

MARKETING APPROACHES USED BY PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BOTSWANA

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Abstract

Private schools in Botswana constitute 4.6 percent of all secondary students enrolled in secondary school nationwide which is far much lower than average numbers elsewhere. This results in high competition among the private schools. The main objective aim of the study was to explore the types of marketing approaches adopted by private secondary schools and the impact they had in these schools as well as the private school education sector in Botswana. A descriptive research using qualitative and quantitative data was used. The research targeted principles of eight randomly selected schools and 260 parents as respondents from Gaborone since it had the highest concentration of private schools. The results indicated acknowledgment of marketing need by private schools, a high use of resource based marketing approach, with minimum use of competitive approach. The marketing approach denoted a product orientation rather than marketing orientation in most private schools.

Keywords: Marketing approaches, private schools, resource based marketing, competitive based marketing

INTRODUCTION

Marketing in any organisation is vital in a competitive environment. Being profit oriented, private schools compete against the government funded schools as well as amongst themselves. Private schooling market in developing countries is large and fast growing. According to Michael, (1990) educational systems in many countries are currently receiving greater attention

from policy makers. This has led to growth in enrolment as well as entry of private players. In Africa, the private sector has been growing with more than double enrolment from 62 million to 149 million students in primary schools (Kajunju 2015). Globally 58million students were enrolled in private schools by 2012. Recent estimates put private school enrolment at 28 percent in rural India at 65 percent in urban India and at 35 percent in rural Pakistan (Pratham, 2012, Bau, 2015, Desai et al., 2008, Andrabi et al., 2008). According to World Bank report, Sub-Saharan Africa has similar numbers with 10-54 percent of primary school children enrolled in private schools, (World Bank Development Indicators, 2014). In Botswana however private schools are few though the number is growing and most of the parents enrol their children in government schools especially in secondary level.

Problem Statement

According to Mguni (2013), the private schools in Botswana constitute only 46 private schools or 16.1% and only 4.6 percent of the students are enrolled in private secondary schools nationwide. This suggests that the majority of students are enrolled in government secondary schools leaving a limited number to be enrolled in private schools, leading to the creation of a market where these private secondary schools compete for a small remaining number of students for enrolment in their schools.

Parents in general search for the “best” possible education for their children, and private education sector like any business would be expected to provide better services than government which is non-profit oriented. It therefore begs the question, why the low enrolment in private secondary schools? What approach does the private sector use to market their services and how effective is it? Could this explain the dismal attraction to parents?

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to explore the types of marketing approaches adopted by private secondary schools and the impact they had in these schools in Gaborone, Botswana.

Specific objectives of the study were:

- To explore types of marketing approaches currently practiced by private secondary schools in marketing themselves,
- To determine the factors that influenced the adoption of a particular approach to marketing by private schools,
- Effects of the approach on customer attraction.

Importance of School marketing

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 (Sferleef *al.* 2012, Okplatka, 2002), and there is a widely held view that principals are expected to incorporate marketing techniques and strategies into their roles in order to effectively cope with the new school environment, (Okplatka, 2002). The privatization of education as suggested by Mok *et al.*, (2009) and Svensson, (2002) can be seen as having an impact with positive and negative effects. However, one fact must be noted: the recent massive expansion of education through private provision has introduced new horizons in marketing educational institutions. No policies, principles or regulatory controls exist for the advertisement and promotion of education; consequently a 'market approach' is practiced (Alam, 2008).

According to Dearden *et al.*, (2002), there is sound evidence that private schooling raises overall academic achievements. 'A caveat to this finding, though, is that on average, university students who had attended a private school are, *ceteris paribus*, less likely than similar students from state schools to obtain a good degree (Naylor and Smith, 2004; Smith and Naylor, 2001, 2005). Nonetheless, recent work also showed that those educated at private schools are significantly more likely to go on to postgraduate education (Machin and Murphy, 2010). Ewert (2013) stated that parents might choose to send their children to private schools for a variety of reasons, including the availability of academic programs and extracurricular activities, religious reasons, dissatisfaction with the local public schools, and school characteristics such as class size and student-teacher ratios.

According to Sedisa (2008) it has been shown that in Botswana senior secondary education is not accessible to all who need it and qualify for admission into senior secondary schools. One critical reason for this is the lack of universalization of the entire secondary education is limited by financial resources on the part of the Government of Botswana. This therefore creates an opportunity for private sector in education.

There are diverse reasons that drive parents to choose private schools (Ewert, 2013). It is therefore important for schools to know and communicate to parents and prospective parents their offerings and to learn how to best serve their clients (parents and students), (Losike-Sedimo, 2011). Therefore to compete and thrive in the market place, it is imperative for private secondary schools to know how to market their institutions in order to differentiate and position them favorably in the education market. Many schools however embrace core academic practices and organizational efforts in areas such as symbolic presentation (uniforms, physical plant, etc.), and brand preservation rather than curricular innovation and marketing which may serve as more attractive opportunities for differentiation (Lubienski, 2005). It has been

postulated that private schools in Botswana typically spend less per student than government schools, largely because government school teachers earned about five times as much as private school teachers (Andrabi et al., 2010).

Secondary Education in Botswana

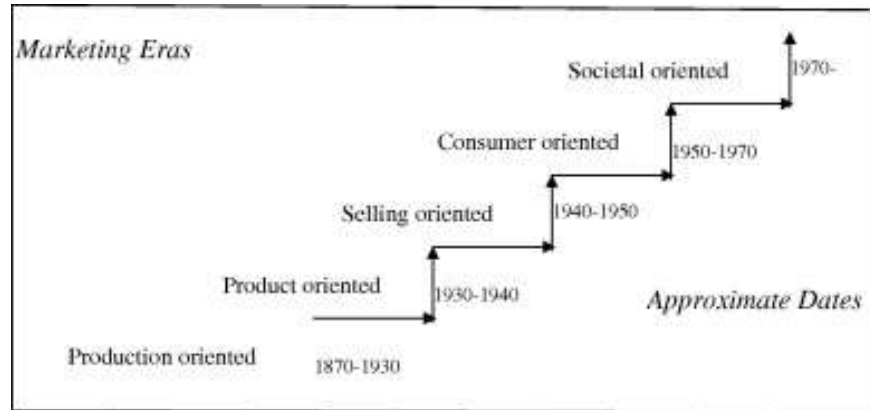
According to the Botswana Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP 2015-2020), government schools constitute 84.0 percent of all secondary schools in the country, with only 16.0 percent being private schools. According to the Statistics Botswana Annual Report (2013/2014), there were 44 private secondary schools by year 2012 from 39 in 2011, showing an increase of 5 schools, with private schools increasing by 10.0 percent from 40 in 2008 to 44 in 2012. Private schools are gradually increasing in number in Botswana, leading to intensified competition for student enrolment. The South East region where the capital city of Gaborone is found has the highest percentage of private schools at 31.8%.

Marketing orientations

The marketing concept has become the creed not just within the marketing discipline but also in the popular exhortation of modern culture as a whole: Know and Serve Thy Customer (Firat, and Dholakia, 2006). The marketing concept have evolved over time in terms of management philosophies within the organisations Marketing orientation now infuses the discourse, the way people relate to their customers, employers, colleagues and how they think about themselves. (Wilkie, and Moore, 2003) Marketing's evolution can be divided into several distinct eras: manufacturing, product, selling, customer, and societal-marketing. Each of these is often referred to as a marketing management philosophy (MMP). For example, the manufacturing and product era began in the 1880s and continued through to the 30s. Then came the next era when companies got closer to distribution channels and markets. Customer orientation began in the 40s when companies realized they had to consider customers' needs and expectations when developing products, and the societal era started in the 70s when it was recognized that organizations ought to really consider the welfare of customers and society more broadly (Tosun, Okumus, and Fyall 2008).

According to (Tosun, Okumus, and Fyall 2008) internal characteristics of an organisation can influence the application of different MMPs, which in practice affect the marketing approaches adopted by the organisation. Thus to achieve a higher level of consumer and societal orientations, organisation need to apply consumer and societal approaches. It is thus safe to presuppose that marketing approach applied by the organisation is a reflection of the marketing management philosophy (MMP).

Figure 1. Marketing Eras



Source: Greyer 1997, Keith 1960, Morgan 1996

Marketing Approaches

There is a variety of marketing approaches that have emerged such as service oriented: Gronroos, (1978): stakeholder approach: Miller and Lewis, (1991): relationship marketing: Morgan and Hunt, (1999): contingency approach: Zeithaml, et al, (1988): gap analysis approach: Brown and Swartz, (1989): competition approach theory: Barney, (1986) all which could help private schools competitively market themselves and gain a competitive advantage, better position and differentiation in the market.

Ivasantikarn (2003) carried out an exploratory study meant to research marketing techniques in student recruitment in private vocational schools in Thailand. It attempted to discover whether private vocational schools engaged in marketing activities to facilitate their enrolment and to what extent they were using them. The study found that indeed vocational schools engaged in marketing activities to facilitate their enrolment. Moreover, Hesketh and Knight (1998,) suggested that parents need information (although they may not be able to decode and use it all) and schools have an interest in managing this information. Schools in England for an example are required by government to provide parents with copious amounts of information in school prospectuses, which are up-dated annually. However, an earlier article by (Knight, 1992) showed that in 1991 schools often failed to provide what the law required and that much of the information appeared to be inaccessible to parents lacking middle class cultural capital.

Few studies examined the strategic actions of school leaders who work in a competitive environment (Jennings, 2010; Holme, Carkhum, and Rangel, 2012). Schools' positions in the marketplace, based on enrolment, funding, and performance, as well as their perceptions of competition affect the ways in which school leaders respond (Jennings, 2010; Ladd and Fiske,

2003). “In a standard Hotelling model, schools respond to competition by product differentiating, leading net student welfare to increase,” (Eaton and Lipsey, 1975).

There is some empirical evidence from commercial and service sector organizations of the positive impact of a market orientation on organizations (Cervera, Molla, & Sanchez, 2001; Guo, 2002). The past research on market orientation found that it is positively correlated with innovation; business profitability; increased sales; high perceptions of service quality, excellence; employees’ high levels of satisfaction and commitment; customers’ satisfaction and brand loyalty. However, there is less conclusive evidence for the relationship between market orientation and performance, but some researchers claimed that market orientation improves outcomes for service organizations (Pulendran, Speed, and Widing, 2003).

Private schools face market pressures leading to school leaders adopting several strategies like academic or curricular strategies (Goldhaber and Eide, 2003), which according to Davis (2013) and also Kasman and Loeb, (2013), there is little evidence to date that competition actually elicits this type of response. Moreover, school leaders might change the existing allocation of resources (Arsen and Ni, 2012; Ghosh, 2011) to improve operational efficiency, or they might differentiate their products, engaging in monopolistic competition (Chamberlin, 1933; Robinson, 1933) by developing strategies that serve to exploit their uniqueness, protect their market share, and buffer themselves from competition. According to Lubienski, (2007) schools may also respond to competition by engaging in promotional activities, such as marketing leaders.

According to Stimac and LekoŠimić (2012) beneficiaries of the education service are constantly testing and evaluating its quality. As such it was asserted by LekoŠimić and Čarapić, (2008) that in order to create a competitive market position it is necessary for an educational institution to adopt the right marketing approach and philosophy and create its strategy and activities in terms of market performance. Private schools adopt diverse approaches with different results, some of these approaches include:-

Resources based approach factors- Private secondary schools’ resources could be one of the factors that influence adoption of the types of marketing approaches. According to the ISCA (2008), parental choice factors include the school facilities, educators, a nurturing and caring environment, small class size and discipline. Robinson (2008), Denessen *et al.* (2005) and Foskett and Hemsley- Brown (2001) identified academic standards, discipline and small classes, traditions, subject choices, facilities as well as the school principal are amongst the top 20 factors identified by parents. According to Gorard (1999), the common reasons for choice of parents are academic reasons, location of the school, and management style of the school, discipline as well as security factors. To compete with state education, private schools deliver

consumption services superior to those available in government schools or elsewhere: sports facilities and tuition, music and other cultural goods, which are tied with the academic education package, (Green et al, 2010). School finance/capital may be a resource factor that could influence the type of marketing approach a private secondary school adopts in making it attractive to the external environment. They influence Human resources (educators), Technological advancements which were highlighted by Connor (2004), Kalenskaya et al. (2013) and Uchendu et al (2015), as vital for competition and customer attraction

Competitive approach factors---Competition approach involves understanding of the competitive environment of operation. Schools develop their own responses to competition after they scan the market for the strategic actions of other schools (Woods et al., 1998). A school's awareness of its status in the market hierarchy informs its strategic actions in response to competition; schools at the bottom may feel they are unable to compete, whereas schools at the top might feel they are "above the fray" (Ladd and Fiske, 2003). Identifying the private school's strengths and weaknesses is vital as well market analysis to identify opportunities and threats (Jayachandran et al (1999).

Gap analysis approach factors---Parasuraman, et, al. erry (1985), described a gap as a divergence between either, an expected service and a perceived (delivered) service from a customer's point of view or the difference between a service provider's specified level of service and the service actually delivered. Overall, measurement can be made objectively in terms of "what the consumer receives as a result of his interactions with a service firm" (Lewis and Klein 1986). Therefore in terms of marketing in private schools the gap would be the difference between the service that was delivered and the students' or consumers' perceptions of the relevance of that service in their lives, for instance, to their careers. Headley and Choi (1992) pointed out, "To improve service quality, one must listen to the customer since quality is ultimately defined by customer perceptions".

Branding equity-----According to Di Cuia, (2003), branding, essentially, is a customer's perception of your product or service; and dealing with perception is a challenging and delicate task. It's a collection of experiences, feelings and expectations one has over a product. Further, branding ought to be something that represents a meaningful connection to the customer, is culturally relevant and boasts smart creativity, thereby increasing the visual awareness of your brand. According to Diaconu and Pandelica (2011), branding is an abstract concept associated with a company, product, service, and the clients, staff, partners, and investors reflected in a certain manner. This abstract concept, is associated with thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences, beliefs, attitudes resulting from stakeholders experience with the brand, which is then materialized in information and expectations associated with a company, product

or service. A strong brand is one of the most valuable intangible goods for any company (Keller, 2008; Keller and Lehmann, 2003) as stated by Diaconu and Pandelica (2011).

A private school's brand thus is their customer promise, business values, personality, the way they communicate to their customers. It's in the way they package their educational services. Therefore communicating the school's brand clearly and honestly to customers will spread confidence and goodwill. It is a badge of trust that set the private school apart from competitors and gives a lasting competitive edge.

Why Marketing Approach

The right marketing builds the school's brand. This informs customers exactly what to expect and guides the school on delivering on those promises. The result leads to customers coming back again and again. For that reason a good brand identity attracts new customers by stressing the differences between the school and the competitors. This is critical when operating in a highly competitive or fast moving market where it is difficult to differentiate yourself on product features alone. The power of a strong brand is such that it can lift a single firm or product above others to become something truly memorable.

According to Diaconu and Pandelica (2011), in a market that has become competitive, education institutions must increasingly consider branding to build a successful image both among prospective students and among employers to maintain an advantageous position on the market. Little (2004), in Diaconu and Pandelica (2011), suggested that the notion of customer value is closely related to the service brand and together lead to the increase of the organization's value. According to Blythe (2013) the key concept of marketing is customer centrality and to realise this goal, service providers have to understand consumer decision-making: how consumers choose between different offerings and how they experience and evaluate the service offerings. Students and parents place more emphasis on value, owing to the rapidly escalating prices of private education. They ask for their money's worth and reasons why they should pay for a private education over the less expensive public one. According to Kalenskaya et al. (2013), education planners, need to understand the behavior of the target population, and the criteria they use to exercise choice.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

A central premise of the resource-based view is that firms compete on the basis of their resources and capabilities (Peteraf and Bergen, 2003). Most resource-based view researchers choose to "look within the enterprise and down to the factor market conditions that the enterprise must contend with, to search for some possible causes of sustainable competitive

advantages” holding constant all external environmental factors (Peteraf and Barney, 2003). This inward-looking approach has proven to be both influential and useful for the analysis of many strategic issues (Foss and Knudsen, 2003), among which the conditions for sustained competitive advantage and diversification.

Porter (1991) stated that, “resources are not valuable in and of themselves, but they allow firms to perform activities that create advantages in particular markets. The competitive value of resources can be enhanced or eliminated by changes in technology, competitor behaviour, or buyer needs which an inward focus on resources will overlook”. Similarly, Levinthal and Myatt (1994) argued that, “many organizational capabilities emerge, are refined, or decay as a result of, or an absence of, product market activity”. Priem and Butler (2001, a and b) concluded that the resource-based view has contributed very little to the explanation or prediction of competitive advantage and recommend that scholars address core connections between resources and the environment because, while resources represent what can be done, the competitive environment represents what must be done to compete effectively in satisfying customer needs.

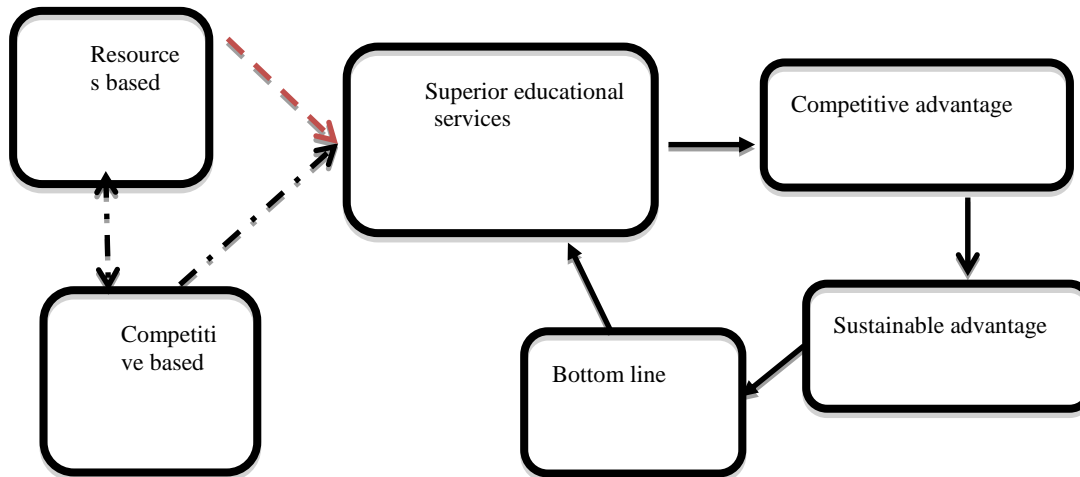
In this paper the researchers combine the resource based theory (Peteraf and Bergen, 2003) and the competition approach theory: Barney, (1986). The researchers took into consideration, the nature of education, (the parents’ are quasi consumers of services, and that education is a social service). A direct competitive approach is important as noted by Lubienski, (2007) however; the resources of the school play a vital role in school marketing. The use of resource based approach without looking at the market limits attraction of students due to lack of information as noted by Diaconu and Pandelica (2011). Consequently, the researchers broadened the resource-based perspective to link the resources and competition. We postulate that a use of resource based approach leads to improved services, while the competition approach assist in disseminating information of the superior services to the market thus attracting more customers. The combined approach would resort well-resourced competitive school with superior services and thus a competitive advantage. A sustained competitive advantage would result to a profitable school with the profits being ploughed back to improve resources for services and marketing, as indicated in Figure 2.

It should be noted that this is not the first attempt to extend the resource-based view. For instance, Oliver (1997) combined resource-based and institutional factors in her model of sustainable competitive advantage. Extending the resource-based view to analyse competitive behaviour, Tripsas (1997) studied how existing competences shaped responses to technological change and Peteraf and Bergen (2003) proposed a market-based and resource-based framework to identify direct and indirect competitors. Thus, bringing together the firm’s

resources and the competitive environment in a single framework could help to understand how resources contributed to performance (Priem and Butler, 2001, a and b) and how resources influenced competitive dynamics (Foss, 1998).

According to Bridoux (2004), in education, researchers have also measured competition primarily by its structure: the number of surrounding schools in a fixed geographic area or the number of students moving between schools. The focus on structure provides little understanding of firm strategy (Porter, 1980), except to suggest that firms may increase barriers to entry or differentiate their product to have a competitive edge. However, for private schools to compete, a school leader must recognize market pressures and respond accordingly (Ni and Arsen, 2010).

Figure 2. Theoretical model used in the study



This model assumes that:

The school's resources: include all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, school's attributes, information, knowledge, etc. which can be utilized by the school, to gain competitive advantage. It also assumes that parents want the best for their children and thus will enrol their students to the best performing school with best facilities, and a well-publicised impressive image. However these are limited as the competing schools utilise the same. It is therefore necessary to use competitive based marketing in an equal measure to differentiate your schools from the competitor and to attract more students. This competitiveness leads to a more superior offer of educational services.

Competitive sustainable advantage: is a result of superior differentiation in the market. Therefore competitive advantage for example, would be determined by the perceived benefits

gained by customers through the offered superior educational services. This leads to a sustainable advantage and profitability.

Bottom line: improved bottom-line leads to an attractiveness of the industry i.e. the private secondary schools. Although this may lead to higher competition, the result is innovations, better services, as well as more resources. Bottom line could be increased by the school's competitive and sustainable advantages resulting from superior educational services that came about as a result of the resources the school has and the understanding of its competitive environment.

It is cardinal to explore how private schools respond to market pressures and how schools' environment influences their marketing approaches. According to Ladd and Fiske (2003), a school's awareness of its status in the market hierarchy might inform its strategic actions in response to competition. "School leaders might change the existing allocation of resources," (Arsen and Ni, 2012; Ghosh, 2011) to improve operational efficiency, or they might differentiate their products, engaging in monopolistic competition (Chamberlin, 1933) by developing strategies to exploit their uniqueness, protect their market share, and buffer themselves from competition.

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory research used both the quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a trade-off between breadth and depth and between generalizability and targeting to specific populations. A quantitative approach was used to yield a representative and broadly generalizable information about the topic under study and a qualitative approach used to elicit more depth into the topic about beliefs of the competitive and social environment within which the private secondary schools operate. A total of 8 private schools were included in the study. Private secondary schools were randomly selected and these schools were those:

1. willing to participate in the study
2. that have been existing for at least 3 years or more
3. that were located in the Gaborone area
4. that were private secondary schools

Parents were selected using a convenience sampling method. The subjects were chosen because of their accessibility and proximity to the researcher. Therefore parents were intercepted as they dropped off or picked up their children in school. Parents selected were:

1. Whose students attended these private secondary schools
2. Only those willing to be part of the study
3. Of all ages

The researchers conducted face-face interviews with the school principals to allow the participants the maximum freedom to respond from within their lived experiences and also to permit the researcher to come up with follow up questions for more elaborations on earlier answers. This method helped to direct the researcher in generation of questions to the parent's respondents in terms of questions and answers needed for the research. To get the views of customers on how they chose the school, a semi-structured questionnaire was also used to collect data by intercepting 300 parents as they dropped or picked their children in school. The questionnaire tool used by the researcher was self-designed bases on parameters extracted from the model to help get a more targeted and focused information on the research questions.

The data on parents' responses was tabulated quantitatively to help understand the nature of marketing approaches, as well as determine the impacts in private secondary schools, while the qualitative data collected through interviews was analysed guided by the specific objectives of the study. The process of data analysis involved transcribing the interviews and extensively reading the transcripts to identify themes and develop a coding list or coding frame. Themes were then created and data was analysed with excerpts from the actual phrases used in specific textual segments.

FINDINGS

A total of 260 respondents materialised of which 61.5 percent were female while a total of 38.5 percent were male. The results show that the majority of respondents were between the ages of 31 to 40 at 43.5 percent, followed by respondents aged between 41 and 50 years old. 23.1 percent constituted respondents aged between 20 and 30 years and only about 0.8 percent of respondents aged above 50 years. As indicated by table 1 below.

Table 1: Gender and age of respondents

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Male	100	38.5
Female	160	61.5
Total	260	100.0
AGE OF RESPONDENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
20-30 years	60	23.1
31-40	113	43.5
41-50	80	30.8
Above 50	2	0.8
Can't reveal age	5	1.9
Total	260	100.0

Marketing approaches practiced

All the eight (8) school heads from the sampled schools revealed that the resources in their school had played a bigger role in marketing, and they emphasised the resources as a differentiation factor when marketing their schools, as indicated by the statements collated under derived from the interviews:

“Our school resources play a part in marketing our school; we mainly use them when we advertise our school, for example, our playgrounds, computer labs and our talented and qualified teachers.”

“We have resources that we use to attract parents to our school. We have enough classrooms for our students and our teachers are also qualified. Even our education product itself, is of excellent quality, so it attracts parents to our schools and even second generations are enrolled in our school.”

“We are growing as a school; we are building our school improving and increasing our school resources as we believe that they attract parents to enrol their children in our school. So the profit we make as a school is used to add resources.”

“Our school has not been known much because it has been hidden, but now our location has improved due to the new road that has been built, there are also plots being developed in the area as well as the constructed cemetery in the area. Our surrounding school environment has improved.”

School heads of 4 schools from the total of 8 sampled schools indicated that they identified a gap in the market and used it for tailoring their services. They however revealed that school fees played key role in market gap, and thus emphasised the fees as a differentiation factor when marketing their schools, as indicated by the statements collated under derived from the interviews:

“Our school mainly targets the middle class, we realised that school fees in some schools are high and the parents who take their students there are mainly employers. So we have decided to target the employees, the middle class and make our schools fees reasonable for them to afford.”

“We have decided to serve the middle class, however, we are open to any parent who wants to enrol their child/ren in our school, but our school fees are tailored mainly for the middle class.”

“Our students are mainly from middle class families because fees in our school are average and affordable compared to others. So parents who cannot afford to take their children to the really expensive school enrol them with us.”

Some of the school heads of the 8 sampled schools revealed that the relationships they have with their clients had played a bigger role in marketing, and they emphasised these relationships have given them a competitive advantage, positioned them favourable in the market as well as proven to be a differentiation factor when marketing their schools, as indicated by the statement collated under derived from the interviews:

“In our school, parents enrol their children. Once they have passed they enrol their siblings as they like the good quality of our education. We even get second generations; our past students enrol their children here as well. Our parents are loyal to our school.”

Competition among private schools

School heads of 5 schools considered their schools relatively new into the education sector and as such cited their school fees as a key factor in gaining a competitive advantage over other schools. Only one of the school heads mentioned the good quality of their education as having been an important factor in marketing their school as indicated by the following collated statement, while two emphasised the good image and reputation associated with their schools as a vital role in their school marketing, as indicated by the following excerpts:

*“Our education product itself is of **excellent quality**, so it attracts parents to our schools and even second generations are enrolled in our school.”*

*“Our school **reputation and image** is well known in the city. Parents enrol their children here mainly because of that as well as other factors. But they like being associated with our school.”*

*“**School Image and Reputation** are important; schools that are well known tend to attract students.”*

However all the 8 sampled schools revealed that these resources played a bigger role in marketing, and they emphasised the resources as a differentiation factor when marketing their schools, as indicated by the statements collated under derived from the interviews:

“We have qualified teachers in our school and our education is of excellent quality, so we mostly get students based on that.”

“Our school has enough classrooms to accommodate our students and any new ones enrolling in our school.”

The parents were asked about the effectiveness of the marketing approaches used in their schools in attracting them to enrol their children. The results indicated dismal effectiveness with a mean of 1.34 (0.48). Promotions highlighting the fees, and the quality of service were more attractive to parents with a mean of 3.46(0.86) and 3.24(0.95) respectively. Emphasis on social

responsibility and community services were the least effective with 2.24(1.18) and 2.28(1.18) respectively.

Marketing mix employed by private secondary schools

Table 2: Marketing mix

N=260	Mean	Std. Deviation.
Do you think the way the school markets itself is effective in attracting potential consumers and retaining current consumers?	1.34	.475
Advertisement highlighting past school open and fun days	2.74	1.103
Advertisement highlighting past school foundations and past students	2.56	1.099
Publicity highlighting past success	2.77	1.281
Publicity highlighting past community engagements	2.24	1.183
Publicity highlighting past community social responsibility	2.28	1.189
Promotion of school highlighting the fees	3.46	.855
Promotion of school highlighting the quality services provided	3.24	.952

Table 3: Reasons for choosing a school by parents

Reasons for choosing a school by parents	Mean	Std. Deviation
There are sufficient facilities such as computer equipment, recreational equipment, books, infrastructure etc.	3.89	0.968
The school environment is safe	4.17	1.02
There are sufficient professional classrooms such as computer classrooms, music classrooms, science laboratory, etc.	3.96	1.05
The school environment is attractive and appealing	3.85	1.07
Teachers are qualified and have professional knowledge on what they teach.	4.27	0.84
Teachers can adopt appropriate teaching techniques when teaching.	4.08	0.87
Teachers are enthusiastic about education and are devoted to it.	3.88	1.19
The school provides partially free tuition to poor students.	2.55	1.44
The tuition and miscellaneous fees of the school are reasonable.	3.79	1.15
Parents know clearly the details and usages of paid fees.	3.54	1.05
The school can offer students lunches at a competitive price.	2.69	1.35
The school plans routes for students who come to school, and there are guide people to assist them.	2.23	1.40
The school plans areas for parents to pick up their children.	3.85	1.16
The school's location is easily accessible	3.52	1.16

There is sufficient space for activities such as playground, activity center, etc.	4.24	0.92
The school prints magazines or papers to report or convey its ideals.	3.04	1.44
The latest news is broadcast by the school at any time.	3.53	1.75
The school broadcasts the achievements of students after they participated in activities or competitions	3.70	1.23
The school holds a teaching demonstration day or PTA for parents to attend so as to achieve mutual communication with them.	3.48	1.29
The school uses mass media to let others know more about the school.	3.67	1.31

Table 3...

The availability of professional teachers with a mean 4.27(084) played a key role in parents choosing the school, followed by sufficient equipment for extra curriculum activities such as sports 4.24(0.92), and a safe environment for the children 4.17(1.02). The ability of teachers to adopt new teaching methodology and skills was also considered to be important with a mean of 4.08(0.87). The results also indicates that the publicity of school indicating its achievements, and generally showing the achievements of the school was considered to be important by parents with an average mean of 3.6, while competitive pricing was not considered as important with a mean of 2.5(1.44).

The schools used brochures, advertisers, followed by newspapers to advertise, with an average mean of 2.75 and the least used media was social media, radio and TV as indicated by the table below:.

Table 4: Media used by schools for marketing purposes

Media used	Mean	Std. Deviation
Newspapers	2.75	1.191
Radio	1.52	.854
Tv	1.43	.740
Magazines	1.86	.916
Advertiser	2.76	2.170
Brochures	2.80	1.226
Knock and drop	2.02	1.314
Billboard	2.03	1.135
Face book	2.16	1.357
Twitter	1.40	.901
Linkedin	1.40	.951
SMS	1.70	1.122

A test of the use of combination of using the resource approach and competitive marketing by private schools indicated that it would lead to a competitive advantage.

Table 3: ANOVA test of the combination of approaches

Source	df	SS	MS	F	P
Between Groups	5	68.269	13.654	22.076	.000
Within Groups	253	156.480	.618		
Total	258	224.749			
Between Groups	5	13.188	2.638	2.638	.010
Within Groups	253	217.554	.860	.860	
Total	258	230.741			

This assumption was tested using the analysis of variance. Based on the test there is a significant effect of the school using resources as emphasis while marketing itself and the use of competitive environment with emphasize on superiority of educational services, at the p-values of 0.000 and 0.010 which are less than the significant level of 0.05. Contribution of school resources as marketing tools marketing $F=(5,235)= 22.076 P=.000$ while results for use of competitive marketing was $F=(5,253) =3.067 P=.010$.

Private schools compete based on the resources they have. Although they do not carry out market research, they however have knowledge about their counterparts and are therefore able to improve the superiority of their educational services based on that knowledge and the resources they possess. As such there is evidence to support the assumption and thus we conclude that the combination of private school resources and marketing (knowledge about the school's competitive environment) leads to superior educational services. At the same time superior educational services lead to both the private school's competitive advantage and sustainable advantage and consequently an improved bottom line.

Table 4: ANOVA test on the superiority of educational services and competitive advantage

Source	df	SS	MS	F	P
Between Groups	4	22.092	5.523	6.153	.000
Within Groups	255	228.904	.898		
Total	259	250.996			

The second assumption was tested using the analysis of variance tests. From the results, there is a significant effect of the school's educational services towards gaining a competitive advantage and thus attracting parents from the market, at the p-value of 0.000, which is less

than the significant level of 0.05 with results of analyses $F=(4,255)=6.153$ $P=.00$ as indicated in the table above. The knowledge that private schools have about their counterparts in the market and the resources they utilized in an effort to gain superior educational services which are then used by these schools to gain competitive and sustainable advantage lead to increased enrolments and consequently an improved school bottom-line which will then be used to further improve the resources and the educational services.

As the schools improved bottom line, they ploughed back the profits for marketing. The use of profit to improve on the resource base, as well as marketing activities leads to improved educational services, and a competitive sustainable advantage. The results shows that there is a significant effect of the contribution of the school's bottom-line towards the improvement of educational services, at the p-value of 0.021 was obtained, which is less than the chosen significant level of 0.05 and a mean square of $F(4,255)=2.932$ $P=.021$.as indicated in the table below:

Table 5: ANOVA test of the school's bottom line and educational services

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Between Groups	4	17.935	4.484	2.932	.021
Within Groups	255	390.004	1.529		
Total	259	407.938			

Private secondary schools get most of their funds from the school fees paid by the enrolled students. Some of these schools also have investors who provide capital for the school operations. Therefore it is this money that is used to improve the educational services provided by the school gaining a competitive and sustainable advantage in the market.

DISCUSSION

Marketing the Schools

The results revealed the schools engaged marketing activities. However, they are inconsistent mix match of rather than a coherent marketing process. Schools did not use components of logical marketing process, such as marketing research, formulation of the marketing plan, and strategy, they mostly focused their marketing efforts on selling. All the schools made reference to the importance of marketing in the maintenance of the success of their schools, and they consciously promoted attitudes similar to those of the marketing approach. Foskett (1992) however noted that there was a wide range of interpretations of marketing among principals in high schools and confusion about its relationship to public relations, promotions, advertising,

and external relations management. As such, they emphasized the need to respond to students' needs and expressed consideration for parents, students, and community without a directed marketing strategy.

Nonetheless, several marketing tools and elements were employed without labelling or formulating them as part of a marketing plan or process by private secondary schools in Gaborone. More accurately, the schools did not set any particular marketing approach and thus did not formulate any coherent marketing strategy or plan to market their school. However, they are highly aware of the need for school marketing, branding as well as the need to position their schools in relation to others. The schools did not have any section or department responsible for marketing. As such getting information about their schools out to the public to attract potential consumers was treated as part of administrative activities of the headmaster and thus limiting the marketing aspects as noted by Okplatka (2002) noting that most school principals and staff neither held coherent marketing ideology nor practice nor employed a marketing research strategy or plan. Moreover, the concept of marketing was an alien concept for most principals.

Types of Marketing Approaches Currently Practiced By Private Schools

Schools mainly relied on the resources they had when they marketed their schools. They used these resources (classrooms, qualified teachers, reasonable school fees, swimming pool, playground among others) to attract students to enrolment in their schools. Schools mostly used the resource-based approach to market themselves. However this has limitations in differentiation as they had similar resources. On the other hand, schools with fewer resources were then disadvantaged when competing with the schools that had more resources, in this instance.

Some schools used relationship marketing approach. However relationship building and maintenance was mainly based on formal interactions, suggestions boxes, communication books and parents and teachers association meetings. This limited the relationships to the current parents. Without any market research or formulation of plans, processes, and implementation of these strategies and tactics would be limited. This approach has a potential to negatively impact on the relationships since clients feel they are important only when they are contributing to bottom line. It may lead low loyalty by students and parents and thus increase chances of clients leaving or switching schools. There was no conscious thought to foster relationships with potential and prospective parents and students, for instance, through creating interactive websites which could be used by schools to build databases from which they could continuously mine data on how to improve and market their schools. Moreover, schools did not use much of technology to build relationships with their current and prospective clients, for

instance, technological tools such as Auto-send could have helped in personally reaching out to each person that joins a website.

Service-oriented approach was also used in private secondary schools in Gaborone. The focus of service orientation was on the view that the core element in the exchange between firms and customers is service provision. Emphasis was upon the notion that knowledge is the fundamental source of competitive advantage. Therefore, schools tended to focus on improving the resources and how they deliver their service (e.g. computerised classrooms, qualified teachers, enthusiastic about their work, laboratories etc.). Nevertheless, even though the emphasis of service orientation was upon the notion that knowledge is the fundamental source of competitive advantage, there was not much effort by private secondary schools in Gaborone in packaging and disseminating information to the prospective parents to attract and lock the current parents in order to expand the clientele base as noted by Okplatka (2002), Tripsas (1997), Peteraf and Bergen (2003). The school failed in bringing together the firm's resources and the competitive environment in a single framework that could help to understand how resources contributed to performance as suggested by Priem and Butler, (2001).

Furthermore, gap analysis approach was also employed in the private secondary schools in Gaborone. Emphasis of gap analysis is mainly on expected service and perceived service from the customer's point of view. Gap analysis can be used as a tool by schools to assess the difference between a service provider's specified level of service and the service actually delivered. The schools under study however, focused more on identifying gaps in the market and targeting specific markets to fill those gaps than the gap between the expected service and provided service. These schools revealed that they targeted employees in the market as opposed to schools that target employers. Therefore their marketing especially on the basis of school fees was targeted to those who were classified as salaried employees, e.g. government workers.

Although the stakeholder approach was used, it was not largely adopted in schools. The emphasis of the stakeholder approach is placed on the whole relationship between stakeholders such as workers, managers, financial backers, customers, administration, and society at large. The aim is to create value exchange using these relations between all these groups over time. There are various stakeholders involved in private secondary schools. There is the government, which provides policies, laws and procedures of governing education and schools in general. The community at large which provides a pool of potential customers, the current customers involved with the school, suppliers of various school materials and the investors for those schools among others. Thus the school becomes a result of contributions by a set of stakeholders. However, the schools have shown to barely use this approach and as such did

not derive much benefits of creating value exchange using these relations between all these groups over time.

Factors influencing schools to adopt particular marketing approaches in schools

Schools heads from the 8 sampled private secondary schools revealed that there were several factors that influenced the marketing approaches they adopted in their schools. Three resources that schools possessed were identified as major importance by all the school heads. The schools mentioned the following resources as having played a vital role in how they marketed themselves, gained a competitive advantage, differentiated and positioned themselves in the market:

Human resources: they stated that they had qualified teaching staff that they regarded as an asset in marketing their schools.

Physical resources: these included the infrastructure in terms of classroom buildings, laboratories, playground centres and facilities including recreational equipment, computer equipment, swimming facilities etc.

Financial resources: school heads have stated that they do have funds that they used in marketing their schools to retain and attract clients. They revealed that they got their funds from school investors and also from paid student school fees. In addition to marketing their schools, these funds were also used to improve the school resources, which in turn played a vital role in the marketing of these schools.

Effects of the approaches on customer attraction

Parents normally have options when deciding on schools to enrol their children and due to this there were several factors about schools that influenced their choice. According to the quantitative data collected, parents have stated the following factors as having influenced their choice of school.

1. The Most cited factors include school's physical resources such as playgrounds, classrooms, laboratories, swimming facilities, infrastructure etc. These resources were used mostly as the main focus for marketing schools. They were utilized to retain and attract potential consumers and as such constant improvement of these resources was sought by schools to enhance their attractiveness to current and potential customers.
2. The human resource was another factor that influenced the adoption of particular marketing approaches by private secondary. Schools hired teachers whom they thought of as qualified and had professional knowledge on what they taught. The teachers were

regarded as an asset to their schools and were used as a resource to attract parents and students to schools.

3. Furthermore, school capital played an important factor in influencing the marketing approach adopted in private secondary schools. Most private secondary schools have revealed that they have investors who have provided them with capital to run their schools and that they had to pay out dividends to these investors and as such had a little of the capital left.

Nonetheless schools have shown that they did develop and set aside a budget to use in marketing the schools. These funds were also used to improve the school's resources and educational services. However, schools were not able to do much marketing of their schools as they desired due to the limited funds they had. Schools under study also did not utilize much technology in marketing their schools. Websites were the main technology used to market the schools. They contained information about the schools; what the school offered, fees, location, school projects etc. however, not much of the technology was employed, which was a drawback in this technologically advanced, time conscious society.

While the heads of schools emphasised on the resources, especially in the development of infrastructure, teaching resources and Human resources, the research indicates that this was just bare basic requirement. Parents sought for schools that could differentiate their image through publicity, publicised teaching demonstration, PTA, and use of mass media. This gap is easily filled by the utilising resources in embracing environmental scanning, SWOT as well adoption competitive marketing.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, the researcher concluded that schools were aware of the importance of marketing their institutions. They employed different marketing approaches for their schools and these included resource-based approach, relationship marketing, service-oriented approach, stakeholder approach and gap analysis approach however these approaches were not focused due to lack of marketing strategy.

The concept of school marketing was viewed with a measure of negativity. That is why there was no considerable market research done, formulation of marketing plans and process or use of marketing terms in general. The product orientation was very much practiced in schools rather than marketing concept. While the schools adopted marketing approach, it was limited to customer attraction thus becoming more sales oriented than marketing. Schools employed resources insufficiently and were sometimes ineffectively utilized, as such it affected the level

and success of marketing the institutions. Moreover, private schools would have benefited more from conducting a market research to help target and segment their market as well as to better differentiate and position their schools well in the market.

However, these schools acknowledged the need for marketing their schools and that would give them a competitive advantage. A good combination of resources and good services as well as strategic competitive oriented marketing, dissemination of information to the current and potential customers could ensure a competitive advantage for the schools. As such it was concluded that though the marketing process was not properly followed through each stage and not fully understood, schools understood the importance of competing with other schools to gain a competitive advantage, differentiation and comparable position in the market.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is a need to edify the heads of schools in marketing approaches, the proper use of these approaches as well as development of marketing strategy.
2. There is a need to adequately sensitize and involve all members of staff so as to improve their perception, appreciation and knowledge of school marketing and the approaches to improve utilization.
3. Relationship building is important in retaining and attracting customers. The schools need to consciously develop, build and keep good customer relations with their clients. This makes customers develop loyalty towards the school, improving chances of second-generation enrolments, positive word of mouth etc.
4. Since most schools cannot afford to assemble a top-tier marketing team, an acquisition of some marketing tools would be of help to private secondary schools. Word of mouth has shown to be the main mechanism through which customers become aware of schools. It is therefore important for schools to develop mechanisms to help cultivate, guide, inform and control the information passed

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

- Schools operate on a timetable; time is divided into different slots for activities: be it learning and teaching activities or extra-curricular activities. Therefore, collecting data from participants during working hours delayed and slowed down the progress in the study. Moreover, the respondents had difficulty keeping time and kept postponing appointment days resulting from time wastage and delayed data analysis
- The study targeted secondary schools only while there are slightly higher number of private pre-primary and primary schools as well as tertiary institutions. Research

targeting these education sector would enhance the findings thereof or not of importance of marking

- The research explored the marketing aspect of secondary school education. It would be beneficial to carry a more in-depth descriptive research to send more right in marketing and management of the private education sector as a business.

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