

CONSUMER SECURITY AND BRAND PROTECTION (QUALITY ASSURANCE) AS PREDICTORS OF SUSTAINABLE PATRONAGE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated consumer security and brand protection (quality assurance) as predictors of sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria. Two research questions were answered while two hypotheses were tested. This study adopted a correlational research design with a population of 147 (UPH-78, RUST-39 and IAUOE 30) Head of Departments in the three public Universities in Rivers State. The three universities have 25 (UPH-12, RUST-7 and IAUOE 6) faculties respectively. The sample size of the study was 117 (UPH-62, RUST-31 and IAUOE-24) Head of Departments. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to arrive at the sample size representing 80% of the population of the Head of Departments. Consumer Security Scale (CSS), Brand Protection Scale (BPS) and Sustainable Academic Patronage Scale (SAPS) were used for data collection. Face validity was ascertained for the instruments. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of Consumer Security Scale (CSS) and Brand Protection Scale (BPS) are 0.84 and 0.76 while that of Sustainable Academic Patronage Scale (SAPS) is 0.74. The research questions were answered using simple regression while hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with simple regression at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that consumer security and brand protection (quality assurance) significantly predicted sustainable patronage to a high extent in public universities in Rivers State Nigeria to a very high extent. It was recommended that the school authority should improve on the extent of provision of conducive and secured learning school environment for sustained school patronage. The Heads of Department should ensure that the right contents are delivered to the students for sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State.

Keywords: Consumer security, brand protection (quality assurance) and sustainable patronage

Introduction

A public university can be delineated to that which is owned by the state or federal government. The ownership is not by an individual as it is obtainable in the private universities. These universities are sponsored or funded with significant amount of public funds. Public universities in the view of Ogidi (2016) are a higher learners' institution that are owned by the state or federal government but are funded from the public contribution through taxation and remittances. It is university that is owned by the nation or the state. It is reported that the number of private universities is more than that of federal or state universities. It is statistical proven that private universities number up to 79 while federal universities are 43 and state universities are 45 respectively (Statista.com, 2020). The growing trend of private universities cannot be compared with that of state or federal universities. The establishments of private universities have put the federal and state universities in a serious competitive mode. It is worthy to note that public universities in Nigeria as well as those in the South-East zone of the country have been reduced to glorified secondary schools (Ogidi, 2016). The level of abandonment of public universities

in Nigeria is a strong pointer that its operations have been adversely affected (Ozioko, 2018). These public universities are further debased and derogated with over grown lawns and grasses, falling roofs, broken windows, yanked doors, unkempt walls, dearth availability of teaching aids, problems of power supply, inadequate offices, low quality and quantity of staff, lack of source of water supply, no pathways, leadership and administrative lapses, dilapidated hostel facilities and series of admission malpractices and scandals (Ozioko, 2018). In addition to these ugly scenarios, there are cases of incessant strike actions by the academic and non academic unions of these higher institutions (Ozioko, 2018). The incessant strike actions by these unions are geared towards the welfare of the workers and the institution at large. This may not be far from the fact that most of these higher institutions have been abandoned to rot away with dilapidated buildings, programmes, personnel, and patronage. The survival rates of most of these institutions are affected by the level of patronage they receive. Patronage can be seen as the art of using something or buying goods. In the educational system, patronage has to do with educational services provided for consumption. It is also the art of receiving educational services from the school institutions. This could be probably because the state or federal universities are not sustaining the gains that they have recorded in the time past when they were taking lead in qualitative and quantitative patronage.

Patronage is the state of being a customer to an establishment. Patronage could as well be likened to being a consumer of a particular product or organization. It entails being a client to an establishment such as the school. On the other hand, sustainability is the consistency to keep maintenance of an activity to a certain rate. Therefore, sustainable patronage is the consistency to keep the process of maintenance of the access to consumption of goods or visitations (Ndukwu, 2019). In the educational industry, sustainable patronage can be operationally seen as the consistency to keep the maintenance and patronage of the consumers of educational services, programmes and activities. Sustainable educational patronage allows the consumers to acquire equal knowledge, skills, attitude, values, that will consistently increase the level or rate of patronage of the educational sector even in the future (UNESCO, 2014). There are various reasons why public universities are failing in their mandate to sustain their consumers' and certify their quest on patronage. Some of these reasons are lack of supervision, incessant strike, high level of indiscipline among the students as well as the teachers, congestion in the classroom, poor public relation with the parents, low standard of education, lack of commitment and dedication, dilapidated hostel facilities, abysmal classrooms, shortage of teachers, difficulty in gaining admission and poor public health centers in the school (Ukpor, Ubi & Okon, 2012).

Academic patronage has been negatively influenced by so many factors both at the global and in the local dimensions. There are four basic types of academic patronage that exist in the school system. These four types of academic patronage are decisions made, processes used, assistance given to individuals and personal interactions (Brian, 2013). The forms of patronage are discrimination, favouritism, prejudice, quota system, among others (Brian, 2013). Patronage has been affected in the academia by the influence of bias and discrimination (Martin, 2009). Patronage is affected mainly by the type of decisions made, help received by individuals, personal interactions and the processes used (Martin, 2009). Martin is of the view that the level of patronage is affected by these key factors. Some institutions take decisions that do not have human face and such do not make provision to capture all categories of applicants or admission seekers. Some of these

decisions they make take into consideration ways to uphold issues of bias and discrimination on entrants.

Consumers' or student's security plays a prominent role in the patronage of public universities in Nigeria. Alemika (2012) postulated that insecurity in Nigeria has taken the dimensions of physical insecurity-violent personal and property crimes; public security-violent conflicts, insurgency and terrorism; economic insecurity - poverty, unemployment; social insecurity- illiteracy, ignorance, diseases or illness, malnutrition; water borne disease, discrimination and exclusion; human right violations- denial of fundamental rights by state and non-state actors in different states; and political insecurity- denial of good and social democratic governance have been suggested to have a prominent role to play in the level of school patronage. Supporting this, Condoleezza Rice, former Secretary of State of the United States of America posited that quality education of a nation is a direct function of a country's national security (Ejirika, 2014). This relationship springs from the role education plays in providing the knowledge base for technological training. In the main, education is as important as national security. The Boko Haram insurgency has become a festering sour because the Nigerian military are fighting 21st century Islamic military insurgency with nineteenth century military education (Ejirika, 2014).

Security in Nigeria has assumed ugly and unfortunate trends in the recent times. It has so seriously attacked the school system that students are afraid of attending school. In the history of these kidnappings, it was recorded that in April 2014, the Jihadist Fighters known as Boko-Haram held 276 Chibok girls in Borno hostage in the forest. These students are boarders. Eventually, some of them regained freedom as a result of negotiation while some escaped from the terrorists. In February 19th 2018, 110 school girls were kidnapped from Government Girls Science Technical (GGSTC) Dapchi in Yobe State. It was on record that all the students were freed except Leah Sharibu who refused to surrender her Christian faith to the Jihadists. In December 11th 2020, over 300 pupils were kidnapped from boys secondary school Kankara in Katsina State. Similarly, on the 27th February 2021, 27 students, 3 staff and 12 family members were kidnapped in Kagara, Niger State. More so, on the 2 of March 2021, 279 students were kidnapped from Government Science Secondary School Jangebe, Zamfara State. The school system has been threatened with ethno-religious conflicts, violence, kidnapping, terrorism, militancy, vandalism, among others. Insecurity has taken different dimensions in the various regions in Nigeria. One requires emotional, social, physical and mental readiness in order to attend school as well as to achieve the goals and objectives therein. If the security of the school, consumers and the host community is not guaranteed, there is the likelihood for school attendance and admissions to be grounded in such area. The frequency of insecurity on school personnel and facilities may not guarantee quality assurance in the school patronage and in the school at large.

Quality assurance otherwise brand protection is one of the attributes that gets a school system running. Quality assurance (brand protection) has to do with patterned review of education services to consumers in order to improve and maintain high quality. Quality assurance in the school has evaluation as its key element. Quality assurance can be achieved through of improvement on the internal and external evaluations which can lead to effective and efficient inspection and supervision of teachers, schools, school leadership and students' assessment. Quality assurance entails the necessary measure that will bring about effectiveness, equity, and efficiency in educational programmes and activities. Quality assurance has been found to be imperative in accountability towards the achievement of the required educational goals and objectives. Quality assurance in the

higher institution takes cognizance of all the planning processes, policies, measures, actions, and implementation approaches in the realization of quality educational services and products. These elements of quality assurance are put into consideration in order to provide education that meets the needs of the customers or clients. The level of patronage of schools may be determined by the extent of quality assurance measures adopted in the school system. When there is quality assurance in the school programmes and activities, the customers will tend to appreciate the services rendered to them.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at investigating the extent educational services management can predict sustainable patronage of public universities Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the extent of consumer security management predicts sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. investigate the extent brand protection (quality assurance) management predicts sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study.

1. To what extent does consumer security management predict sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. To what extent does brand protection (quality assurance) management predict sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: Consumer security management does not significantly predict sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Ho₂: Brand protection (quality assurance) management does not significantly predict sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Methods

This study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study was 147 (UPH-78, RUST-39 and IAUOE 30) Head of Departments in the three public Universities in Rivers State. The sample size of the study is 117 (UPH-62, RUST-31 and IAUOE-24) Head of Departments in the three public Universities in Rivers State. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to draw 62 HoDs from UPH, 31 HoDs from RUST and 24 HoDs from IAUOE representing 80% of the population of the Head of Departments. Consumer Security Questionnaire (CSQ), Brand Protection Scale (BPS) and Sustainable Academic Patronage Scale (SAPS). The Sustainable Academic Patronage Scale (SAPS) have two sections of A and B. Section A elicited information of the demographic information of the respondents such as designation of the respondents, age, name of school and position occupied. Section B have 12 items that elicited responses from the respondents on sustainable academic patronage with four point response options of Very High Extent(4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2) and Very Low Extent (1) respectively. Face validity was done by three experts, one from Measurement and Evaluation and the other two from the Department of Educational Management, all from the faculty of education, University of Port Harcourt. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of Consumer Security Scale (CSS) and Brand Protection Scale (BPS) are 0.84 and 0.76 while that of Sustainable Academic Patronage Scale (SAPS) is 0.74. The

research questions were answered using simple regression while hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with simple regression at 0.05 level of significance with the help of SPSS version 22.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent of prediction of consumer security on sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria?

Table 1: simple regression of the extent of prediction of consumer security on sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Decision
1	.80 ^a	.65	.62	High extent

Very Low Extent (0-25), Low Extent (26-50) High Extent (51-75), and Very High Extent (76-100).

Data on table revealed that the regression coefficient and regression square coefficients are 0.80 and 0.65 respectively. The extent of prediction is determined to be 65% (0.65×100). Therefore, consumer security predicts sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria to a high extent. The 35% variance in the result is not accounted by consumer security.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant prediction of consumer security on sustainable patronage of public universities on South-East Nigeria.

Table 2: t-test associated with simple regression of the prediction of consumer security on sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
1		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	7.450	1.839		4.051	.000
	Consumer security	.795	.055	.803	14.328	.000

Data on table 2 revealed that the t-calculated value associated with simple regression given as 14.328 is rejected because the significant value of .000 is less than the alpha value of 0.05. therefore, there is a significant prediction of consumer security on sustainable patronage of public universities on South-East Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the prediction of brand protection (quality assurance) on sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

Table 3: simple regression of the prediction of brand protection (quality assurance) on sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Decision
1	.822 ^a	.68	.67	High extent

Very Low Extent (0-25), Low Extent (26-50) High Extent (51-75), and Very High Extent (76-100).

Data on table 3 revealed that the regression coefficient and regression square coefficients are 0.82 and 0.68 respectively. The extent of prediction is determined by multiplying the regression square by 100% which gave 68% (0.68×100). Therefore, brand protection

(quality assurance) predicts sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria to a high extent. The 32% variance in the result is not accounted by brand protection (quality assurance).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant prediction of brand protection (quality assurance) on sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 4: t-test associated with simple regression of the prediction of brand protection on sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	6.551	1.774			3.693	.000
Brand protection	.814	.053	.822		15.362	.000

Data on table 4 revealed that the t-calculated value associated with simple regression given as 15.362 is rejected because the significant value of .000 is less than the alpha value of 0.05. Therefore, there is a significant prediction of brand protection (quality assurance) on sustainable patronage of public universities on South-East Nigeria.

Discussion

The study revealed that consumer security predicts sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria to a high extent. The finding of this study is in line with that of Ajala and Kilaso (2019) revealed improved safety and security students are paramount in school patronage. In the same vain, Uzuegbu-Wilson (2019) corroborated the finding of this study protection from terrorism attacks can enhance school patronage. The findings of this study have shown that security is paramount in the school system. This implies that the more security is provided in the school system, the more there will be high level of patronage. Further analysis revealed that there is a significant prediction of consumer security on sustainable patronage of public universities on South-East Nigeria. The result was significant because security arrangement and provision in the school is indispensable.

The study revealed that brand protection (quality assurance) predicts sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria to a high extent. The finding of this study is in support of that of Horsfall (2021) who found that quality brand has a strong, positive and significant influence on patronage action. In the same vain, Anetoh, Chinweuba, Moguluwa (2018) quality school variables have strong positive significant influences on consumer patronage. The discussion here is centered on the fact that the more educational services are dished out with the required quality, the more the level of patronage will be increased. This also implies that quality brand of educational services appeal to a reasonable extent on positive changes that will be experienced in the school patronage. The hypothesis showed that there is a significant prediction of brand protection (quality assurance) on sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The result of the hypothesis is supported by Horsfall (2021) who found that quality brand has a strong, positive and significant influence on patronage action. The findings of this study are possibly predicted on the fact that the more there is quality in the school system, the more consumers' level of patronage increases. Quality in education is very important because its assurance implies that the level of patronage will increase tremendously.

Therefore, quality assurance is necessary for the actualization of high level of patronage in the school.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was also concluded that consumer security and brand protection (quality assurance) are independent and significant predictors of sustainable patronage to high extent while consumer appreciation can predict sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State Nigeria to a very high extent.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of this study, it is recommended that:

1. The school authority should improve on the extent of provision of conducive and secured learning school environment for sustained school patronage.
2. The Heads of Department should ensure that the right contents are delivered to the students for sustainable patronage of public universities in Rivers State.

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