

**THE INFLUENCE OF POSITIONING IN THE ENROLMENT OF
STUDENTS IN NAIROBI'S PRIVATE MIDDLE LEVEL COLLEGES**

BY:

GITONGA PATRICK KIRIMI

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, the market for private middle level colleges in Nairobi has expanded extensively resulting in increased competition amongst the competing colleges in the city. This expansion is as a result of globalization, liberalization and partial deregulation of the higher education industry, technological advances in online education and the country's long term educational plans and policies of universal basic, secondary, and higher education for all.

In such a marketplace, the privately funded middle level colleges have a huge task of gaining a competitive edge over local and foreign-based colleges and universities as they face several challenges. These include competition from public and foreign middle level colleges and universities, foreign colleges through affiliate colleges, exodus of students to colleges outside the country, and the emergence of global online competition. Therefore, these private colleges have to fight it out for the best "position" in the minds of their consumers so as to win over more students to join their colleges. This calls for the use of positioning strategies which are widely used as seen from previous studies done.

Several studies have been conducted with regards to positioning and commercial or private middle level colleges, however most of them have focused on the firms using the strategies without any emphasis on the influence of the strategies on the consumers' purchase decisions while others have focused on general business strategies used by these colleges. Therefore, this study's objectives were mainly to determine the extent of influence of positioning in the enrolment of students in private middle level colleges and secondly to determine the most effective positioning strategy in influencing students to join or enroll in a private middle level college in Nairobi.

Moving on, due to cost and time limitations the study was carried out in only in Nairobi, with the target population being students currently enrolled and studying in private middle level colleges in the capital city. The study involved a total sample of 120 students, with 4 students randomly chosen from each of the selected private middle level colleges (listed in appendix III) using systematic random sampling technique. Primary data was collected using personal or face to face interviews and questionnaires mainly composed of likert-scale type questions.

From the edited data, a response rate of 87.5% was obtained. This was acceptable in view of previously done studies. Data was analyzed and presented using percentages, frequencies, and means scores and in the form of pie charts, histograms and tables respectfully. The study revealed, majority of the respondents were aged between 21- 30 years, followed by the age bracket of 31-40 years, male, were taking information and communication technology studies, attained secondary school level as their highest level. The major reason for enrolling or joining a private middle level college, was advice from parents, friends. The study also found personnel positioning strategy as highly effective in influencing the students when choosing a college to enroll in. Also, the major influencing mode of communication was word of mouth from parents, relatives and friends in. However, college sponsored community development activities, websites and email addresses had least influence on the students' choice of college. The findings also reveal price or fees charged as not effective in influencing the students. Finally, the study revealed positioning, as a strategy, highly influenced the students in selecting and enrolling in a college.

Therefore, it can be concluded that positioning highly influences students to join or and enroll in a given private middle level college with personnel positioning strategy being most effective in

influencing the students' choice of college. Finally, the report suggests studies can be conducted in other parts of the country, since the study was limited to Nairobi, to ensure the results are reflective of the real nature of the issue at hand, in the whole country. Also, studies can be carried out in public middle level colleges, and private and public universities to evaluate the effectiveness of positioning and the various positioning strategies used by the institutions in influencing students to enroll and study in those institutions.