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Promotion Mix Strategies and Customer Satisfaction in TVET Institutions: Empirical Evidence from Busia County, Kenya

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Abstract

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions increasingly use social media, open days, campus tours and other promotional activities to communicate with customers and strengthen institutional relationships. However, limited research has examined how enrolled students in Kenyan TVET institutions evaluate these practices and how such evaluations relate to customer satisfaction. This study examined the relationship between promotion mix strategies and customer satisfaction in four TVET institutions in Busia County, Kenya. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted using a proportionate stratified sample of 351 students drawn from a target population of 2,865. Three hundred usable questionnaires were returned, yielding an 85.5% response rate. Data collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire were analysed through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression. Promotion mix strategies received a favourable composite rating ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.80$). Social-media communication recorded the highest mean ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.72$), followed by open days and college tours ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.79$), accuracy of marketing materials ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.81$), and creativity and relevance of promotional campaigns ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.87$). Promotion mix strategies were positively and significantly correlated with customer satisfaction ($r = .589$, $p < .001$). After controlling for product, price and place strategies, promotion retained a positive and statistically significant association with customer satisfaction ($B = 0.112$, $SE = 0.021$, $\beta = .142$, $t = 5.333$, $p < .001$). The findings indicate that promotional communication is relevant to customer satisfaction beyond its role in student recruitment. TVET institutions should strengthen responsive social-media communication, experiential engagement and the accuracy and relevance of promotional messages.

Keywords: promotion mix, customer satisfaction, TVET, social media marketing, marketing communication, Busia County, Kenya

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Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a pivotal role in skills development, employment creation, and socio-economic transformation by equipping learners with practical competencies required in the labor market (ILO, 2023; UNESCO, 2022). The rapid expansion of TVET opportunities has intensified inter-institutional competition, making effective marketing and communication essential for attracting and retaining learners (Murithi & Wamwayi, 2026). In Kenya, public TVET institutions must strategically communicate their academic programs, technical facilities, and institutional value to differentiate themselves and cultivate positive relationships with target stakeholders (Ministry of Education, 2023; Murithi & Wamwayi, 2026). This communication imperative is particularly vital in counties such as Busia, where variations in institutional accessibility, digital connectivity, and marketing resources directly shape promotional effectiveness.

As a core element of the service marketing mix, promotion include advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing to communicate value to target audiences. Within TVET settings, these activities have evolved to integrate interactive social media platforms, institutional websites, community outreach, open days, and direct engagement with prospective and enrolled students. Beyond creating initial awareness and driving recruitment, effective promotional communication manages student expectations, enhances institutional credibility, and strengthens long-term relational quality. However, promotional effectiveness cannot be evaluated solely through student applications and enrollment metrics; customer satisfaction ultimately depends on whether communicated promises accurately and consistently align with students' ongoing educational experiences.

A growing body of empirical literature underscores the relationship between promotional strategies and student satisfaction across diverse educational contexts. González-Mohíno et al. (2024) established that strategic Instagram integration in higher education enhanced student motivation and academic communication, thereby contributing to overall satisfaction. Similarly, Kethüda and Bilgin (2025) demonstrated across 55 universities in Istanbul that interactive, entertaining, and customized social media marketing activities significantly improved institutional image, student satisfaction, and brand loyalty. Examining a non-metropolitan university in Peru, Moreno-Menéndez et al. (2026) established that

promotional communication held the strongest positive association with student satisfaction among all marketing mix dimensions in an emerging-economy setting. Within the Kenyan TVET sector, Murithi and Wamwayi (2026) confirmed that digital marketing strategies, including search engine optimization and mobile marketing, significantly enhanced institutional performance.

Despite these empirical insights, significant gaps remain in the literature. Existing studies focuses predominantly on university settings, institutional branding, student recruitment, and overall performance, giving limited empirical attention to how promotion mix strategies influence the satisfaction of currently enrolled students receiving vocational education services. Furthermore, findings drawn from metropolitan universities or international contexts do not adequately reflect the specific resource constraints, geographical accessibility, and communication infrastructure of technical institutions in rural Kenyan counties such as Busia. Consequently, how promotion mix strategies relate to customer satisfaction among TVET learners in such localized settings remains insufficiently understood.

To address these gaps, this study examined the relationship between promotion mix strategies and customer satisfaction in public TVET institutions in Busia County, Kenya. The study was guided by the research question: *What is the relationship between promotion mix strategies and customer satisfaction in TVET institutions in Busia County, Kenya?* Correspondingly, the study tested the null hypothesis (H_{01}): *There is no statistically significant relationship between promotion mix strategies and customer satisfaction in TVET institutions in Busia County, Kenya.*

Literature Review

Promotion Mix in Educational Services

The marketing mix provides a framework for understanding how institutions develop and communicate their services to target customers. It traditionally comprises product, price, place and promotion, while the extended service marketing mix incorporates people, processes and physical evidence. Promotion involves advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and direct marketing to create awareness, differentiate institutional services and maintain customer relationships. Ivy (2008) demonstrated the relevance of marketing mix elements in higher education positioning, while Lim et al. (2020) emphasised coordinated marketing in institutional brand management.

Educational services present unique promotional challenges because their quality cannot be fully assessed before enrolment. Prospective students therefore rely on advertisements, websites, social media, open days and recommendations when selecting institutions. After admission, they assess whether the information communicated during recruitment corresponds with their actual experiences. Accurate and consistent promotional communication is consequently important in managing expectations and supporting customer satisfaction.

Recent empirical evidence demonstrates the relationship between educational marketing and satisfaction. Moreno-Menéndez et al. (2026), studying 287 students in a non-metropolitan university in Peru, established a positive association between the educational marketing mix and student satisfaction, with promotion recording the strongest association among the four marketing mix dimensions. Similarly, Rosas and Madrigal

(2025) examined student satisfaction with institutional services in a Philippine higher education institution and identified promotion as an important dimension of the marketing mix in evaluating educational services. These findings demonstrate the relevance of promotional activities in shaping customer experiences.

Social Media, Customer Engagement and Relationship Quality

Social media has transformed institutional promotion from predominantly one-way communication into interactive engagement. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and WhatsApp enable institutions to communicate admission requirements, programme information, institutional events and student achievements. Constantinides and Zinck Stagno (2011) identified the potential of social media in higher education marketing, while Rutter et al. (2016) demonstrated its relevance to university branding and recruitment. Recent studies further demonstrate the importance of digital engagement. Song et al. (2023), examining 410 students from six Malaysian higher education institutions, established that social interaction and information sharing positively influenced relationship quality, which subsequently contributed to institutional brand image and loyalty. Dwivedi (2024) similarly found that information sharing and social media engagement influenced faculty–student relationship quality and institutional brand performance.

Kethüda and Bilgin (2025), using data from 1,072 students across 55 universities in Istanbul, established that social media marketing activities, including interaction, entertainment, trendiness and customised communication, contributed to university image, student satisfaction and loyalty. These findings suggest that digital promotion can strengthen customer relationships when communication is informative, interactive and responsive.

However, effective social media promotion requires more than maintaining institutional accounts. Outdated information, delayed responses and exaggerated promotional claims can undermine institutional credibility. TVET institutions should therefore provide accurate programme information, timely responses and consistent updates while maintaining traditional communication channels for customers with limited internet access.

Experiential Promotion and Message Credibility

Experiential promotion involves activities that allow customers to interact directly with institutions and experience aspects of their services. These include open days, institutional exhibitions, campus tours, community outreach and programme demonstrations. Such activities are particularly relevant to TVET institutions because prospective students can observe workshops, equipment, training facilities and interact with instructors and existing students before making enrolment decisions.

The importance of interactive communication is supported by Song et al. (2023), who established that social interaction and information sharing contribute to relationship quality. Similarly, Kethüda and Bilgin (2025) demonstrated that interactive and customised promotional communication contributes to student satisfaction and institutional loyalty. These findings suggest that promotional effectiveness depends not only on message frequency but also on the quality of customer engagement.

Message credibility is equally important in educational promotion. Advertisements and recruitment messages should accurately represent

programme availability, training facilities, fees, admission requirements and employment opportunities. Misleading information may attract prospective students but create dissatisfaction when actual services differ from communicated promises. Promotional activities should therefore be coordinated with academic departments, administration and student support services to ensure consistency between institutional communication and service delivery.

Customer Satisfaction and Expectation Management

Customer satisfaction refers to the extent to which customers perceive that services received meet or exceed their expectations. In educational institutions, satisfaction develops through experiences with teaching, practical training, administration, facilities, communication and student support. It is therefore a cumulative evaluation rather than a response to a single institutional activity.

The expectation-confirmation perspective explains how promotional communication may influence satisfaction. Customers develop expectations from information received before accessing a service and subsequently compare those expectations with actual experiences. When institutional communication is accurate and service delivery corresponds with communicated promises, customers are more likely to develop favourable evaluations. Conversely, misleading advertisements and inconsistent information may create dissatisfaction.

Empirical evidence supports this relationship. Kethüda and Bilgin (2025) found that social media marketing activities contributed to student satisfaction and loyalty through institutional image and engagement. Moreno-Menéndez et al. (2026) also established a positive association between the educational marketing mix and student satisfaction, with promotion recording the strongest association. Elfadel et al. (2024), studying postgraduate students in Jordanian public universities, further established a significant positive relationship between electronic promotion and customer satisfaction with electronic information services.

These findings demonstrate that promotional communication is relevant beyond student recruitment. Its accuracy, accessibility, consistency and responsiveness can influence how customers evaluate their institutions throughout their educational experiences.

TVET Communication in the County Context

TVET institutions serve diverse customer groups, including school leavers, employed learners, parents, employers and community members. These groups have different information needs and communication preferences. While some rely on social media and institutional websites, others obtain information through radio, community meetings, recruitment visits and recommendations from former students. Effective promotion should therefore integrate digital and traditional communication approaches.

In Busia County, geographical accessibility, household economic circumstances and variations in digital connectivity may influence how customers access institutional information. Promotional messages should address practical concerns such as programme availability, admission requirements, fees, training facilities and attachment opportunities. Community outreach, open days and interpersonal communication can complement online advertising.

Although institutions may face limitations in marketing budgets and specialist personnel, effective communication can be achieved through regular social media updates, accurate information materials, alumni engagement and organised open days. Moreno-Menéndez et al. (2026) demonstrated the relevance of educational marketing to satisfaction in a non-metropolitan setting, while Song et al. (2023) and Kethüda and Bilgin (2025) established the importance of interactive communication in higher education. However, these studies do not directly explain promotional effectiveness among rural Kenyan TVET customers.

Research Gap

The reviewed literature establishes that promotion contributes to customer satisfaction through information provision, institutional visibility, customer engagement and expectation management. Advertising creates awareness, sales promotion communicates incentives, public relations strengthens institutional reputation, personal selling facilitates direct engagement, while direct marketing provides targeted communication. Their effectiveness depends on the accuracy, accessibility and credibility of institutional messages.

Despite existing evidence, much of the empirical literature focuses on universities, student recruitment, institutional branding and loyalty rather than customer satisfaction in TVET institutions. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to rural Kenyan counties, where institutional resources, geographical accessibility and communication preferences may influence promotional effectiveness.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between promotion mix strategies and customer satisfaction in four TVET institutions in Busia County, Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in the marketing-mix framework and expectation-confirmation logic. The marketing-mix framework treats promotion as a controllable strategic element through which an institution communicates value to selected audiences. Within a TVET setting, the promotion construct comprises the use of social media, open days and college tours, the accuracy of marketing messages, and the creativity and relevance of promotional campaigns. These activities shape how customers understand the institution and evaluate their relationship with it.

Expectation-confirmation theory explains why promotional communication may be related to satisfaction after enrolment. Oliver (1980) argues that satisfaction is shaped by the comparison between expectations and perceived performance. Institutional promotion contributes to the expectations students form before and during enrolment. When messages are accurate, timely and consistent with experience, expectations are more likely to be confirmed. When communication overpromises or omits important conditions, negative disconfirmation may occur. Promotion is thus not assumed to create satisfaction independently of service quality; rather, it informs expectations, provides relational support and shapes the interpretation of institutional performance.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between promotion mix strategies and student satisfaction across TVET institutions in Busia County, western Kenya. The county setting was particularly

suitable because its public technical institutions serve learners drawn from dispersed rural, peri-urban, and border communities who encounter institutional communication through a blend of digital media, campus contact, interpersonal referrals, and community outreach. Evaluating multiple institutions provided a broad representation of student communication experiences across the region. While the cross-sectional approach enabled the collection of comparable student perceptions at a single point in time to support descriptive and inferential analysis, it captured statistical associations rather than temporal evidence required to establish direct causality.

The target population comprised 2,865 enrolled students across four TVET institutions in Busia County: Mungatsi Technical Training Institute, Bumbe Technical Training Institute, Butula Technical Training Institute, and Okame Technical Training Institute. Applying Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error yielded a sample size of 351 respondents.

To ensure proportional representation, the sample was allocated across the four institutions according to their respective enrollment sizes, and stratified random sampling was utilized within each institutional stratum to select participants. Out of the 351 questionnaires distributed, 300 were returned fully completed and usable, representing an 85.5% response rate.

Primary data were gathered using a self-administered structured questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The promotion mix construct was operationalized using four key indicators: the usefulness of social media information, the perceived value of open days and college tours, the accuracy of marketing materials, and the creativity and relevance of promotional campaigns. Student satisfaction was measured as a composite evaluation reflecting met educational needs, perceived value for money, facility quality, administrative service, and willingness to recommend the institution.

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed to summarize central tendencies, response dispersions, and item-level agreement patterns. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to test the bivariate relationship between promotion mix strategies and student satisfaction. To evaluate the net effect of promotion within the broader marketing-mix model, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted while controlling for product, price, and place strategies.

Results

Response Rate and Respondent Characteristics

A total of 351 questionnaires were distributed, of which 300 were completed and found usable for analysis, representing an 85.5% response rate. Regarding gender, 158 respondents (52.7%) were male, while 142 (47.3%) were female. In terms of age, 110 respondents (36.7%) were aged 21–23 years, 85 (28.3%) were aged 18–20 years, and 65 (21.7%) were aged 24–26 years. The remaining 40 respondents (13.3%) were in other age categories. Overall, the respondent profile indicates that the survey captured the views of a predominantly young student population in the selected TVET institutions.

Descriptive Results for Promotion Mix Strategies

The study assessed customers' perceptions of promotion mix strategies

using four indicators: social-media communication, open days and college tours, accuracy of marketing materials, and creativity and relevance of promotional campaigns. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Promotion Mix Strategies

Promotion mix indicator	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
Social-media platforms keep me well informed	39.3	41.7	10.3	6.0	2.7	4.07	0.72
Open days and college tours were helpful during enrolment	34.0	45.3	12.0	5.7	3.0	3.98	0.79
Marketing materials accurately represent college offerings	31.3	43.7	13.7	7.3	4.0	3.89	0.81
Promotional campaigns are creative and relevant	28.3	42.7	15.3	9.7	4.0	3.82	0.87
Composite promotion mix						**3.94**	**0.80**

Note. SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = neutral/not sure; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree. n = 300.

Table 1 shows that promotion mix strategies received a favourable overall rating (M = 3.94, SD = 0.80). Social-media communication recorded the highest mean (M = 4.07, SD = 0.72), with 81.0% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that institutional social-media platforms kept them well informed. Open days and college tours followed (M = 3.98, SD = 0.79), with 79.3% agreement. Marketing materials accurately representing college offerings recorded a mean of 3.89 (SD = 0.81), with 75.0% agreement. Creativity and relevance of promotional campaigns had the lowest mean (M = 3.82, SD = 0.87), although 71.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Relationship between Promotion Mix Strategies and Customer Satisfaction

Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between promotion mix strategies and customer satisfaction. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation between Promotion Mix Strategies and Customer Satisfaction

Variables	Pearson correlation (r)	p-value	n
Promotion mix and customer satisfaction	0.589	< .001	300

The results indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship between promotion mix strategies and customer satisfaction ($r = .589$, $p < .001$). This implies that higher evaluations of promotion mix strategies were associated with higher customer satisfaction. Therefore, the null hypothesis that promotion mix strategies have no statistically significant relationship with customer satisfaction was rejected.

Regression Results for Promotion Mix Strategies and Customer Satisfaction

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to establish the contribution of promotion mix strategies to customer satisfaction while controlling

for product, price and place strategies. The results for promotion are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Regression Results for Promotion Mix Strategies and Customer Satisfaction

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p-value
Promotion mix strategies	0.112	0.021	0.142	5.333	< .001

Note. n = 300. The coefficient for promotion is adjusted for product, price and place strategies.

The regression results indicate that promotion mix strategies had a positive and statistically significant association with customer satisfaction (B = 0.112, SE = 0.021, β = 0.142, t = 5.333, p < .001), after controlling for product, price and place strategies. Hence, the null hypothesis stating that there is no statistically significant relationship between promotion mix strategies and customer satisfaction in TVET institutions in Busia County, Kenya was rejected. The unstandardized coefficient indicates that a one-unit increase in the promotion mix score was associated with a 0.112-unit increase in customer satisfaction, holding the other marketing-mix variables constant. The standardized coefficient (β = 0.142) indicates a positive but comparatively modest contribution of promotion to customer satisfaction in the adjusted model.

Discussion

The findings established a positive and statistically significant relationship between promotion mix strategies and customer satisfaction (r = .589, p < .001). Promotion also retained a significant positive association with satisfaction after controlling for product, price and place strategies (β = .142, p < .001). These results indicate that customers' evaluations of promotional communication are associated with their overall satisfaction with TVET institutions. This finding is consistent with Moreno-Menéndez et al. (2026), who established a positive association between the educational marketing mix and student satisfaction, and Kethüda and Bilgin (2025), who linked social-media marketing activities with student satisfaction and institutional image.

Social-media communication received the highest rating among the promotion indicators, indicating that students considered digital platforms an important source of institutional information. This finding supports Constantinides and Zinck Stagno (2011), who highlighted the role of social media in higher education marketing, and Song et al. (2023), who associated social-media engagement with relationship quality and institutional brand performance. The result suggests that promotional communication extends beyond student recruitment to include information exchange between institutions and enrolled students. Through these platforms, students can access institutional updates and information relating to their training experience.

Open days and college tours also received favourable ratings, demonstrating the continued relevance of direct institutional engagement alongside digital communication. Such activities provide opportunities for prospective students to observe training facilities, interact with trainers and obtain information about available programmes. This finding is consistent with the emphasis placed by Song et al. (2023) on engagement in educational marketing. It

also illustrates that customers' perceptions of institutional communication are shaped by both online interactions and direct experiences with the institution.

Marketing materials were generally considered accurate, although some respondents expressed disagreement. This finding highlights the importance of consistency between promotional information and actual institutional services. Oliver (1980) explains that customer satisfaction is influenced by the comparison between prior expectations and actual service performance. In the TVET context, discrepancies between communicated information and actual programme availability, fees, facilities or student support may result in unmet expectations. The finding therefore reinforces the relevance of information accuracy in shaping customers' evaluations of educational services.

Creativity and relevance of promotional campaigns recorded the lowest mean among the four indicators, suggesting variations in how students perceived the usefulness and appeal of promotional messages. Although the overall assessment remained favourable, the result indicates that promotional content may not address all students' information needs equally. This finding is related to Kethüda and Bilgin (2025), who established the importance of social-media marketing activities in shaping student perceptions and institutional relationships. It further suggests that the effectiveness of promotional communication depends not only on the availability of promotional channels but also on the relevance of the information conveyed.

The adjusted regression results showed that promotion had a positive but comparatively modest association with customer satisfaction (β = .142) after accounting for product, price and place strategies. This indicates that promotion has a distinct relationship with satisfaction, but its contribution is considered alongside other dimensions of the educational marketing mix. Promotional communication informs customers about institutional offerings, while their overall satisfaction also reflects their experiences with programme quality, affordability and accessibility. This interpretation is consistent with Rosas and Madrigal (2025) and Moreno-Menéndez et al. (2026), whose studies examined customer or student satisfaction within the broader educational marketing-mix framework.

Conclusion

This study established a statistically significant positive relationship between promotion mix strategies and customer satisfaction in TVET institutions in Busia County, Kenya. Enrolled students evaluated promotional activities favorably, rating social media communication, open days, and campus tours as the most effective touchpoints. These results demonstrate that institutional promotion serves as an ongoing relational bridge rather than a mere recruitment tool, driving satisfaction post-enrolment when messaging remains accurate, timely, interactive, and aligned with students' actual educational experiences. Because communication cannot succeed in isolation, promotional strategies must remain consistent with underlying operational realities, including academic quality, fee structures, and service delivery.

Recommendations

To enhance customer satisfaction, TVET institutional managers and administrators should actively optimize social media platforms as responsive two-way communication channels for both

prospective and enrolled students. Institutions should also expand structured open days and campus tours, incorporating practical workshop demonstrations and clear guidance to establish realistic expectations before enrolment. Furthermore, cross-departmental verification of marketing materials is essential to ensure that promotional claims accurately reflect available programs, facilities, and costs. Finally, promotional campaigns should incorporate authentic student-generated content and blend digital marketing with traditional community outreach to effectively engage diverse learner demographics across rural and peri-urban areas.

Limitations and Further Research

The cross-sectional design identifies association and prediction but does not establish that promotion caused changes in satisfaction. The composite promotion measure contained four indicators and may not capture the full range of public relations, interpersonal outreach, advertising and community communication used by TVET institutions.

Further research should use longitudinal designs, institution-level comparisons and qualitative interviews with students to explain how specific messages and channels shape expectations. Future studies should also test mediators such as institutional trust, expectation confirmation and customers' engagement, and should compare rural and urban TVET settings.

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