# MARKETING STRATEGIES AND STUDENT PATRONAGE OF SELECTED PUBLIC TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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# ABSTRACT

*The study investigated marketing strategies and the student patronage of selected public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State (University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State University and Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic). Three objectives and three null hypotheses were raised and formulated to guide the study. It was motivated by the fact that public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State find themselves in a competitive environment and may not know which marketing strategy is effective in increasing student patronage. The study adopted the survey research method. 320 questionnaires were distributed to students in selected public tertiary institutions in the three senatorial districts of the Akwa Ibom State. This formed the sample of the study. The data obtained was analysed using descriptive and inferential analysis which was computed electronically by the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21. The study revealed that there is a significant effect of product strategy, price strategy and promotion strategy on the student patronage of public higher institutions in Akwa Ibom State. It is therefore recommended that marketing strategies such quality programmes, low tuition, scholarship and online information should be used to increase student enrolment, since it is a modern way of awareness creation and communicating values of the institutions’ product services to the prospects. This will serve to increase patronage, thereby increasing literacy in the country for social and economic well-being.*

# Introduction

Marketing strategy has become a veritable tool globally for any organization to remain in competitive market environment and wax stronger. Marketing strategy is a vital prerequisite of Industry's ability to strengthen its market share and minimize the impact of the

competition (Adewale, Adesola, & Oyewale, 2013). Owomoyela, Oyeniyi, and Ola, (2013) also see marketing strategy as way of providing quality product that satisfies customer needs, offering affordable price and engaging in wider distribution and back it up with effective promotion strategy. (Adewale et al, 2013). A successful marketing strategy must tell an organization where they would want to be on a long-term basis that is why it is often said that marketing strategy is a continuous process Education being a global service that every country strives to provide for their citizens since it serves as a tool for socio-economic development. The expansion in population poses the demand for establishment of more higher institutions in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State in particular, which will accommodate more students for knowledge acquisition. It is on this note, education has been liberalized by the government to allow private sector participation at all levels. The private sector participation has brought about increase in number of higher educational institutions to serve the growing populace, programme quality, and general innovation in modern educational practices. Following the private sector participation, which bring about “profit focus” has given rise to institutions competing for students and for academic performance. Recently, there have been a significant explosion in private tertiary education especially in response to innovation, demand for meeting standard for globalization and tertiary education in Nigeria (Onyemaechi, 2016). Public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State find themselves in a competitive environment both locally and globally, hence effective marketing strategies are required to improve their educational performances. This paper examines marketing strategies (product strategy, price strategy and promotion strategy) and their impact on performance in Akwa Ibom State.

# Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to determine the relationship between marketing strategies and students patronage of public tertiary institution in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

The Specific objectives were:

1. To examine the relationship between product strategy and student patronage of public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
2. To investigates the relationship between price strategy and student patronage of public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
3. To ascertain the relationship between promotion strategy and student patronage of public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

# Research Hypotheses

Based on the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated:

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between product strategy and student patronage of public tertiary institution in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

**H02:** There is no significant relationship between price strategy and student patornage of public tertiary institution in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

**H03:** There is no significant relationship between promotion strategy and student patronage of public tertiary institution in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

# Literature Review

**Dimensions of Marketing Strategies Product strategy**

Kotler and Armstrong (2016) define a product as anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a want or need. They further define a consumer product as the product bought by the final consumer for personal consumption. Consumers buy products frequently, with careful planning, and by comparing brands based on price, quality and style. Borden, (2014) sees a product as about quality, design, features, brand name and sizes. Mohammad et al, (2012) also say that product is the physical appearance of the product, packaging, and labeling Information, which can also influence whether consumers notice a product in-store, examine it, and purchase it. Past researchers have clearly suggested that product influences have a significant impact on business performance (Kazemand Heijden, 2010; Kemppainen et al, 2012; Ogunmokun and Esther, 2014; Owomoyela et al, 2013).

**Pricing strategy** is an important strategic issue because it is a significant indicator of products’ quality. Lovelock observed that in services marketing the role of pricing is even more important, as many services are intangible in nature, so customers rely mostly on price while assessing the level of their quality. In general, pricing decisions involve choices regarding the level of prices to be charged, discounts, terms of payment and the extent to which price differentiation is to be pursued. These decisions are similar to the issues facing a good marketer, however some differences occur. Most services are perishable and they cannot be stocked in inventory. If there is no demand, the unused capacity is wasted. On the other hand, when the demand exceeds the capacity, a number of customers may not buy a product. Thus, a key issue for services marketers is to smooth demand using dynamic pricing strategies. Price is a very important component of the marketing mix strategy, because it brings revenue for a company while other elements represent costs. Price is also a very flexible element and can be used as an important tactical tool. Unlike other marketing mix elements, such as product features, distribution network, and advertising, price can be changed quickly and adopted to market conditions. Lovelock (2017) opined that setting the right price is a difficult task since many factors should be considered at the same time.

**Promotion strategy** according to Johann (2015), no marketing program can succeed without communications, which involves different methods and techniques used to deliver information about an offer, persuade the target customers of the benefits of a specific brand, and encourage them to take action at specific times. The traditional promotion mix includes advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations. In the case of services marketing these elements are also important, but because services are produced and consumed at the same time, service personnel can become an important component of promotional activities as well as tangible elements of service environment. Also, because of services intangibility, the role of services communications is to create confidence in the firm’s capabilities and reduce the perceived risk of purchase. The marketing communications mix, often called promotion mix, refers to a combination of marketing tools used to communicate the marketer’s message to achieve the company’s communications objectives.

**Personal selling:** The sales personnel plays a very important role in the communications strategy of many service companies. This is because firms typically have a control over service delivery channels including service outlets, which gives cost-effective and powerful

communications opportunities. Personal selling is a unique communications tool because it allows for personal interactions between sales staff and customers. According to (Attih and Essien 2023) Personal selling ignites a customers buying decision which is the actual purchase decision.

**Advertising:** Is especially effective in building brand awareness and brand preference and remains the most popular form of communication in consumer markets. When it comes to making a choice about which media to select, marketers should consider many factors, such as target audience media habits, product characteristics, message characteristics, and cost. Analyzing the content of ads, research shows that ads for services contain more factual information on price, warranties, documentation of performance, and availability than ads for goods (Kotler, 2013).

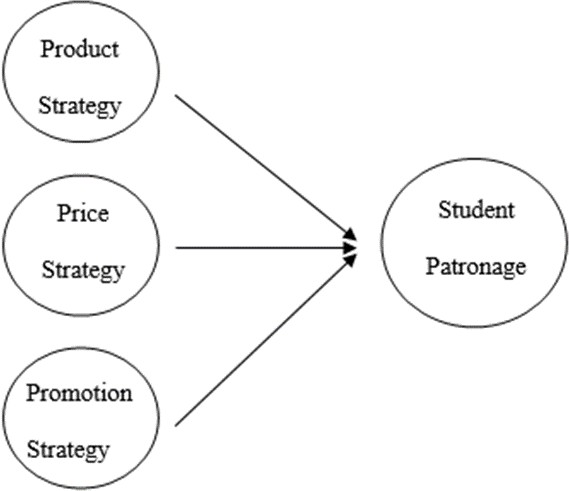
**Sales Promotion:** Service companies often use sales promotion as a very important ingredient of their communications strategy. Conversely to advertising which gives a reason to buy a product, sales promotion offers an incentive to buy it. This category of communications embraces a diverse collection of tools such as samples, coupons, discounts, gifts, and competitions with prices. They can be used in consumer markets and in business markets.

**Public relations:** Besides communication tools which are typically designed to attract target market customers, service companies must use also tools that allows communications with all groups of stakeholders and general public. Public relations involve techniques aimed at promoting a company’s image or its individual products. They include press releases, press conferences; obtaining testimonials form public figures, community involvement, fundraising, and sponsorship of sporting events and other activities.

**Internet:** The role of e-marketing tools is growing in importance since they can complement or even supplement conventional communications channels. The Internet provides opportunities for a greater interaction with customers and personalization of message at a reasonable cost. The typical forms of e-marketing communications include company’s own websites and online advertising,

**Word of mouth:** This form of communication involves recommendations from other customers and is more credible than promotional activities initiated by a company. When the perceived risk associated with the service purchase is relatively high, customers are more likely to rely on the word of mouth communication. As many services tend to have credence attributes, the perceived purchase risk is high and customers seek information from reliable sources. For this reason positive word of mouth is very important for service companies.

# Marketing Strategies Student Patronage

**(Independent variable) (Dependent variable)**

# Figure 1: Conceptual frame of marketing strategies and student patronage Empirical Review

Below are some empirical reviews of works on the subject matter of study:

In the study by Ebitu (2016), he examined the impact of three marketing strategies (product quality, marketing communication and relationship marketing) on the performance of selected small and medium scale entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study adopted the survey method. Data obtained were analyzed using pearson product moment correlation analysis. Findings showed that there was a significant impact of product quality strategy and relationship marketing strategy on the profitability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State.

The study by Mumel, Hocevar & Snoj (2017) revealed that there is a significant correlation between the number of marketing communication activities a company uses and their net sales and customer loyalty. However, they noted that companies aspiring for better performance should concentrate more on the frequency of using specific marketing communication activities and not so much on how many marketing communication activities they should use. This is so because according to research, the frequency of using certain marketing communication activities correlates with the number of business.

The study by Attih, (2020) was carried out to determine the relationship between packaging attributes and consumer patronage of beverages in Akwa Ibom State. The survey research design was used for this study. Data for the study were obtained through questionnaire administered to 385 respondents across the three senatorial districts in Akwa Ibom State. A multi-stage sampling technique – stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the respondents for this study. A total of 376 copies of questionnaire were retrieved and used for the analysis. Five hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance. Data obtained for the study were analyzed using tables, frequency and percentage while hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression. The findings

revealed that there is significant positive relationship between design of wrapper, printed information, packaging size, packaging innovation and consumer patronage of beverages in Akwa Ibom State. This implies that when there is an improvement in design of wrapper, printed information, packaging size and packaging innovation, there will be significant positive influence on consumer patronage of beverages. It was concluded that packaging plays an important role in the marketing of beverages and can be treated as one of the vital components of product that influence consumer patronage. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that attention should be given to the overall improvement of design of wrapper, printed information, packaging size and packaging innovation by beverage manufacturing firms in offering their products to the target market.

# Theoretical Framework

**The Theory of Marketing Mix(4ps) by Professor Jerome MCCarthy in 1960.**

This theory focuses on the key elements marketing: Product, Price, Promotion and Place. By carefully considering this key element of marketing, educational institutions can develop strategies to attract student. For example, they can create appealing course offerings (product) set competitive tuition fees (price), and implement targeted promotional campaigns (promotion), then ensure convenient locations or online accessibilities (place)

# Methodology

This section focuses on methods and procedures used in collecting and analysing data. It includes research design, population of the study, sample size/sampling technique, instrument for data collection and methods of data analysis.

# Research Design

The survey research design was adopted for the study. The primary data were obtained through the use of a structured questionnaire.

# Population of the Study

The target population consists of students of selected public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State, namely University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State University and Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic representing each of the senatorial district of the State for fair representation. The population of the study consists of 30,000 students of the University of Uyo, 12,000 students of Akwa Ibom State University and 15,000 students of Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic. Totally 55,000 as the population. According to Nigeria Tertiary institutions database, 2021 and Nigeria Board for Technical Education report, 2021. (Internet Source).

# Sample size/Sampling technique

The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula since the students’ population of the selected public tertiary institutions is known. From the computation, therefore, a representative sample size of 397 students was obtained for the research. A simple random sampling technique was adopted to reflect a fair representation of the institutions. Out of 397 questionnaires administered, 320 were correctly filled and returned for analysis.

Taro Yamane for determining known sample size:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| n = N | 55,000 | 55,000 | = 397 |
| **1+ N(e2)** | = 1 +55,000(0.05)2 | 138.5 |  |
| Where: |  |  |  |
| N = | Sample size |  |  |
| N = | Population |  |  |
| E = | error margin |  |  |

# Instrument for Data Collection

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire which contained 12 items and was constructed on a five point Likert scale items ranging from strongly agree 5 to strongly disagree

# Methods of Data Analysis

The data obtained through questionnaire administration were analysed using tables, frequency, percentage, and simple linear regression. All hypotheses were tested at 95% or

0.05 level of significance. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 21) was used for data analysis.

# Conceptual Specification of Model

In line with the research hypotheses, conceptual model was developed to determine the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. The model specifies that marketing strategies of government owned higher institutions a function of student patronage.

# Empirical Specification of Model

To determine the relationship between independent variable (Marketing Strategies) – Product strategy, Price strategy and Promotion strategy and dependent variable (Student Patronage) of selected public tertiary institutions, a multiple regression model was developed.

The model is expressed mathematically as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Y | = | f(X1, X2, X3) |
| Y | = | ao+ b1X1 + b2X2 + b3X3 + e |
| Where: |  |  |
| Y | = | Student Patronage |
| X1 | = | Product |
| X2 | = | Price |
| X3 | = | Promotion |
| a | = | Constant |

b1, b2, b3 = Regression coefficient of each variable e = error term

# Analysis and Results

**Table 1: Total number of questionnaire retrieved useable**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Institutions** | **Copies allocated** | **Copies retrieved**  **Useable** | **Percentage (%)** |
| University of Uyo | 217 | 170 | 78 |
| Akwa Ibom State University | 108 | 88 | 81 |
| Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic | 72 | 62 | 86 |
| **Total** | **397** | **320** | **81** |

# Source: Field Survey, 2022.

A total number of 397 structured questionnaires were distributed among respondents in the three selected public tertiary institutions representing each of the senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State, 320 were appropriately filled and returned. This implies that 81% of questions administered were retrieved means that the number of returned questionnaires is good enough to make valid conclusions.

# Table 2: Frequency Table

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variables** | **SA(%)** | **A(%)** | **N(%)** | **D(%)** | **SD(%)** |
| **Product Strategy** |  |  |  |  |  |
| The programs offered in my school are of global  standard. | 51.2 | 30.4 | 4.4 | 8.0 | 6.0 |
| The student/Lecturer relationship in my school is  cordial. | 26.2 | 34.4 | 4.5 | 27.5 | 7.4 |
| With our academic programs we can complete  anywhere in the world. | 39.3 | 39.8 | 2.0 | 17.2 | 1.6 |
| **Price Strategy** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our fees are affordable | 39.3 | 39.8 | 2.0 | 17.2 | 1.6 |
| We have cheap accommodation fees. | 36.9 | 48.8 | 2.0 | 11.1 | 1.2 |
| The percentage of scholarship to students in our  school is good | 29.9 | 49.6 | 1.6 | 17.2 | 1.6 |
| **Promotion strategy** |  |  |  |  |  |
| The publicity of our academic programs is good  enough to increase our enrolment. | 41.4 | 49.6 | 2.5 | 6.1 | 0.4 |
| Most of our new intake comes in through word  of mouth communication. | 25.0 | 36.5 | 5.7 | 27.0 | 5.7 |
| Every information about our school can be  accessed online. | 23.0 | 38.9 | 6.6 | 25.8 | 5.7 |
| **Student Patronage** |  |  |  |  |  |
| The academic programs in our school have really  boasted student patronage. | 23.4 | 30.3 | 4.5 | 29.5 | 12.3 |
| Our student enrolment is increased as a result  affordable fees | 25.0 | 43.9 | 5.7 | 20.5 | 4.5 |
| The accessibility of our school online has  brought about more patronage. | 46.7 | 45.1 | 0.4 | 7.4 | 0.3 |

**Source: Field Survey, 2022.**

Data collected from the copies of questionnaire on marketing strategies attributes and student patronage are shown in Table 2 the data collected revealed that 73.76% of respondents

showed a positive attitude towards product strategy as an influence to student patronage. 3.63% of respondents were neutral on whether product strategy had any influence on the patronage of students. 22.56% expressed negative responses towards the product strategy at the selected public tertiary institutions.

Respondents representing 81.43% had a positive view on pricing strategy as an influence to student patronage in government owned higher institutions. 1.18% were neutral of this marketing strategy factor, and 16.65% were of a negative view on pricing strategy of public higher education on student patronage.

On promotion strategy, 72.9% expressed a positive view that publicity of school programs, referral through word of mouth communication and the accessibility of information about their school online help increased patronage. 9.13% were uncertain and 17.86% had a negative view that promotion strategy had any influence on student patronage.

On considering general questions about student patronage, 71.46% were positive on their programs meeting global standard, affordable tuition and accessibility of their academic programs anywhere in the world. 23.56% of respondents expressed a negative view, while others were not certain.

# Test of Hypotheses Hypothesis one:

**Ho:** There is no significant relationship between Product Strategy and Student patronage.

# Table 3: Model summary of the Product Strategy on Student patronage

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Model** | **R** | **R2** | **Adjusted R square** | **Std error of the Estimate** |
| 1 | .893a | .763 | .760 | 2.386 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Product Stratrgy

# Source: SPSS computed results

**Table 4: ANOVAa of the effect of Product Strategy on student patronage of government owned higher institutions.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Model** | **Sum of Squares** | **Df** | **Mean Square** | **F** | **Sig** |
| Regression | 1319.966 | 1 | 1319.966 | 742.388 | .000b |
| Residual | 408.913 | 319 | 1.778 |  |  |
| Total | 1728.879 | 320 |  |  |  |

1. Dependent Variable: Customer patronage
2. Predictors: (Constant), Product Strategy.

# Source: SPSS computed results

**Table 5: Coefficientsa of the effect of product strategy on student patronage**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Model** | **Unstandardized**  **Coefficients** | **Standardized**  **Coefficients** | **T** | **Sig** |
| B | Std error | Beta |
| 1 (Constant)  Product Strategy | 5.273  .523 | .606  .061 | 8.703 | .000  .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Student patronage

# Source: SPSS computed results Interpretation of Result

The results on Tables 3, 4 and 5 show the linear regression analysis of the effect of product strategy on student patronage of public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. Table 3 which is the model summary reveals that the correlation (relationship) between both variables (product strategy and student patronage) is 89.3 percent (seen in R column), which indicates a very strong degree of correlation. The coefficient of determination (R2) of 0.763 indicates that up to 76.3 percent of the variants in the dependent variable (student patronage) is explained or predicted by the independent variable (product strategy). This implies that a unit change in product strategy will affect student patronage of public tertiary institutions product services by up to 76.3 percent when other factors are held constant. The F-test (742.388, P < 0.05) statistic in Table 4 indicates that the overall prediction of the dependent variable by the independent variable is statistically significant; therefore, the regression model provides substantive evidence to conclude that product strategy has a significant effect on students’ patronage of government owned higher institutions product services Also, the coefficient table (Table 5) shows that the independent variable (product strategy) significantly contributes to the model as the P value (0.000) is less than 0.05 error margin, and the t-test result (t= 8.590) explains that the relationship between both variables is a direct and positive one. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, leading to the conclusion that product strategy has a significant effect on students’ patronage of public higher education.

# Hypothesis Two

**Ho:** Price strategy has no significant effect on student patronage

# Table 6: Model summary of the effect of Price Strategy on customer patronage of public higher institutions.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Model** | **R** | **R2** | **Adjusted R square** | **Std error of the Estimate** |
| 1 | .893 | .724 | .720 | 2700 |

Predictors: (Constant), Price Strategy.

**Source: SPSS computed results**

# Table 7: ANOVAa of the effect of Price Strategy on customer patronage

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Model** | **Sum of Squares** | **Df** | **Mean Square** | **F** | **Sig** |
| Regression | 1251.802 | 1 | 1251.802 | 603.569 | .008b |
| Residual | 477.077 | 319 | 2.074 |  |  |
| Total | 1728.879 | 320 |  |  |  |

1. Dependent Variable: Student patronage
2. Predictors: (Constant), Price Strategy

**Source: SPSS computed results**

# Table 8: Coefficientsa of the effect of Price Strategy on student patronage of public higher institutions

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Model** | **Unstandardized**  **Coefficients** | **Standardized**  **Coefficients** | **T** | **Sig** |
| B | Std error | Beta |
| 1. (Constant) Product Strategy | 8.241  .185 | .793  .070 | .873 | .000  .008 |

a. Dependent Variable: Students’ patronage

# Source: SPSS computed results Interpretation of Result

The results on Tables 6, 7 and 8 show the linear regression analysis of the effect of price strategy on student patronage of public higher schools. Table 6 which is the model summary reveals that the correlation (relationship) between both variables (price strategy and student patronage) is 87.3 percent (see the R column), which indicates a very strong degree of correlation. The coefficient of determination (R2) of 0.724 indicates that up to 72.4 percent of the variants in the dependent variable (students’ patronage) is explained or predicted by the independent variable (price strategy). This implies that a unit change in price strategy will affect student patronage of government tertiary institutions by up to 72.4 percent when other factors are held constant. The F-test (603.569, P < 0.05) statistic in Table 7 indicates that the overall prediction of the dependent variable by the independent variable is statistically significant; therefore, the regression model provides substantive evidence to conclude that price strategy has a significant effect on student patronage of public tertiary institutions service products. Also, the coefficient table (Table 8) shows that the independent variable (price strategy) significantly contributes to the model as the P value (0.008) is less than 0.05 error margin, and the t-test result (t= 2.665) explains that the relationship between both variables is a direct and positive one. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, leading to the conclusion that price strategy has a significant effect on student patronage of services offered by universities, polythenics and colleges of Education owned by government.

# Hypothesis 3

**HO3:** Promotion strategy has no significant effect on student patronage of public higher institutions

# Table 9: Model summary of the effect of promotion strategy on customer patronage

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Model** | **R** | **R**  **Square** | **Adjusted R**  **Square** | **Std Error of the**  **Estimate** |
| 1 | .535a | .412 | .408 | 2.740 |

1. Predictors: (Constant), Promotion Strategy.
2. Source: SPSS computed results

# Table 10: ANOVAa of the effect of promotion strategy on customer patronage of public tertiary institutions.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Model** | **Sum of Square** | **Df** | **Mean Square** | **F** | **Sig** |
| 1 Regression Residual  Total | 712.068  1016.811  1728.879 | 1  319  320 | 712.068  4.421 | 161.065 | .000b |

1. Dependent Variable: Student patronage
2. Predictors: (Constant), Promotion strategy

# Source: SPSS computed results

**Table 11: Coefficientsa of the effect of promotion strategy on student patronage of public higher education**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Model** | **Unstandardized**  **Coefficients** | **Standardized**  **Coefficients** |  | **T** | **Sig** |
| B | Std Error | Beta |
| 1 (Constant) Promotion strategy | 10.789  .042 | .945  .080 | .535 | 11.413  4.525 | .000  .000 |

1. Dependent Variable: Student patronage

# Source: SPSS computed results Interpretation of Result

The results on Tables 9, 10 and 11 show the linear regression analysis of the effect of promotion strategy on students’ patronage of public tertiary education products. Table 9 whichis the model summary reveals that the correlation (relationship) between both variables (promotion strategy and student patronage) is 53.5 percent ( see in the R column), which indicates a strong degree of correlation. The coefficient of determination (R2) of 0.412 indicates that up to 41.2 percent of the variants in the dependent variable (Student patronage) is explained or predicted by the independent variable (promotion strategy). This implies that a unit change in promotion strategy will affect student patronage of public tertiary education services by up to 41.2 percent when other factors are held constant.

The F-test (161.065, P < 0.05) statistic in Table 10 indicates that the overall prediction of the dependent variable by the independent variable is statistically significant; therefore, the regression model provides substantive evidence to conclude that promotion strategy has a significant effect on student patronage of government owned tertiary institutions. Also, the coefficient table (Table 11) shows that the independent variable (promotion strategy) significantly contributes to the model as the P value (0.000) is less than 0.05 error margin, and the t-test result (t= 4.525) explains that the relationship between both variables is a direct and positive one. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, leading to the conclusion that promotion strategy has a significant effect on student patronage of public education services in tertiary levels.

# Discussion of Findings

The study reveals that there is a significant relationship between the product strategy and student patronage in public tertiary institutions of Akwa Ibom State. This finding is supported by the position of Adewale et al, (2013) which states that product influences and total quality management could serve as marketing strategy which impacts on business patronage. In Akwa Ibom State, public tertiary institutions agreed that product strategy factors responsible for the increase in student enrolment includes quality of their service product, good cordial relationship among students and Lecturers and their competitive nature of the programmes globally.

The findings of this study also reveal that there is a significant relationship between price strategy and business patronage in public higher institutions in Akwa Ibom State. According to Martins (2015) low tuition, scholarship and other pricing strategy helps to ensure long- lasting customers and repeat sales (patronage) among students. Showing customers that you value and appreciate them encourages them to refer other potential customers which may be their colleagues, friends, relatives, and others to your business. As further supported by Rouse (2015), the goal of price strategy is to ensure that student can have quality products at affordable rate and connects with the brand that can lead to on-going relationship.

The findings of this study also reveal that promotion strategies have a significant impact on student patronage in government owned higher education in Akwa Ibom State. In a study conducted by Adewale, Adesola, & Oyewale, (2013) this was confirmed as their study revealed that the relationship between promotion consideration and business performance is significant. This may be due to online promotion of the school information and referral through word of mouth marketing by students and other stakeholders of public higher education.

# Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation Summary of the Findings

From the analysis of data used in the survey research and based on the objectives of our study, the following findings were made:

* 1. Product strategy has a significant effect on student patronage of public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.
  2. There is a significant effect of pricing strategy on student patronage of public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.
  3. Promotion strategy exerts a significant effect on student patronage of public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

# Conclusion

Public tertiary institutions are faced with a lot of challenges in their service delivery daily in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State in particular, as a result of the stiff competition from the private tertiary education sector. These challenges hamper their enrolment and patronage. This study examined the marketing strategies adopted by selected government owned higher institutions and their effects on student patronage. Product strategy, pricing strategy, and promotion strategy were found to have significant effect on student patronage of public higher. The study concluded that marketing strategies are effective tools that can influence

student patronage if managed well, and can also increase student enrolment base of government owned third tier of education.

# Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the study recommended as follows:

1. Public tertiary institutions should always ensure that their product service (academic programmes) is of very high quality in order to meet up with the global standard of education. This will also guarantee student patronage and ensure great value for their money.
2. Pocket-friendly prices are recommended for their product services such as tuition, acceptance fees, transcripts and other product services.
3. It is also recommended that public tertiary institutions should use the less costly promotional tools word-of-mouth communication, social media platforms such as facebook, youtube, whatsApp, Instagram, in promoting their products. This will enable them reach a wider range of people at lower cost.

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