

# **An Investigation into the Application of Marketing Tools to Religious Organisations' Service Delivery: A Study of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Application of marketing tools to the activities of religious organisations is gaining prominence in the world today. The churches especially the number of 'mega' and 'giga' churches in Nigeria have risen exponentially with presence beyond the country. Likewise, in the global context churches play a very important role as agent of change, individualization, critics of traditional cultures and religions. The objective of this paper was to examine the success of religious organizations in Nigeria from a marketing perspective. In addition to the review of literature, primary data were obtained from a total of 101 respondents to validate the two hypotheses formulated in the study. It was revealed that marketing has helped religious organizations in improving, increasing, satisfying and achieving their goals in the face of intense market pressure due to increase in their members and competitions. The paper concluded that churches, whether consciously or otherwise, have embraced sophisticated marketing logics, tools, techniques and strategies, specifically the customer-driven orientation just like the commercial organizations. It was recommended that churches should pay closer attention to church management and marketing for the benefits of enhancing growth in modern day church service deliveries.*

**Keywords:** *Religious organization, marketing tools, service delivery, Pentecostal churches and Nigeria*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Marketing is universal and the use and application cut across the globe on every facets of human and organisations' endeavours. Whatever a man does an element of marketing operations can be noted, as observed from the ten entities that can be marketed (Kotler, 2000).

From time past Nigerian society has never been devoid of religious institutions. The application of marketing was noted right from the time of colonial rule when the colonial masters professed the new faith religion, forcing the traditional beliefs, gods and practices to give way. The new found faith has since being dominating the consciousness of the people in all their activities--- politics and political appointments, businesses, marriages, school admissions, job employments, visas grants and other seemingly mundane things. Thus, religion remains the opium of the people.

Nigeria is said to have over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own languages in one of several language families. Split religiously, about 50% of Nigeria's population is Muslim, 40% is Christian and the remainder adheres to indigenous beliefs (Agomuo, 2015).

There is proliferation of religious organizations (churches) in the country with each pursuing its mission objectives through the service products they offer. No church can successfully achieve its mission objectives if it is not able to satisfy the target markets' (beneficiaries') needs (Modi, 2011). Today the church as one of the not-for-profit organizations ( Anheier,2005; Kotler,2000; Stanton, Etzel & Walker,1991) now operate under intense market pressure due to increase in their members, hence competing to reaching and retaining their target markets which include the sponsors, volunteers, donors, adherents and members, etc; so it is expected they should adopt a market- oriented approach to their operations ( service delivery) like for-profit organizations as advocated by Kotler (2000) and Sargeant and Bennett (2004).

Many of the churches have grown and have well established branches within the country and are popping up in other countries around the world. The churches have adopted sophisticated marketing strategies, specifically the customer-driven orientation just like the business outfits (Alasiri,2014; Kotler, 2000; kuzma, Kuzma & Kuzma, nd). Marketing and market researches, segmentation, positioning, branding, product planning and development, integrated marketing communication, and distribution strategies are clearly understood, embraced and utilized in the marketing strategies of successful religious organizations.

Administrators of religious organizations employ marketing techniques consciously or otherwise (Freitas-da-costa, Silva, Paula, Silva & Vieira,2011; Sargeant & Bennett,2004). For instance, a religious organization will name it missionary work and not personal selling when members evangelize, win souls and convert new members into the fold; many of the organisations will resent the term advertisement but prefer to call it information notice or circular; call them members or parishioners and not customers. This is because administrators of these institutions tend to have negative attitude toward marketing activities and terms; to them it is demeaning, unethical and present their organizations in bad light (Dolnicar & Lazarevki, 2009; Kotler,2000;Stanton *et al.*,1991). Many societies still express their opinions that marketing is a concept that can not be associated with something as saint as religions. The problem here is that they regard marketing as only being used to sell to people things they do not need (Bruce,1995 in Sargeant & Bennett,2004) yet these organizations are seriously in need of effective marketing application in their activities (Kotler & Andreasen,1996;Stanton *et al.*,1991).

Religion is treated as sacred and not many people want to touch on it. No organization wishes to fail in its set mission/ goals, and the practice of marketing techniques is one of the ways to succeed. To champion a church's mission course marketing techniques is inevitable and remains a kingpin. The objective of this paper is to examine the success of religious organizations in Nigeria from a marketing perspective. Studies on religious service marketing exist around the globe, but the study in the Nigeria context does not exist, as far as the researcher is aware; this is the area of contribution in this study. The question is can marketing tools be used to assist religious organizations in Nigeria to achieve both the earthly and eternal objectives? The study is guided by two research questions: (1) Do religious organizations apply marketing mix elements in their operations and service delivery? (2) In what ways do religious organizations segment among their congregations?

This study is organized as follows: section one is the introduction; section two deals with review of relevant literature divided into theoretical, conceptual and empirical sections. Section three is the methodology of research while section four discusses the findings. Section five is the conclusion and recommendations.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theoretical review**

Theory of planned behaviour is considered in this study to explain man's behaviour with regard to accepting religious organisation's product offerings. The theory was developed by Ajzen (1991) as an extension to the earlier Theory of Reason Action (TRA, Ajzen & Fishbein, 1981) which suggest that behaviour is dependent on one's intention to perform the behaviour. The TRA was used to explain the relationship among beliefs, attitudes, norms, behavioural intentions and behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1981). According to Ajzen (1991) intention is determined by a person's attitude (i.e beliefs and values about the outcome of the behaviour) and subjective norms (i.e beliefs about what other people think the person should do or general social pressure). Behaviour is also determined by a person's perceived behavioural control, defined as an individual's perceptions of their ability or feelings of self-efficacy to perform behaviour. Ajzen argued that intentions precede and motivate a behaviour, noting that they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert in order to perform the behaviour. Accordingly he submitted that the stronger the intention to engage in behaviour, the more likely should be its performance.

The extension of this theory to explain acceptance of religious organisations' products suggests that intension is an important variable in predicting behaviour change, suggesting that behaviours are often linked with one's personal motivation (Godin & Kok, 1995). This means that it may be important to present information to help shape positive attitudes toward the behaviour and stress subjective norms or opinions that support the behaviour. For perceived behavioural control to influence behaviour change, much like self efficacy, a person must perceive that they have the ability to perform the behaviour.

### **2.2 Conceptual review: Church and service delivery.**

Religious organizations do not have profit making as their objective, however, they need to identify their mission goals, plan strategies and tactics to attain these goals effectively, executive their plans and evaluate their performances. God blesses the church with the gift of administration (1 Corinthians 12: 28) for the purpose of perfecting the saints (Titus 1:5) as cited in the Holy Bible.

Though there is no universally accepted definition of the term church, scholars and contributors agreed it posses certain unique characteristics which include: non financial objectives, mission-driven, multiple 'customers', competitive – cooperative relationship with others, multiple stakeholders (Dolnicar & Lazarevki,2009;Stanton *et al.*,1991).

Crudem (1994) stated that the church is the community of all true believers for all time. This implies that as a true community, full of the saved, born again people, every one sees each other as his brother's keeper. Odeyemi (2000) described a church as consisting of those called out of the world,--delivered, saved and sanctified. This means, it is not the building but the company, assembly or collection of those who are followers of Jesus Christ.

The church therefore is a ministry about serving people and giving things away and feeding the hungry,--not making money (Siemon,1996 cited in Silverman,2005), hence, Odeyemi (2000) opined that church administrators can use the knowledge of managerial tools as obtained in the business world to advantage, but with care, because whereas the business organization is profit-oriented, the church enterprise is non-profit making venture. The end justifies the means in business world, but the means justifies the end in churchmanship. Part of the aims of the church is to achieve its eternal objectives, that is, soul winning, making of disciples, building work force for the kingdom of God on earth and the preparation of believers for the eternal kingdom (Alasiri, 2012;Iyer, Velu & Mumit, nd; Kacuba, 2014; Odeyemi, 2000)

Churches are variously categorized depending on their views on bible doctrines, practices, sizes, structures, hence we can have mainstream or traditional churches, mega, giga, seeker, Episcopal, purpose-driven, event, evangelical and non-denominational Pentecostal (Alberto,2014; Kucaba,2014; Kuzma, et.al,nd)

The controversies over definition of religion are sometimes non-scientific, relating to psychological complexes and to the personal theological commitments and biased attitudes of individual definers. Durkhem (1915) in Alasiri (2012) defined religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relatives to scared things. That is, things set apart and forbidden. All religions are human and cultural institutions, differentiated from other social institutions because of the elements of the sacred or the supernatural. It is a means, an instrument for the satisfaction of needs, hence, it is an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings (Melford,1964 cited in Alasiri,2012). Accordingly, religion provides a world view, changes people's habits, internalizes values and generally provides guidelines for behaviour( Prandi,2008). Religion is thus part of culture, even though it is not the same thing (Alberto,2014). He stated that affinity exist between religion and culture globally---consumer culture, media culture and the culture of the individual. However, Lehmann(2009) in Alberto(2014) pointed out that religious belonging is increasingly based on personal options of belief rather than on tradition or cultural heritage.

In the description of the term religion the concepts of supernatural and sacred are crucial. The relationship between man and these two basic concepts are not haphazard, but institutionalized; the relationship often being instrumental, not an end in itself. Religions are belief systems and may be highly charged emotionally. They therefore have their cultural as well as their organizational aspects; in many cases, the institution of religion e.g church or mosque provides the basis for the organization. While serving to give meaning to religion, the institutions serve as integrative mechanism for its community of believers. In religion there is the belief in supernatural being, some kind of supernatural life, having effects on the living. The worship of the supernatural being can be from three perspectives---God, Sprit and Holy Ghost. Man worships these super being based on their culture and belief system.

Pentecostals are trying to make individual jettison the exclusive character of traditional culture and religion. De-traditionalising according to Alberto (2014 ) was noticed in afro-Brazilian and indigenous population groups in Latin America, people in Africa such as Angola, Mozambique, Congo, Nigeria; in Asia such as India, Vietnam, and Oceania continent like Australia.

### **2.2.2 Religious Marketing**

Religious marketing is used to identify the marketing activities of the religious organizations. It can be used to evangelize and attain other set objectives (Kucaba, 2014) Religious marketing is associated with social marketing, which is used in many not-for-profit organizations (NPOs)(Kotler,2000). Religious organizations do engage in marketing because they too run a business and employ business management techniques (Goerke, 2003; Kotler,2000;Stanton *et al.*,1991). Dolnicar and Lazarevski (2009) cited Thomas (1983) stated that marketing involve those activities performed by individuals or organizations either profit or non- profit, that enable, facilitate and encourage exchange to the satisfaction of both parties. It is all about mutually satisfying exchange relationship, in which both parties are satisfied with the outcome. These churches have missions hence like all other organizations they must set strategies and tactics to reach these goals, through proper management and marketing. Churches employ accounting system, financial controls, personnel management and labour relations and other business management techniques (Andreasen, Goodstern & Wilson,2005;

Goerke,2003;Odeyemi,2000;Stanton *et al.*,1991). They employ marketing techniques consciously or otherwise (Freitas–da-costa *et al.*,2011;Sargeant & Bennett,2004).However, many religious organisations rarely understand the concept of a total marketing program, where in a planned product offering is effectively priced, promoted and distributed to provide satisfaction to the various markets (public). Many treat marketing in part, as tantamount to advertising, selling or promotion (Akchin,2001; Kotler,2000;McGrath,1997). According to Dolnicar and Lazarevski (2009),and Kotler (2000) many of the religious organisations are still production-oriented rather than market or customer oriented.

Non profit organization or social marketing according to Thomas (1983) as cited in Dolnicar and Lazarevki (2009) is concerned with the application of the marketing concept to organizations whose goals are defined not by profit but by other yardsticks of performance. Kotler and Keller (2006) captioned it from social area and defined it as the design, implementation and control programs that seek to increase the acceptance of an idea in a focus group. Freitas- da – costa *et al.* (2011) stated that social marketing is a tool democratic and efficient system that applies the principles and tools of marketing to create and grant a greater social values to the proposal, finding again the consumer through interactive dialogue, creating conditions for the build process of reflection, participation and social change.

Churches engages in promotional activities (marketing communication-mix: personal selling, publicity, public relations, advertising, sales promotion) through what is termed mediatization (Alberto, 2014). By this, church activities and products are made accessible to the ever-increasing audiences through the media conglomeration such as cinemas, internet, the press, music industry. The church uses these outfits for the creation and diffusion of taste, ideas, values, life styles, behaviour, fiction, world view, feeling of belonging, personal identification etc. Today, many religious organizations in order to control and restrict their audiences on messages received invest heavily in buying or building their own media-outfits;-gospel music, cult-shows, talk-shows, exorcism, real-time prayer, messages, media-oriented evangelization strategies, confronting and demonizing traditional and native religions. Hence we proposed the hypothesis that:

H1: Application of promotional tools have positive effect on the size of the congregation By their own Christian products Pentecostal churches use the existing authority of the bible to disqualify and exorcise traditional forms of beliefs in sprits, playing traditional ritual drums, ghosts, magical practices, ancestral souls and local, traditional deities. The doctrine of Pentecostal churches emphasizes prosperity theology and holy war theology against evil sprits. Religion and churches will not remain the same, as they are already adapting and undergoing internal transformations, management and marketing. The products offered by the churches can be classified into religious and non-religious services. The former include propagation and expansion of faith, religious education, performance of religious rituals like weddings, while the latter include establishment of educational and health centres / schools, employment, child care, food distribution/ social welfare, skill empowerment training, sporting activities and other corporate social responsibilities/ charities (Alberto,2014; Iyer, et al,nd; Kacuba,2014; Kuzma, et al,nd; Silverman, 2005) To achieve its aims the church features the training and pragmatic use of native personnel, the culture and language education and the adoption of media and marketing raisonnement. We hypothesize that: H2: Segmentation strategy affords the Church to satisfy its members

### **2.3 Empirical review**

A number of studies have shown the degree of application, acceptability and importance of marketing tools to NPOs especially as they relate to religious organizations activities. This section discusses some of the findings of these works. Kucaba (2014) in his study titled an attitude of the symptoms of marketing in the church in one religion society, using Poland, reported that marketing phenomenon in the church is not new. That marketing was not fully utilized in the 1950's not until 1970's when some church organizations began implementing the marketing strategies similar to those in the business area. He reported of a research carried out in the 80s in the USA which showed that up to 68% of the pastors sampled thought that the church should be more of a business-like, to grow and meet the expectations of the faithful; 93% of the pastors agreed to using advertising on their activities.

Kucaba used 210 respondents, 78.5% of the people are believers. 63.4% of the respondents believed that marketing used in the church influenced the image of the catholic church. 72.2% respondents believed that the church should use the technological progress to communicate with believers. While many recognized the power of marketing, 14% believed that the use of marketing offend theirs religious feelings. He concluded that the Polish society is aware of the occurrences and sensitivity of marketing in the church, but does not notice the need to use it. He noted the openness of the society for the evangelization using modern information technology such as the internet, web, radio, sms etc to communicate with the target.

Modi (2011) studied 579 NPOs who were into service provision and found out that market orientation in NPOs improved peer reputation, beneficiary satisfaction and innovativeness. He concluded that contrary to the evidences from previous studies carried out in the developed countries, market orientation does not help in attracting more resources in India.

In their studies, Dolnicar and Lazarevski (2009) and Kotler (1995,1998,2000) concluded that NPOs managers indicated that the most important marketing activities are promotional in nature, only a small proportion of NPOs acknowledged the importance of marketing research on need assessment, product development and strategic marketing. This finding agreed with Andreasen and kotler (2003) assertion that NPOs have an organization- centered mindset. Kotler (1998) concluded that marketing lagged dramatically in adoption by NPOs compared to the other business practices such as accounting, financial management and planning.

Studies by Georke (2003);Greiling (2011);Harvey (2001) and Stanton *et al.* (1991) concluded that NPOs operate in a highly competitive environment hence have started to adopt business like techniques in their approach to operations so as to combat the market place pressure just like in the for- profit organizations. Kotler and Keller (2006) concluded that NPOs must possess a satisfactory understanding of marketing in order to survive, grow and strengthen their contribution to the general welfare.

Freitas-da-costa *et al.* (2011) in their comparative study of NPOs concluded that NPOs that adopted marketing in their operations had better and effective performance vis- a vis their mission goals and beneficiary satisfaction than NPOs that do not adopt marketing approach to their operations. This submission support the claims by Kotler and Keller (2006); Sargeant and Bennett (2004) and Terblance (2001) that application of marketing techniques to the NPOs environment has created a shift in the mindset from realizing the advantages of applying marketing concepts and tools in the NPOs to the emphasis of a more systematic approach through the help of strategic planning.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

The study is descriptive and cross sectional survey. This method is economical and has the potential to address the research questions and hypotheses formulated.

138 Pentecostal churches(PC) were randomly selected in five local government councils in Lagos State, based on their locations, population and commerce, and they represented four out of the five administrative divisions in which the state is divided. A self developed questionnaire titled 'Religious Marketing Service Delivery Questionnaire' (RMSDQ) was used on the respondents who were mainly pastors, assistant pastors, administrative officers and priests in the churches sampled. The researcher also observed things by himself on some churches' activities.

Using convenient sampling technique, a pilot study involving 20 respondents from ten Pentecostal churches in Isolo local government council area, Lagos State was conducted between 9<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2016 before the collection of the main data for the study, to determine among others, the sample size, validity and reliability of the research instrument (Chisnall, 1981; Nurudeen, 2001). Pearson's product moment correlation which resulted into 0.89 coefficient was used for test-retest reliability of the instrument. The final survey instrument benefited from both face and construct validity test through the experts' opinion on the suitability and appropriateness of each item in the questionnaire.

Apart from the six questions which were bio-data based, the other nine items in the instrument were measured on 5 point Likert's scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree to determine the extent to which the church and respondents understand, utilized and applied marketing tools in the organisation's service operations and delivery. A total of 101 questionnaires were retrieved from the 138 sent out between 11<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2016, and were analysed using Chi- square statistical formular.

### **IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

Below is the analysis of the responses from the 101 Pentecostal churches that participated in the study.



**Table 1-** Sample profile. Source: Field survey 2016.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage			
<b>A Sex:</b>			<b>B Age Class</b>		
Male	87	86	Below 30yrs	03	02.9
Female	<u>14</u>	<u>14</u>	30-40yrs	31	30.7
Total	101	<u>100.0</u>	41-50yrs	42	41.6
			51-60 yrs	19	18.8
			Above 60	06	5.9
<b>B Age Class</b>			<b>D * Distribution:</b>		
Below 30yrs	03	02.9		Frequency	Percentage
30-40yrs	31	30.7	RCCG	22	21.8
41-50yrs	42	41.6	Catholic	08	07.9
51-60 yrs	19	18.8	MFM	<u>16</u>	<u>15.8</u>
Above 60	<u>06</u>	<u>5.9</u>	Apostolic	12	11.9
			CAC	11	10.9
			Four square	06	05.9
			DLBC	12	11.9
			Others	14	13.9
	<u>101</u>	<u>100.0</u>		<u>101</u>	<u>100</u>
<b>C Education:</b>			<b>E job status:</b>		
WASCE	17	16.8	Pastor	35	34.7
ND/NCE	21	20.8	Asst Pastor	16	15.8
HND/BA/B.sc	43	42.6	Admin	<u>27</u>	<u>26.7</u>
Post Graduate	20	<u>19.8</u>	Minister	16	15.8
			G.O	<u>07</u>	<u>06.9</u>
	<u>101</u>	<u>100.0</u>		<u>101</u>	<u>100</u>

\* RCCG=Redeemed Christian Church of God. CAC=Christ Apostolic Church

MFM= Mountain of Fire Ministry. DLBC=Deeper Life Bible Church

From the table above, 87 (86%) men and 14 (13.8%) female participated in the study. 76 (75%) of the respondents were aged 50 years and below, and all the sampled have a minimum of senior secondary school certificate. This suggest that more men seem to take more of leadership positions in church affairs and the responsibilities were normally given to people that were still agile, strong and educated. Those who participated were either pastors, assistant pastors, admin officers and ministers in their churches. Only 7 people were general overseers of their churches. This suggests that many of the churches are organized and managed following hierarchical statuses. Part D in the table showed the distribution of the questionnaires to the churches.

23 different Pentecostal denominational churches were involved. A total of 12 (52%) of them have establishments outside the country. 96% have their presence in at least two states in Nigeria and have been founded more than nine years. The respondents were asked the extent to which their churches applied some marketing tools in their activities.

Upon collation, all the participants (100%) agreed they do advertising (use sign posts, fliers, bill boards, print, electronic and social media); personal selling (evangelism, counseling, follow-up); conversional marketing (baptism, alter calls, believer class); fund raising (grants, donations, offerings). A total of 68 (67%) of the sampled agreed that the church engaged in publicity activities (crusades, skill empowerment training); 87 (86%) people agreed on public relations campaigns (social works, corporate social responsibilities); 92 (91%) affirmed on event marketing (conventions, retreats, special meetings, praise concerts, seminars); 95(94%) people consented to market segmentation (for youths, adults, children, teens, singles, excellent men, good women, elders). This confirmed the findings by Anheier,2005; Kotler,2000 and Stanton, et al,1991 that the church operated in intense market pressure due to increase in their members. Also, the findings agreed with Sargeant and Bennett (2004) and Kuzma, et al.(n.d) that the church like other NPOs should adopt a market—oriented, customer—driven approach to their operations and service delivery. The church whether consciously or otherwise employed marketing tools in conformity with findings by Freitas-da-costa, et al (2011) and Kucaba(2014). A total of 97 (96%) people aligned with market positioning (new branch establishment, prison evangelism, visits to less privileged—orphange). The participants agreed on the need for all the stakeholders (Ushers, Sunday school teachers, Choirs, Prayer warriors, Security men, etc) to work as a team in order to satisfy the people and meet the mission’s objectives which was consistent with the findings by Modi (2011).

Findings from the study clearly showed that churches applied marketing tools because of its importance. The churches applied the marketing mix elements for mission accomplishment but not as for-profit making organizations, and do deliver the right needs according to the segment identified and focused. These two

assertions were further confirmed in the two hypotheses tested where the null hypotheses were rejected (Table 2 below). Statements 2 & 5 and 4 & 7 were used for H1 and H2 respectively.

Statement 2: Advertising helps create church awareness

5: Promotional mix afford increase in church members

4: Groupings enables church provide quality service to the identified

7: Proximity of worship centres lead to increase in church membership

**Table 2:** Chi square test. Source: Field survey, 2016

Hypothesis	Sample size	Degree of freedom	Level of sig.	x <sup>2</sup> cal	x <sup>2</sup> tabulated	Decision
HO <sub>1</sub>	101	4	0.05	118.39	31.41	Reject
HO <sub>2</sub>	101	4	0.05	88.65	31.41	Reject

Hence, we conclude that (1) promotional tools have positive effect on the size of the congregation, and, (2) segmentation strategy affords the church to satisfy its congregation members.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Religious organisations now operate under intense market pressure and competition hence it is expected they should adopt a market- oriented approach to their operations and activities like for- profit organizations as advocated by Kotler (2000) and Sargeant and Bennett (2004). It was empirically confirmed that many of these organisations still lack an understanding of the application of marketing tools though, they believe it could help them in achieving their mission objectives effectively. To achieve greatly the churches need to change their perceptions on what marketing functions are by being more customer- oriented than organization- focused.

Based on the result from this study the following are hereby recommended:

- i. Marketing is everywhere, therefore, religious organizations should as a matter of necessity pay closer attention to church administration / management and marketing and go further to develop contemporary marketing strategies for the benefit of enhancing growth in modern day church service deliveries.
- ii. The church products are services, which make them inseparable from the recipients. However, the church should consider reaching their people, even evangelism through the integrated techniques and communication means—radio, television, web, internet, phone etc. Each parish / mission should have her own website where the faithful can be reached and derive information about the church and their activities and programs.
- iii. NPOs, the churches inclusive, like their counterparts in the for-profit making organisations are also 'running a business', hence, all their activities must start and end with the customers (marketing concept) by ensuring that all their operations are geared towards satisfying these group of people ( market- orientation) while not loosing focus on achieving the organization's eternal mission objectives.

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