



Shaping Students' Choices through the 4Ps Model: An Examination of Marketisation Strategies in Tanzanian Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT:

The increasing commercialisation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has led to the widespread adoption of marketisation strategies to catch the attention of prospective students. In this regard, the current study examined how Tanzanian HEIs, both public and private, leverage the 4Ps (product, price, place, and promotion) model to shape the choices of prospective applicants. Employing a mixed methods research approach with an embedded design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected by using interview, questionnaire and document review. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve selected staff members, including public relations officers (PROs) and registrars from six HEIs. Additionally, an online questionnaire was distributed to 100 students using convenience sampling. Quantitative data were summarized in descriptive tables and analysed using inferential statistics such as Chi-square and Kruskal-Wallis Test, while qualitative data were thematically examined. Qualitative analysis unveiled that HEIs in Tanzania employ diverse program offerings, brand identity enhancement, tuition-based revenue models, and industry partnerships to influence students' choices during the application process. Quantitative analysis displayed variances in the perceived effectiveness of marketing strategies utilized by Tanzanian HEIs. Significantly, differences between public and private universities were observed regarding the use of product and place as marketing strategies. These results suggest that Tanzanian HEIs have embraced a comprehensive marketing approach, integrating the 4Ps model to shape prospective students' decisions effectively. The study advocates for HEIs to enhance their brand identities collaboratively and expand their partnerships globally to enhance visibility in terms of price, product, promotion, and place as outlined in the 4Ps model. Public-private collaborations to enhance access and equity were found to be underutilized.

Keywords: Higher education marketing, 4Ps model, marketisation strategies, student choice

ABSTRAK:

Meningkatnya komersialisasi Institusi Pendidikan Tinggi (PT) telah menyebabkan meluasnya penerapan strategi marketisasi untuk menarik perhatian calon mahasiswa. Dalam hal ini, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana perguruan tinggi Tanzania, baik negeri maupun swasta, memanfaatkan model 4P (produk, harga, tempat, dan promosi) untuk menentukan pilihan calon pelamar. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan penelitian metode campuran dengan desain tertanam, data kualitatif dan kuantitatif dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, kuesioner, dan telaah dokumen. Wawancara semi-terstruktur dilakukan terhadap dua belas anggota staf terpilih, termasuk petugas hubungan masyarakat (PRO) dan panitera dari enam perguruan tinggi. Selain itu, kuesioner online didistribusikan kepada 100 siswa menggunakan convenience sampling. Data kuantitatif dirangkum dalam tabel deskriptif dan dianalisis menggunakan statistik inferensial seperti Uji Chi-square dan Kruskal-Wallis, sedangkan data kualitatif diperiksa secara tematis. Analisis kualitatif mengungkapkan bahwa Perguruan Tinggi di Tanzania menerapkan beragam penawaran program, peningkatan identitas merek, model pendapatan berbasis biaya kuliah, dan kemitraan industri untuk memengaruhi pilihan siswa selama proses pendaftaran. Analisis kuantitatif menunjukkan perbedaan dalam persepsi efektivitas strategi pemasaran yang digunakan oleh Perguruan Tinggi Tanzania. Perbedaan yang signifikan antara universitas negeri dan swasta terlihat dalam penggunaan produk dan tempat sebagai strategi pemasaran. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa Perguruan Tinggi Tanzania telah menerapkan pendekatan pemasaran yang komprehensif, mengintegrasikan model 4P untuk membentuk keputusan calon

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mahasiswa secara efektif. Studi ini menganjurkan HEI untuk meningkatkan identitas merek mereka secara kolaboratif dan memperluas kemitraan mereka secara global untuk meningkatkan visibilitas dalam hal harga, produk, promosi, dan tempat sebagaimana diuraikan dalam model 4P. Kolaborasi pemerintah-swasta untuk meningkatkan akses dan kesetaraan ternyata kurang dimanfaatkan.

Kata Kunci: Pemasaran Perguruan Tinggi, Model 4Ps, Strategi Pemasaran, Pilihan Mahasiswa.

A. INTRODUCTION

The higher education landscape worldwide has undergone a significant transformation in recent decades, marked by the increasing commercialization and the adoption of marketisation strategies by higher education institutions (HEIs) (Mkunde & Dachi, 2023; Zhang, 2017). This shift has been driven by various factors, including reduced government funding, the emergence of private HEIs, and growing competition for student enrolments (Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2023; Mkunde & Dachi, 2024). In response, HEIs have been compelled to adopt a more proactive and strategic approach to marketing, shifting away from their traditional roles as public service providers to embracing a more market-oriented mindset (Hall, 2018; Mogaji et al., 2020). The role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the global knowledge economy has become increasingly significant, as they are tasked with the dual mandate of fostering intellectual advancement and serving as engines of socioeconomic development (Hall, 2018; Watson, 2019; Zhang, 2017). Within the broader framework of the global higher education landscape, HEIs are subject to various supranational and national policies, regulations, and frameworks that shape their strategic priorities and operational practices (UNESCO, 2022).

Marketisation, a concept that has gained prominence in the higher education discourse, refers to the adoption of market-oriented practices by HEIs to attract students, generate revenue, and enhance their competitiveness (Clark et al., 2020). This phenomenon involves the incorporation

of various market-driven principles and practices, such as competition, institutional autonomy, diversified funding, performance measurement, consumer choice, marketing and branding, entrepreneurialism, performance-based incentives, accountability, and flexibility (Mkunde & Dachi, 2024; Muya & Tundui, 2021). Together, these aspects shape the transformation of HEIs towards a market-driven approach, aiming to drive efficiency, innovation, and responsiveness to consumer demands. However, in the pursuit of market-driven goals, it is crucial for HEIs to maintain a strong focus on enhancing the provision of quality education and upholding their core academic values (Wu & Naidoo, 2016). The increasing commercialisation of higher education has raised concerns among various educational stakeholders about the potential negative implications, including the risk of compromising academic integrity, the widening of social inequalities, and the prioritization of profit over quality (Masele & Rwehikiza, 2021; Mkunde & Dachi, 2024; Suru, 2021; UNESCO, 2022).

The phenomenon of marketisation has gained significant traction within the higher education sectors of many developed countries, as HEIs have increasingly embraced market-oriented practices to enhance their competitiveness and generate revenue. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the higher education system has undergone a profound transformation, with institutions adopting strategies such as aggressive marketing, the diversification of funding sources, and the implementation of performance-based incentives to attract students and secure their financial

sustainability (Clark et al., 2020; Watson, 2019). Similarly, in Turkey, the higher education landscape has witnessed a greater emphasis on institutional autonomy, entrepreneurialism, and the implementation of accountability frameworks, as universities strive to cater to the evolving needs of an increasingly discerning student population (Çağırkan, 2021; Eker İşçioğlu & Ertürk, 2017). Meanwhile, in China, the rapid expansion of the higher education sector has been accompanied by a shift towards more market-driven practices, including the introduction of tuition fees, the establishment of private universities, and the implementation of performance-based funding models (Zhang, 2017). Across these developed higher education systems, the pursuit of market-driven strategies has been driven by factors such as reduced public funding, the need to enhance institutional prestige and global rankings, and the desire to position universities as attractive options for students seeking high-quality, relevant, and cost-effective educational experiences (Musselin, 2018; Shahnaz & Qadir, 2019).

The adoption of marketisation strategies by HEIs is particularly evident in the context of developing countries, where the higher education sector has experienced rapid expansion and diversification (Carr-Hill, 2020; UNESCO, 2022). Tanzania, as a developing country, has witnessed a significant increase in the number of HEIs over the past two decades, driven by the liberalization of the higher education sector and the entry of private providers (Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2023). This growth has led to heightened competition among HEIs, as they vie for a share of the increasingly discerning and demanding student market (Mgaiwa, 2018; Mkunde & Dachi, 2023). Similar trends have been observed in other African countries, such as Nigeria and Kenya, where the higher education

landscape has become increasingly diversified, with the proliferation of both public and private institutions, each employing various market-oriented strategies to attract and retain students (Farinloye et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2022; Mgaiwa, 2021a; UNESCO, 2022).

HEIs are established under the University charter that require the HEIs to be independent while performing their core functions, namely teaching, research and public service (TCU, 2019). Performing these noble functions, there is a need for each HEI to have resources such as qualified human resources, modern infrastructure and facilities, funding for research and outreach programs (Mkunde & Dachi, 2023). However, the prioritization of market-oriented policies and entrepreneurialism may have unintended implications for the core functions of HEIs. In Tanzania, for instance, the government established the Commission for Universities (TCU) in 2005, replacing the former Higher Education Accreditation Council (HEAC), had primary responsibility for registering and accrediting private universities only, the TCU was charged with the practical tasks of registering, accrediting, and overseeing both public and private universities in the country designating it as the agency responsible for registering, accrediting, and overseeing both public and private universities in the country (Mgaiwa, 2021b). This shift was enabled by the liberalisation of the higher education sector, as outlined in the Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 1995 and the Higher Education Policy (HEP) of 1999, which allowed and encouraged the private sector to establish and operate private universities and other higher education institutions, often in partnership with the government (Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2023). As a result, Tanzania has witnessed a significant increase in the number of both public and

private HEIs, leading to heightened competition for students (NBS, 2022; UNESCO, 2022). However, this rapid expansion has also brought about various challenges, including a lack of capacity in terms of adequate, qualified, and experienced academics to undertake quality assurance functions, a shortage of funding, a lack of viable quality assurance policies, a lack of awareness on quality assurance issues, and a lack of academic leadership (Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2023; Mkunde & Dachi, 2024). These issues have posed significant obstacles to ensuring the quality and sustainability of the higher education sector in Tanzania, even as HEIs have increasingly adopted market-driven strategies to attract students.

The expansion and diversification of the higher education sector in Tanzania is well-documented through vital statistical data. According to the latest reports from the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU), the number of accredited higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country has increased significantly, rising from a single university college in 1961 to the current total of 49 HEIs, comprising 34 full-fledged universities and 15 university colleges (TCU, 2024a). This expansion has been accompanied by a marked increase in student enrollment across both the public and private higher education sectors. Enrollment figures reveal an upward trajectory, with the total number of students enrolled in HEIs rising from 209,144 in the academic year 2017/2018 to a projected 253,701 by 2023/2024 (NBS, 2022; TCU, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). While the public HEI sector has maintained a robust enrollment, reaching 162,553 students in 2022/2023 and projected to remain at a similar level of 162,479 in the upcoming academic year, the private HEI sector has exhibited a steadier upward trend, with enrollment increasing

from 68,851 in 2017/2018 to a projected 91,222 in 2023/2024 (TCU, 2023). This significant expansion of the higher education landscape, driven by the government's policies aimed at promoting private sector participation and enhancing the provision of quality educational opportunities, has inevitably intensified competition among HEIs as they vie for a share of the growing student market (Amani, 2022; Kessy, 2020; Mkunde & Dachi, 2023).

In this context, HEIs in Tanzania have been compelled to establish their distinct brand identities and leverage various marketing strategies to attract and retain prospective students (Amani, 2022; Muya & Tundui, 2021; Tefurukwa, 2023). The utilisation of these marketisation strategies, however, operates within a complex and unclear environment, which has raised concerns among various educational stakeholders (Mkunde & Dachi, 2023). Concerns have been raised about the potential negative implications of the commercialisation of higher education, including the risk of compromising academic values, the widening of social inequalities, and the prioritization of profit over quality.

The 4Ps (product, price, place, and promotion) model, which originates from the field of marketing, has been widely adopted by HEIs as a framework for developing and implementing their marketing strategies (Kotler & Fox, 1995). This model provides a comprehensive approach to understanding how HEIs can shape the choices of prospective students through strategic decisions and actions related to their academic programs (product), tuition fees and financial aid (price), the accessibility and availability of their educational services (place), and the various marketing communication channels used to reach and attract students (promotion) (Abbas et al., 2021; Kidulani, 2013).

Access to higher education remains a concern in Tanzania, particularly for disadvantaged groups and those in rural areas (Carr-Hill, 2020; Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2023). The Tanzanian government has undertaken concerted efforts to bolster access, equity, and inclusivity in the higher education sector through establishment of University Act of 2005 and the development of Education and Training Policy 2014. According to the Universities Act of 2005, HEIs are empowered to offer degree programmes which last for three to 5 years depending on one's type of degree programme (URT, 2005). As in many other countries, HE in Tanzania epitomises formal or official schooling. To gain direct admission to university-level studies, prospective students must complete advanced secondary education and fulfil the minimum eligibility criteria established by the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU). Alternatively, individuals possessing relevant diploma-level qualifications may be considered for entry into select degree programs. However, the rapid expansion of Tanzania's higher education landscape has intensified competition among HEIs to attract prospective students (Mkunde & Dachi, 2023). This dynamic has compelled institutions to increasingly engage in strategic marketing and recruitment efforts. While such initiatives enhance institutional visibility and appeal, they also risk posing challenges for some qualified individuals to successfully access higher education opportunities, particularly those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.

Despite the growing importance of marketing in the Tanzanian higher education sector, there is a scarcity of empirical studies exploring the predominant marketing strategies employed by HEIs for branding and student recruitment, particularly

through the lens of the 4Ps model. The existing literature on higher education marketing in Tanzania is limited, with most studies focusing on broader issues related to the massification and privatization of the higher education system (Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2023; Mkunde & Dachi, 2023). There is a need to gain a deeper understanding of the specific marketing approaches used by Tanzanian HEIs, both public and private, and how these strategies influence the choice of prospective students.

This study, therefore, sought to address this significant gap in the literature by assessing how Tanzanian higher education institutions utilize the foundational 4Ps of the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion) to attract and retain students in the context of a rapidly expanding and diversified higher education landscape. The findings of this study have the potential to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the Tanzanian higher education system by illuminating effective marketing practices that shape student choice and enrolment. This study is underpinned by the following objectives: to explore the marketing strategies predominantly employed for branding higher education institutions in Tanzania, and to assess the contextually relevant marketization strategies utilized by Tanzanian higher education institutions (HEIs) to attract and retain students.

B. METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach, specifically utilizing an embedded mixed research design to comprehensively examine the marketisation strategies utilised by Tanzanian higher education institutions (HEIs) through the lens of the 4Ps marketing mix framework. This design is effective where a quantitative data set plays a supportive, secondary role within a primarily qualitative study (Creswell

& Creswell, 2018). The embedded design implies that data from different students and staff members were collected independently and simultaneously through separate methods. The qualitative data were collected from administrative staff using interviews and document review, while the quantitative data were collected from students in the selected higher education institutions (HEIs). An in-depth, semi-structured interviews was conducted with the selected admission officers and public relation officers (PROs) from six sampled private and public HEIs of Dodoma, Morogoro and Dar es Salaam regions in Tanzania. The interview protocol was designed to elicit detailed information on the institutions' approaches to promotional activities. All interviews were audio-recorded under informed consent of the respondents, transcribed verbatim, and analysed using a thematic analysis approach to identify recurring patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Document review was also used to comprehensively review a diverse range of marketing strategies both printed and electronic materials found through official statistics documents by TCU and HEIs, TCU guide book, strategic plans, HEIs websites, and social media platforms.

Furthermore, a questionnaire was used to collect data to current undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in the selected six HEIs who were obtained by using convenience sampling technique to supplement data collected from staff. The survey instrument measured students' experiences regarding the 4Ps marketing strategies employed by their respective institutions. Questions assessed factors such as program offerings, tuition and financial aid, campus locations and accessibility, as well as the effectiveness of promotional efforts in influencing their choice of institution. Quantitative data collected through questionnaires was analyzed

descriptively and inferentially by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Inferential analysis performed were chi-square test and Kruskal-Wallis test. Chi-square test was applied to test for the significance levels of the obtained findings while Kruskal-Wallis test was applied to identify existence of significance differences between public and private owned HEIs in terms of marketing strategies. A total of 100 students participated in the study and 12 staff members from six HEIs. The qualitative and quantitative data were integrated during the analysis and interpretation stages to provide a comprehensive understanding of the marketisation practices and their impact on student choice.

A comprehensive pilot investigation at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) - Dodoma Centre was conducted to assess the content validity and reliability of the questionnaires and interview guides used in this study. This preliminary phase was instrumental in making necessary modifications to the research instruments. To ascertain the internal consistency of the quantitative survey, Likert scale items were incorporated, and Cronbach's alpha was utilized as a measure of reliability, revealing a value of .83 for the items related to the research question - exceeding the minimum reliability threshold ($\alpha \geq .70$) and suggesting effective measurement of the intended construct. Additionally, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sample Adequacy (KMO) and the anti-image correlation matrix (AntiI) were employed to assess the validity of the collected quantitative data, with all proxies of the research objective yielding KMO and AntiI-values of 0.5 and above, indicating the data were valid and adequate for the necessary numerical analyses. Ethical considerations were ensured throughout the study, with the University of Dodoma's

Research Ethical Committee reviewing and granting ethical clearance (MA.84/261/68/2) on behalf of the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH), and informed consent obtained from all participants while maintaining their anonymity and confidentiality.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Result

This study investigated the predominant marketing strategies employed by higher education institutions (HEIs) in Tanzania for branding purposes and assessing how Tanzanian higher education institutions utilize the foundational 4Ps of the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion) to attract prospective students. To this end, the study aimed to obtain a comprehensive sample of 112 participants, comprising 100 students and 12 staff members from both public and private HEIs in Tanzania, as shown in Table 1. The section then presents the response rate of the participants and the key findings of the study.

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Variable	Sub-scale	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	52	46.4%
	Female	60	53.6%
Educational level	Bachelor degree	68	60.7%
	Masters	39	34.8%
	PhD	5	4.5%
Age	< 21	16	14.3%
	21-30	50	44.6%
	31-40	32	28.6%
	41-50	13	11.6
	>50	1	0.9%

Occupation	Students	100	89.3%
	Staff	12	10.7%
Ownership	Public	87	77.7%
	Private	25	22.3%

The demographic data presented in Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the participants involved in the study. The sample was composed of 52 male (46.4%) and 60 female (53.6%) individuals, the majority of whom held bachelor's degrees (60.7%), while 34.8% and 4.5% had earned master's and doctoral degrees, respectively. The age distribution was skewed towards the 21-30 (44.6%) and 31-40 (28.6%) cohorts, with smaller representations from younger and older age groups. The sample was predominantly comprised of students (89.3%), with the remaining 10.7% employed as staff, and the institutional affiliation was predominantly public (77.7%) rather than private (22.3%). This comprehensive demographic profile enhances the contextual understanding of the study's findings and strengthens the ability to draw meaningful inferences from the data.

a. Marketing Strategies Predominantly used for Branding Higher Education Institutions

The primary study objective inquired about the available marketing strategies predominantly used for branding Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Tanzania. Data gathered from members of staff were gathered through individual interviews. Subsequently, staffs' responses were subjected into themes. The sampled staff members were asked to elaborate on how prospective students become aware of their institute and programs. The data, gathered through in-depth interviews with institutional

officers, reveals notable variations in the reported utilization of these strategies.

b. Social Media and University Websites

The strategic utilization of social media platforms and institutional websites as part of a holistic marketing approach has emerged as a pivotal element in the higher education landscape, as evidenced by the findings from the study. As one officer stated:

"We harness the power of social media channels as integral tools for strategic marketing and meaningful engagement. By leveraging these platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube and Twitter, we effectively connect with our target audience, share compelling stories, and cultivate interactive experiences that foster a vibrant online community around our institute".

This highlights that by harnessing the power of social media channels, such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter, higher education institutions (HEIs) are able to effectively connect with their target audience, share compelling narratives, and cultivate interactive online experiences that foster a vibrant community around the institution. Another officer added:

"We have a strong website with all information needed for students. We also use influential people's platforms like the Instagram account of MILLARD AYO for marketing, as it has more than 1 million followers, making it easy to reach the broader society and customer base."

These excerpts emphasize that this multifaceted approach to digital marketing and online engagement plays a decisive role in attracting and retaining prospective students, as well as fostering deeper connections with the broader community, ultimately contributing to the HEIs' overall competitiveness and growth in the dynamic higher education sector.

c. Education Fairs and Events

Participation in education fairs and events organized by educational authorities and industry partners emerged as another significant marketing strategy, recognized by 91.7% of the interviewees. As one officer emphasized:

"We participate in education fairs and events organized by educational authorities to connect with potential students face-to-face. We also use Saba Saba Day. In the exhibitions, we participate to showcase our courses, where our internationalization unit is present to support foreign students."

These extracts indicate that education fairs and events serve as strategic platforms for student recruitment, enabling institutions to connect with a diverse pool of applicants and showcase their academic programs, admission requirements, and campus life. Education fairs and events bring together various stakeholders, fostering networking and the establishment of collaborative partnerships that can contribute to the enhancement of an institution's academic reputation and the enrichment of its educational offerings. Additionally, the direct engagement with prospective students and other stakeholders helps HEIs to provide valuable feedback and market intelligence, informing institutional decision-making, program development, and marketing strategies to ensure responsiveness to the evolving needs and preferences of the target audience.

d. Career Guidance Programs

Conducting programs such as career guidance in schools or camps was also identified as an important marketing strategy, as it enables HEIs to reach out and connect with potential students in a meaningful way, providing them with valuable information and establishing a rapport. As one officer stated:

"We also visit schools and JKT camps to organize career guidance sessions to directly interact with students. Furthermore, we actively collaborate with industry partners and conduct outreach programs that expose potential students to the unique opportunities our institute offers."

The findings highlight that HEIs are able to directly interact with potential students, provide them with valuable information about academic programs and industry collaborations, and establish meaningful connections that support the students' decision-making process. This shows that these career guidance programs, often conducted in partnership with industry stakeholders, serve as strategic marketing tools that enhance the HEI's visibility, credibility, and appeal among prospective students, ultimately contributing to the institution's ability to attract and retain a diverse pool of talented individuals

e. Traditional Advertising Methods

The utilization of traditional advertising methods, such as TV, radio, and newspapers, was recognized by 75% of the interviewees, suggesting that these channels still hold significant reach and impact on the target audience. As one officer mentioned:

"Our institute adopts a comprehensive marketing strategy to reach prospective students. We have our Institute ambassador who moves around schools currently to invite students, and we also use traditional means like radio, TV, brochures, and banners at the center of the town for everyone to see."

The findings suggest that traditional advertising methods still possess the ability to reach a wider and more diverse audience, including those who may have limited access to or familiarity with digital media. The perceived credibility and longevity associated with traditional advertising formats enable higher education institutions (HEIs) to complement their digital marketing efforts and reinforce their brand messaging

across multiple touchpoints, enhancing their visibility and appeal among prospective students. As highlighted by one of the institutional officers, the HEIs' marketing strategies often involve a combination of traditional and emerging digital tactics. This includes the use of Institute ambassadors, radio and television advertisements, brochures, and the placement of prominent physical signage and banners within the community. The strategic integration of these traditional advertising methods allows HEIs to leverage the distinct strengths and reach of both conventional and digital marketing channels, ultimately optimizing their marketing effectiveness and strengthening their competitive position in the dynamic higher education landscape.

f. Campus Events

The findings reveal that campus events, including tours, open ceremonies, and graduation, were identified as valuable opportunities to showcase the campus culture, engage with prospective students, and create a positive impression. As one officer stated:

"We proactively extend invitations to prospective students, warmly welcoming them to experience our vibrant campus life through a diverse range of engaging events and open days. We have events, whatever small they may be, and we make them bigger, including graduation, which is for marketing purposes. We demand the management to increase the budget for marketing those events to have images and post them through social media platforms. We also have a research week, which is in its 9th year."

Additionally, the data suggests that HEIs are intentionally amplifying the scale and visibility of these campus events, recognizing their potential to serve as powerful marketing tools. By increasing the budget for marketing these events and actively leveraging social media platforms to share visuals and experiences, the

institutions aim to further enhance the reach and impact of these engagement opportunities with prospective students. Furthermore, the inclusion of research-focused events, such as the 9-year-old research week, demonstrates the institutions' strategic efforts to showcase their academic and research prowess, which can act as a key differentiator in attracting high-caliber applicants.

g. Alumni, Current Students, and Staff as Ambassadors

The findings also reveal the importance of leveraging alumni, current students, and staff as ambassadors to promote the institution. As one officer emphasized:

"Our institute harnesses the immense potential of our esteemed alumni network, strategically leveraging them as passionate ambassadors to champion our institute's values, accomplishments, and transformative educational experiences to prospective students."

Another officer added, "From an internal perspective, I believe that a strong alumni engagement process is crucial for promoting our programs and institute. Our alumni are our brand ambassadors, and their success stories and testimonials carry significant weight in attracting prospective students."

h. Scholarships as a Marketing Strategy

Furthermore, the use of scholarships as a marketing strategy was highlighted, as it serves as a powerful tool to attract and retain talented students, especially in specific academic disciplines. As one officer stated, "Our institute is proud to offer scholarships specifically for humanities studies to our prospective students, covering approximately 50% of the tuition fees. These scholarships are designed to recognize and support the academic excellence and passion of students pursuing

humanities disciplines." Another officer mentioned,

"We are affiliated with international universities to share some programs and experiences. Our students study here for the first semester, and then they go to those international universities for the second semester. We provide scholarships to Poland and Australia for our new students, especially master's students who pursue philosophy, but next year, we will also offer scholarships for education programs."

The varying degrees of utilization across different marketing strategies suggest that HEIs may prioritize certain approaches over others based on factors such as institutional preferences, resource availability, and the perceived effectiveness of these techniques in influencing their target student population.

Based on the findings from this study, it is concluded that higher education institutions (HEIs) in Tanzania have adopted a comprehensive and integrated marketing approach to attract prospective students. The study's results indicate that HEIs have embraced a diverse range of strategies, including a strong emphasis on digital marketing tactics, strategic participation in education fairs and events, and the incorporation of career guidance programs in their marketing efforts.

These findings were in agreement with the existing literature on branding and promotion within the higher education sector. Researchers have long emphasized the pivotal role of digital marketing, particularly the strategic use of social media and institutional websites, in enhancing the visibility and appeal of HEIs among prospective students (Bohara et al., 2022; Hall, 2018; Mkunde & Dachi, 2023; Mukosa et al., 2023). The study's findings align with this research, suggesting that HEIs in Tanzania have successfully leveraged digital platforms to engage in dialogic communication and foster stronger

relationships with their target audience, as highlighted by Constantinides. Furthermore, the study's emphasis on the strategic participation in education fairs and events resonates with the scholarly discourse on the value of experiential marketing in the higher education context, recognizing the importance of face-to-face interactions and immersive experiences in enabling HEIs to directly connect with potential applicants and showcase their offerings (Kwang, 2019; Masele & Rwehikiza, 2021).

i. Contextual Relevant Marketisation Strategies to attract students in HEIs

The second research objective aimed to assess how Tanzanian higher education institutions utilize the 4Ps of the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion)

to attract and retain students in the context of a rapidly expanding and diversified higher education landscape. To achieve this objective, data was gathered from a sample of students through a questionnaire. Subsequently, three different types of analysis were performed: the first one was descriptive analysis that employed mean and standard deviation for result interpretation; the second one was a chi-square test that utilised probability values (p-values) to assess the significance level of variables; the third analysis was Kruskal-Wallis Test that employed p-values to identify significant differences among variables. The analysed strategies were categorized into the four Ps of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion.

Table 2. Contextual relevant of marketisation strategies

	Strategies	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std
PRODUCT	Variety of academic programs	100	1	5	3.48	1.28
	Curriculum and teaching methodologies	100	1	5	3.43	1.27
	Emphasize on practical skills development	100	1	5	3.41	1.27
	Programs align with industry demands	100	1	5	3.07	1.30
	Supportive learning environment	100	1	5	3.28	1.33
	Product weighted mean				3.33	1.29
PRICE	Tuition fees are affordable	100	1	5	3.41	1.31
	There is various financial aid options	100	1	5	3.05	1.15
	There is value for money	100	1	5	3.08	1.23
	There is flexible payment plans	100	1	5	3.21	1.20
	Tuition fees are transparently communicated	100	1	5	3.34	1.13
	Price weighted mean				3.22	1.20
PLACE	Campus facilities are modern	100	1	5	3.26	1.38
	Campus is conveniently located	100	1	5	3.32	1.27
	There is conducive learning environment	100	1	5	3.39	1.30
	There is online learning opportunities	100	1	5	2.93	1.31
	University location is accessible	100	1	5	3.07	1.27
	Place weighted mean				3.19	1.31
PROMOTION	There is use of digital advertising platforms	100	1	5	3.71	1.19
	Actively engages in public relations activities	100	1	5	3.67	1.16
	Provision of accurate information	100	1	5	3.58	1.14
	University participates in education fairs	100	1	5	3.60	1.13
	There is personalized communication	100	1	5	3.26	1.14
	Promotion weighted mean				3.53	1.14
OVERALL MEAN					3.32	1.24

Interpretation of the mean scores

4.01-5.00 = Very appropriate /very effective
3.01-4.00 = Somehow appropriate / somehow effective
2.01-3.00 = Somehow inappropriate /somehow ineffective
1.00-2.00 = Very inappropriate / very ineffective
SDV > 1.5 = Indicate significant deviation of responses

Findings in Table 2 indicate variations in the perceived appropriateness of different marketing strategies employed by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Tanzania. The findings suggest that while some aspects of the marketing strategies are considered somewhat appropriate, others exhibit varying degrees of appropriateness or inappropriateness. Furthermore, Kruskal-Wallis Test conducted in Table 3 aimed to assess if there were significant differences in the contextual relevance of using product, price, place, and promotion as marketing strategies between public and privately owned Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Table 3. Contextual relevant of marketisation strategies with regard to ownership of the institution

Strategies		Mean	STD	DF	Test statistic
Product	Public	3.21	0.02	1	3.84
	Private	3.84	0.07		
Price	Public	3.16	0.01	1	0.11
	Private	3.26	0.06		
Place	Public	3.03	0.02	1	6.84
	Private	3.79	0.07		
Promotion	Public	3.52	0.01	1	1.36
	Private	3.84	0.05		

The findings in Table 3 indicate that there were statistically significant differences between public and private universities in terms of utilising product and place as marketing strategies. The findings suggest that there may not be substantial differences

between public and private universities in terms of the contextual relevance of employing price and promotion as marketing strategies. These findings provide evidence that private universities in Tanzania tend to have a relatively stronger contextual relevance in utilizing product and place as marketing strategies compared to public universities. However, the differences in mean scores, particularly for price and promotion, were not statistically significant.

The review of documents from TCU vitalstats of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Tanzania reveals a diverse program landscape, with 2,190 programs offered in the 2023/24 academic year, comprising 59% undergraduate and 41% postgraduate degrees. Public universities dominated the program offerings, with a stronger presence at the master's and doctoral levels compared to private institutions. Enrolment data indicates that Education was the most preferred field of study, followed by Business and Medicine/Health Sciences. The number of university graduates has shown a positive trend, increasing from 46,294 in 2017 to 56,520 in 2023, a 22.1% rise. While the overall gender distribution of graduates in 2023 was fairly balanced, with 49% female and 51% male, a disparity was observed between public and private HEIs, with the former producing a higher number of male graduates (TCU, 2023, 2024b). This comprehensive overview of program offerings, enrolment patterns, and graduation trends provides valuable insights into the state of higher education in Tanzania.

2. Discussion

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the multifaceted marketing strategies employed by HEIs in Tanzania, highlighting the significance of the 4Ps in shaping student enrolment patterns. Regarding "Promotion," the study aligns with existing research on the increasing importance of digital marketing in higher education. For instance, a study by Zhang (2017) found that prospective students heavily rely on university websites and online platforms when researching and selecting HEIs. The study found that Tanzanian higher education institutions, both private and public, employ a diverse range of marketing strategies, blending traditional and digital approaches, to enhance their brand image. However, the variations observed in the perceived appropriateness of marketing strategies between public and private universities underscores the need for contextual sensitivity, as highlighted by (Masele & Rwehikiza, 2021; Nuriadi, 2021). Their research on the marketisation of higher education in developing countries emphasized the importance of aligning marketing approaches with institutional characteristics and the unique considerations of the target market. The findings from the current study suggest that HEIs in Tanzania should carefully calibrate their product and place strategies based on their institutional type and the specific needs of their prospective student population.

Furthermore, the findings on the "Product" dimension raise important questions about the relevance and marketability of academic programs offered by HEIs in Tanzania. Studies by (Clark et al., 2020; Mkunde & Dachi, 2023) have highlighted the mismatch between higher education program offerings and the evolving needs of the labour market in many

African countries, including Tanzania. The findings on the "Product" dimension reveal that public universities dominate the program offerings, particularly in fields like Education, Business, and Medicine/Health Sciences. While this suggests a wide range of academic options, the enrolment patterns indicate that certain programs are more popular among students, while others, such as STEM fields, have relatively low enrolment.

The analysis of "Price" reveals significant disparities in tuition fees between public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) in Tanzania. Public HEIs offer more affordable options, with bachelor's program tuition ranging from TZS 700,000 to TZS 2,200,000 and master's programs costing TZS 2,330,000 to TZS 3,150,000, compared to their private counterparts. This price differentiation appears to influence student enrolment patterns, with more students opting for public HEIs due to the affordability of tuition. Additionally, the cost of hostels and other contributions has been shown to contribute to the disparity in student numbers, as public HEIs typically charge lower hostel fees, around TZS 210,000 per year, compared to private accommodations that can cost over TZS 500,000 annually. This affordability factor shapes students' perceptions of the services provided by HEIs and poses challenges for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, potentially leading to postponement and dropout (Masanja, 2019; Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2023; Nuriadi, 2021). The statistics from the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) indicate that financial constraints are a major issue, with 164 students postponing their studies in 2020/2021, 331 in 2021/2022, and 267 in 2022/2023 (TCU, 2023, 2024b). This suggests that the range of tuition fees and associated costs significantly impact

enrolment and accessibility in the Tanzanian higher education landscape.

The findings on "Place" underscore the significance of geographic location in shaping student enrolment patterns, aligning with the research of Kumar (2019) and Kwang (2019), who highlighted the importance of institutional distribution and accessibility in expanding educational opportunities. Public HEIs situated in more populous and economically vibrant regions, such as Morogoro, Dar es Salaam, and Dodoma, consistently exhibit higher student enrolment figures compared to institutions located in more remote areas. This suggests that the "place" or accessibility of HEIs plays a crucial role in shaping student choice, with more centrally located institutions having an advantage in attracting a larger pool of applicants. A study by Farinloye et al. (2020) observe that a university's brand identity is crucial for visibility and differentiation, and institutions must strategically manage this to establish a strong reputation and appeal to prospective students. While there is a growing demand for higher education in Nigeria, the limited supply of universities, particularly in certain regions, highlights opportunities for expanding the university system to meet the needs of the large and growing population. Collectively, the findings of the study provide a multifaceted understanding of the 4Ps and their influence on student choice of HEIs in Tanzania. However, the critical examination of the study's limitations and the incorporation of relevant empirical research can strengthen the analysis and inform more robust policy recommendations to enhance the Tanzanian higher education landscape.

D. CONCLUSION

The examination of the 4Ps (Price, Product, Promotion, and Place) in the Tanzanian higher education landscape reveals that institutions are increasingly

adopting marketisation strategies to shape student choice and enrolment patterns. The significant price differential between public and private higher education institutions (HEIs), with public HEIs offering more affordable tuition and associated costs, is a major factor influencing student enrolment decisions. Additionally, the quality and perceived value of academic programs, as well as the range of extracurricular activities and support services provided by HEIs, are important considerations for prospective students. Effective communication of the HEI's brand identity, unique selling points, and value proposition through targeted marketing and outreach strategies is crucial for visibility and differentiation in the competitive higher education market. Furthermore, the geographic distribution and accessibility of HEIs across Tanzania play a role in student choice, highlighting the need for strategic expansion and equitable distribution of higher education opportunities. Overall, the findings suggest that Tanzanian HEIs, both public and private, must adopt a comprehensive marketisation approach, leveraging the 4Ps, to effectively shape student choice and enhance their competitiveness in the evolving higher education landscape. The implications of the examination of marketisation strategies in Tanzanian higher education highlight the need for multifaceted interventions by policymakers, higher education institution (HEI) administrators, and regulatory bodies. Policymakers and HEI administrators should consider strategies to address the affordability gap between public and private institutions, such as targeted financial aid, scholarships, or cost-sharing mechanisms, in order to improve access and equity in the higher education system. Additionally, HEIs, both public and private, should enhance their efforts to communicate the value

proposition and quality of their programs to prospective students, emphasizing factors beyond just the price, through strengthened brand identities, targeted marketing strategies, and greater engagement with potential students and their families. Furthermore, the Tanzanian government and higher education regulatory bodies should explore ways to expand the capacity of the higher education system, particularly in underserved regions, to accommodate the growing demand for university education, which may involve incentivizing the establishment of new public and private HEIs or supporting the expansion of existing institutions. Ultimately, collaborative efforts between public and private HEIs, as well as with the government, could help address the regional disparities in university access and optimize the utilization of resources across the Tanzanian higher education landscape.

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