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**UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMES AND CUSTOMERS' PATRONAGE OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES  
IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA.**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examined the relationship between university programmes and customers' patronage of private universities in Abia State Nigeria. The study used descriptive survey research design, and questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection. The data collected in the study was presented using simple percentage and analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05% level of significance. It was found that professional courses and non-professional have significant and positive influence on customer loyalty and customer repeat purchase. The study concludes that the achievement of improved students' patronage (customer loyalty and customer repeat visit.) in private universities depends on the marketability of university programmes. The study recommends that there is need for private universities to run programmes in both professional and non-professional courses so as to achieve customer loyalty and customer repeat visit. Private universities should make the price (fees) of their programmes very affordable so as to attract more students and customer repeat visit. Private Universities should ensure availability of professional courses in their curriculum so as to influence customer loyalty. In addition, private universities need to improve their professional courses to retain and encourage customer repeat purchase.

**Keywords:** Programmes, Professional Programmes, Nonprofessional Programmes, Customer Patronage, Customer Loyalty and Customer Repeat purchase.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Universities are established to impart knowledge and develop different kinds of skills to enable students to be productive, earn a living and contribute towards national development (Saguti, 2015). The University system therefore is saddled with three major responsibilities namely Teaching, Research, and Community Services. It is pertinent to note that quality is of utmost importance for University education. Therefore, for a private university to achieve its objectives (improved patronage), it

must offer more general and unique courses to attract more students than others, according to Mehrdach, Ali, Reza and Seyyed (2012). Specifically, programme is all about courses of study offered in the tertiary institution which attract students to the university. For Kotler and Fox (1995), programmes replace the products. For Saguti (2015), in all, programmes are the means by which universities seek to satisfy students' needs. Programmes in this sense are courses which the universities offer to students. For this study the basic institutional variables have been made to include professional courses and non-professional courses. When the above university programmes are positive, they lead to customer patronage of the private universities.

Another basic variable in this study is customer patronage, which can be positive through the effectiveness of universities programmes. Patronage is the extent consumers or people acquire an organization's product or service. If private universities must achieve sustainable growth, they must be patronized by the students, hence the issues of students choice of the universities. Many issues determine the level of customers' patronage or preference for a particular university. Such factors and issues include price, programmes, reference/promotion, standards in the school system, level of infrastructural development, teaching and learning methods etc. (Ike, 2019). But for this study the basic variable has been made to include customers' loyalty and customers' repeat purchase. For that, the level of customers' patronage in a particular university could be measured by determining the number of students that were admitted in different courses/ departments in the university, the number of students the university graduates from different courses/department in each year.

### **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

One of the major determinants of development in a country is the number of literate population. On this note, the Federal government of Nigeria, through open door policy on education has empowered private sector participation in education provision, especially for private universities (Nicolescu, 2009). Notwithstanding this enhancement, enrolment in private universities is still very low. Some of the private universities do not offer some courses, and that affects their performance through patronage. Almost all the private universities are very costly or capital intensive as most poor parents may not afford to pay their fees. For that, the universities are usually for middle to high income homes. Their emphasis on promotion is another issue that has always makes their fees high. Though some of them may have good learning environment, but other factors mentioned above have always affected, mainly hinder them from performing very effectively.

This has led to over flooding the public universities with enormous number of enrollees, leading to outrageous number in school carrying capacity. Irrespective of government effort in ensuring that private universities are up to standard before approval for operation, which assures quality in their educational programmes, coupled with the

attempts of most private schools to reach their target prospects by use of modern infrastructures in the schools and adoption of some awareness creation medium, the problem continued in high dimension. This has been attributed to non-adoption of adequate university programmes as the basic strategy to enhance customers' patronage of the private universities.

**Independent Variables**

**Dependent Variables**

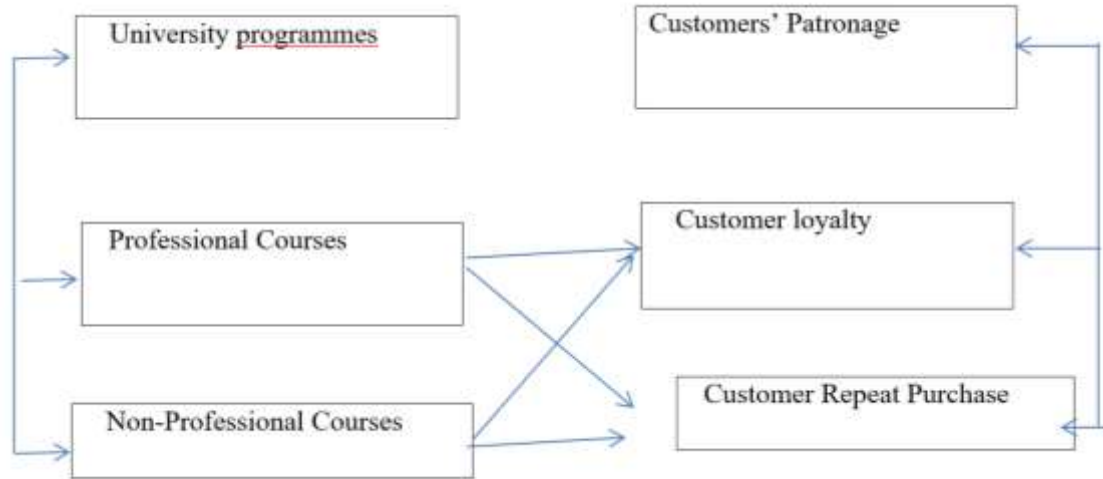


Fig 1: Operational Conceptual Framework  
Source: The Researcher desk, 2023

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The general objective of this study focuses on the effect of university programmes on customer patronage of private universities in Abia State Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. assess the effect of professional courses on Customer loyalty of private universities.
2. determine the relationship between professional courses and Customer Repeat Purchase in private universities.
3. examine the effect of non-professional courses on Customer loyalty of private universities.
4. investigate the relationship between non-professional courses and Customer Repeat Purchase in private universities.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions were posed for the study.

1. What is the effect of professional courses on Customer loyalty of private universities?

2. What is the relationship between professional courses and Customer Repeat Purchase in private universities?
3. What is the effect of non-professional courses on Customer loyalty of private universities?
4. What is the relationship between non-professional courses and Customer Repeat Purchase in private universities?

### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research hypotheses guided the study.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** Professional courses has on significant effect on Customer loyalty of private universities.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between professional courses and Customer Repeat Purchase in private universities.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** Non-professional courses does not have a significant effect on Customer loyalty of private universities.

**Ho<sub>4</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between non-professional courses and Customer Repeat Purchase in private universities.

### **CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

#### **University Programme**

Programme according to Mehrdach, Ali, Reza and Seyyed (2012) relates to school courses of study. This means that a private university that offers more general and unique courses are likely to attract more students than others. This is because students check for courses or programs in the school before applying for study. Specifically, programme is all about courses of study offered in the tertiary institution which attract students to the university. For Kotler and Fox (1995), programmes replace the products. Programmes are the first basic elements of the service marketing of HE institutions. They argue that without product there is no need for pricing, promotion and distribution. However, organizations can differentiate themselves from the competition through extended benefits of their services like helpful and polite personnel (Mahmood & Khan, 2014).

The most basic decision that the higher education institutions have to make are to develop programmes that satisfy the students' wants and needs. It is a critical marketing activity for the educational institutions (Hoyer & McInnis, 2011). Mamata (2013) suggests that the values derived from a programme can greatly influence the student's behavior. That is when the students understand what they will achieve in studying the programme and the quality of the teaching staff they will likely choose the private university. Hollensen (2003) held that an appropriately implemented service marketing results in programmes being design cooperatively, developed, tested, piloted, installed,

and refined. The word cooperatively means that the HE does not just produce programmes, but are researching this with the potential consumers.

The challenges of marketing of education stems from the fact that the private universities offers professional services that customers cannot inspect before purchasing (White, Martin, Stimson & Hodge, 1991). It is only when a student gets into the program after purchase that they can assess the service quality. In his service marketing framework, Mamata (2013) outline the programme that the private universities is selling includes curriculum, quality teachers, spiritual values, good students, safe environment, courses/programs offered, and values (moral, social, ethical, and practical). For Saguti (2015), in all, programmes are the means by which universities seek to satisfy students' needs. Programmes in this sense are courses which the universities offer to students.

### **University Programmes Variables for Private Universities Professional Courses**

Professional courses refer to programs that are designed to provide students with specific skills and knowledge that are required to enter a particular profession or industry. Examples of professional courses include medicine, engineering, law, nursing, and accountancy etc. (Mahmood & Khan, 2014). These courses typically require a specific level of academic qualification and are offered by professional bodies or recognized institutions. The curriculum of professional courses is structured and includes both theoretical and practical components. A professional course is one that provides you with practical skills, making you job-ready at the completion of the course. The professional courses provide practical training in the form of apprenticeship/internship in order to keep updating standards and practices (Bowersox and Closs 2018). After your first degree, you would have to be certified and receive a license from a professional regulatory body through an oral or written examination. Professional course admission usually faces stiff competition in terms of admission. For example, the Nigerian Medical Association confer licenses to Medical Practitioners in Nigeria and so it is in other countries. And it is believed that they should be paid better. However, the advent of technology has rather proved this wrong.

### **Non-Professional Courses**

The non-professional courses are more theoretical than professional courses. These courses are very popular and demanded courses of all times. Non-professional courses are very popular and demanded courses of all times. Non-professional courses are available for students of every stream, including commerce, humanities and social science. These are the simple B.Com, B.A, and B.Sc courses which can be pursued generally by anyone. Students select to pursue these courses because they find them convenient (Bowersox and Closs 2018).

### **Customers' Patronage of Private Universities**

Patronage is the extent consumers or people acquire an organizational product or service. If private universities must achieve sustainable growth, they must be patronized by the students, hence the issues of students choice of the universities. This is all about the activities of students to make decision on the university to attend. When a private university is enjoying high patronage of students, it means the school is performing positively. Many factors according to Hayes (2012) help students to make decision concerning a particular university. Such include finance, nearness, courses offers, connection with some people (staff or students) in the school, and other needs. Many issues determine the level of customers' patronage or preference for a particular university. Such factors and issues include price, programmes, reference/promotion, standard in the school system, level of infrastructural development, teaching and learning methods etc (Ike, 2019). For that, the level of customers' patronage in a particular university could be measured by determining the number of students that were admitted in different courses /departments in the university, the number of students the university graduates from different courses/department from the university in each year.

If the numbers are high and reasonable, it means improved patronage and high level of students' preference for the choice of the particular private university. The students' choice is a complex series of activities, in which individuals are participating or acting differently (Litten, 2012). Five steps of the students' choice process are: needs & motives, information gathering, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post evaluation (Kotler, Wong, Saunders & Armstrong, 2005:279). A need or motive is usually trigger in the student when a student realizes that he/she wants to pursue higher education, possible different marketing strategies to address consumers in the two and searches for information about potential HE providers. Knowing the reasons applicants choose universities and courses of studies, is important to developing institutional positioning (Maringe, 2006). For this study, patronage of private universities could be measured using;

1. **Customer Loyalty:** Customer loyalty can be defined as a deeply held commitment to continue with the patronage of a preferred product, service or service provider consistently in future even in the face of marketing efforts capable of causing defection and situational influences, (Oliver, 2019). According to Litten (2012)., it is the feeling of attachment or affection consumers hold towards a product, services or company's personnel. A company's ability to attract and retain new customers is related not only to its products or services but also to the way it services its existing customers, the value the customers actually perceive as a result of utilizing the solutions, and the reputation it creates within and across the market place (Cheng and Liu, 2017). Successful customer retention involves more than giving the customer what they expect. Generating

loyal advocates of the brand might mean exceeding customer expectations. The key differentiation in a competitive environment is often the delivery of a consistently high standard of customer service (Litten, 2012).. Further, in the emerging world of customer success, retention is a major objective (Bowersox and Closs 2018). Customer retention has a direct impact on profitability. Research by Maringe (2006) indicates that engaging customers, while having engaged employees return a revenue gain of 3-4 times the norm.

- 2. Customer Repeat Purchase:** Customers can be divided into new customers and repeat customers. Private university proprietors are obviously concerned about attracting new students. However, the focus on continued growth often causes them to neglect what is arguably the most important part of sustained success: repeat customers. Researchers at Harvard have found that if you increase repeat visits by 5%, you raise profits anywhere from 25% to 125%. Other studies show that the cost of acquiring new customers is five times the cost of retaining an existing customer, though some experts say it may be even higher- at 6 to 7 times the cost. Here's how to create repeat customers. Attracting new ones is very important, but since over 60% of customers of a successful private university are repeat ones, it is evident that much attention and focus be placed on satisfying repeat purchase customers. This is because it takes satisfied customer to repeat or come again. Having or bringing in new customers is important, but what's even more important is turning those new customers into repeat purchasers (Maringe, 2006). Turning a customer into a repeat one is more an art than a science. Kotler (2013) further stated that the necessity for a customer to repeat purchases would be backed-up by utmost satisfaction or utility gained from bought items or consumed. That means that, after a first degree in the university, the graduate would want to come back to the same university for further studies like masters' degree and doctoral degree program. Also, their siblings would want to pursue their own studies in the same university.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **Agglomeration Location Model**

This model was developed by Spani in 1978. The model stated that the nature of the location determines the economic benefits and growth in the universities. Location model is primarily concerned with the area or regional of the organisation. It states that a certain area is best suited for a particular activity of the university. According to the model, locations of economic activities are influenced by economies derived from large-scale operation and from proximity to complementary firms and facilities. In this case, economic benefit of the universities could be achieved when the universities location is situated in a good and friendly environment. This model was used because the students

consider the location of a university before taken decision of where to study. Such issues in location mainly considered include nearness, friendliness, socio-economic factors and many others.

### **The Commitment Trust Theory**

The commitment trust theory of Morgan and Hunt (1984) emphasizes that relationship, commitment and trust is central to successful relationship marketing. Commitment and trust are the key because they encourage service organizations to be committed and work on trust. In this study, the researcher adopts the commitment trust theory to analyze the study. Therefore, commitment and trust produce outcomes that promote efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1984). This theory was used because private universities can only achieve their goals of attracting student if they are committed towards providing the right educational training. Here, for the private universities to perform positively, they must do things that will enhance public trust, and they must be committed in doing the right things that will attract students. The universities must have to apply service marketing strategies which include doing general and unique programmes, making sure that their prices of school fee is not too high, using different promotional strategies, employing the right people to perform lecturing and administrative functions, and providing good physical environment, including available facilities in the university. When the above service marketing approaches are positive, it leads to improved performance of the private universities.

### **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

In this subsection, the researcher summarized some related works on this topic.

Donaldson (2012) The attractiveness of programmes and performance of higher education in Bagaldesh. Using a dutch panel data set of 1300 programmes in 50 institutions, this study investigates what explains the attractiveness of study programmes. We hypothesize that the distance of study programmes plays a major role in student decisions to attend. Based on an instrumental variables identification strategy, we demonstrate that the closest distance between similar programmes have significant effects on the enrollment of students in higher education.

Kuwu and Gakure (2014) Factors influencing the choice of tertiary education institution as in South-South Nigeria. An exploratory study was carried out in four(40 tertiary education institutions based on group of conceptual model of five choice factors which influences students' decision on choosing tertiary education institutions. A survey was applied to conveniently sample 2,200 prospective students, parents of prospective students and first year tertiary education students. Findings include finance, location, physical infrastructure and industrial expectations were significant factors influencing choice of tertiary education institution. Promotion was not a significant factor. Uchendu, Nwafor and Nwaneri (2015) investigated marketing strategies and students' enrolment in private secondary schools in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State.

One research question was raised and two null hypotheses formulated to guide the study. Thirty two (32) school administrators in 32 private secondary schools in the



study area constitute the study population and were used intact as the study subjects. Data were collected using a 30-item research questionnaire titled “Marketing Strategies and Students’ Enrolment Questionnaire (MSSEQ). The obtained data were analyzed using Mean, Population T-Test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The results revealed some marketing strategies that can be used in private secondary schools to boost students’ enrolment in their order of perceived effectiveness. It also indicated that the extent private secondary school administrators adopt marketing strategies in enhancing students enrolment is significantly low in most of the studied school. The results further showed that there is significant relationship between marketing strategies adoption and student enrolment.

Oluwaseun Oluwasanmi (2016) investigated the determinants of student’s choice of private universities in Ibadan Nigeria. Adopting a cross-sectional qualitative design involving the use of focus groups, the research revealed that choice of a private university is determined by factors such as the projection of the university brand, acquisition and retention of qualified staff and students, university Alumni and university positioning amongst others.

Adeoye, Abdulrahim, Bolaji (2022) the study looked at the factors influencing the choice of private universities in Ilorin Nigeria. For this study, the primary research approach was descriptive survey research. A total of 300 students were used in the study. A structured questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.95 was utilized as tool. The data were examined using descriptive statistics, and the hypothesis were tested using T-value statistics at the 0.05 level of significance. Affordability offers of the desired program, reputation/academic quality, the flexibility of schedule, hands-on learning/real-world experience in curriculum, location/ security, availability of facilities are seven (7) major factors that influence students’ choice of private universities in Ilorin.

Akata (2022) focused on marketing mix and patronage colleges of education in Nigeria. It used survey method and data were analyzed using mean. It discovered that promotion and price are the major determinant of patronage.

Uchenna (2022) factors influencing the choice of tertiary education institution in South-South Nigeria. It used survey method and data were analyzed using ANOVA. It discovered pricing strategy, quality products strategy, and nearness are the major strategies to development tertiary education.

## **RESEARCH GAP**

On the topic, some of the past studies focused on university programme without any emphasis on customers’ patronage of the private universities. Others studied customers’ patronage without adequate attention to university programme. Some of the past studies were done outside Nigeria without specific consideration to Nigerian business environment. Some works done within Nigeria did not use universities in the south east

as the focal point. The objectives and its variables as used in this work were not covered or adequately covered by the past studies. Most of the past studies did not use university programme indexes – professional and non-professional courses; and how the significantly influence patronage of private universities i.e. customer loyalty and customer repeat purchase. Past studies did not adequately review literature to cover the basic conceptual review, theoretical review and empirical review as covered in this work. Some of the past studies use only secondary data, through expos facto research design, and did not cover primary data through questionnaire as will use in this work. Some that use survey research design (as used in this work), used only interview method, and did not consider questionnaire. More so, study population/sample, and statistical tools used for data analysis from the past studies differ from what were employed in this work.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Research Design:** In this study, survey research design was used. A survey is a research design that enables a researcher to take information from primary sources (Ubah, Nnamdi, Okwara, Makbere & Ochienta, 2021). The choice of survey design is appropriate since there is need to cover a larger percentage of the population in the study. Survey research has as its aim not only the collection of data per say, but the discovery of meaning in the data collected so that the facts and events can be better interpreted, explained and understood
- **Population of the Study:** Nwodu (2006) reported that population refers to the entire group of people, events or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. This study used three private universities in Abia State. The population of this study is therefore made up of all the students in Gregory University, Uturu, Clifford University, Owerrinta, Spiritan University, Nneochi, and they have a population of 2000, 6600, 2040, respectively, making a total of 10640 in all (**Source:** The Personnel Unit of the Universities, 2024).
- **Sample Size Determination:** They researcher used the Taro Yamane’s method to determine the sample size. The reason for using Taro Yamane formular in determining the sample size in this study is because the entire population of staff in the private universities are relatively large, and will be difficult to study all. For that, the Taro Yamane therefore helped to reduce the sample size of each university to a manageable standard. The formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where n = Sample size

N = Population of study

(e)<sup>2</sup> = Square of the level of significance

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{10640}{1+10640(0.05)^2} \\ &= \frac{10640}{1+10640(0.0025)} \\ &= \frac{10640}{27.6} \\ &= 385.5 \\ &= 385 \text{ sample size} \end{aligned}$$

- **Research instrument:** In this study, the research used both primary and secondary sources of data. Questionnaire served as primary sources of data and secondary data were collected through literature review.
- **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument:** Content and face validity were used to validate the instrument. In order to determine the internal consistency of the instrument, test/retest exercise was carried out by the researcher.
- **Data Analysis Technique:** The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage and Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient (at 0.05% level of significance) through SPSS version 20.0. Simple percentage and mean statistic was used to analyze the demographic variables of the respondents. More so, Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient (at 0.05% level of significance) through SPSS version 20.0 was used to test the hypotheses.

#### TA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Out of the 385 copies of the questionnaire distributed by the researcher, only 380 copies were properly filled and returned.

#### Questionnaire Analysis

Table 1: Questionnaire return rate.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Number of questionnaire distributed	385	100
Number returned	380	98.4
Number not returned	5	2.6
Total	282	100

Source: Field Survey (2024).

The table above shows that of the 385(100%) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, 380(98.4%) copies were duly completed and returned while 5(2.6%) copies of the questionnaire were not returned.

#### Personal Data

##### a) Demographics of respondents

Table 1: Sample profile

Options	% of Responses
Gender	
Male	74.0

Female	26.0
Age	
Below 19yrs	69.1
20-23yrs	23.0
Above 24yrs	7.8
Student level	
100 level	30.6
200 level	23.4
300 level	24.0
400 level	22.0
Marital status	
Single	84.8
Married	15.2

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Table1 shows that 61.0% of the respondents were males and 49.0% of the respondents were female, 69.1% of the respondents 19yrs,23.0%are of the respondent are 20-23yrs and 7.8% are above24yrs, 30.6% of the respondents are 100 level, while 23.4% of the respondents are 200 level, 24.0% of the respondents are 300 level and 22,0% of the respondent are 400 level, 84.8% of the respondents were single whereas, 15.2% of the respondents were married.

**Table 2:** The effects of professional courses on customers' loyalty of private universities.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\Sigma X$	X	Dec.
1	The nature of courses offered determines customers' loyalty	224	156	-	-	380	1364	3.5	Positive
2	Universities that offer professional courses will attract more professional students	157	214	6	3	380	1285	3.4	Positive
3	When university is offering	210	148	12	10	380	1318	3.5	Positive

conventional courses, customers' patronage will increase	
Grand mean	3.5

It was discovered in table 2 that has items 1 to 3 were all positive. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.5 item 2 has a mean of 3.4, item 3 has a mean of 3.5 ; hence all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 and above. It is therefore concluded that there is significant effects of professional courses on customer loyalty of private universities.

**Table 3:** The relationship between professional courses and customer repeat purchase to private universities.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\Sigma X$	X	Dec.
1	Most students consider courses of study before applying to any private university	236	144	-	-	380	1376	3.6	Positive
2	Some university programmes are easily accredited than others and they attract customer repeat purchases	153	200	18	9	380	1257	3.3	Positive
3	Conventional courses in humanities, social and management sciences attract more accreditation and customer repeat purchases	234	92	37	17	380	1303	3.4	Positive
	Grand mean							3.4	

It was discovered in table 3 that has items 1 to 3 were all positive. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.6, item 2 has a mean of 3.3, item 3 has a mean of 3.4 ; hence all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 and above. It is therefore concluded that there is

significant relationship between professional courses and customer repeat purchase in private universities.

Table 4: The effects of non-professional courses on customer loyalty of private universities.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	ΣX	X	Dec.
1	Most students consider course of study before applying to any university	157	178	25	20	380	1222	3.2	Positive
2	Most parents consider course offered in the university before patronizing any university	178	172	24	6	380	1282	3.4	Positive
3	Non-professional courses can enhance customer loyalty of private universities	171	150	35	24	380	1228	3.2	Positive
Grand mean								3.3	

It was discovered in table 4 that has items 1 to 3 were all positive. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.2, item 2 has a mean of 3.4, item 3 has a mean of 3.2, ; hence all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 and above. It is therefore concluded that there is significant effects of non-professional courses on customer loyalty of private universities.

Table 5: The relationship between non-professional courses and customer repeat purchase in private universities.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	ΣX	X	Dec.
1	The effectiveness of non-professional course offered can enhance customer repeat purchases	152	173	35	20	380	1217	3.2	Positive
2	Universities that offer non-professional courses with the requisite curriculum will attract customer repeat purchases	165	200	16	13	380	1305	3.4	Positive
3	Accredited non-professional courses	132	101	24	12	380	1241	3.3	Positive

engender long term positive effect on customer repeat purchases	
Grand mean	3.3

It was discovered in table 5 that has items 1 to 3 were all positive. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.2, item 2 has a mean of 3.4, item 3 has a mean of 3.3 ; hence all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 and above. It is therefore concluded that there is significant relationship between non-professional and customer repeat purchase in private universities.

### TESTING OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** Professional courses has no significant effect on customer loyalty of private universities.

<b>H1 Professional courses have no significant effect on customer loyalty of private universities.</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation = 0.88</b>	<b>Decision VALID</b>
	<b>Sig = 0.05</b>	
	<b>N = 380</b>	

The result above is highly strong. This is because the Pearson correlation is 0.88. It means there is significant and positive relationship. The significance result which is 0.05 is higher than the Pearson correlation result meaning the variables (professional courses and customer loyalty of private universities) significantly related. We therefore conclude that professional courses has no significant effect on customer loyalty of private universities.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between professional courses and customer repeat purchase in private universities.

<b>H2 There is significant relationship between professional courses and customer repeat purchase in private universities</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation = 0.87</b>	<b>Decision VALID</b>
	<b>Sig = 0.05</b>	
	<b>N = 380</b>	

The result above is strong. This is because the Pearson correlation is 0.87. It means there is significant and positive relationship. The significance result which is 0.05 is higher than the Pearson correlation result meaning the variables (professional courses and customer repeat purchase) significantly related. We therefore conclude that there is significant relationship between professional courses and customer repeat purchase in private universities.

**Ho3:** Non-professional courses does not have a significant effect on customer loyalty of private universities.

<b>H3</b>	<b>Non-professional courses does not have a significant effect on customer loyalty of private universities</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation = 0.81</b> <b>Sig = 0.05</b> <b>N = 380</b>	<b>Decision = VALID</b>
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The result above is highly strong. This is because the Pearson correlation is 0.81. It means there is significant and positive relationship. The significance result which is 0.05 is higher than the Pearson correlation result meaning the variables (non-professional courses and customer loyalty) significantly related. We therefore conclude that non-professional courses do not have a significant effect on customer loyalty of private universities.

**Ho4:** There is no significant relationship between non-professional courses and customer repeat purchase in private universities.

<b>H4</b>	<b>There is significant relationship between non-professional courses and customer repeat purchase in private universities</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation = 0.89</b> <b>Sig = 0.05</b> <b>N = 269</b>	<b>Decision = VALID</b>
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The result above is strong. This is because the Pearson correlation is 0.89. It means there is significant and positive relationship. The significance result which is 0.05 is higher than the Pearson correlation result meaning the variables (non-professional courses and customer repeat purchase). We therefore conclude that there is significant relationship between non-professional courses and customer repeat purchase in private universities.

**Concise table result for hypotheses testing.**

S/N	Hypotheses	Statistical Tools Applied (Software R studio)	Decision
<b>H1</b>	Professional courses has no significant effect on customer loyalty of private universities	Pearson Correlation = 0.88 Sig = 0.05 N = 380	<b>VALID</b>
<b>H2</b>	There is significant relationship between professional courses and customer repeat purchase in private universities	Pearson Correlation = 0.87 Sig = 0.05 N = 380	<b>VALID</b>
<b>H3</b>	Non-professional courses does not have a significant effect on customer loyalty of private universities	Pearson Correlation = 0.81 Sig = 0.05	<b>VALID</b>



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	N = 380
<b>H4</b> There is significant relationship between non-professional courses and customer repeat purchase in private universities	Pearson Correlation = 0.89 Sig = 0.05 N = 380

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### **DISCUSSION FINDINGS**

For our hypothesis one, it was discovered that professional courses influences customer loyalty of private universities. According to Smriti (2020), students look for schools which have their courses of choice. For Ritesh and Mitesh (2012), school that offers professional courses most times attract more students.

For hypothesis two, it was revealed that there is significant relationship between professional courses and customer repeat purchase to private universities. According to Smriti (2020), most universities have their courses accredited because they offer more of medicine, engineering, law, nursing, and accountancy which are most sought after professional courses.

In hypothesis three, this work revealed that non- professional courses influence customer loyalty to private universities. According to Smriti (2020), students look for schools which have their courses of choice. For Ritesh and Mitesh (2012), schools that offer non- professional courses most times attract more students because they find them most convenient.

It was discovered in our hypothesis four that there is significant relationship between non-professional course and customer repeat purchases. According to Smriti (2020), most universities have their courses accredited because they offer more of social and management science courses and they easily attract customer repeat purchases.

### **CONCLUSION**

The impact of university programmes and customers' patronage of private universities in Abia state cannot be neglected. This is because for a private university to achieve its goals, it must look into the effectiveness of its professional courses and non-professional courses. When the above indices are positive, it will add values on the extent to which the private university achieves customer loyalty and customer repeat purchases. This is as a result of the fact that prospective students of private universities, in most cases, look for favourable advantages which they will benefit when they patronizes the university. Practically in Nigeria today, most of the private universities do not offer some courses, and that affects their performance through patronage. This factor mentioned above has always mainly hindered them from performing effectively. Till date, the situation has not changed for private universities. This study concludes that the achievement of customers' patronage (customer loyalty and customer repeat purchase) in the private universities depends on the effectiveness of the university programme.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is need for private universities to run programmes in both professional and non-professional courses so as to achieve customer loyalty and customer repeat purchase
2. Private universities should make the price (fees) of their programmes very affordable so as to attract more students and customer repeat purchase.
3. Private Universities should ensure availability of professional courses in their curriculum so as to influence customer loyalty'
4. Private Universities need to improve their professional courses to retain and encourage customer repeat purchases.

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