

ASHESI UNIVERSITY

**DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR
AFRICAN POLISTAS.**



Applied Project Report submitted to the Department of Business Administration, Ashesi University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Applied Project Report is the result of my own work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the Applied Project Report were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of applied projects laid down by Ashesi University College.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

African Polistas is an organization that boasts of being a pan-African polo club deeply rooted in the Ghanaian and South African community. It is currently chaired by Harold Awuah - Darko. With the organization's knowledge of polo and the aim of teaching and nurturing generations of horse lovers, the team recently introduced its riding school which targets not only the elite but horse lovers including children and all others willing to learn and play polo at a fee.

Having been in operation for over a decade, the organization has acquired its clients mainly through referrals. This was as a result of low brand awareness among its potential customers. This conclusion was reached after an extensive needs assessment on the organization which exposed relevant gaps within the firm's operations. In conducting this needs assessment, qualitative research was employed to gather in-depth analysis and specific themes related to the research topic. Methods employed included observations, semi-structured and unstructured interviews and internet research. Pictures were taken during periods of observations which can be found in the appendix. An aide-memoire guided the researcher through unstructured interviews. Interview guidelines aided the conduction of semi-structured interviews. Findings from the research showed low marketing efforts of African Polistas among potential clients. The marketing mix was then employed to develop an Integrated Marketing Communications Plan which was best fit for the organization. Recommendations and conclusions were reached in the latter part of the chapters which illustrated the end of the project's journey.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Ghana as a country offers a large array of sports activities for both the young and the young at heart. It would be unfair to acknowledge the fact that the art of boxing and football has had great influence and dominance from individual glory, Olympic medals as well as international cups. Certain sports activities though such as polo, horseback riding, hockey, rugby just to mention a few, remain almost unnoticeable in the industry although highly recognized and profitable on an international level. (Danquah, 2019)

This project is mainly centered on polo and horseback riding as a sport. Subsequent chapters lay emphasis on its level of appreciation in the international and Ghanaian sport community as well as the cultivation of better marketing strategies to reach horse lovers. Polo as most people know is commonly described as a ‘gentleman’s sport’ mainly appreciated among the elite in society. It is a game played worldwide and involves the participation of over 50 countries in the world. Dominant countries or nations which seem to be invested in polo include Argentina, the USA and Britain. (Davis, 2019) This sport goes further than improving the riding skills of players to inculcating the values of teamwork and strategy in its players. Polo has a brief history in Ghana although it is by no means a sport that dominates the industry. Due to the fact that polo is not so popular in Ghana as in an international setting, a polo team known as the African Polistas was introduced with a mission to create a world class equestrian facility that serves as a hub to teach and nurture generation of horse lovers and the vision to be an incubator for all equestrian sports in Ghana. African Polistas is a decade old pan-African polo team with a network of more than fifty (50) polo members in England, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa,

Argentina and the USA. It has managed to participate in various tournaments internationally which has enabled the organization to forge a great network. With its resilient and dedicated team members, African Polistas participated in a tournament which earned them their first African cup in 2008, making it the first all-black team in the tournament's 14-year history to lift the cup. To an audience of over 2000 people in the year 2014, history repeated itself again when African Polistas lifted the trophy. Games hosted and played by the African Polistas in Ghana are mainly at the Accra Polo Club. It is however wrong to conclude that African Polistas the polo team of the Accra Polo Club since they only rent the Accra Polo club for most of their games and riding lessons. Despite their great success and achievements, African Polistas seems to be dissatisfied with their clientele base and are hoping to increase their customer base with a well-defined marketing strategy.

1.2 Overview of Chapter

This chapter will begin with the profile of African Polistas, as well as the purpose for choosing to work on this project. It further goes on to analyze the industry from external and internal angles using both a SWOT and PESTLE analysis. Under the SWOT analysis, focus will be laid on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the firm in the business environment. The PESTLE analysis will be used as a tool in the latter part of this chapter to evaluate and track certain macro-economic factors which can directly affect the business currently and in the future. Porter's Five forces will however be mentioned at the latter part of this chapter although not a major tool used for the industry analysis.

1.3 Company Profile

Although African Polistas was introduced in an earlier paragraph, this section will solely focus on the company profile of African Polistas, its success and glory over the years as well as certain challenges faced. African Polistas was a team formed a decade ago with less members than currently. This club boasts of being a pan-African polo club deeply rooted in the Ghanaian and South African community. This team is currently chaired by Harold Awuah -Darko and with a number of approximately 50 players in the team. The logo of the team is represented by the head of a lion conveying the message of courage, strength and excellence, with the colours red, yellow and green better appreciating the African community. The pan-African polo team has actively participated in a number of tournaments which never goes unrecognized by the polo industry since their hard work led them to lift the African cup in the year 2008 and 2014 bringing glory to the team and a better brand image for the team.

With their knowledge of polo and with the aim of teaching and nurturing generations of horse lovers, the team recently introduced its riding school which targets not only the elite but horse lovers including children and all others willing to learn and play polo at a fee. Currently, the team hosts approximately 20 students including children between the ages of 5 and 7, horse lovers with ages from above 21, as well as all others interested in learning the sport. African Polistas although victorious in certain tournaments they have competed in, does not fail to embrace challenges that have come their way such as a lower clientele base, problems with customer service and relations as well as logistics and planning which they hope to surely improve upon in the coming years to strengthen their brand.

- Mission Statement: To create a world class equestrian facility that serves as a hub to teach and nurture generations of horse lovers
- Vision: To be an incubator for all equestrian sports in Ghana.

1.4 Rationale for Selecting African Polistas

Choosing to work with African Polistas was mainly because it is an organization chaired by a friend's father. In my final year, I was to choose an organization to work with. I was quite late in my decision since I was confused on whether to do entrepreneurship or an applied project. At the last minute, the project options I had were quite limited and not very interesting. I was approached with this project involving horses called the African Polistas project and found it different due to the fact that the other options I had were either concerning a fashion industry, a bank, law firm or cleaning agency. I accepted the African Polistas Project mainly because I wanted to assist a friend and also perceived an animal-related project to be nothing but fun and a different experience. I also thought that getting detailed information about the organization will be easily accessible since my friend is currently a member of the Board of Management.

1.5 Industry Analysis

For the industry analysis, a SWOT analysis, PESTLE analysis and Porter's Five forces were used as tools to evaluate the industry. This section will begin with the use of the SWOT analysis as a tool to identify certain internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization, as well as external opportunities and threats of the organization. The PEST analysis will then be used as a tool to analyze and monitor the macro-environmental factors that may have great

impact on the performance of the organization. Lastly, porter's five forces will be used to analyze the competition of the organization.

1.5.1 SWOT analysis

Strengths: The African Polistas through its involvements and victories in various tournaments was able to build strong relationships with clubs of diverse cultures as well as prominent people in society, hence a great network established. The organization also has easy access to financial support due to the willingness of various investors across the country to invest in this sport. It also prides itself with having a resilient and committed team and great management skill which has helped to keep it running.

Weaknesses: There seems to be a communication gap between managers of African Polistas and stable workers as a result of language barriers such as dialects and language disabilities which include stuttering. Certain employees hired were not so fluent in English as they were in their local languages such as Twi and Ga, making it quite difficult to communicate with clients. Also, employees have no clear job definitions which makes it difficult for clients to know who to call to address a particular need. African Polistas had no structured marketing plan, as a result, the organization was observed to have low marketing among potential clients, hence, the inability to increase its clientele base. The organization's client base was mainly increased through referrals and comprised of retained and returning clients.

Opportunity: Since the sector in which the industry operates is underdeveloped in Ghana, there is little or no competition. Also, with their great network, they are able to easily get sponsorships from other companies. The firm has easy access to technology and the right resources needed for the effective running of activities.

Threats: African Polistas mainly operates with horses and land. The fear of horses being exposed to various diseases such as the chronic disease and infections such as the Equine influenza can pose as a threat for the efficient running of activities. Land is a natural resource highly prone to natural disasters such as floods and this can pose as a threat to the organization. Since games are played and lessons are held in the open, the likelihood of rain can be seen as a threat to the organization. Games and lessons will have to be cancelled whenever weather forecasts suggest rain at venues rented. The fear of stablemen feeding horses with sprayed hay grass is a threat to the organization. More importantly, possible unauthorized entry of horse owners into the industry may pose as a threat to the African Polistas.

1.5.2 PESTLE Analysis:

Political Environment: Factors in the political environment that are likely to affect the firm include political instability. When there is political instability in the country, the operations of African Polistas can be negatively affected. Political instability can lead to curfews, closed entry points which limits the number of hours that the club can operate as a business. However, with Ghana's current state where there is low or no political instability, African Polistas can freely operate and there is no limit for their working hours, hence, horse lovers or people who would want to ride horses can do so even after work or whatever time they would want to do so.

Economic

Environment: Economic factors likely to affect the firm include inflation rates and investment rates. When there is inflation, prices for goods and services increase which impacts the costs of living and doing business. Higher levels of inflation will lead to higher prices of offerings by

African Polistas, clients would also find it difficult to afford services rendered by the club due to price increments. Hence, suppliers of African Polistas, African Polistas as well as clients of African Polistas will be negatively affected by high levels of inflation. Investments rates can affect both the organization and clients of the organization. When interest rates increase, consumers with debts will have to pay more interests on their loans, hence, a reduction in savings. Consumers are therefore demotivated to spend more due to a reduction in their disposable income. Since African Polistas deals in rendering luxurious products and services, the organization may be hit harder by a rise in interest rates since consumers first rule out luxurious services or products when they experience a decrease in disposable income. However, with lower interest rates, the cost of paying back a loan is less. Hence, savings gained increase disposable income of consumers. With this, consumers have the means to purchase luxurious products and services. This economic change will be highly advantageous to African Polistas since consumers have more income to spend.

High interest rates make it difficult for businesses to acquire loans since these loans become more expensive. This could further affect the expansion of an organization negatively. Low interest rates however, make it more beneficial to take out loans for business expansion since lower interest rates implies a low cost on loans. African Polistas can therefore take advantage of lower interest rates to place available cash produced by the organization in high-yield accounts which can be described as an opportunity in this economic environment.

Socio- cultural Environment: Sociocultural factors are defined as forces which influence an individual's thoughts, feelings and habit. These forces are experienced within cultures. Within the current Ghanaian setting, polo is barely likely to be affected by Socio-cultural factors.

Technological Environment: Technological factors such as the access to technological equipment such as computers, laptops, access to the internet, adequate technological experience of employees, horse equipment and accessories, amongst other equipment can potentially affect the operations of the organization positively. (Kitchin,2006). African Polistas can take advantage technological advancements to work easier and faster as well as enhancing innovation for the betterment of the organization. Technological equipment such as laptops, computers, phones, amongst other devices can help in communication and administrative work done by the organization. Easy access to the internet can contribute to the organization's activeness on social media platforms, potentially improving its marketing strategies. Since horse garments and masks are purchased overseas, online orderings are made possible and easier through an improved technology. Also, the ability of employees to use technological equipment and their familiarity with technological equipment and devices can facilitate the progress of the organization's operations.

Legal Environment: Legal factors here concerns regulatory bodies such as the Food and Drugs Administration. This is regulatory body is needed due to the fact that African Polistas deals with feed and drugs for the upkeep of horses. The FDA is therefore responsible for ensuring that these drugs administered to horses are safe and feed provided are of some level of quality. Other regulatory bodies the Environmental Protection Agency, Civic Society or National Commission for Civic Education. We can have them as regulatory bodies in terms of how much noise pollution there is since excessive noise will affect the concentration of riders as well as the horses.

Natural environment: African Polistas is an organization that heavily relies on land. The Environmental Protection Agency can therefore be a regulatory asset in terms of monitoring environmental pollution. This organization is concerned with environmental licensing, enforcement of environmental law, environmental planning, education and guidance, monitoring, analyzing and giving a report on the environment, amongst other functions. They therefore help to keep the environment in the right condition, limiting the amount of pollution.

1.5.3 Porter's Five Forces:

The introduction of Porter's five forces was to shape the structure of industries and to further establish the rules of competition and the root causes of profitability within industries (Porter,2008) The basic idea for the establishment of this framework started with the perception that managers in industries view competition very narrowly. The five forces therefore brings an industry's attention to the fact that they do not only compete with direct competitors, but they are also in competition with an extended set of competitors such as customers who have bargaining power, suppliers who have bargaining power, new entrant who might come into the industry to take part in activities in order to make money and substitute products that have the potential of placing a cap on an industry's profitability. The five forces framework can therefore be described as an integrated way of viewing any industry and understanding various drivers of profitability.

The competitive forces can be applied by African Polistas in answering related to competition and profitability. Such questions include:

1. What is causing profitability in the industry

2. What trends are most likely to be significant in changing the game in the industry
3. Where can constraints which when identified can allow you secure a strong competitive position?

Subsequent paragraphs on Porter's five forces will focus on exploring various competition likely to be faced by African Polistas in its industry in Ghana.

Threat of new entrants: The entry of new competitors into the industry could change the competitive equation and reduce profits of the organization. Since the Ghana Military Academy, has horses available, their need to enter the polo industry can be a great competition to African Polistas. Entering the polo industry in Ghana is quite costly due to the high level of funds needed, amongst other factors. With an increased competition in the polo industry, the elite or polo lovers in Ghana have more alternatives, hence a dissatisfaction with any of the services offered by African Polistas will cause them to leave the organization resulting in a reduction of the clientele base of African Polistas, further decreasing revenue generated by the organization as well.

Bargaining power of buyers: The African Polistas can be faced with rivalry if other horse owners choose to enter the market. With an increase in competition in the polo industry, clients will have some sort of bargaining power to their benefit (Haghighi,2019). If other polo organizations enter the market and offer less costly products and services as compared to African Polistas, clients are more switch within organizations. Hence, in the case of high competition, clients have a higher level of bargaining power. However, this is not the case of African Polistas

as the organization seems to be reaping the benefits of a monopolistic firm in Ghana. The bargaining power of buyers or clients is therefore low.

Bargaining power of suppliers: There is an assessment of how easy it is for suppliers to raise prices. This is influenced by the number of suppliers of each necessary input, peculiarity of their products or services as well as costs of switching from one supplier to another. (CGMA, 2019) The bargaining power of the suppliers such Equine South Africa who is the organization's main supplier of horse equipment and feed is currently high due to the fact that the club prides itself in the best horses, feed for horses, amongst other necessities.

Threat of substitutes: Substitutes products or services are products or services that offer the same functionality as former goods. Hence, if horse owners enter the industry providing similar offerings, the monopolistic status of the industry can be damaged. African Polistas faces low competition in Ghana in terms of its offerings which helps it maintain its monopolistic status.

Rivalry among competitors: Competition is said to be highly significant in forcing competitors to improve upon their position. With the possible entry of other horse owners, forms of competition such as price competition, may lead to instability and can affect the level of profitability for African Polistas. Currently, African Polistas faces low level of rivalry in Ghana based on the low level of competition in the Ghanaian polo industry. However, with an introduction of its riding school, a potential competitor identified is the Burma Camp Academy which also targets horse lovers, health conscious and active individuals

CHAPTER TWO: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter of the project focuses mainly on how data was gathered using various procedures and methods with specific tools that fit the purpose of the needs assessment. It entails the rationale or reason for the choice of procedures applied as well as how information gathered was analyzed.

2.2 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The needs assessment is concerned with clearly outlining the problems of African Polistas which is highly relevant for making direct recommendations to help in creating desirable results for the organization. In basic terms, it seeks to outline the relevant gaps within the processes, operations and business strategies adapted by African Polistas through detailed research into these departments. A needs assessment is defined as a systematic way of determining the current state of an organization before proceeding to propose or recommend solutions to improving upon its current state (Musser et al, 2012). Throughout this chapter, the current conditions of African Polistas will be identified.

The main objectives of this chapter are to:

1. Synonymize the day-to-day activities of African Polistas to be able to find relevant gaps in relation to the level of satisfaction of their clientele base.
2. Determine their methods of retaining and expanding their clientele base

These objectives will help in identifying certain deficiencies within the operations of African Polistas for necessary recommendations.

Problem Statement

Since African Polistas began its operations a decade ago, it has been unable to have a structured plan in approaching and acquiring new clients. The organization has acquired clients mainly through referrals and its customer base mainly consists of retained and returning clients. For this reason, they rarely experience drastic increase in revenues. The organization therefore believes that in becoming more proactive in their marketing strategies, they will be able to reach out to new clients, hence, increasing their customer base. Further assessments of the African Polistas created a realization that the organization currently has no major problem with customer service although they believe that this sector of the organization is not perfect and describes it as fair. The reason for this rating is based on their definition of good customer service as providing timely and top-notch service to a customer, making sure that their needs are prioritized and met in a manner which reflects positively on the company. This they believe is being incorporated in the standards and principles of the organization. African Polistas is therefore of the view that with their present customer service, they can handle and maintain customers they acquire, hence, are focused on methods to maintain a consistent influx of new clients.

2.2.1 Real Life Narrative

In order to derive information about the marketing African Polistas had done over the years, interviews were held with some existing and potential clients. This category of people interviewed comprised a mix of polo players outside and in Ghana, clients of African Polistas,

individuals who love the game of polo, horse lovers and owners, international or private school students, amongst other interviewees. Most of these participants occasionally came to watch polo matches at the Accra Polo Club and Labadi Beach Club. Questions asked were centered on whether these categories of people actually knew about the organization and what exactly they did. For clients, questions asked were centered on how they had heard of the organization in addition to whether or not they were clear on the services rendered by the organization as well as their experiences. Answers derived from majority of interviewees who were not customers of the organization was mostly on whether they knew of or had heard about the organization. A few who had heard of the organization were oblivious of services it rendered, their mission and vision. Through further conversational interviews conducted, individuals were also able to express their love for other sports activities or games such as golf, football, tennis, just to mention a few. Participants involved who mastered in other sports activities mentioned that the main reason they attended polo events was mainly for networking. With the knowledge that golf players are potential clients of African Polistas since it also targets the elite in society, more focus was laid on interviewing or holding conversations with these individuals. When asked why they preferred gulf to polo, the most common reason was that polo was riskier than gulf and it is really all about preference. They had started playing gulf at a tender age and attended gulf matches with their parents when they were young so the interest was definitely built from their youth. The others who expressed their love for other sports activities were not totally excluded from further conversations since they had the feature of being highly health conscious and the desire to keep fit. These people barely knew of African Polistas. Last but not least, African Polistas clients who were involved in conversations definitely knew of the organization as a polo club and were aware and clear of other services it provided. These clients expressed that most of

their experiences with the organization was great. A funny comment passed by a client which was worth noting was that whenever he thought about African Polistas, he thought about everything horse.

In holding conversations with existing clients of African Polistas, the recurring theme was that they had been referred to the organization by colleagues, business partners and friends or acquaintances of their parents. Others either knew the founder of the organization or his son who is currently managing it.

Answers derived was evidence of the fact that African Polistas had low to no marketing among their potential clients over the years and most of their existing customers were mainly through referrals.

2.3 Methodology

In conducting the needs assessment, various procedures were used. These included, observations, interviews, as well as online research. The first technique employed was observations which involved the researcher being present at settings where respondents were, while taking notes, pictures and videos. This method of data collection was more labor-intensive, necessary to derive a realistic view of the organization. This was done mostly over the weekends since those were working-days for African Polistas. However, weekdays were included to observe the operations of employees of this organization. Informal conversational interviews also referred to as unstructured interviews was a procedure employed in conducting the needs assessment as mentioned earlier. Interviewees were conducted on respondents comprising of a mix of polo players outside and in Ghana, clients and employees of African Polistas, individuals who love the game of polo, horse lovers and owners as well as international or private school

students. An organization included in this interview was the Burma Camp Riding Academy since its product and service offerings includes riding lessons which can be seen as a substitute to what African Polistas provides as part of their package.

These categories of interviewees were selected using purposive sampling also known as judgement, selective or subjective sampling. This sampling method is described as non-probability sampling method in which members of the population chosen to partake in the research is based on the researchers own judgement. The main goal of employing technique was to concentrate on specific features of the population relevant to the study that will aid in answering the research questions. In basic terms, participants were intentionally chosen based on certain characteristics they possess such as their love for horses, their interest in polo events, their level of appreciation of polo as a sport, social status, level of health consciousness or desire to keep fit among other features, their availability and voluntariness to be included in the research as well as their understanding and experience in this particular field of research. This technique helped to gain knowledge on what potential and existing clients of African Polistas prioritize before patronizing a service or purchasing a product and various platforms, where they easily accessed information.

Before proceeding with the aforementioned data collection pertaining existing and potential clients as well as a potential competitor of the organization, an interview was held with the manager of African Polistas to derive vital information needed for further research. With the interview conducted, information was gathered on the history of the organization, the industry it finds itself in, target market, the services they provide, day-to-day operations, number of existing employees and clients, platforms used for communication by the organization, as well as the expected outcome of the project. Conducting such an interview was highly relevant for the

project since it gave a better understanding of the organization from both internal and external perspectives.

2.3.1 Observations

To start with, the first procedure employed was observations. This data collection method involving the researcher immersing herself in the setting where participants were present while taking notes, pictures which can be found in the appendix and recordings. This was seen as a good needs assessment technique in gathering a realistic view of the situation of the organization although it was highly labor-intensive. With this procedure, the researcher was able to get an estimate of the number of people who walk-in to patronize the organization's services, day-to-day operations of the organization and helped monitor spectators present at games. It could be observed that it was the same customers who walked-in every time. When these customers are in to play polo, the horses were mostly already on the fields although there were few delays on certain days which was extremely rare, in addition to the equipment needed to play. Customers rarely had to wait for long before the games or lessons begun. Time, was of the essence to customers and the organization was sure to put that as priority. Employees were always on the look-out for customers' needs and attended to them with promptness. It was however quite clear that the customers barely knew who to call for a particular service and mostly called for the services of the employee they were friendlier and more familiar with. After the games, most players normally sat to talk about the game, business related topics and even general headlines concerning the state and had a few refreshments alongside provided by the African Polistas team before leaving the field. There was clearly a sense of belongingness and strong relationship between members which was due to the fact that they were either business partners or longtime

acquaintances. Learners who attended lessons organized by the organization were either in their youth stage or fell within a higher range. Since they were less familiar with the horses, patience was of the essence. Instructors who held lessons were extremely careful in teaching learners. Lessons were quite slow in the beginning since these customers needed to acquire certain skills to be able to control the horses. Safety was also highly prioritized since the organization used smaller and calmer horses they had in their possession for lessons instead of the huge and aggressive ones they had. An approach they used to ensure time consciousness was working strictly by schedules where customers come as and when their classes are scheduled for. Children who came for lessons left with their parents or guardians who sat and waited throughout lessons while being attended to by other employees who ensured their comfort. Adults who came for lessons either sat to watch other lessons accompanied with refreshments catered for by the organization or left right after their lessons. It could be noted however that feedback was given to heads in charge right after the game through conversations held during refreshment or relaxation periods.

Spectators who came to watch the polo match were potential interviewees since it could be assumed that they had some sort of passion for the sport. Most spectators identified or differentiated players by the colour of their polo shirts. Others were quick to notice the name of the teams printed on the polo shirts. My general observation was that clients of the organization were satisfied with services being rendered by the team although there were a few glitches with regards to delays before the start of the game or lessons which was extremely rare and employees not having proper job definitions. Spectators were mostly attended to by the employees of venues where games were being played or hosts of games organized.

The greatest problem witnessed during the entire period was the organization having very few or no customers during working days. The most clients they ever had for their games on Saturdays were less than eight (8) and for their riding school, less than ten (10) on working days. There were days where there were zero or no customers coming in which made employees idle. This was clear evidence of the low inflow of customers regularly.

2.3.2 Interviews

Interviews conducted on various interviewees or participants were either semi-structured or unstructured. Semi-structured interviews were held with the current manager, two members, ten employees of African Polistas and five (5) clients of African Polistas who purchase products and patronize services of the organization. In conducting this type of interview, a few questions asked were predefined while the rest of the questions posed were unplanned. An advantage realized from this technique was that since it combined both structured and unstructured interview methods, it provided a more individualized and spontaneous or natural approach that raised interesting points in relation to the research topic.

Unstructured interviews also known as informal conversations were held with existing clients of the African Polistas riding school, equestrian instructor at Burma Camp, equestrian instructor of African Polistas and two horse owners spotted as part of the spectators present at games hosted by African Polistas. Under unstructured interviews, questions posed are neither unplanned nor predetermined. Questions arise from conversations held which exposes the researcher to unexpected themes. The interviewer must however be focused on the purpose of the interview although flexible in his or her proceedings, hence, the need for an aide-memoire.

The challenge here was the comparison of various responses gathered to derive a specific theme. This technique was highly preferred to allow interviewees talk in some depth.

2.3.3 Internet research

Distance was a factor which could inhibit the progress of the research. Transportation expenses were also increasing hence the need to rely on the internet as a faster and cheaper means of research. Information gathered from the internet was on African Polistas. It specifically measured the level of marketing done by the organization, experiences of clients, and to even test how active the organization was on social media.

Information was accessed on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook since much it had no structured website for obtaining information. These platforms gave a sense of what clients really thought about their brand. On these platforms, it was noticed that pictures posted were mainly of horses, polo games they had participated in or hosted, mostly in South Africa, or posted outlining packages they offered. Comments for pictures and videos they posted on these platforms were mostly disabled which gave a limited idea of client's experiences. This could impact the organization negatively in the sense that clients may want to share their great experiences or positive comments which could help with the marketing function publicly. They also had quite a number of followers which indicated that either potential and existing clients both outside and in the country were active on this platform, they had good or attractive content on their page, among other reasons. African Polistas was highly active on WhatsApp platforms. This was a way they mostly communicated with their clients and vice versa. This platform does not extensively help their public marketing although it is described as a communication platform used.

Conclusions reached using this research method was their low presence or activeness and focus

on using social media as a tool to reach potential clients. However, the limited comments reviewed showed that they had a great brand image among their existing clients as comments or feedback posted about client's experiences from services rendered were mostly positive.

2.4 Findings from Observations, Interviews and Internet Research

- A. Information gathered from clients of African Polistas revealed that the organization acquired its existing clients mainly through referrals and not by any intentional marketing activity done by the firm. These existing clients either knew friends, partners or colleagues who are either members (part of the board of directors who make decisions) or clients of the organization. Some knew the founder or his son, who is currently managing the riding school. These clients had a fair idea of the services ran by the organization. The conclusion derived from this information gathered showed the low brand awareness African Polistas had created over the years.
- B. Horse owners included in the interview were not clients of the organization but had heard of African Polistas. These individuals rendered the organization as solely a polo club and only for the elite in society due to its expensive or pricey nature. This indicated a vague understanding within these selected participants who had only heard of African Polistas to be a polo team but were unaware of the other product and service offerings done by the organization

- C. The current manager explained that the organization had no structured website which could give a clear definition of their products and services. This was confirmed when the researcher needed additional information on the organization through internet research.
- D. The firm was not making maximum use of social media to their maximum benefit. Although they had some sort of presence on social media, more can be done to leverage on this presence to attract potential clients to their brand. The organization should bear in mind that social media goes beyond hashtags, photos and videos. It is a powerful tool to maintain connection with a larger community which goes beyond technology. Social media is also about sociology and psychology. Positive reviews and great branding publicly could draw the attention of potential clients to the firm. Tracking the most used platforms by potential and existing clients could massively help in the decision of where their presence should be optimally active. These aforementioned deductions were exposed through internet research.
- E. Customers were asked to rate the services of the organization. From higher positive ratings and responses gathered, it was realized that organization has no major problem with satisfying their customer's needs. Clients prioritize safety and the organization is sure to include that as part of their principles. Instructors revealed that rules and regulations are given to clients on the first day they join the organization as guidelines and safety protocols and these instructors make sure clients or learners are familiar with these protocols before lessons and games begin.

- F. Interviews held with instructors disclosed that in case of any unfortunate accidents or injuries while riding horses, the organization has insurance policies in place which cater for their clients.

- G. Information gathered from the manager showed that the organization's current focus is expanding their riding school through an increase in their customer base. It was further disclosed that in doing so, the organization may need to hire new employees which they have made provision for and are willing to do so if need be.

- H. Further interviews held with the current manager revealed that the organization is has the potential to expand their riding school due to the fact that venue costs are excluded from their expenses since the owner of the organization is a member of the Accra Polo club, where their games and lessons are mostly held.

2.5 Justification

This needs assessment exposed the segments within the organization which needs much focus. It was clear that the organization renders various services in addition to it being a polo club. These additional services include riding lessons, the sale of horses, horse products, horse garments and horse masks. Throughout the entire needs assessment, research on the quality of their customer service was not excluded. The focus on customer service was highly significant for the progress of this project since the organization finds itself in a niche market in Ghana and is highly dependent on referrals as a means of customer acquisition. Most good organizations become great due to the loyalty they command from clients. This loyalty guarantees that clients stay with the organization over the years. For loyalty to be instilled within customers, there is the need to give good customer service. Although African Polistas has satisfied clients, the

organization also needs focus on creating more raving fans or activists by making the experiences of clients memorable.

Currently, the main focus of African Polistas is to increase clients for their riding school since they have the means and capability to do so. They are also willing to hire new employees if needed, as stated in the findings from the needs assessment. To proceed with recommendations, certain drawbacks of the firm had to be acknowledged and noted. First of all, the firm has low level of marketing within potential clients. Secondly, they were not fully leveraging on their presence on social media platforms to their advantage. With an overall assessment of African Polistas, a structured approach to acquiring new customers and maintaining a consistent inflow of new customers to their organization will be extremely necessary in addition to various recommendations needed to retain its existing customers. This will entail certain marketing for its success. On the whole, it is to be noted that referrals are not bad strategies to draw customers to your organization, after all, customers are potential promoters of your products or services more authentically than your own ads will, but by completely relying on referrals, the firm will be unable to control the exact message they will want customers to know about service and product. A clear example witnessed pertaining African Polistas will be potential customers referring to their products and services as being overly priced and solely polo, failing to acknowledge the fact that the organization renders other services, horses are thoroughly trained by African Polistas staff, among other factors which make their products and services of high quality and therefore costly.

The objective of this project is to therefore identify the marketing strategy which is best fit for organization's riding school to help them be more proactive in their marketing to reach

out to potential customers, facilitating a consistent influx of clients thereby expanding their customer base.

CHAPTER THREE: MASTERY OF SUBJECT MATTER

3.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

After an extensive assessment of African Polistas, major gaps within their operations were revealed. The first paragraphs of this chapter will explore referrals as a means of customer acquisition since the organization highly relied on this technique for the increment of its clientele base. Subsequent chapters will provide a detailed understanding of customer acquisition, marketing and the relationship between these two concepts. In doing this, reviewed literature and trusted articles will be explored to identify various frameworks employed which could help in deriving a solution as well as designing a tool which could be used by the organization to achieve its goals.

3.2 Customer engagement and referrals

According to Herriot (1992), a referral channel is defined as a relationship between an independent organization in which a party (the referrer) is in the position to give information about another firm or organization (the referred) to potential customers. (Ryu and Feick,2007) argues that referrals are crucial since they have the potential to reduce the cost of customer acquisition for an organization and bring in future revenues. In many product or service industries, assistance from other customers can significantly affect the behavior of others through increased persuasion, thereby converting others to actual clients or customers. (Wuyts, 2007)

mentions that a great deal of research already exists and is evidence of the role of an individual's influence in the adoption of a product or the patronage of a service. Hill et al. (2006) propose that referrals therefore play a significant role in sales made by an organization. The behavior that contributes to customers' influencing value is as a result of intrinsic or the extrinsic motivation of customers (Keiningham et al., 2007). (Cable and Turban, 2003; Van Hoyer and Lievens, 2007) in addition, argues that referrals are communication or social interactions regarding the movement, activities, products or services of an organization among existing staff (For example: relatives, friends and colleagues), hence, they go beyond the engagements of existing customers. Van Hoyer (2013), states that based on motivational theory, employees who have positive work ethics, engage in word of mouth communication or referrals. As stated by Hollebeek (2011), customers who are highly engaged with organizations are activists of the organization and recommend it to others. (Wragg, 2004) further posited that these individuals have emotional bonds with the organization or service provider and participate in building the brand through their active engagements.

It should however be noted that, referrals generated by referees to others can either be positive or negative resulting in the persuasion or obstruction of others in the network to either purchase or refuse to purchase a product or patronize a service. Potential disadvantages of referrals could be the referrer recruiting any type of customer or unsuitable customers for the organization (Kuester & Benkenstein, 2014). Also (Schmitt et al., 2011) argues that referrals may not be as effective as other traditional marketing strategies. With referrals, individuals (referees) may be unable to reveal certain essential features of the organization to potential customers, therefore not communicating the exact message the organization will want to put out there in public. It is important for an organization to not only rely on referrals as a means of

broadening their customer base. Other marketing strategies can be added on to attain higher or increased clientele base.

3.3 Customer acquisition

According to Drucker (1973), the sole purpose of the establishment of a business or organization is to create a customer. Customers are assets that need to be attained before they can be managed for sales or profits in an organization (Levitt, 1986). Ang, Lawrence & Buttle, Francis (2010) mention that, in as much as focus has to be laid on activities and strategies to reduce the number of customer defections in an organization, customer acquisition is highly relevant in many organizations, specifically; start-ups, businesses entering new geographical locations, low involvement product and services, just to mention a few. (Sellers 1989, Hanan 2003, Buttle 2004) further argue that customer acquisition is highly relevant for an organization even where customer retention is regarded as a core strategy. Goodwin and Ball (2003) state that there could be maximum economic gains from improving your customer acquisition. Mathematically, it has been shown that a firm having even less than 50% share of the market enjoy 5 times the profit or revenue impact from a 1% increase in acquisition than from a 1% increase in retention.

3.4 Marketing

The principal focus of an organization should be the needs and wants of customers. Marketing therefore provides the link between the human, financial and physical resources of an organization and the needs and wants of customers. In marketing a product or service, certain environmental factors should be considered. These include direct and indirect competition, economic uncertainties, legal and political inhibitions, cultural and social dynamics and

technological and institutional changes. The need to be forward-looking in developing products and services of an organization and customers should involve a marketing activity. Whether or not this activity is planned or unplanned, it takes place either ways. An authorized marketing activity in an organization is therefore focused on the analysis, planning and control of various processes that match the human, financial and physical resources of an organization with the needs and wants of a customer. In successfully linking an organization's possession to customers, customers must be able to understand what your product or services is and determine whether it satisfies their needs, products or services should be able to be judged by customers in terms of price and performance, the public needs to be informed about the product or service and in order for the organization to maximize sales, focus should be placed on the location where products can be purchased or services can be rendered. This is summarized in the marketing mix of an organization. (Giles et al.,1990) When dealing with each of these stages or strategies in the marketing mix, there will be certain challenges encountered called the marketing mix problem. In order to be able to battle with these mixing problems as and when they arrive there is a need to create a marketing plan for the organization.

3.5 Marketing Plan

A marketing plan is described as a systematic approach for matching resources to the needs of a customer. It examines the market environment, assumptions and overall objectives of an organization. According to (Giles et al.,1990), there is little doubt of how essential a marketing plan is, considering the possibility of competition, environmental dynamics, among other factors that could potentially affect the growth of an organization. However, these authors do not fail to recognize that in creating a marketing plan, there could be a possibility of the

exhaustion of energies by the organization in disputes. (Giles,1989) goes further to argue on the importance of an organization to generate or construct a marketing plan. He goes ahead to say that the planning system involves the acquisition and adoption of certain essential principles. The first is to consider that a marketing plan should be generated specific to the organization. This plan gives a consistent approach for appraising opportunities and developing strategies to capture these opportunities as and when they arrive. Secondly the organization should bear in mind that the results of certain intangible processes will be realized as the organizational culture matures, hence, a firm not witnessing or experiencing sudden results does not render the marketing plan generated inactive or ineffective.

3.6 Marketing Communications Plan

Communication is defined as the basis of exchanging ideas and information.

Communication effectiveness according to Pospecu (2002) is determined by the comprehension of the message and getting the desired response from the receiver. There are various ways in which product and service features and attributes affect a consumer's perception about it. A consumer's motivation to purchase a product or patronize a service is based on physical characteristics alone and in certain cases, the attributes of a service or product which are centered on marketing communications. (Allison and Uhl, 1964; Foxall and Goldsmith, 2003) According to (Fills,2006) Marketing communications is a management process through which organizations interact with their selected audience. This activity is done with the intention to understand the selected audience in order to create a message that relates with this same audience. The purpose of this is to trigger a positive behavioral response potentially increasing sale for organizations. He further goes on to argue that marketing is the means through which organizations are first introduced to their audience, engagements with their audience is later done by the organization to

secure long-term relationships. These engagements enable the establishment of markets and collaborative exchange. Kanibira, Saydanb & Nartc (2014), simplify the concept of marketing communications as the processes of establishing chances of communication and forwarding messages to as well as acquiring messages from clients resulting in a preferred reaction from selected audience.

3.7 Integrated Marketing Communications Plan

Integrated Marketing Communications defined as an act to integrate and combine a promotional mix which consists of sales promotion, advertising, personal selling, direct marketing and public relations (Polyorat,2014). Marketing communication indicates the means through which organizations can commence an exchange with customers and other stakeholders regarding product and services offerings (Keller,2001). According to Saeed, Naeem, Bilal & Naz (2013), Integrated Marketing Communications is essential for an organization since it yields positive outcomes such as customer satisfaction, an increase in profitability, increase in sales, brand loyalty and awareness, unique brand association as well as a positive brand image. Keller (2009) indicates that, for an organization to create an image, understanding and familiarity in the minds of customers, Integrated Marketing Communications is extremely necessary. Through marketing communications, organizations strive to directly or indirectly notify, convince and prompt consumers about products and labels they offer or sell (Kotler&Keller,2012).

3.8 Frameworks and Models

3.8.1 The marketing mix

McCarthy (1964) proposed the marketing mix or the 4p's as a means of translating a marketing plan into practice (Bennett,1997). A marketing mix is a conceptual framework used

to develop both long-term and short-term strategies. (Palmer,2004). According to Grönroos (1994) the marketing mix is an essential and powerful framework that makes marketing easy to handle and allows the separation of marketing activities from other engagements of an organization. The marketing mix helps to identify the benefits of certain competitive strengths against the benefits of others. It also helps allocate specific resources to specific demands among competitive demands. (Low and Tan, 1995) believe that in doing this, the marketing ethics in an organization will be inculcated. As the years went by, researchers proposed other P's to join the existing 4P's. To add on to the existing 4P's which was product, price, promotion and place, Booms and Bitner (1980) add 3 Ps which was participants or people, physical evidence and process.

Product

Armstrong (2006) defined product in the marketing mix as anything that can be provided to the market for purchase or possession and utilization that may satisfy or address a particular want or need. It incorporates product, services, physical objects or a blend of these units. Products is said to be the essential in the market offering since it forms the basis of an organization's relationship with its customers.

Place

Place in the marketing mix is defined as various operations carried out to bring products from the production unit to customers. This part of the marketing mix includes a transportation of products and services as well as deciding where these products and services will be

distributed. This distribution procedure is expressed as a collaboration between the organization and distribution channel. According to Jobber (2004), it is highly significant for organizations to have an appropriate distribution channel since this will help the organization distribute its products and services to their selected market. This further helps to come up with cost effective access to the market place and therefore plays an important role in the operations of an organization.

Price

Price describes the amount of money demanded or charged for a product or service. Price is said to be a feature in the marketing mix which can potentially influence the choice of a buyer. Other factors which could affect a consumer's decision are the quality of products and services, taste of products as well as the uniqueness of products or services. While all other elements in the marketing mix are viewed as costs, price is described as the only element in the marketing mix that generates revenue. Dealing with price can also be very challenging for the organization since it is never fixed and subject to change which can further result in the downfall of the organization in multiple ways. It is also a challenge working with this element since organizations sometimes find it extremely difficult to assure consumer's that the value they get for their money paid exceeds lower prices offered by competitors. (Kotler& Armstrong, 2010) Furthermore, customers have the tendency to switch within brands when prices charged by an organization change.

Promotion

Promotions, also referred to as marketing communications are various tools used by an organization to communicate with its target audience and stakeholders to promote its product and service offerings. Tools employed in this mix include advertising, sales promotions, direct marketing, personal selling, just to mention a few. It marketing to be extremely beneficial, it is essential for it to be integrated. This can be accomplished through a fusion of consistency and unity. Marketing tools will have to be focused in comparable directions to avoid any conflicts. Failing to achieve this could result in a weak brand identity.

Through various assessments of the organization, a communications plan which was best fit was to be developed. Based on prior statements, focus will be placed on the Promotional element in the marketing mix.

People

People in the marketing mix, refer to staff and sales personnel employed by the organization. Providing great customer service helps organizations create a memorable and positive experience which further creates a positive brand image in the minds of customers. Customers who patronize services and purchase products from the organization tend to spend the word about their positive experiences through excellent services provided. Thus, great customer service can increase the customer base of an organization through referrals. To attain this, organizations must therefore focus on recruiting the right people, training their staff or employees and maintain or retain their good staff. This can also put the organization at a competitive advantage.

Physical evidence

Physical evidence refers to things customers are likely to see when interacting with an organization. Mualah&Qurneh (2012) refer to this element of the marketing mix as the environment which facilitates the delivery of products and services. This includes where services are rendered, interior design, packaging amongst other features. Physical evidence in the marketing mix includes an organization's staff or employees, how presentable or decent they appear and also how they interact or engage with customers. Physical evidence also helps with creating an image of the organizations in the minds of customers as well as adding on to their experiences.

Process

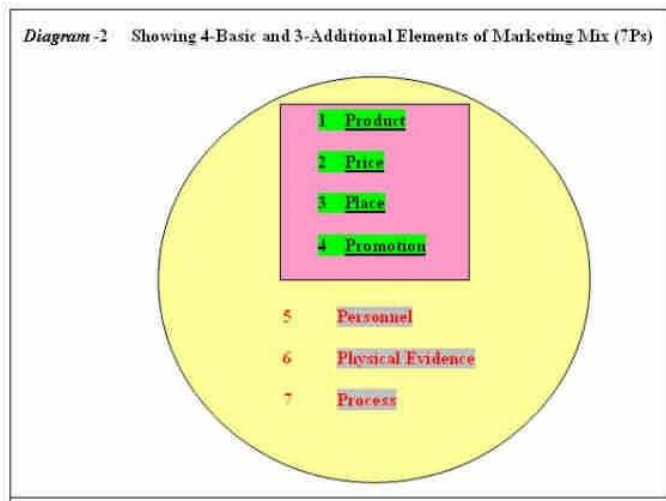
Processes in the marketing mix, represent the operations of businesses. It includes various procedures employed in the delivery of products and services to customers. The development of procedures and processes is extremely important in the early stages of the establishment of an organization or remodeling an organization which is seen to have been underperforming over the years. Processes and procedures of an organization plays a significant role in staff recruitment or training, induction programs and official processes like reviewing staff performance. Efficiency can be increased through formalized processes and procedures which tend to save an organization's time and money. More work can be accomplished in an organization by strictly adhering to official processes and procedures. Less time is spent on continuous supervision of

staff or day-to-day operations of a business. Processes and procedures also tend to improve the service or product delivery of an organization. (Mualah&Qurneh ,2012)

Standards can further be set for an organization as a benchmark for staff performance.

This will help to evaluate the conducts of staff or employees in an organization.

Figure 1: Marketing Mix



Source: Khan, 2014

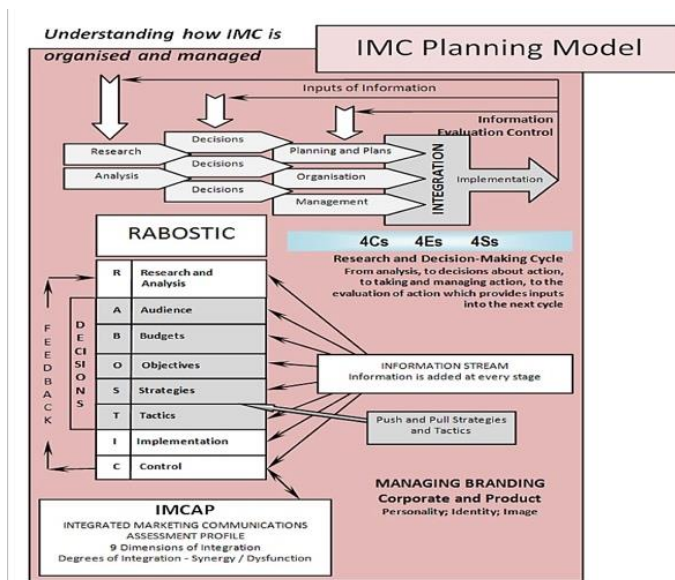
3.8.2 RABOSTIC MODEL

Pickton and Broderick (2005) proposed the RABOSTIC model. This model reflects a chronological process in creating an Integrated Marketing Plan. The acronym RABOSTIC stands for Research (and analysis), Audiences, Budget, Objectives, Strategies, Tactics, Implementation and control. The first step in this model is to assess the current position of the organization in the market. Audience, as its next step concerns targeting, segmentation and positioning of their target listeners. Budgets focuses on how resources and expenditures can be set, and what resources are available for communication operations. The fourth step being Objectives, focuses

on what the organization wants to achieve and strategies that can be adopted to achieve these objectives. Strategy deals with the development of a message and communications strategy.

Tactics focus on the delivery of a message by choosing suitable media and organizing operations or activities. Just as the name suggests, at the implementation stage, plans are put in action. The measurement, evaluation and tracking the effectiveness of the marketing communications developed is done at the control stage.

Figure 2: RABOSTIC Model



Source: Pickton, 2017

3.8.3 PASTA MODEL

This last strategy to be discussed is the PASTA model. This is a five-step model proposed by Theo Zweekers (2013). This diagram begins with problem identification, the analyzing the market and the environment, to strategy, tactics and finally action.

The P in the acronym represents problem identification as mentioned earlier. This involves a clear identification and definition of the organization’s problem. Analysis which is the second step in this model studies the environment and market in which the organization exists. Strategy consists of four interdependent modules which are target group, objectives, proposition and positioning. Tactics help to determine which tools, devices and techniques can be used to achieve the goals of an organization. At the action stage which is the last on the model, once tools and resources have been determined, contents of the tools need to be refined to execute the message of the organized.

Figure 3: PASTA model



Source: Smart Insights, 2017

CHAPTER FOUR: SOLUTION

This chapter will focus on proposing a solution to solve the problem of African Polistas. The first paragraph will suggest what the proposed solution is as well as explore this solution. Subsequent paragraphs will be concerned with why that solution best fits the needs of the organization. Paragraphs will further provide a practical application of this solution to the to give a clearer understanding of how it can be used to meet the organization's needs and how it works to meet these needs.

From various assessments made and literature reviewed, it was realized that African Polistas needs to focus on the promotion of its brand since the organization seeks to increase in customer base and retain existing clients as well. It will be necessary to adopt a tool which provides guidelines for message delivery of the services offered by the organization to a selected audience at the right place and right time. To be able to do this, the marketing mix will be employed. Although this model consists of seven elements, focus will be laid on four elements of the marketing mix. Namely, physical evidence, process, people and promotions. These elements of the marketing mix were chosen since they address the objectives peculiar to African Polistas.

4.1 Physical Evidence

Physical Evidence of an organization is referred to as the environment in which services products are delivered. This element also refers to things that facilitate communication or interactions with customers. It holds a high level of importance since customers judge the quality of a service offered by an organization through physical evidence. For African Polistas, physical evidence includes stables where horses are groomed, kept and sometimes exhibited to

clients, the Accra Polo Club where games and lessons are hosted and even social media pages.

Various components of service experience are termed service scape. This includes the ambience, comfort of the setting, music played in backgrounds, the design of the service facility as well as the appearance of employees or staff. Unlike products, services cannot be displayed. African Polistas can therefore focus on creating a good environment to emphasize on the quality of services rendered.

The organization currently has a stable located at Tema, Horses have their individual rooms with fans provided to cater for the hot weather. The organization can make sure that stables are mostly clean or neat to cater for unexpected guests or clients. To make the experience of customers more exciting, the names of horses can be written on a board and placed in front of their designated rooms. This can further create bonds between clients to visit stables.

There should be a special room or place where horse feed is mixed to prevent untidy environment for customers.

Employees should have special uniforms with name tags and positions held specified on badges or tags for easy identification by clients.

Venues where games and lessons are held should be extremely serene. This is because horses are easily distracted by noises. This could prevent accidents while riding horses. Fields should be kept green and tidy or levelled. When playing polo or riding horses, it is important for turfgrass to be frequently mowed and kept tidy for better quality of polo fields which enhances better play and spectator viewing. Tents can also be mounted to cater for clients of the organization. Although venue rented cater for seating arrangements, the organization can have a tent put up for clients to share a common setting which facilitates relationships within the

organization through interactions. Solemn music can be played in the background for relaxation purposes before and after games.

With regards to social media or online platforms, African Polistas should focus on creating a website to improve its advertising and communication effectiveness. Its presence on other platforms or the use of certain communication platforms such as sending electronic mails, WhatsApp chats, amongst others, can facilitate communication with clients.

4.2 Process

Process is the execution of activities that can potentially increase value for products and services at a reduced cost and to the advantage of customers. In dealing with this aspect of the marketing mix, approach in delivery as well as the skillfulness of service providers are assessed by the customer, which determines the customer's level of satisfaction with the purchase and patronage of products and services. Thus, the outline and execution of service or product components are highly relevant to the delivery of products and services.

Under the process strategy, time is of the essence. Hence schedules are highly relevant for operations. For customers who patronize their riding services, schedules should be outlined for them to enhance time management. Schedules developed will allocate clients to a particular instructor who is only available at a particular time. Instructors must adhere strictly to this, to be able to effectively impact clients with skills within a specified amount of time.

4.3 People

People as an element in the marketing mix refer to service providers or employees who are in charge of producing and delivering products and services. It is noteworthy that various

services include interactions or conversations between customers and employees of an organization which could influence the perception customers may have concerning the quality of a service. With additional training, learning and advice, employees are sure to flaunt the maximum value of products and services.

African Polistas as a business with both product and service offerings needs to focus on this element of the marketing mix to enhance delivery of their products and services in order to facilitate general solutions proposed.

The researcher suggests that it is necessary for employees to be recruited through interviews, as a strategy to effectively identify talent, attract applicants and select the most suitable talent for specified roles. Interviews employed as a means of recruitment will test the fluency of applicants with English or and other languages.

Training should also be done monthly by the Chief Executive Officer. This will include sanitation practices, basic etiquette to facilitate employee-customer relationship as well as relationships even within staff, education on how to use various platforms, devices and systems and ways by which operations of the organization can be enhanced. The CEO was recommended to be in charge of training to get feedback from fellow staff for necessary adjustments or modifications of activities or operations.

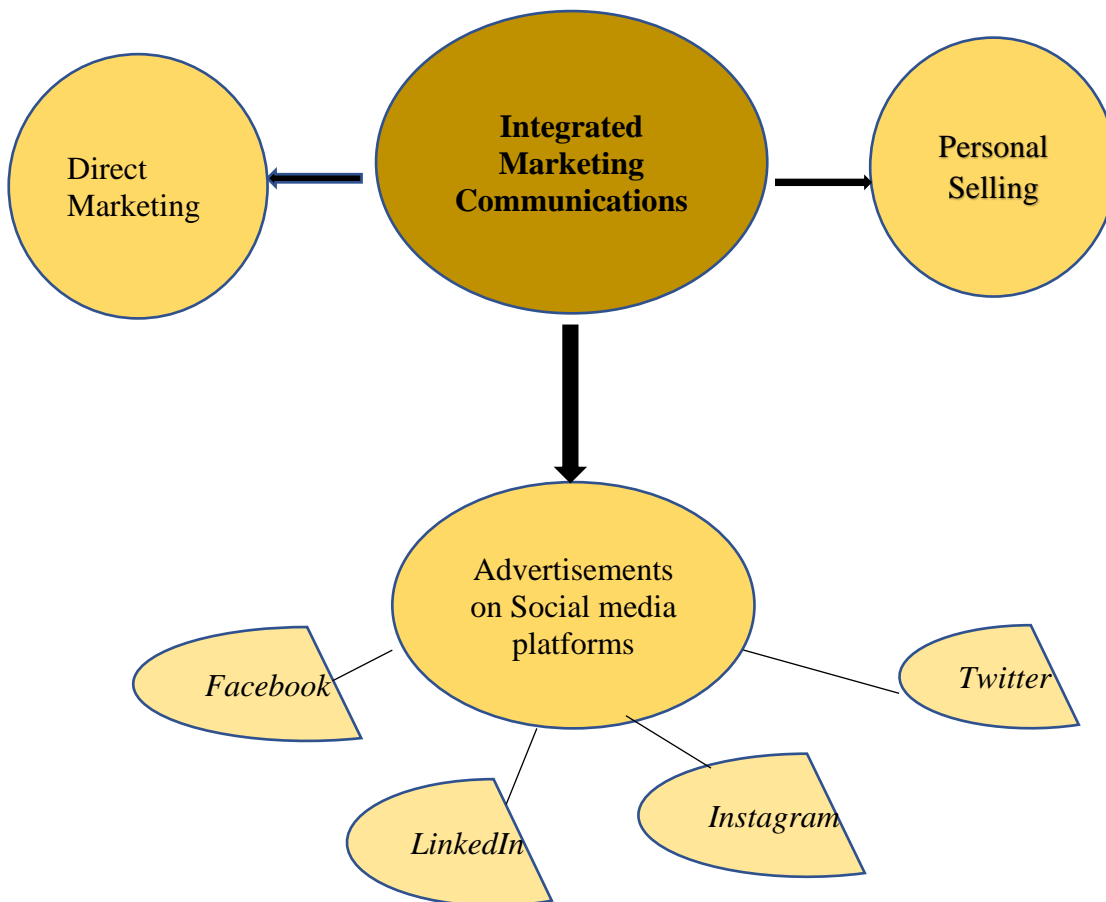
4.4 Promotions

Promotion is defined as the selling strategies in a marketing mix. This act of communication makes potentials clients aware of the options available for the organization's product and services. It is a fact that, this tend to vary across organizations. Promotions are relevant in marketing strategies because:

1. It delivers the needed information about a product or service of an organization.
2. It helps in convincing the selected audience on the benefits of the product and service
3. It encourages potential clients to respond to messages delivered on the product or service.

Based on previous assessments, an Integrated Marketing Communications Plan will be most suitable for African Polistas. An Integrated Marketing Communications Plan is a promotional strategy which incorporates various elements in a promotional mix to establish a regulated, integrated schedule for effective marketing.

Figure 4: Integrated Marketing Communications Plan



Source: Author's own research

Direct marketing, personal selling and word of mouth will be the main focus of the promotional activities of African Polistas.

4.4.1 Direct marketing

Direct marketing is described as a personal way of interacting with potential clients of an organization. With direct marketing, organizations delivery messages directly to their selected and potential clients. This form of promotional activity tends, to build relationships with potential clients.

The organization can engage in direct selling by communicating with parents or guardians of children who patronize their riding services. This group of potential clients approached should aim at looking for new of keeping fit and should be health conscious. Instead of waiting for their wards to end lessons while being ideal, parents can be involved in riding lessons or games as well. This can convince parents or guardians to be clients of African Polistas since their attention is also drawn to the fact that this could be an opportunity for a fun bonding time or experience with their wards.

4.4.2 Personal Selling

Personal Selling is done when a representative or sales personnel of an organization communicates directly with potential clients. African Polistas engage in this activity through various means. The organization can reach out to certain schools such as GIS, TIS, Lincoln and other international schools to include riding lessons in their extracurricular activities using salespersons. This can help increase their customer base, creating relations between schools and

individuals. In doing this, the interest of the game can be inculcated in young individuals. Oral presentations can be prepared when reaching out to schools. It is necessary for the organization to carry along brochures which could help individuals better relate with the organization, its products and services.

4.4.3 Word of mouth

Word of mouth is described as a people-to-people marketing strategy which is either done orally, written or done using electronic communication. Social media is believed to be an essential driver of word of mouth marketing. In as much as the organization engages in a level of word-of-mouth marketing, their strategies can still be improved. The organization should focus on developing a website which encapsulates details of what they do as an organization, products and service offerings, mission, vision, victories over the years, location as well as contact details. Pictures and videos should be included to give a visual representation of what of African Polistas is about. This will educate potential and existing customer as well as improving the effectiveness of advertising.

African Polistas needs to focus on using elite social media platforms to interact with its potential clients. Social media platforms considered as elite include LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook. LinkedIn is described as a social media platform targeted at professionals. This platform helps individuals to build their portfolio and network with other organization or individuals. African Polistas can take advantage of this platform to communicate their products and services offerings to various professionals. Since it is a platform mostly used by high income learners, customer base can be expanded for their polo and riding services.

Instagram

This creates an avenue for organizations and individuals to share photos and videos to the public. Organizations on this platform create accounts to obtain followers and inform the public about their product and service offering. This platform can be used to target and influence young individuals to purchase your brand. African Polistas is not making maximum use of their presence on this media platform. Pictures and videos posted on these platforms should include existing clients at games and lessons, in addition to pictures and videos of horses posted. This can potentially attract young clients to the organization. Comment sections should be enabled to allow customers share their experiences and views of the organization which could serve as a form of feedback and reviews on the organization.

Facebook

Although Facebook is described as an old-fashioned media platform, its improved features of collaboration and monetization attract organizations and individuals of the working class to still be active on this platform. In addition to building its presence on LinkedIn, African Polistas can focus on building its brand using Facebook as a platform to reach out to organizations and individuals earning a level of income. Facebook can further help to make the experiences of existing customers memorable. With its new live streaming accessibility tools, games and lessons can be streamed live. Customers who are absent from matches due to certain reasons, can still feel part of the organization through live streaming. This elevates their experiences and enhances relationships and bonds created with the organization. This is a great strategy for customer retention as well.

Twitter

The usage of Twitter as a social media platform is simply a fun way of interacting. On twitter, users communicate through hashtags and tweets. Twitter over the years, has become an increasing known to the general public. African Polistas should therefore be present on this media platform to reach a wider range of potential customers. Videos and pictures posted on Twitter tend to go viral in seconds. The organization can therefore create an account on this platform to communicate their products and service offerings.

4.5 Sample of Action Plan

This part of the paper provides guidelines of activities needed to be done, details of how activities should be done, persons responsible for these actions, periods within which activities should be done and various costs incurred per activities. With an outbreak of COVID-19, it was deemed necessary to postpone certain activities which involve physical interactions.

Table 1

Activity	Person assigned	Time Periods	Details	Costs (in GHC)
Training employess	Mr. Awuah Darko	December 2020	All staff of African Polistas will be assembled twice in a month and taken through process training thoroughly. This is to equip them with necessary skills needed for interaction with customers.	Varies

			NB: Regularity of training is flexible.	
Creation and handling of website	Marketing manager of photography expert including newly hired social media marketer	August 2020	Person assigned with this responsibility will have to manage the organization's presence on social media platforms through posting pictures and videos as well as live streaming. Person assigned will have to be present at all games, events and lessons.	1000
Designing, printing and distribution of brochures	Verified publishing agency	January 2021	Outline of relevant information in brochures detailing what the organization does and its achievements with visuals	1000
Presentations to schools	Salesperson of African Polistas	January 2021	Trips will be made to certain international schools such as GIS, TIS and Lincoln by salespersons.	Transportation costs or fuel costs: 200

Source: Author's own research

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

This chapter focuses on generating a general conclusion on the applied project. Recommendations are also provided for the organization. During the study, certain challenges and limitations were encountered which will be included in this chapter. Finally lessons and experiences will be shared in the latter paragraphs.

5.2 Limitations and Challenges

The outbreak of COVID-19 prevented further needs assessments. Certain details which could have been beneficial to the project were therefore not included in the study. Also, interacting with a wider range of clients was impossible due to the refusal of the organization to share contact details of clients. Hence, customers involved in the study only included those who were present at games, riding lessons and events held by the organization.

Also, interacting with employees was quite difficult to the language barriers such as dialects. Although, other employees present who were fluent in a couple of languages helped with translations, essential information which could have enhanced the study was not recorded.

5.3 Recommendations

The first recommendation will be for the organization to assign employees to specific roles based on experience. They can also hire new if the need arises. Staff of the organization should be made to wear name tags with their specific roles to help customers determine who to call when they need a particular service. The organization should also focus on employee empowerment through the provision of non-cash incentives such as awards and honors like staff of the month, most hardworking staff, amongst other honors. This is an important strategy for

employee satisfaction through motivation. This can lead to an increase in output of employees, resulting in high productivity.

African Polistas can also stage national programs to further enhance its promotional strategy publicly. During Independence Day, the organization can ride its horses skillfully at the Independence square or specified venues with banners showcasing the name of the organization.

5.4 Lessons learnt from project

Working on this project has taught me a lot about time management. Through this project, I was able to experience the difference between learning concepts taught in class and field work. I was able to apply, knowledge gained from courses such as marketing, competitive strategy and Foundations of Design and Entrepreneurship and also realized the importance of reading wide. The fun part of this whole experience was being able to combine work with pleasure.

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Appendix
6.1 Interview Guide

The African Polistas Research

Interview questions

These interview questions can be applied to all participants of the interview.

1. What is your status with the African Polistas team?
2. How long have you been with this team?
3. How has your journey or experience with the African Polistas team been?
4. Would you say, there has been progress so far with the team?
5. What will you say the deficiencies of the team are?
6. In your opinion, which sectors need improvement?

This interview question can be geared towards members of the African Polistas team

1. What would you say you prioritize as a polo player?

This interview question seeks to target the gulf players of the gulf club

1. Why not an interest in polo but rather gulf?

6.2 Pictures from observations

Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



