IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)
e-ISSN: 2278-487X, p-ISSN: 2319-7668. Volume 24, Issue 5. Ser. III (May. 2022), PP 17-25
www.iosrjournals.org

Differentiation Strategy On The Retention Of Pupils In Private Primary Schools In Igembe South Sub County, Meru County

Thomson Onkendi Ondimu
Presbyterian University of East Africa (PUEA)
P.O Box 387-00902 Kikuyu, Kenya

Dr. Nancy Rintari, PhD
Kenya Methodist University
P.O. Box 45240 – 00100, Nairobi, Kenya.

Dr. Samuel Oresi, PhD
Presbyterian University of East Africa (PUEA)
P.O Box 387-00902 Kikuyu, Kenya

Abstract
The study aimed at investigating the effects differentiation strategy on the retention of pupils in private primary schools in Igembe South Sub County, Meru County. It was guided by the following objectives: To examine the influence of Unique Services/Products on the retention of pupils in private primary schools; To establish the influence of technological innovation on the retention of pupils in private primary schools; and to determine the influence of brand image on the retention of pupils in private primary schools. The theories that underpinned the study included Marketing Mix Model (MMM), Marketing Impact & Persistence Model (MIPM) and The Marketing Mix Theory. This study used a descriptive research design with questionnaires being used to obtain data from the respondents. The population for this study comprised of senior staff members in the private schools in Igembe South Sub County. Data was then analyzed quantitatively with a view of making generalized statements on the relationship between categories or themes of data. A linear regression model was applied in conducting the analysis. The findings of the study revealed that unique products/services. Technological innovation and brand image significantly influence the retention of pupils in private primary schools. It was therefore concluded that product differentiation strategy influences the retention of pupils in private primary schools.

Key Words: *Retentions of pupils, Private Primary schools. Unique products/services, technological Innovation, Brand Image.*

Date of Submission: 01-05-2022 Date of Acceptance: 13-05-2022

I. Background to the Study

Private schools are profit oriented institutions and operate in highly competitive environments where they compete with government funded institutions as well as other private schools in most parts of the world. It has been estimated that by the year 2021, a total of 58 million pupils were enrolled in private schools. In rural India, the retention in private schools have been estimated to be 28 percent in rural areas at 65 percent in urban centers, while in rural Pakistan, an estimated 35 percent of the pupils were enrolled in private schools. The private schools engaged in several marketing as well as strategic management strategies to ensure students enrolments and retention (Andrabi et al., 2008; Bau, 2015; Pratham,2012).

In Latin America, a report indicated that school programs in Brasil and Chile brought about similarities as well as differences in process by which parents selects schools. The report showed that in Santiago-Chile, students' retention in private of public school was determined by a family social economic status and the closeness of the school to the neighborhood. The report also indicated that wealthy families were willing to enroll their children in high achieving schools regardless of the locations of the schools or whether its private or public (Alves et al., 2014).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 10-54 primary school children are enrolled in private learning institutions (World Bank, 2014). However, in a country like Botswana for instance, the number of private schools is high as parents prefer to enroll their children in public schools especially those in high school. In Nigeria, Uchendu, Mwaneri & Nwafor (2015) reported that the increased competition in Nigeria's education sector has forced private schools to develop innovative marketing to increase student retention. The report further showed that the increased number of private schools meant that they have resulted to aggressiveness by the management of several private schools in their efforts of creating awareness the values and missions of the schools to both parents and prospective pupils in order to increase retention.

In Kenya, the right to education is enshrined in the 2010 Constitution of Kenya. Similarly, the importance of education in increasing human and social capital was also emphasized in the Kenya Vision 2030 report (GoK). The Sessional Paper 10 (GoK) of the year 2012 emphasized that education played an important role in achieving equitable social development in Kenya. The paper also highlighted the gains made by the free primary education. Firstly, the retention rate in primary, secondary and university has increased. The transition rate from primary school to secondary school showed a lot of growth. This has led to Kenya having the largest and most dynamic human resource pool in the region (GoK, 2012).

With the increased number of private schools, the competition for potential pupils is high and the private schools are struggling to retain pupils. This has led to private schools developing creative marketing to achieve student retention. Ensuring that a school properly utilizes the appropriate marketing mix is crucial for student retention. The basic elements of the marketing mix is usually referred to as the 4Ps that is product, cost, place (distribution) and promotion. When the marketing mix is properly combined it results in increased student retention leading to increased profit (Isoraite, 2016). Quality service has been found to increase student retention. Private schools need to establish what is required to satisfy their pupils (Selvakumar, 2015). Several studies have been conducted on the factors affecting public school retention in Kenya but little or no research have examined in detail the influence of differentiations strategy on the retention of pupils in private primary schools in Kenya, this is the existing research gap that the study aimed to fill.

Statement of the Problem

As student retention becomes more of a priority, private primary schools in Kenya are increasingly engaged in marketing strategies aimed at increasing student enrollment. However, many private schools in Kenya are not able to attain the desired level of student retention despite the efforts they make. Administrators and proprietors of private primary schools in Kenya who have been able to maintain steady enrollment are likely to create a school environment that is secure in its budgets and curriculum. Likewise, when students remain enrolled, the structural stability of the school is likely to improve. Since student tuition accounts for 65% to 80% of private school revenue, low levels of retention destabilize the budget from a financial perspective.

Lack off effective strategies have resulted to low rates of enrollment, inconsistent school budgets and the inability of school administrators to make long term goals base. These goals can result to an increase in faculty and extra-curricular offerings, technology, student counseling, or any other school offerings that would make the private schools a more desirable to parents and students. Board members, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders need to know what factors influence retention and to what degree these factors influence a student or family's decision to remain at any private school. Thus, with new admissions no longer adequate to maintain a consistent enrollment, retention of students in private schools is of paramount importance for the schools' financial sustainability while meeting the expectations of pupils and their parents. At present managers and proprietors of private primary schools in Igembe South-Sub County have not effectively analyzed and understood the factors associated with parents' decisions regarding their children's enrollment and retention in the private primary schools, neither have the management of the private primary schools effectively formulated and implemented differentiation strategies to ensure the retention of pupils. This study therefore examined the influence of differentiation strategies by private schools on the retention of pupils.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The general objective of this study was to investigate the effects differentiation strategy on the retention of pupils in private primary schools in Igembe South Sub County, Meru County

Specific Objectives

i. To examine the influence of Unique Services/Products on the retention of pupils in private primary schools in Igembe South Sub County, Meru County

ii. To establish the influence of technological innovation on the retention of pupils in private primary schools in Igembe South Sub County, Meru County

iii. To determine the influence of brand image on the retention of pupils in private primary schools in Igembe South Sub County, Meru County

Theoretical Framework & Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The theories that guide this study include marketing impact-persistent model (MIPM), the marketing mix model (MMM), the marketing mix theory and the Broadening Theory.

Marketing Mix Model (MMM)

This model was hypothesized by Jerome McCarthy in 1960. The model originates from a marketing principle that considers the marketing mix concept as jungle that comprises of different aspects such as pricing, product differentiation, promotion and distribution forming the 4 P's of marketing. The Marketing Mix Model links an organization towards the focus of remaining responsible to the promises made to customers through the development of highly effective marketing, implementation and evaluation of impacts or results. The model integrates the output of research of marketing activities, brand and the budgets for marketing thus leads to the conversion of sales into revenues which is quantifiable over time. Marketing as a functional unit can be assisted by the Marketing Mix Model to: establish the influence of sales and revenue realization on and off line basis in order to enhance the levels of accountability of the investments made in marketing activities or actions that use extrapolative forecasting, spend along a performance metrics in a single view, it also combines marketing plans. The model can be relied upon to improve the performance of an organization that can be measured by indicators such as Return on Investment (ROI) through the allocation of resources to support the marketing functions. This theory also enhances the understanding of how target consumers usually interrelate with brands across various mediums that are offline and online. Consumer interaction with brands usually influences their brand perception (Zeithami et al, 2017).

Marketing Impact & Persistence Model (MIPM)

The measurement of the impact of marketing activities is very important, this is due to the fact that failure to measure the impact of marketing may lead increase pressure on a business organization provide justification on their marketing expenditures as well as return on investment (ROI) (Gruca & Rego, 2015). Researchers and practitioners have been put on the spot for the failure to clearly show how marketing activities undertaken by firms can be linked to shareholder's value, return on investment (ROI) and firm profitability. Marketing efforts and actions such as pricing, product differentiation and distribution usually enable organizations to build long-term brand positioning that translates into customer satisfaction, brand loyalty and customer retention which translates to high levels of profitability being realized by the firms. For private schools, marketing efforts result to high level of student retention which translates to high revenues.

The revenues of business entities are leveraged by the brand asset and direct the entire firm towards attaining short term profitability (Almamun, 2014). As noted by Wu et al (2018), long term or short term market rejoinder stands at the hub of any market strategy that creates a powerful, sustainable and effective competitive advantage for the entire organization and its brands. On the other hand, short term impact of marketing activities can be observed periodically based on the effectiveness as well as the efficiency of a given brand.

Based on this model, the assessment of long-term responses is done by persistent modeling that is focused on the marketing efforts that impacts through the quantification of value and combination of the total measure of net long run impact as well as the response of consumers giving a positive feedback when it comes to the performance of marketing. The response of competitors that arise as a result of the initial marketing actions put in place by a firm are considered as risks associated to marketing that are averted through the acquisition of market share and brand loyalty (Zeithami et al, 2017). The major problem is that only short term results of marketing can be observed, however, this should not be the case. The impact of effective marketing is longitudinally measured and not a one off action, with this, majority of support the idea that short-term profit maximization is not the best paradigm for allocating resources to support the marketing put in place. Businesses in the United State of America and Europe have continued to criticize the short term orientation both in terms of marketing as well as general business operations (Cellini et al, 2018).

The quantification of long-term turnover maximization that results from an outstanding marketing event is considerably not easy, this is due to the fact that little consensus of the composition of the long run as well as changing conditions of the market are known. It is therefore not easy to provide a relationship of current and future outcomes that present impediments of whether to use long or short term impact outcomes to current actions to improve the performance an organization (Kim et al, 2015). A leverage approach that is anchored on the important principles of marketing is provided by the persistence modeling enabling the understanding of the influence and power of customers, firm behaviors and the existing market competition that correspond to the prevailing forces in the market. It further provided a quantification of the duration as well as the scale of marketing impact on the performance business and addresses the associated risks related to long run marketing activities.

The Marketing Mix Theory

This theory was hypothesized by Borden (1964), it originated the concept of the marketing mix and McCarthy (1964) popularized the use of the 4 P's (i.e. Place, Product, Place, Promotion and Cost) in the 1960s, several business plans have been developed for the achievement of desired profitability and market share objectives by manipulating each or combining the four key marketing mix components. This represents a useful functional stereotype of market behavior as marketers strive for the adoption of a strategic approach to either or sustain or maintain their competitive advantages. Despite the fact that marketers already accepted the marketing mix theory, Magrath (1986) further expanded this theory by differentiating the applications between the normal product elements and services. In a well-structured argument, with examples drawn from air cargo services, food industry and operations of nursing home, Magrath (1986) argues that while considering the marketing of services, three more P's (i.e. Physical facilities, Personnel and Process management) must be added to the existing mix. While physical assets and personnel serve as marketing surrogates for the conveyance of the subtle services experience, process management endorses a shift towards optimization in the handling of complex and peak loads through gradual industrialization. The efforts taken to tangibilize the intangible and the avoidance of challenges by industrializing processes appear in many marketing to be similar to Levitt's (1981) view.

On the other hand, Kotler (1986) further included the politicization factor. In the so-called mega marketing issues, Kotler (1986) urged marketing executives to add two more P's to the four P's of marketing strategy to include public relations and power. A derivative of the marketing mix seems to be the product life cycle (PLC) concept, one in which Baker (1987) has maintained to be a popular and yet the most widely misunderstood theoretical construct in marketing. The product life cycle (PLC) concept draws on the analogy between growth patterns of successive products as well as biological life cycles. In considering the effects of technological advancement or innovation and new products, research and development are considered vital as innovation continues to result to displacement, and bring to an end, existing product life cycles with their new offerings.

II. Literature Review

Differentiation Strategy

A differentiation strategy is one that involves the firm creating a product/service, which is considered unique in some aspect that the customer values because the customer's needs are satisfied (Dirisu et al., 2013). Differentiation is characterized by innovation and rapid response to customer needs. According to Mahdi et.al (2015), the core of this strategy is innovation. To cope with competition in the industry and constantly meet changing consumer needs, firms must leverage their distinctive competencies and organizational capabilities to produce new product features, products, services and processes. Gehani (2013) emphasizes that to sustain a competitive advantage these enterprises must establish high barriers to entry for their rivals by going beyond their incremental improvements and transforming themselves into radically innovating enterprises with protected proprietary intellectual property or unique distribution channels.

Zehira, Canb and Karabogac (2015) argue that from the beginning of the millennium, due to the speed of globalization, the intensity of competition has increased and as a result firms are focusing more on formulating and executing business models that will give them a competitive edge over other industry players. Many organizations opted to innovate to cope with changing lifestyles, tastes and preferences and this led to the push to differentiate products and services from those of competitors. There are varied approaches to achieving differentiation. Yang (2013) in a study on innovation in the Chinese tourism industry describes innovation as one of the pillars of the differentiation that drives competitiveness in a firm. According to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (2017), innovation refers to the introduction of a good or service that is new or significantly improved with respect to its characteristics or intended uses. These significant improvements may include technical specifications, components and materials, incorporated software, user friendliness, service experiences or other functional and aesthetic characteristics.

According to Awwad, Al Khattab and Anchor (2013), most manufacturing concerns consider quality to be a competitive marketplace weapon. This is because quality as an aspect of differentiation creates a competitive advantage when products and services meet or exceed customer needs and expectations. Fields et. al (2014) while citing Garvin's Comprehensive framework, define quality as the degree of excellence of a product or service. They present eight dimensions for measuring quality. These include performance, features, reliability, conformance, durability, serviceability, aesthetics, and perceived quality. The pursuit of high quality in differentiation improves product attractiveness which consequently leads to an increase in sales and brand loyalty. Other features of a differentiation strategy include brand positioning, innovation in marketing techniques, control of distribution channels, advertising campaigns, intensive research and development, improving brand image and company reputation (Zehira et al., 2015).

Differentiation is therefore a source of competitive advantage. By seeking out customers' needs that other competitors have not met, a firm executing the differentiation strategy can offer products and services that are unique and of high quality to these consumers. Cao (2017) posits that this unique offering provides higher profitability because buyers are willing to pay higher prices for the distinctive features that surpass those of competitors.

Zehira et al., (2015) emphasize that the differentiation strategy provides higher profitability by creating brand loyalty and low price sensitivity. This strategy reduces price sensitivity, decreases power of suppliers, creates a powerful entry barrier and reduces threat of substitute products. Through effective brand positioning, aggressive advertising and marketing, superior logistics, technological developments, quality control and revamping brand image an enterprise can grow its revenues, maximize shareholders' wealth and satisfy internal and external stakeholders (Awwad et al., 2013).

Globally, there are numerous examples of successful companies in different industries that have excelled on the strength of competitive strategies. An example of a firm that has sustained a competitive advantage through the differentiation strategy is Nike (Forbes, 2017). Nike incorporated is an American multinational that designs, manufactures, markets and sells sports footwear, equipment and accessories. Nike focuses on developing high quality products for its target market and charges a premium price for the value addition. In 2016 the brand was valued at $15.9 billion, making it the most valuable brand among sports businesses (Forbes, 2017). Another example of a successful differentiator is Apple – a market leader in the computer and electronics industry. The American brand's huge success has been driven by a culture of continuous innovation and a customer driven outlook. Apple has consistently trounced its competitors with its cutting edge innovation. The company upgrades its products inexhaustibly, offering great colour choices, artistic designs and elegant product features that appeal to customers who are willing to pay a premium price for their high quality products (Jinjin, 2013).

Unique Services/Products

A firm following a differentiation strategy attempts to convince customers to pay a premium price for its good or services by providing unique and desirable features (Aliqah, 2012). Such firms build on their capabilities and resources to provide unique and desirable product or service features that customers are willing to pay a premium price for. According to Fathali (2016), differentiating firms unlike cost leaders compete based of uniqueness rather than price when they seek to attract a large customer base. Young (2017) emphasizes that uniqueness is a key pillar for such firm since the main focus of this competitive strategy is its emphasis on features or characteristics that make the company's products stand out against competitors. The author presents the example of Unilever which produces personal care products like Dove Cream Bars to satisfy consumers' need for soaps that are not harsh or drying. Despite their relatively high selling prices, such Unilever products are competitive because they stand out from a majority of soaps that focus more on cleaning than moisturizing.

Quality in differentiation refers to the customers' perception of how well a company's products and services meet their expectations (McFarlane, 2013). Thomasson and Wallin (2013) define quality as the conformance to standards, requirements or expectations. The authors suggest that this definition originated from the quality control concept in the manufacturing industry. They state further that the quality of a product is therefore measured in terms of its conformance to specifications or expectations. Another definition by Elassy (2015) relates quality to customer satisfaction and business growth. Quality in this perspective defines the state of meeting or exceeding customer needs. The author stresses the importance of understanding and knowing what the firm's customers want and then satisfying those needs. In addition, the delivery of high quality can lead to growth in market share and profits (McFarlane, 2013).

Pearce and Robinson (2015) postulate that it may however be difficult for a firm to sustain this growth and competitive advantage because other firms in the industry may replicate its competencies or capabilities and create similar features, thus eroding the distinguishing characteristics of a product or service. According to Baroto et. al, (2012), companies having an advantage in terms of financial and technological resources, trained human capital, new and modern management systems, innovative production methods better fulfil the conditions required to implement a differentiation strategy successfully since they have the resources to develop high quality or unique products and charge a premium price.

Technological Innovation

Technology is the practical application of knowledge especially in a particular area or field. It is a manner of accomplishing a task especially using technical processes, methods, or knowledge. It can also be defined as the specialized aspects of a particular field of endeavour (Khayali et al., 2014). Technology may also refer to digital devices and applications that help people and businesses meet their needs (Vaughan, 2013). According to Giesler and Heller (2013), technology refers to an artefact or instrument that enables individuals and organizations to achieve their desires or goals. Therefore, technology refers to all the tools, devices and systems which are clearly identifiable, whether tangible or intangible and which can be manipulated. The authors support this definition by asserting that technology has distinct features that qualify to be defined thus.

Technology should be operational, instrumental and functional. Apart from these features, the user should also derive some benefit from it. Benefits may include ease and speed of work (Giesler & Heller 2013). Technology has evolved over the decades as people find new ways of making work and processes simpler, less costly and more effective. As ideas build on each other to form new technologies, these new technologies are set up to become components of future new technologies, and so on, and so forth. Existing technologies evolve into something far more powerful and greater than we had before (Samaroo, 2013).

According to Genpact Research Institute (2017), we are entering an era in which new yet robust technologies – such as cloud computing, analytics, collaboration, mobile technology - will catalyze the evolution of process operations, and multiply operations' impact in addressing the numerous challenges that large enterprises face. Kinyuira (2014) in a study of competitive strategies deployed by savings and cooperative societies in Kenya established that technology was used mainly to differentiate product and service features; to control resources and to schedule operations. A firm may patent specialized technology that it uses to manufacture products. Blue chip companies like IBM, Samsung and Microsoft take up numerous patents to protect technology they have developed to create unique and high value products (Fisher & Oberholzer-Gee, 2013).

According to Samaroo (2013), this drive to improve technology is based on a proven premise that it is a tool for improved performance. It is therefore a core competence that organizations want to harness to gain a competitive advantage hence the need for continuous improvement and aggressive research and development. Technology must therefore be complemented by creative thinking and innovation. Vaughan (2013) adds that businesses should create a culture of learning if they seek to harness and improve this valuable resource. For this reason, some scholars blend their definitions of technology with innovation.

The Organization of Co-operation and Development (2016) defines innovation as the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace organization or external relations. According to Greenhalgh and Rogers (2010), innovation is the application of new ideas to the products, processes, or other aspects of the activities of a firm that lead to increased value. This value is defined in a broad way to include higher value added for the firm and also benefits to consumers or other stakeholders.

Innovation therefore facilitates operational improvements, which enhance cost efficiency. Innovation is an organizational capability to adopt and apply new ideas, products, and processes (Bayraklar et.al, 2016). This continuous improvement the author stresses, leads to improved organizational performance, long-term success and competitiveness. Innovation is a source of sustainable competitive advantage that has been shown as one of the most crucial strategic positioning tactics necessary for long term success. Vaughan (2013) defines technological innovation as a process that develops new, creative and efficient methods of accomplishing tasks and responding to customer needs. Therefore, technology, coupled with innovation can have a great positive impact on organizational performance. The Boston Consulting Group (2016) in its 2016 Most Innovative Companies Survey, mentions Apple, Google, Tesla, Microsoft, Amazon and Netflix as some of the most innovative companies. These companies are also high performers on other indicators such as financial performance, employee motivation and customer satisfaction. However, technology and ideas can be imitated by competitors hence the need for continuous improvement and innovation to help the firm acquire inimitable capabilities (Pearce & Robinson, 2013). There is clearly a link between the application of technology and innovative practices and organizational performance.

Brand Positioning

Urde (2013) describes a corporate brand as embodying the mission, vision and core values of the organization. An organization's culture and competences are also vital elements of a corporate brand's internal component and that externally, outsiders will define a brand based on the following attributes: - value proposition, market position, image, reputation, visual identity, external communication and other variables. Firms use Technology, Innovation and Strategy Interaction Competitive capabilities, improved product quality, enhanced product line breadth, Shorter product life cycles, enhanced customer service and business manager's participation in branding strategy formulation as a way of controlling and managing the perceptions of consumers about their products/services and brand image. In many cases, branding creates sustainable competitive advantage for organizations (World Intellectual Property Report, 2013).

For an organization that is implementing the differentiation strategy, brand is a highly valuable intangible asset, and one these firms develop as a top priority (Hsu, Wang & Chen, 2013). Brand loyalty and a strong brand image are essential for retention of established customers and to attract new ones. This is especially the case for these firms since they charge premium process for their products and services. Loureiro, Sarmento and Bellego (2017) support this argument by presenting results from a study on various brands which confirmed that emotional brand attachment is a key success factor for all of these companies, brands, and firms. This is motivated by the finding that such connections lead to higher level of consumer loyalty, which increases a company's financial performance. However, there is no conclusive empirical evidence of how brand reputation can impact organizational performance. In addition to building a strong, positive brand, differentiating firms must also aggressively market their products to increase awareness of their distinct products or features in comparison to those of competitors.

Student Retention

As private schools compete for students and resources, recruiting and retaining students becomes very important to the success of any private school. Researchers who explore student retention and recruitment tend to approach the process of selecting students and retaining them in three ways. The first set of researchers looked at retention and recruitment through the lens of attrition (Rootman, 1972; Spady, 1971; Tinto & Cullen, 1973), student participation (Beal & Noel, 1979; Bean, 1980; Walters & McCay, 2005), and looked at retention in relation to action plans implemented to retain students.

These studies focused on attrition and retention at the college level. Because there is little research on retention in private primary and middle schools, these studies were used as a starting point. A second set of researchers looked at retention through the lens of community and school culture (Goodwin, 2005; Lindsey et al., 2003; Schein, 2006). School and community culture begin with how the school culture fits with the students' goals and the assumption that different schools best serve different types of students (Zarybnisky, 2010). In order to attract and retain students, that will be successful in these private schools, leaders must design schools to reflect the community and culture that students want (Schein, 2006).

A third set of researchers examined retention through parent satisfaction (HewittEdmond, 2009; Ravitch, 2010; Zarybnisky, 2010); Parents who perceive that the school is meeting their expectations build trust and feel less need to be involved at school (Sgro, 2006). On the other hand, when parents perceive that the school does not meet their expectations, they un-enroll their children from the school. Gallanter (1994) states, "Parents transferred their children when they lost faith in the school's ability to serve their children" (p. 284). These sets of studies have been used to examine factors affecting retention

Hypothesis

H0: Differentiation strategy has no significant influence on the retention of pupils in private primary schools in Igembe South Sub County, Meru County.

H1: Differentiation strategy has significant effect on the retention of pupils in private primary schools in Igembe South Sub County, Meru County**.**

Conceptual Framework

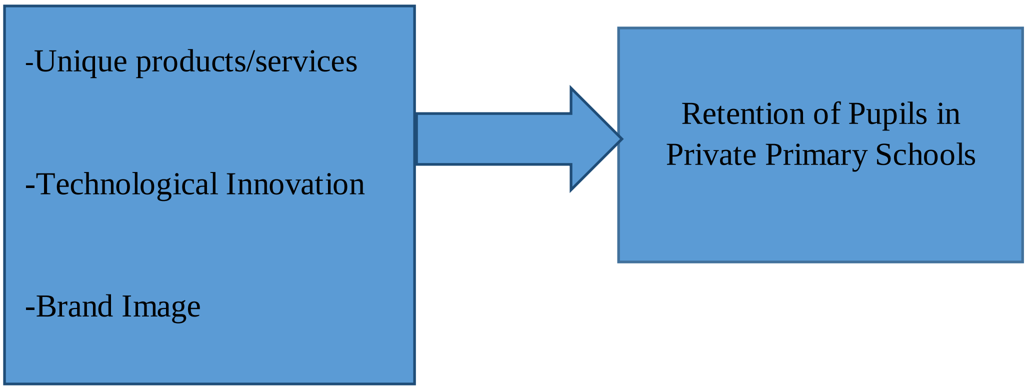

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

III. Methods

Research Design

This study used a descriptive research design with questionnaires being used to obtain data from the respondents. The population for this study comprised of senior staff members in the private schools in Igembe South Sub County. From the total population in each private school, the study used Slovins' sampling formulae to sample 238 respondents, this formula was used since the researcher did not have adequate information about the target population's behaviour.

aires. Data was then analyzed quantitatively with a view of making generalized statements on the relationship between categories or themes of data. A linear regression model was applied in conducting the analysis. Below is the linear regression model which was applied in the analysis:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + e$$

Where;

y = Retention of students in private schools

x_1 = Unique Services/Products

x_2 = Technological Innovation

x_3 = Brand Positioning

e = error term

IV. Findings

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it therefore be concluded that the adoption of differentiation strategies by private schools significantly improves the levels of student retention. Provision of unique services by private primary schools have a major influence on student retention, this is due to the fact that both curricular and extra-curricular programmes in a schools are major concerns for guardians and parents before they enroll their children in schools.

Adoption of technological innovation improves educational outcomes or the performance of pupils and therefore private school that adopt technological innovation will significantly achieve the retention of pupils. Finally, it can be concluded that brand image of private primary schools significantly influences retention of students in private schools.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the management of private primary schools in Kenya should put in place competitive strategic responses to help them gain a competitive advantage over their competitors and hence achieve high rate of student retention. The managers should focus on strategies that benefit their schools through increased enrollment, student retention and hence profitability at the least cost possible. Through the employment of differentiation strategies, private primary schools should find strengths that enable them to broaden their scope within the market and identify a position for themselves.

Through brand position, the management of the schools should focus on expanding into new markets and standing out as the most preferred brands to help them compete within the established public as well as private schools. This will be done by engaging in effective branding and marketing to showcase the quality of services provided as well as the facilities and resources that the schools have.

Through the already established relationship between differentiation strategies and improving student retention in response to increased competition, the strategies put in place by the management of the schools should be very effective. These will help private schools to increase the rate of student retention hence establishing a profitable and sustainable position against the forces that determine industry competition in the market.

In an increasingly digitized and technology-driven world, students, teachers and parents alike expect to use technology with the aim of improving learning outcomes as well as enhancing engagement. The private primary schools should therefore increase their use of technology in order to enable more productive instruction from teachers and learning by students so as to enhance student retention.

Suggestions for further studies

This study has led to identification of various areas that should be studied on to broaden the work done on competitive strategies adopted by private primary schools in Kenya. Based on the findings it is suggested that further research should be undertaken to establish the challenges that are faced by private schools in adopting the differentiation strategies in response to increased competition. Further research should also be conducted on the determinants of student's retention in Kenya's tertiary educational instructional. Finally, a comparative study should be conducted on the effects differentiation strategy on the retention of pupils in private primary schools and tertiary institutions in Kenya.

References

[1]. Naziri, N., Ghasemi, B., & Saeidi, S. S. (2015). Analysis of the Influence of Trusting a Brand, Brand Logo and Brand Character on Deciding to Buy, Considering Loyalty Mediator Role for a Brand. 9(1), 481-486.

[2]. Nedbalova, E., Greenacre, L., & Schulz, J. (2014). UK Higher Education Viewed Through the Marketization and Marketing Lenses. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 24(2), 178-195.

[3]. Njeri, A., Kambona, O. O., & Odhuno, E. (2015, Dec). The Relationship Between the Marketing Marketing and Competitiveness of Four and Five Star Hotels. International Research Journal, 6(6), 118-131.

[4]. Omboi, B. M., & Mutali, I. N. (2011). Effect of Selected Marketing Communication Tools on Student Retention in Private Universities in Kenya. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 14(3), 1-206.
[5]. Ouda, J. B., Atieno, R., & Wambiya, P. (2015). Quality Education for the Pastoralists in Public Primary Schools in Kajiado County Kenya: Case Study of Dupoto-E-Maa Education Project in Kajiado Central District. Journal of Education and Practice, 3(34), 45-53.
[6]. Palmer, J., Eidson, V., Haliemun, C., & Wiewel, P. (2011). Predictors of Positive and Negative Word of Mouth of University Pupils: Strategic Implications for Institutions of Higher Education. International Journal of Business and Social Science, 2(7), 59-62.
[7]. Pfeffer, J., Zorbach, Z., & Carley, K. M. (2018). Understanding Online Firestorms: Negative Word Of Mouth Dynamics In Social Media Networks. Journal of Marketing Communication, 1-12.
[8]. Polat, G., & Umit, D. (2018). Marketing management functions of construction companies: evidence from Turkish contractors. Journal of Civil Engineering and Management, 16(2),267-277.
[9]. Pour, B. S., Nazari, K., & Emami, M. (2013). The Effect of Marketing Mix in Attracting Customers: Case Study of Saderat Bank in Kermanshah Province. African Journal of Management, 7(34), 3272-3280.
[10]. Renter, N. G(2015) Exploration into The Quality Of Kenyan University Graduates And Their Work Preparedness.
[11]. Ramsaran-Fowder. (2005). Identifying Health Care Quality Attributes. Journal of Health and Human Service Administration, 428-443.
[12]. Ravichandran, K., Mani, B. T., Kumar, S. A., & Prabhakaran, S. (2010, April). Influence of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction Application of Servqual Model. International Journal of Business and Management, 5(4), 117-124.

Dr. Nancy Gacheri Rintari, et. al. "Differentiation Strategy on the Retention of Pupils In Private Primary Schools In Igembe South Sub County, MERU County." *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)*, 24(05), 2022, pp. 17-25.