers to effectively identify strategic tools of marketing to apply to direct their activities. There is the need for tertiary institutions (especially the privately owned) to incorporate a greater effort in strategic planning which focuses on market orientation and the customer (students, parents and interested parties).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An institution's marketing orientation will establish the role of strategic marketing and the level of its application. Marketing orientation has been discussed on two levels by Jarowski, Kohli and Sahay (2000). The first level is the 'traditional market driven approach' which calls for segmentation, targeting and focusing on the needs of consumers while proactively dealing with competition. The second level examines the market structure and engages in activities that influence the industry and behaviour of firms to the advantage of organisations (Jarowski et al., 2000). These theories determine the direction of institutions. A market driven institution will use strategic marketing to steer affairs to the benefit of stakeholders. A review of a number of studies reveals that applying strategic marketing concepts can effectively enhance the performance of tertiary education services (Ivy and Naudé, 2004, 1999; Maringe, 2004; Maringe and Foskett, 2002; Ivy, 2001). Marketing services like any marketing activity according to Kotler and Keller (2009) and Foskett (1994) is a management process that calls for planning activities, developing marketing mix and meeting targeted consumer needs and making it a part of the organisation's philosophy. A holistic approach should be adopted to cover all areas pertinent to the management and promotion of the institution while meeting the needs of consumers (students, parents and interested parties). Eckel (2007), Levy (2006) and Bok (2003) have observed that marketing education services using techniques, models and tools in that field invariably leads to strategic planning and management. Therefore to survive in a competitive

industry like education services, strategic marketing planning and developing coherent marketing mix for managing activities is the way to go. Eckel (2007), Levy (2006) and Sallis (2002) concluded that marketing education services using techniques, models and tools lead to positive results in student inflows, finances, quality of services provided, facilities, the image and reputation of institutions. These positive reflections of marketing education services take on more of a business approach. And there is a growing need to manage private tertiary institutions from a business perspective. This may come off like a commercial venture but education is for public good and should focus on societal benefit, cost sharing and performance. This makes strategic marketing management a necessary step.

The need to use strategic marketing tools

Marketing is at the core of every business though it is not every firm that makes it a part of their most important function. Kotler and Fox (1985), Gibbs (2002) and Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) have used marketing concepts to examine higher education approach to combating competition. In a study of United Kingdom universities' response to competition, Naudé and Ivy (2006) found that these institutions recognise the importance of marketing and practice it using various techniques. Models, theories and concepts developed for the business sector were transferred and used in education services marketing (Oplatka et al., 2004; Gibbs and Knapp, 2001; Ivy, 2001; Nguyen and LeBlanc, 2001; Mazzarol, 1998). Another study by Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) reviewed 63 empirical and theoretical studies and concluded that marketing is 'recognised' as a beneficial tool in the 'field of higher education marketing'. Strategic marketing techniques were employed in identifying and resolving problems and developing strategies in an adhoc manner. Tools and techniques range from market segmentation, targeting, focusing, position, market planning and other techniques to differentiation and building image. The need to use strategic marketing tools cannot be over emphasized. The environment for tertiary education is changing and more institutions are changing with the times to meet needs and requirements. This is making the industry highly competitive especially in the developing countries where the number of higher education institutions is limited. Applying strategic marketing and management tools in education services is a precursor to competitive advantage.

Strategic marketing basically calls for a systematic or logical planning, strategising and using tactics to manage a business entity. It entails a series of well thought out fundamental issues that are pertinent to the organisation's survival. The fundamental issues include type of business the firm conducts and what business they are into, who the target customers are and what they want, the level or future plans and how to get there. This involves understanding the competencies of the organisation and its environment and developing marketing programmes

and strategies. This is in essence finding out what works in the current situation and looking for the best techniques and tools to perform the institutions' functions.

Establishing a strategic marketing framework for marketing education services

Moore (1989) succinctly point to the fact that strategic plans facilitate operations in an institution whilst focusing and coordinating the marketing activities. The establishment of strategic marketing approach in tertiary education and particularly the private institutions requires a reappraisal of structures, programmes and a total overhauling of competences and available resources. The structures involve the task levels, mode of operation, functions, coordination and supervision. This is dependent on the mission and vision of the education institution. Programme overview, resources and competencies can all be covered under strategic marketing planning and implementation. The first step in such an exercise after a reappraisal is to determine the organisation's capabilities in terms of resources available, strategic marketing mix, competitors and the market demand for services. The organisations development is dependent on the financial resources at its disposal. The next stage is to have a plan – a business or institution plan that inculcates a strategic marketing plan. This plan Port and Burke (1989) argue that it is a must have or a necessary appendage for managing an institution. The plan should follow a logical process and should be time bound (Kotler and Fox, 1985). Theoretically the process is straight forward but strategic planning is complex and multifaceted with various levels of functions and cross functions which operate in an inter – related mesh. Therefore in applying it checks and balances must be in place to ensure strict adherence to laid down procedures. Kotler (2003) referred to the strategic planning procedures as “analysis, planning, implementation and control” process. Subhash (1999) call the process “planning and strategy”. They all agree that there should be a corporate, business and functional level activities marked out. Time frames should be incorporated to have short and long term plans. The next stage is the situation analysis that calls for examining the institution's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats leading to strategy formulation, based on business objectives, allocating resources, scheduling, implementation evaluation and controlling of activities. At the heart of the planning activities is segmentation, targeting of consumers/clients focusing and positioning. This activity occurs during marketing strategy formulation (Kotler and Keller, 2009).

At the functional or tactical level marketing mix planning is useful in helping to identify sources of competition in the business environment to push firms to develop specific programmes to address them. The marketing mix translates strategies developed in the marketing planning process into actionable programmes for implementation. Each element of the marketing mix adds up to create the unique positioning required in an institution. Kotler and Fox (1995) developed a 'mix' of elements to market education services. It is made up of the

“programme, price, place, promotion, process, physical facilities and people. This is similar to Ivy (2008) and Ivy and Naudé (2004) marketing mix variables for educational institutions. In establishing a theoretical framework, the strategic marketing planning process which recognises the marketing mix model is exploited in this study.

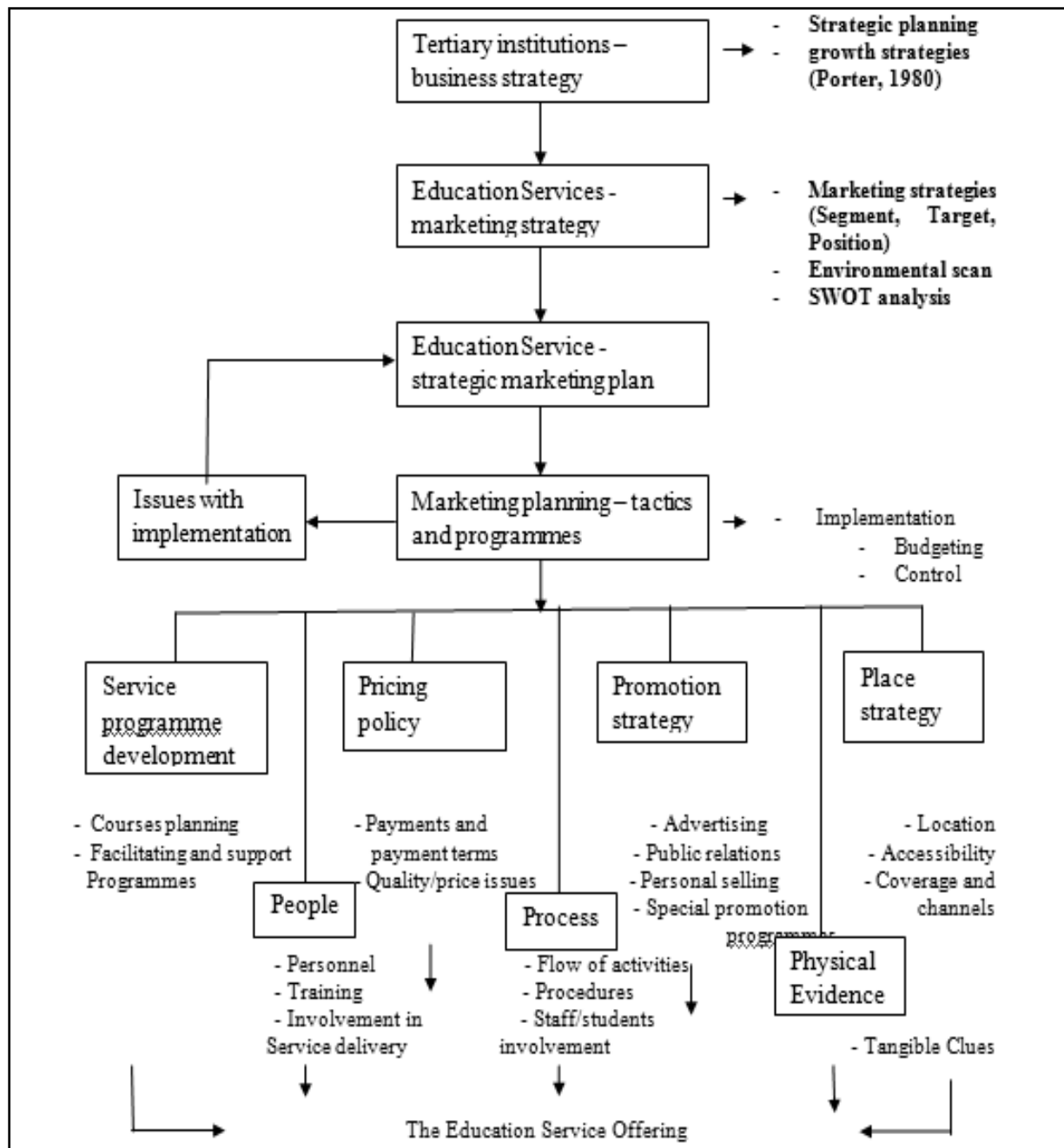
Marketing mix variables - the crux of strategic marketing planning

The service programme (service product) according to Kotler et al. (1995) calls for a review of academic courses and designing customer specific courses that meets industry needs. The programme of a tertiary institution could be used as a differentiating factor (Frumkin, Milankovic and Sadler, 2007; Kotler et al., 1995). Service programmes are intangible and experienced therefore its evaluation can only be done after the consumption (Bloom and Hayes, 2002). This factor makes it necessary to ‘make tangible the intangible service’ by emphasising any physical aspect (Gibbs and Knapp, 2002). In the case of tertiary institutions, factors like lecture materials and course handout could be focused on. Price according to Kotler (1999) and Eckel (2007) are institutions’ major source of revenue that must be given much attention. For private tertiary institutions, it is a major source of revenue. Various pricing factors are considered in the private institutions (Kotler and Fox, 1995). Place of service delivery is a factor that plays a major role in strategic planning and marketing of education services (Kotler et al., 1995; Ivy and Nandé, 2004). Place includes the websites for the institution, location convenience and accessibility (Maringe, 2006). Promotion is about communication with stakeholders, reputation and image building activities which are usually captured in advertising (internet, print, audio or video), public relations, personal selling and special education promotion activities to market the institution to the general public (Harris, 2009; Gibbs et al., 2002; Kotler, 1999). Processes basically are the institutions main business procedures which Kotler and Fox (1995) argue that it affects all facets of the marketing mix variables for education services. In this regard, quality checks and balances to maintain the status quo in the service delivery is important (as emphasized by Sallis, 2002). The people in the education marketing mix play an important role since faculty, administrative staff and students (both old and new) form part of this element. The fact that services are ‘produced and consumed simultaneously’ by ‘people’ and quality depends on their actions makes it the bottom line that must be matched. Marketing planning for education services should pay attention to this element given that it is the defining factor that could propel and promote the service itself. Wright (1999) has called for adequate training and equipping for staff of education services to positively reflect on other aspects of the marketing mix variables. The physical evidence or facilities are the tangible aspect of the education service (Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2012; Lovelock and Wirtz, 2013). This plays a major role in tertiary education in view of the fact that it captures all physical representation of the institution.

Kotler et al. (2002) suggest that this is the vital clue or hint about what to expect and it is an image or identity factor. It consists of all physical representation like buildings, furniture, facilities, brochure and so forth. The marketing mix acts as a strategic model that facilitates the strategic marketing and management process for tertiary education institutions.

For the purpose of this paper a variation of strategic marketing planning process and Kotler and Fox's (1995) marketing mix for education services is adopted as the strategic framework for marketing education services.

Figure 1: A variation of strategic marketing process and marketing mix for Education Services (extension of Kotler and Fox, 1995)



The framework begins with strategic planning (Kotler and Keller, 2009) of the institution that leads to a business strategy development. The business strategy development may involve deciding on which course of generic growth strategy to adopt (Ansoff's growth strategies). Should the institution penetrate the market with existing programmes or develop new programmes? Is diversification into new programmes an option or the institution will look to new markets with current programmes?

These are issues that must be addressed. The marketing strategy calls for segmentation, of student groups (markets) and selecting a specific target market. The needs and wants of this target group will be tailored into providing core programmes for positioning activities. To determine the factors shaping primary demand in the country, the environmental scanning of the economic, socio – cultural, demographic, political/legal and technological issues provide the necessary answers (Kotler and Keller, 2009). The micro factors which affect the education industry like the competitors, customers, and the current market situation (Strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) are determined to help with market plan policy development. The 7P's for marketing education services by Kotler and Fox (1995) exemplifies the policies that must be developed under each mix variable. The implementation of such a plan calls for scheduling for personnel needed, projections, budgeting to determine the implementation cost involved, timing to implement, tracking, controlling and evaluation is put into action. The question that needs to be addressed is that are private tertiary institutions following such a plan especially in a developing country like Ghana?

Education service in Ghana

The Ghanaian education system broadly is designed to achieve education for all to help in economic development and the nation as a whole. Azeem (2010) and Acheampong et al. (2007) based on reforms since the 1961, 1980's and 2000, laws and Acts initiated to bring education to all added that these changes ensured that every child had access to higher level academic training. This resulted in the expansion of all levels of education and the number of intake in institutions.

Table 1 shows the rapid expansion of access to education after independence to date in the public (government assisted) institutions and from the figures one can conclude that measures to increase access have had significant results. The tertiary sector that is, teacher training, technical and universities have had significant increases in schools and students intake.

Table 1: Ghana: Rapid expansion of access to Education after independence

| | 1951 | | 1966 | | 2013 | |
|------------------|---------|----------|---------|-----------|---------|------------|
| | Schools | Students | Schools | Students | Schools | Students |
| Primary | 1,083 | 153,360 | 8,144 | 1,137,495 | 12,130 | 1.3million |
| Middle | 539 | 66,175 | 2,277 | 267,434 | 5450 | 489,000 |
| Secondary | 13 | 5,033 | 105 | 42,111 | 503 | 107,600 |
| Teacher Training | 22 | 1,916 | 83 | 15,144 | 21 | 11,300 |
| Technical | 5 | 622 | 11 | 4,956 | 18 | 21280 |
| University | 2 | 208 | 3 | 4,291 | 5 | 5,600 |

Source: Hayford (1988), updated with additional data for 2013.

The government of Ghana and education policymakers have continuously reviewed and made significant changes to enhance and promote institutions to better provide needed quality services and performance. Currently, Ghana's educational system operates the nine (9) years primary and junior high schooling, three (3) years of senior high schooling, four (4) years tertiary education with a variation of three (3) years for polytechnics and vocation training, six (6) and seven (7) years for the sciences and law programmes. Ghana's major challenge with providing education service is the lack of enough funds for infrastructure, needed systems and logistics. Though some measures are constantly being visited and applied, the question of fully funding basic education, partially funding senior high schools and tertiary education have been a challenge. One of the main goals of the 1987 and 2007 Education Reform in Ghana was to bring in more private sector participation in providing education services (Adu, 2009; Azeem, 2010). And policies and Acts were promulgated to pave the way and facilitate such moves. Tax exemptions were put on education materials and various programmes encouraged private sector participation. It opened the doors for foreign tertiary institutions to come to Ghana. As a result, enrolment in tertiary institutions multiplied. Student admissions in private universities between 1999 and 2006 went up to 118,000 (Ghana Government, 2007).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The approach for this study involved focusing on a specific tertiary institution hence the choice of a case study method. This method is particularly important in this study because it provided a real case situation. The case study gave the researcher the opportunity to holistically examine the process employed in the college. The choice of a private tertiary institute was based on three factors. The first is that the institute should be more than 10 years old and privately owned. It should be located in Accra the capital of Ghana where a number of tertiary institutions are located. And finally it should run both undergraduate and professional courses. This led to

five institutions and a convenient sampling was used to select the case institution – Zenith University College.

Zenith University College is a private tertiary institution established in 2001 with a mandate to provide higher education that brings out entrepreneurial abilities of students while promoting academic research in collaboration with industry. The college offers flexible higher education opportunities for workers and students who want to pursue professional and undergraduate courses.

Sampling

Based on the objectives of the study the management staffs of the college were deemed to have much information concerning strategic decisions and its implementation in the institution. The registrar identified 25 staffs who were deemed to be in the position to address the research objectives and respond to the questionnaire. The staffs were mainly from the general office, academic affairs, registrar's office and public relations. Using the convenient sampling method, questionnaires were administered to the sample size of 25 respondents who were selected due to their functions in the College.

The questionnaire was developed using similar studies as point of reference and to suit the Ghanaian situation (Naudé and Ivy, 1999). The reliability of the questionnaires used in the survey were established (Cronbach alpha value $> .7$), however to double check its applicability the researcher undertook pilot testing after which minor errors were corrected. Out of the 25 questionnaires given out all (100%) were received. Of that number 40% (10) were females and 60% (15) males. The research inquired of their work experience to determine if they qualify to address the research objectives and 24% (6) had worked with the college for more than two years, 32% (8) for 3-5 years, 44% (11) had been associated with the college for more than five years and none had worked for less than two years.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results show that 24% (6) of the respondents hold a Bachelor's degree, 32% (8) had a Master's degree, 20% (5) held professional qualification (Chartered Accountants and Marketers); 12% (3) had both Bachelor's degree and professional qualifications and 12% (3) had other higher National diploma. This indicates that there are a large number of qualified personnel in management position.

Marketing orientation

In view of the fact that private tertiary institutions must keep their integrity while marketing their services, the study sought to find the marketing orientation of the institution (Kotler and Keller,

2009; Kotler, 1991). From the responses, all the respondents (100%) agreed that the university is market focused. As to the question of having a strategic marketing plan, all the respondents (24 = 96%) answered on a positive note (Yes) except 1 (4%) who did not know of the existence of a document. And this is in agreement with Kotler and Fox (1985) and Port et al. (1989) call for a strategic plan to manage tertiary (higher education) institutions. Per the responses all respondents 100% (25) agree that the management board takes strategic decisions for the university.

The use of strategic marketing plans

The questions on the use of strategic marketing plans revealed the following results:

Table 2: The use of strategic marketing plans.

| | Yes | | No | | Don't know | | Total |
|---|----------------|-----|-----------|-----|------------|-----|-------|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | |
| Does the university use strategic marketing plans? | 22 | 88% | 0 | 0% | 3 | 12% | 25 |
| Does a long term (5 to 10 years) strategic marketing plan exist? | 19 | 76% | 3 | 12% | 3 | 12% | 25 |
| Does the university have a short term (1 to 3years) strategic marketing plan? | 22 | 88% | 1 | 4% | 2 | 8% | 25 |
| Does every department have their own short term strategic marketing plans? | 16 | 64% | 6 | 24% | 3 | 12% | 25 |
| Is strategic marketing a priority? | 22 | 88% | 0 | 0% | 3 | 12% | 25 |
| Mean | 20.2 | | | | | | |
| Standard deviation | 2.68328 | | | | | | |

From table 2, 88% (22) said the company uses a strategic marketing plan with 12% (3) who did not know. The university uses both long and short term plans as per table 2 and 64% (16) said the departments have their own short term plans as against 24% (6) who answered in the

negative and 12% (3) who did not know. This is consistent with the literature on strategic management (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Table 3 tried to establish if strategic marketing plans determine annual budget of the university and a total of 80% (20) answered in the positive (strongly agree 28% - 7, and agree 52% - 13). As per table 3, the mean value is 5 with a standard deviation of 4.6.

Table 3: Strategic Marketing Plan Determines Annual Budget of the institution

| | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative Percentage | (x-mean) | (x-mean) ² |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 7 | 28.00 | 28.00 | 2 | 4 |
| Agree | 13 | 52.00 | 80.00 | 8.00 | 64 |
| Neutral | 3 | 12.00 | 92.00 | -2.00 | 4 |
| Disagree | 2 | 8.00 | 100.00 | -3.00 | 9 |
| Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0.00 | 100.00 | -5.00 | 25 |
| Total | 25 | 100 | | 0 | 81 |
| Mean | 5 | | | Mean Variance | 21.20 |
| | | | | Stand Deviation | 4.60 |

The findings indicate that of the 25 respondents, 12% (3) said the institution had a marketing department and 88% (22) answered in the negative. Further probing revealed that the public relations department also functions as a marketing department with qualified marketers but it is not labelled as such. The institution recognises the need and use of a strategic marketing plan but there are no particular departments managing the marketing function (Port et al., 1989).

The marketing mix and the institution

When respondents were asked about the relevance of marketing and strategic marketing to the institution, 84% (21) thought it was highly relevant and 16% (4) said it was relevant.

The study inquired whether the respondents had knowledge of the marketing mix variables. The analyzed data shows that 88% (22) were familiar with and had adequate knowledge of the marketing mix variables used by the institution while 12% (3) were familiar with it but did not have adequate knowledge. The results indicate that majority of respondents have knowledge of the marketing mix used by the institution. The research sought to find out the marketing mix element function in the university. Of the seven marketing mix variables for

education services (product – programme, pricing, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence), 60% (15) of the respondent agreed that the promotion, people, pricing, programme and process are constantly monitored and changed. 24% (6) mentioned promotion, pricing, people, physical evidence and programme in this order while 16% (4) mentioned promotion, programme and pricing. To the question of whether the marketing mix variables used have an effect on the institutions' performance, 56% (14) 'strongly agree', that it has an effect on the institution, 24% (6) 'agree', 8% (2) 'disagree', another 8% (2) ticked neutral and 4% (1) strongly disagree. From the responses the institution has not integrated its marketing function as per Kotler and Fox (1995). Integration calls for the use of all seven marketing mix variables concurrently in a holistic manner.

Tools used in marketing education services

The study inquired from the respondents the type of market tools used by the university in increasing student inflow. The results revealed that promotions specifically advertising played a major role. From the findings 48% (12) said promotions, 24% (6) indicated the programmes offered (products) 12% (3) said the prices (tuition), 8% (2) said the people (human resource) and another 8% (2) referred to the place (location). The factors that influence the choice of marketing technique (s) were also inquired and the respondents were made to pick two items from the following list:

- Target group, target market and the desired coverage by the university - A.
- Reputation of Zenith University College - B.
- The type of product/services provided by the university, thus the programmes offered – C.
- Competition and competitors strategies – D.
- Price, less expensive – E.
- Flexibility and strategic location – F.
- Technology advantage and internet presence – G.
- Human resource advantage – H.

This list was developed from an in-depth discussion with the staff at the Public relations department. Out of the 25 respondents, 32% (8) indicated the 'target group, target market and the desired coverage by the university and the price (A and E), and 24% (6) the A and C. In addition 24% (6) marked A and F and 16% (4) A and G with only 4% (1) indicating C and F. Further, the respondents were requested to indicate the marketing technique that is highly used by the institution. Majority that is 48% (12) said advertising in the media, another 24% (6) said

posters were highly used and 20% (5) indicated the internet presence and 8% (2) referred to other means - word-of-mouth communication.

The effect of marketing education services

The extent to which using strategic marketing planning and tools affect the performance of the institution was inquired of the respondents. Majority 56% (14) of the respondents were of the view that marketing education services fairly affects the performance of the university while 40% (10) thinks that it has a high effect on university performance. 4% (1) of the respondents said marketing education services had no effect on the university's performance. This follows studies by Ivy and Naudé, 2004, 1999; Maringe, 2004; Maringe and Foskett, 2002; Ivy, 2001 that posits that strategic planning and marketing tools influence educational services performance.

CONCLUSION

The influx of private and international higher education services in Ghana have attracted the attention of many in recent times. This is leading to tertiary education institution paying more attention to marketing of their activities. Though some expert would not encourage marketing of education services, it is becoming a part of their planning process. The case specific examination of the strategic marketing activities of a private tertiary institution provides an avenue to peep into a real situation. The study revealed that the institution is market oriented and follows a strategic marketing planning process. This is the basis for the institutions' budgeting activities. Based on the strategic marketing plan, the university derives a marketing plan which it uses in managing and promoting its activities (Kotler et al., 1995; Port et al., 1989). Zenith University College uses both long and short term plans which are developed by the management board in conjunction with other members of the institution (deans). The question of marketing mix variables used revealed interesting results with no group of respondents picking all seven mix variables for marketing education services. For an organisation to effectively market its activities it must holistically use and balance the mix variables to its advantage if the institution should propel its activities to overcome challenges in the industry. The implication of this study is that institutions must re-examine the strategic marketing process and practice to ensure that the right procedures are followed and utilised to benefit education services if they must overcome the intense competition. The main limitation of this study is that it focuses on just one case. The next level of this study would compare the marketing of education services in the public and private tertiary institutions in Ghana. Further, the extent to which marketing is effectively used will be studied.

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