DOI: https://doi.org/10.66884/kesj.2024.9c90auvl

Mudashir.KESJ Volume 4, Issue 1, 2024 ISSN : 2734-2751

PERCEPTIONS OF ARCHITECTS ON MARKETING IN THE ARCHITECTURE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN SELECTED NORTH CENTRAL STATES OF NIGERIA

MUDASHIR GAFAR OLAIYA

Ahmadu Bello University

*Corresponding Author's Email: gafarmudashir@gmail.com. Tel:+2348035927619

ABSTRACT

The professional code of conduct for architects in Nigeria has not changed. Despite this, many architects ignore ethical conduct in marketing and advertising and still promote their professional services, following a worldwide practice because of the movement toward globalization.In light of this, the article aimed to understand how Nigerian architects perceived the marketing of their professional services.The research employed a quantitative methodological approach and purposive sampling was utilized to gather data for the study using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire. The data are analyzed using descriptive analysis.The list of architects registered with Architectural Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON) is used to define the respondent targets.The research finding showed that mainstream of Nigerian architects has diminutive knowledge of marketing as related to service-oriented profession. Also, Nigerian architectural firms are unconsciously engaging in marketing-related activities to position themselves to draw clients without explicitly adopting them. The results presented academic and professional analphabetism as the obstacles to marketing promulgation and implementation in the profession. The research suggests that Professional regulatory bodies need to review their code of conduct in light of the national and globally competitive economies that are creating increasingly competitive architectural practices. Hence, the findings have significant implications for the nation's architectural education. Therefore, the study suggested the incorporation of the fundamentals of marketing into the architectural curricula. The novelty of the study is the connection between the architectural profession and service marketing as a cutting-edge strategy for repositioning architectural firms in a competitive economy.

Keywords: Architect, Marketing, Architectural Firms, Professional Practice

1.0 INTRODUCTION

All professionals in the service industry have traditionally functioned under a framework of standards of behavior governed by laws and responsibilities to the society they serve. In architectural profession, the members of the two professional organizations for architects, the Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA) and the Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON), have customarily been forbidden from performing any acts of advertisement or promotion. However, the realities of the contemporary business environment pushed global regulatory authorities and worldwide professional organizations to update their corresponding legislation and embrace the advertisement and marketing of services as a fundamental part of their respective professional activities. The field of architecture is not an exception; the same economic difficulties affect architectural services. The architectural service code of conduct is now deregulated in developed nations like Europe and Asia to incorporate the concepts of architecture as an enterprise and marketing as a promotional strategy. Hogben (2000) characterized the modern architectural practice as a period of "marketing fever."All this stimulated general interest in architectural service marketing and encouraged scholarly research.

Technological advancement has created modern competitive markets across the world. The client/customer has become the major factor in the whole value chain. The client/customer became the center of attention

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

for corporate activities as a consequence. The service providers believed that they needed to comprehend the client's actions and his demands of the services. Eventually, it became crucial for the majority of businesses providing professional services to pinpoint their target market and offer their services within the parameters of a well-researched marketing strategy. All of these factors created an environment of curiosity that supported the scholarly investigation into the issue of marketing for architectural services. Numerous studies on marketing adoption and acceptability, its efficacy, its instruments, institutional impediments, and knowledge-based barriers to marketing have been conducted in developed nations. However, there are few or no empirical studies available in Nigeria on marketing in the architectural profession. Even though today's realities do not dispute the significance of marketing for architectural firms in attracting potential clients and projects in an era of competition and limited jobs, according to the findings of various studies (Stang Valand *et al.*, 2021; Epead & Othman, 2014; Hodges&Young, 2009).

Globalizations have led to the entry of multinationals architectural and construction firms into Nigeria which is creating numerous economic rivalries for the Nigerian architectural businesses. It is understood, however, that most architectural firms in the nation confine themselves to identifying the needs and values of their clients and rely on the traditional man-know-man marketing strategy to get jobs. A majority of Nigerian architecture businesses, with the exception of a small number that are also involved in design and build, construction, and real estate development, are not aggressive in using formal marketing strategies to advertise their professional services, according to Ipe and Pepple (2018). It is acknowledged that the significance of the relationship between business and marketing is being undermined by the paucity of academic study (Hodges & Young, 2009)and documentation on the topic in the Nigerian setting. In this context, the study aimed to understand how Nigerian architects perceived marketing as a promotional strategy for their professional services.

2.0 Review of Literature

2.1 Concept of Marketing

It is vital to have a basic idea of the concept of marketing before we can understand how it operates. Despite a popular misconception, marketing requires more than just selling. It entails the gathering of information that aids in the organization of a firm's operations, plans, and activities. The majority of organizations mistakenly associate marketing with selling. The "concept of selling" is concerned with what is produced and is trying to be sold to customers, whereas the "concept of marketing" is concerned with what the client or consumer requires, desires, and how to satisfy them.

According to the marketing concept, a company should aim to meet the needs of its target market, approach decision-making from a constructive perspective, and endeavor to provide clients with value for money and a return on investment. In client-oriented businesses, the needs of existing and potential clients are paramount. All organizational decisions are focused on clients' requirements in all functional areas (design, finance, research, marketing, and production) to meet those needs. In fact, post-occupancy evaluations in the field of architecture are a sort of service that can measure clients' and end-user's satisfaction and loyalty for future job commissioning.

Consequently, marketing is the process of retaining an organization's existing clientele and attracting new collection of customers. It is a system of procedures and actions for communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that are valuable to consumers/clients and satisfying and sustaining their needs and wants pro?tably. The secret to operating a successful and sustainable business is marketing. Customers must be recognized and accepted as the center of attention for all

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

organisation endeavors, and determining their requirements and desires should serve as the starting point for all significant business choices.

2.2 Marketing in Architectural Profession.

A target physical or virtual market is where an organization's products and services are sold and promoted in order to convert prospects into clients or customers. Marketing is a science that encompasses these abilities and techniques. In most organizations, whether they are product- or service-based, it is often used formally or informally. Professional service businesses like those of physicians, attorneys, accountants, and others are numerous; these businesses formerly had no competitors. However, the number of these professionals have grown lately. Likewise, an increase in the number of architectural firms globally have sparked aggressive rivalry in the industry. Architectural firms need to secure enough profitable projects to sustain their operations and this called for passive if not aggressive marketing in the profession. However, there are many concerns about its uses and advantages in the context of the architectural profession. Karam (2003) and Esperdy (2005)stated that rarely did architects view their industry as a business that needed to be promoted. Architects frequently claim that the buildings they design and construct speak for themselves, and they perceive the final result as a promotional tool for their landmark brand. These occupations have become more prevalent recently. For instance, the emergence of more and more architectural firms and allied professionals has intensified competition in the building sectors. In order to maintain their business operation, marketing now plays a crucial function in the architecture profession (Stang Valand, *et al*. 2021; Viet Ngo, & O'Cass, 2010). The primary goal of marketing is to match firms' services with what people and the built environment need. More than just selling is marketing. Instead of merely basic services that a firm is willing to provide, marketing creatively interprets customers'/clients' needs and develops appropriate beneficial packages.

In the past, Royal Institute of Architects stated that architects were not permitted to market themselves in any form advertisement because they thought this would lead to some low-quality work receiving more notoriety and acceptability only for having superior marketing abilities (Baker & Lamb, 1994; Barksdale Jr& Clopton, 1995). However, in Europe, architects did not feel the need to promote their work because their abilities and output qualityrather than their marketing prowesswere what ultimately led to their fame (Brown, 1990). As a result, architects erroneously believed they were immune to market forces like supply and demand, architects were not accustomed to thinking that the services they supplied required marketing. But ultimately, architecture is still a vocation that should be profitable (Sawczuk, 2009). Even if this occurred in the past, some attitudes are still present in the architectural culture of today(Richardson, 2003). These misconceptions have led to a significant degree of indecision, which has made it challenging to match the marketing strategy with architecture.
In this contemporary era, the exchange of architectural design concepts for monetary gain qualifies the profession as a business, which is why providing architectural services is also regarded as an enterprise. Nearly every architectural endeavor involves both people and money. Resources, both human and financial, are now the most crucial factors in the field of architecture. The ability of the architects to sketch or design is only one aspect of a successful architectural practice. It also comprises managerial abilities that maintain the firm's financial stability. It is obvious that the architectural firms have to secure a sufficient number of successful contracts in order to recover its costs and turn a profit. Today, architectural profession is becoming more competitive than ever before, this drive more architectural firms to develop marketing strategies to enthusiastically pursue their clients in order to gain more commissions.

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

Nobre and Faria (2017) reported that only a small number of the larger architectural firms, however, have the capacity and resources to carry out extensive marketing campaigns. In fact, they have a strategy that outlines their corporate direction and objectives and structure in place for the evaluation and modification of their corporate strategies.

Furthermore, notable studies have revealed that professional service providers place less value on marketing as a promotional strategy for service delivery (Sawczuk, 2009). Other professionals like lawyers, engineers, and doctors have a low attitude towards marketing (Gabbianelli & Pencarelli, 2021; Merz & Fink, 2006).In one school of thought, Singh and Singh (2017) emphasised the importance of marketing in professional services. Also, Epead and Othman (2014) argues for the necessity of a marketing strategy in the architectural profession, particularly at a time when competition is increasing as more young, energetic architects enter the professional practice in an already saturated market. In another school of thought, Esperdy (2005) noted that professionals who work in the architectural field do not view marketing as essential and that they perceive less value in the use of marketing in their professional endeavors. The argument is that architects do not perceive their field of work as an enterprise that needs to be promoted or advertised and are not confined to customer-based marketing. In addition, Karam (2003) claimed that in the past, architects could only preserve the concept of a non-profit organization by providing clients and customers with an appealing and functional design. Hence, notable studies have shown the negative effect of professional regulations on marketing engagement within professional organizations (Lu, *et al.* 2013). The art of design and the financial profitability of an architectural firm currently defines its economic sustainability in the business-driven world of architecture. Therefore, it is essential in this age to prepare the architectural profession for the digital economy and virtual marketing, if not physical advertisement.

From the wealth of literature, some scholars have identified the reasons for architects' poor use of marketing strategies in the profession. The first reason is the past ideology of the professional, followed by the psychological disposition to marketing(Baker, & Lamb, 1994). In addition, Lawrence, (2000) identified two main issues with academic studies refuting the idea of marketing. First, the desire to embrace marketing as a practice within the profession is severely undermined by the "professional code of conduct." Second, there is a general lack of understanding of marketing and an inappropriate linkage between marketing and architectural practice(Zelenskaya & Elkanova, 2021). The below subsections outline how marketing principles and the delivery of architectural services are intertwined to educate architects about the relevance of marketing in professional practice, satisfy the client's requirements, and retain their loyalty.

2.3 The Confluence of Architectural Practice and Marketing

The contemporary architecture profession seems to have a disconnection between its two fundamental components, which are architectural design and architectural practice. A similar dichotomy exists between art and science, and it is now clear between architectural design and architectural business practices. According to notable scholars, the system of architectural education perpetuates this disconnection (Nakhaee & Arab Nasrabadi (2019; Hodges & Young, 2009).Furthermore, they noted that the emergence of economic uncertainty and competition among architects, the business of architectural practice has become yet another essential field of study. The reason is that the processes involved in designing buildings and managing a viable architectural firm conflict. The conflict between the creativity and competence of architectural design and the effectiveness of sound architectural business operations is the embodiment of this paradox. However, one corporate strategy that aims to close the gap is

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

ISSN : 2734-2751

marketing (Murtagh, *et al.* 2016; Saif, 2015).

The value of marketing as it relates to the architectural profession continues to be a point of debate in the industry. While proponents agree that marketing is a fact of modern architectural practice and that the architect has profited from this management tool, some contend that excessive marketing has hurt architecture. Marketing makes the relationship between the architect and the client more suitable. Instead, marketing offers a procedure through which clients and architects may interact in a more advantageous way. Marketing may bring together the two seemingly unrelated components of design and practice and steer them both in the same direction.

The evolution of architectural practice in this era is widely acknowledged and not in contention due to changing client demands, market demand, and competition in the industry. However, it is now essential to examine the relevancy, underlying principles, and practices of conventional architectural practice (Khaidzir & Anwar, 2007). For instance, the growing complexity of architectural services, rising competition for architects, changes to building designs and components, competition with allied professionals, and increased knowledge and sophistication of clients' demands all require reevaluating the applicability and usability of marketing strategies in contemporary architectural practice.

Marketing in architectural practice is simply a means to an end; nevertheless, the firm's primary aim must be the successful delivery of service and product, which is project completion and end-user satisfaction. The use of market research will assist architects in determining the markets with the highest service demand and those that are most compatible with the firm's profile and objectives. An analytical evaluation of the existing environment in light of the firm's resources leads to an effective use of time, effort, and financial resources through marketing.

At this point, six fundamental factors connect marketing and architectural practice. They are as follows: The processes used in marketing and architecture are similar; both function within a socioeconomic and cultural context; both are bound by economic restrictions; both make an effort to satisfy parties involved in the business through an exchange relationship; both entail goods and services; and both make efforts to meet the clients', consumers', and customers' requirements and wants at the end. Research is the final component that connects marketing to a successful and efficient architecture business. As a result, research improves the architectural firm's performance, client satisfaction, and service delivery.

The social, political, economic, and technological traits of the society in which it functions affect marketing. The method of professional practice and marketing needs to evolve and change as these features do. This is a crucial element of marketing and how it relates to architecture. The societal contexts that influence and distinguish an architect's work must be recognized and valued. Through the use of marketing research, the information must be acquired and used as the basis for decisions and to understand the factors that affect the market, which might be accomplished through marketing research (Mitrache, 2012). Market research will assist the architectural industry in finding new market prospects, showing how capacity building, diversity, and performance may be enhanced, and enabling the firm to recognize, explore, and increase profitability. In summary, architects should understand that marketing is not just a mechanism or tool for them to promote their personal or business interests or financial advantages; it is also not a way for them to compromise the ethical values of the profession. Instead, architects in training and practicing need to comprehend that marketing exists to promote the interests of both the client and the architect, as well as to provide a fundamentally priceless benefit to society (Hodges & Young, 2009).

In addition, the following justifies the

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

necessity for marketing by architectural firms: The first rationale for marketing is the traditionalist perspective of architectural practice. Although the design process, aesthetic value, and services offered by the architectural profession give the impression of being responsive to change and innovation, Nobre and Faria (2017) asserts that the profession is fundamentally quite conservative. This conservatism may have contributed to their unwillingness to follow up with marketing trends and social expectations.

Secondly, contrary to past beliefs, the complexity of the architectural firms' market is progressively expanding due to increased public concerns about architecture in the media and among educated social groups. Hence, this intensifies competition amongst architectural firms, especially when their membership has multiplied due to fresh graduates' ambition to start their businesses or firms and technological advancement in the sector (Winch, 2008; Grosskurth, 2008).

The third justification for marketing is the unpredictability of the local and global economies. Construction and architectural businesses were among the sectors negatively affected by the economic downturn, which influenced the high cost of building supplies and unpredictable prices. Because of this, architecture companies need to use marketing techniques to enhance their corporate image and sustain the loyalty of their clientele (Epead, & Othman, 2014).

Apart from the economic challenges, architectural firms require cutting-edge marketing initiatives to maintain market leadership, discover new markets, and create innovative services that will attract new clients and set the firm above its competitors. Moreover, Singh and Singh (2017) asserted that marketing-oriented architecture firms gained access to new markets and attracted more clients than those without a plan. When it comes to notable architectural companies in developed countries, those who carry out efficient marketing research (feasibility and viability studies, and post-occupancy evaluation) provide their clients with projects that are viable investments, economical, and satisfy end users (Santos-Vijande, *et al*. 2022).

Apart from past Architects' belief that their design and constructed buildings is a promotional strategy for their landmark brand and this is also marketing in its own form. Marketing provided different promotional strategies to architectural firms (Zelenskaya & Elkanova, 2021;

Ikoli, 2018). According to 2003 AIA research by Othman and Hafez (2019), architectural firms in the United States spend around 10% of their annual budget on marketing, and they have acknowledged, embraced, and incorporated marketing into their company operations. Yet, the bulk of architectural firms in developing nations lack marketing budgets or rely only on one-man promotional campaigns (Saif, 2015; Nobre & Faria, 2017; Othman & Hafez, 2019). The interpretation is that a substantial percentage of architectural firms have limited marketing knowledge and experience as it relates to the service-oriented profession that architecture is.

2.4 The Role of Marketing Planning, Research and Analysis(MPRA) in Architectural Practice

Organizational planning does provide a competitive edge. An organization's strategic planning process might pinpoint a niche market that competing businesses haven't yet exploited. By incorporating marketing concepts into the long-term planning of an organization, the company can advance in the structure's development to address problems, which will help the firm or business grow more successfully (Epead & Othman, 2014). The marketing planning process includes setting marketing objectives, doing market research and analysis, creating a timetable, and establishing implementation procedures. The market analysis involves interpreting the data collected from the research. According to Low *et al.* (2016),architectural firm's location and market trends necessitate extensive research on variables like potential competitors, financial

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

projections, and changes in the economy that can influence organizational performance.

In fact, Saif (2015) stated that economic factors have a significant impact on the practice of architecture. For instance, the current economic recession in Nigeria tends to force people to renovate their existing homes rather than build new ones, which means that retrofitting projects tend to boom for architects rather than new design and construction commissioning jobs(Gafar& Raji,2018; Ipe & Pepple, 2018; Ameh &Chukwujekwu, 2020).

In addition, demographics and population patterns in the area where the architectural firm is located have a significant role in determining employment prospects and marketing approaches (Ikoli, 2018). Murtagh *et al*. (2016)established that marketing research and analysis could provide an architect with a better understanding of the nature of services required in a society dominated by senior citizens, where retirement homes and medical facilities might be services available to architects. Providing residential apartments, hostels, and recreational facilities may be something architects should consider doing in a town where the majority are the young workforce. It implies that any significant change in demographics will have a strong influence on the nature of architectural service demand and the marketing strategies required in that built environment.

Every architectural firm engaged in organizational and project management planning, marketing research, and analysis, even though they practiced a hybrid model in their service delivery at the local, national, and international level. The hybrid model practice is as follows:

* ***Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE):*** Both design, construction and real estate firms used POE as a marketing research mechanism to examine how well a building functions and how comfortable its occupants are over time. Scientific literature, industry publications, and professional periodicals have discussed its benefits. POE provides ways of enhancing building performance and creating a constructed environment that best satisfies the requirements of clients, end users, and the general public. Building developers commonly depend on this marketing technique to gather information and analyze clients' satisfaction and loyalty. Although architects use this marketing analytical tool, research has shown that post-occupancy assessment usage in the field of architecture is still minimal (McDonald & Madhavaram, 2007).

* ***Case Studies Analysis (CSA):*** An additional type of exhaustive, scientific, and analytical evaluation or investigation mechanism that presents an all-inclusive review of a particular issue in architectural practices is a case study analysis. It provides an architectural business with a wealth of knowledge for an assortment of goals, including technical, social, managerial, and marketing ones. It offered many chances for a SWOT analysis of an architectural project. CSA are frequently utilized to give a comparative examination of building typologies, market shares, and business operations in the past, present, and future. Likewise, it is employed for research, analysis, and interpretation for a practical understanding of the elaboration of different problem-solving techniques and deliberations for the firm's and built environment's future development.

* ***Market and Value Survey (MVS):*** The hybridization of this investigative survey technique into architecture business activities is crucial for the organization's creativity, economic viability, and overall growth of the country. MVS is a strategy that involves the gathering of information about a target market concerning price trends, client and customer requirements, competition analyses, and any other point of contention that might impede businesses' productivity in both local and global marketplaces. The goal of a market and value survey is to gain clients' and customers' feedback. Both service-oriented and production-based architectural businesses could establish the prices of their value-added

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

services based on internal variables like projected revenue and profitability or the cost of man, material, and machine that grossly affect projects' development expenditure(Mitrache, 2012).

* ***Project Financial Planning and Forecasting (PFPF):*** Generating precise financial estimates and forecasts is a crucial challenge the architectural, engineering, and construction industries encounter. Most importantly, PFPF is an integral part of MPRA. According to Obianyo *et al*. (2022), more than 70% of construction projects exceeded budgeted costs due to inadequate market planning, research, and pricing analysis of labour, materials, and equipment.

* ***Project and Site Management Analysis (PSMA):*** The determinant of successful project management and development is never devoid of marketing planning and analysis of the targeted market, which is essential for both architectural and engineering firms. PSMA entail organizing several activities, assigning resources, and ensuring the project stays on schedule and within budget. PSMA is a subset of MPRA because a project viability assessment is the first step in every pragmatic project after a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the marketplace (Mitrache, 2012). Consequently, the rising demand for more profitable project management demands practical solutions through proactive research, planning, and analysis of efficient management, cost-efficient project execution, and effective marketing of the developed project.

At this point, it obvious that MPRA is a tool for architectural firms to have a good understanding of their competitors, their market share, and their operations. Regardless of the firm's size, planning marketing practice and monitoring competitors' operations will provide information regarding the creative innovation and diversity of an architectural firm's professional practice (Stang Valand *et al.* 2021; Santos-Vijande *et al.* 2022). It can be safely concluded that architects whose services meet the demands of their clients in this knowledge-based economy will accomplish their aspirations in terms of economic sustainability and corporate recognition.

3.0 Research Methodology

The primary aim of this study is to assess the perception of Nigerian architects' usage of marketing as a promotional strategy for their professional service delivery. Five objectives were established to help accomplish this primary aim. The first step is to ascertain how architects have perceived employment opportunities or availability during the last two decades. The second is to identify the marketing strategies used by Nigerian architects for promoting their firms and attracting new clients. The third is to assess the marketing strategy, research, and analysis used in their professionalism. The fourth is to determine the perceptions of architects about the need to integrate marketing into architectural education. Lastly, it is vital to establish perceptions of Nigerian architects on the need to review their professional code of conduct in marketing.

Dong and Lian (2021) claims that the survey research approach is one of the most efficient, affordable, and easy to collect a large number of people's opinions in a short time. Based on these advantages and the fact that this is an opinion-based study that entailed collecting data from a specific group of professionals (architects), the survey research approach was found appropriate and preferable. The study used a quantitative research methodology to examine how Nigerian architects perceive marketing principles as they apply to architectural services in their professional practice. The survey research method was employed, and self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the target respondents. The population studied consisted of licensed Nigerian architects to contribute, diminish the

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

misconception and bridge the disconnection between marketing and the profession of architecture. On this account, a purposive sampling technique was employed to collect pertinent information from registered architects in Northern Nigeria's academic and professional settings. The study purposefully selected architects in the education and practice to have a wider spread of participants.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections to facilitate the collection of relevant information. The first part contained respondents' demographic characteristics. The second part consists of items to measure architects' understanding of marketing concepts and their use in the profession. The last section concentrated on the integration of marketing into architectural education and a review of professional regulations on marketing. The perception of marketing principles and applications among Nigerian architects and their viewpoints on whether marketing should be integrated into architectural curriculum structure and professional codes of behaviour were revealed through descriptive data analysis of the data collected from relevant respondents.

The survey was carried out in three separate metropolitan cities (Kaduna, Zaria, and Abuja) to understand how Nigerian architects perceived the marketing of their professional services. The samples were drawn from the population of about 658 registered architects (ARCON, 2017) in Northern Nigeria. The research employed the purposive sampling technique because of its appropriateness for the nature of this study and because it was cost-effective. In addition, due to the same professional careers of the respondents, purposive sampling aims to achieve a homogenous sample.

On different occasions, a total of one hundred twenty (120) questionnaires were distributed to registered, practicing architects in selected Nigeria's Northern Central States (Kaduna and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja). The podium for the survey's distribution to registered architects in Abuja was at the Nigerian Institute of Architects Colloquium. During Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA) state chapter meetings, an accreditation exercise, and an affiliation visitation to Kaduna State Polytechnic, questionnaires were distributed to appropriate respondents. In addition, Ahmadu Bello University's (A.B.U.) alumina who visited the Department of Architecture at A.B.U., Zaria, and who are registered professional architects and operating in Zaria, Kaduna, and Abuja were given questionnaires via hand delivery.Out of 120 questionnaires distributed, 108 were returned. Thirteen (13) were excluded due to multiple answers on some items of measurement in the questionnaires. Therefore, ninety-five (95) questionnaires were considered appropriate and valid for data analysis.

4.0 Research Findings and Discussion

4.1 Demographic profile of respondents

In this section, the research's findings are presented. The majority (80%) of the architects surveyed possess master's degrees, 9.5% hold bachelor's degrees and HND qualifications, and the remainder of respondents have doctor of philosophy (PhD) qualifications, according to the data on educational qualifications. Of the 95 valid respondents, 6.3 percent were principal architects, 64.2 percent were resident architects, and 29.5 percent were architect-educators.The research's results also showed that all of the surveyed architects have over 10 years of experience working in practice or as educators, as presented in Table 1.0.

As shown in Table 1.0, all the architects responded that they had a good understanding of the basic ideas behind the marketing concept. The Majority of architects (87.4%) held that marketing was acceptable in the practice of architecture, but the remaining 12.6 percent did not. The logical interpretation of this result is that the profession is inherently quite conservative based on the professional code of conduct which may have led to their reluctance to agree to take marketing trends and social expectations as fundamental to the

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

contemporary architectural practice. The result corroborated the assertion made by Nobre and Faria (2017) that apart from the economic challenges, architectural firms require cutting-edge marketing initiatives to maintain market leadership, discover new markets, and create innovative services that will attract new clients and set the firm above its competitors. Moreover, Singh and Singh (2017)asserted that marketing-oriented architecture firms gained access to new markets and attracted more clients than those that do not accept marketing proactiveness in their operational activities.

Only a small number of architects disagreed with the majority's assertion that marketing is essential and relevant to architectural practice in the modern day (83.2%). About 94% of the architects who responded to the question about whether they employed or used marketing tactics in their professional work as architects admitted to having done so at some point, with only a few numbers (6%) not using marketing to deliver professional services to their clients. Epead and Othman (2014) claim that the majority of architectural firms agreed to have practiced a hybrid model of marketing in their professional service delivery, whether at the national or international level, corroborating these research findings.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristic of the Respondents

Qualification	**Frequency**	**Approximate (%)**
Bachelor degree / HND	9	9.5
Master degree	76	80.0
PhD	10	10.5
Ranks		
Architect-Educators	28	29.5
Resident Architect	61	64.2
Principal Architects	6	6.3
Years of Working Experiences		
1 to 5 years	11	11.6
6 to 10 years	33	34.7
11 to 15 years	39	41.1
Above 16 years	12	12.6
Marketing Principles Knowledge	**Yes**	**No**
Do you have basic understanding on marketing principles?	100 (100%)	0 (%)
Is marketing acceptable in architectural professional practice?	12 (12.6%)	83 (87.4%)
Is marketing relevant in today's practice of architecture?	79 (83.2%)	16 (16.8%)
Have you used marketing in your work as a professional architect?	89 (93.7%)	6 (6.3%)
Is marketing a factor to consider in an architectural firm's location?	68 (71.6%)	27 (28.4%)

Note: n = 95 respondents

On the architectural firm's location, a substantial percentage of the architects (71.6%) agreed that marketing should be considered in site selection for the architectural firm's office. Even though most of them do not agree with the earlier assumption of the acceptability of marketing in their professional practice, they still value the importance of marketing as a key factor in determining the location of their office. The finding is consistent with the literature has established that accessibility, availability, visibility, and proximity are important marketing variables that influence a product's or service's saleability, demand, and profitability (Nobre & Faria, 2017; Epead & Othman, 2014).Therefore, the competitiveness, profitability, and sustainability of the architectural firm's goods

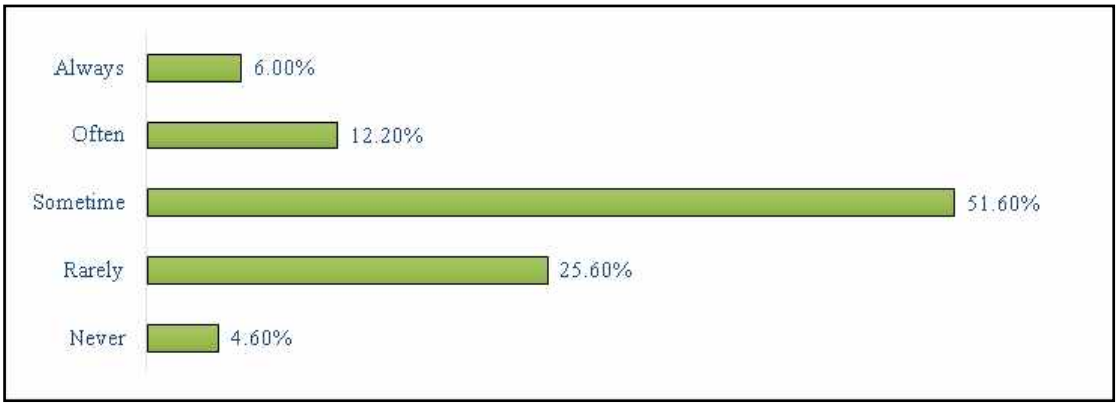
© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

and services could be greatly influenced by its geographic location. It can be concluded that it is important to take accessibility, physical visibility, and proximity to essential infrastructure into account while choosing an office site. Every business must analyze the locations of its offices in order to evaluate clients' satisfaction, supplier dependability, operational performance, and the ability to attract new potential clients or customers.

4.2 Perceptions of Architects on jobs availability/opportunitiesover the last two decades

The research findings showed that majority of the architects (81.80%) responded that job availability or opportunities are low and the few available jobs are highly competitive to secure. The remaining sampled architects (18.20%) continued to hold the view that work prospects are easily accessible in the current economic situation in Nigeria (see **Figure 1**). A possible explanation for this smaller faction of architects could be that they have diversified and engaged in an entrepreneurial reorientation in their professional practice.

Figure 1: Architects' perception on jobs availability/opportunities of jobsover the last two decades



The research outcome is in line with Khaidzir and Anwar's (2007) assertion that the architectural profession is more competitive than ever before in the current competitive labour market. Also, as earlier documented in the literature, it is obvious that the current economic recession in Nigeria has greatly affect the economic sustainability of most architectural firms (Ikoli, 2018; Mitrache, 2012). In fact, few job available are more of retrofitting projects rather than new design and construction commissioning jobs. The rising competition among architects, competition with allied professionals, and the rising cost of building materials were attributed to a lack of new job opportunities (Ameh & Chukwujekwu, 2020; Ipe & Pepple, 2018). All these claims suggest that marketing innovation, diversity, and flexibility of the architectural firm's professional practice are essential for a contemporary architectural practice to be successful in Nigeria's competitive employment markets.

4.3 Architects' marketing strategies used to promote their firm and attract new clients

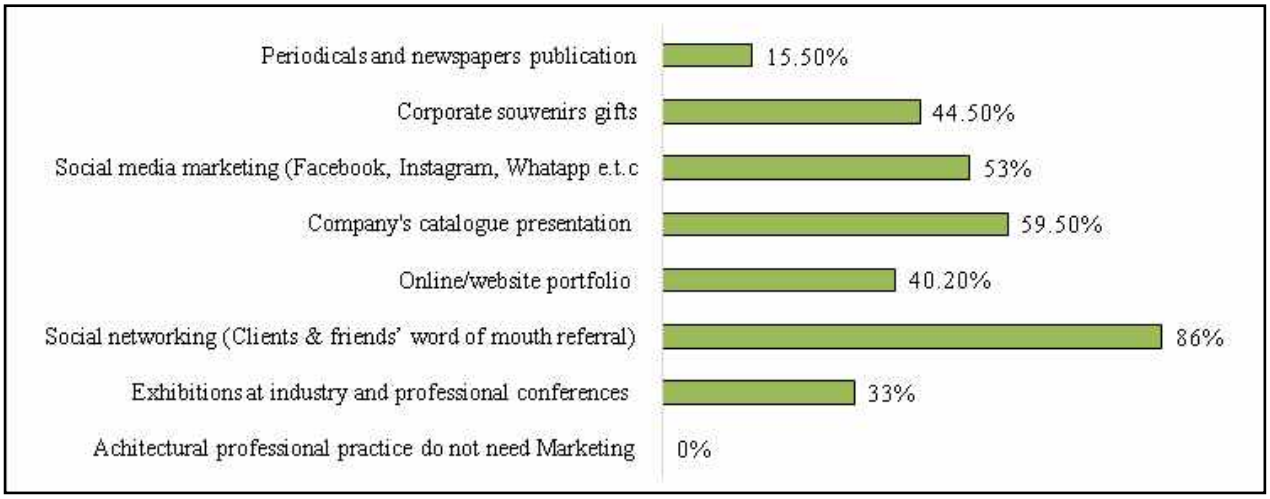
As shown in **Figure 2**, the results showed that more than 86 percent of architects said that social networking through word-of-mouth recommendations from their clients and friends is the most effective marketing tactic for promoting their firms and bringing in new prospective clients. The firm's project notice board (67%) and company's catalogue presentation (59.5%) came in second and third place on the list of marketing techniques used

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

by architects at their architectural firms, respectively. Social media (53%) corporate souvenirs (44.5%), and an online portfolio (40.2%) are three marketing tactics that architects employ just marginally. The least effective promotional strategies used by architects were periodicals and newspapers (15.5%) and exhibitions at industry and professional conferences (33%). No one in the sampled population responded to the statement, "Marketing is not necessary in the architectural profession practice."

On this account, the findings of this research have dispelled previous ideologies and debates over the relevance of marketing in the provision of architectural services, since all the architects asserted to have used one form of marketing at a time in their professional activities. None of the surveyed architects indicated irrelevant of marketing in their professional practice as presented in Figure 2. Since no architect indicated that they had never employed any marketing strategies in their architectural career. The implication for this research outcome is in accordance to Stang Valand *et al.* (2021) assertion that the traditional belief of architects that the buildings they design and build speak for themselves and serve as a marketing tool for their landmark brand cannot survive in the current environment of intense competition in the construction sector.

Figure 2: Architects' marketing strategies used to promote their firm and attract new clients



Architects must now consider their profession a business that needs promotional strategies. The research findings corroborate this assertion. It is logical to conclude that marketing is essential in professional architecture practice. Therefore, marketing architectural services have translated into a comprehensive cluster of activities required to create and promote the corporate image of architectural firms, position them on local and international markets to attract prospective clients, and thus achieve their development goals.

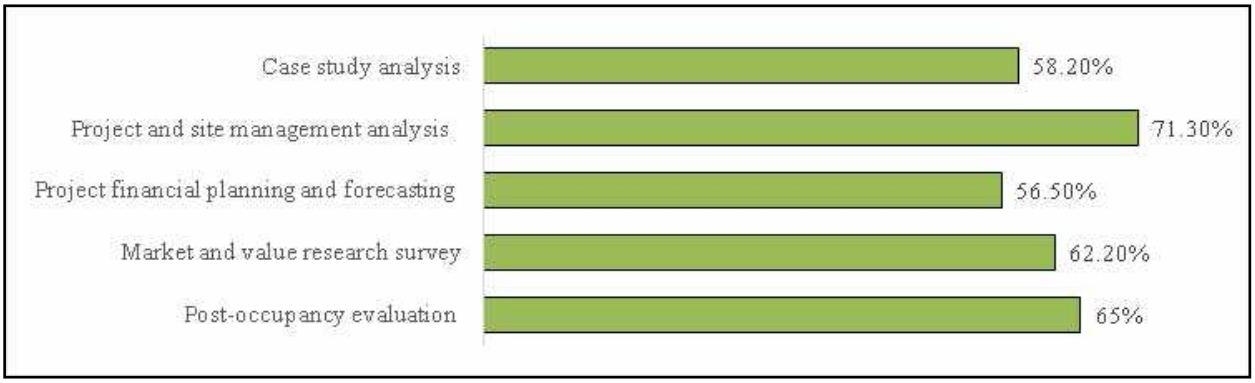
4.4 Architects' usage of Marketing Planning, Research and Analysis (MPRA)in their Professionalpractice

After the architectural firms establish the channels of marketing tactics employed for promoting their services, sustaining their existing clients, and attracting new clients, the next step is marketing planning, research, and analytical methods used to improve their organization's performance.The majority of the architects who responded to this statement noted that they do engage in organization and

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

project planning, marketing research, and analysis, which is common in their professional practice even though they are used in a blended approach, including post-occupancy evaluation (65%), market and value survey (62.2%), financial planning and forecasting (56.5%), project and site management analysis (71.3%), and case study analysis (58.2%) respectively (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Architects' usage of marketing planning, research, and analysis in their professional practice



In sum, all surveyed architects claimed to have utilized POE as a form of MPRA for the determination of clients and end-users' satisfaction on the project they design and occupied by tenants. CSA has been noted to have been used by architects as an analytical method to study and evaluate the merit and demerits of existing projects executed by most architectural firms. Likewise, some architects showed that an investigative analysis are usually conducted on their potential competitors to establish their strength, weakness, opportunities and threats (SWOT) as related to the organisation performance. PFPF and MVA usually conducted for establishing current prices of man's labour, machines and materials for establishing profitability on project execution and changes in the economy that can influence organizational performance. The research finding, as previously established in the literature, is consistent with Stang Valand et al. (2021) and Santos-Vijande *et al.* (2022)'s position on the numerous benefits architectural firms stand to gain by incorporating MPRA into their business activities. MPRA should not solely an activity for multinational corporations but must be implemented by all firms, from small to large, new to old, at all times. In conclusion, MPRA is a comprehensive performance evaluation tool that provides guidelines for a company's future direction.

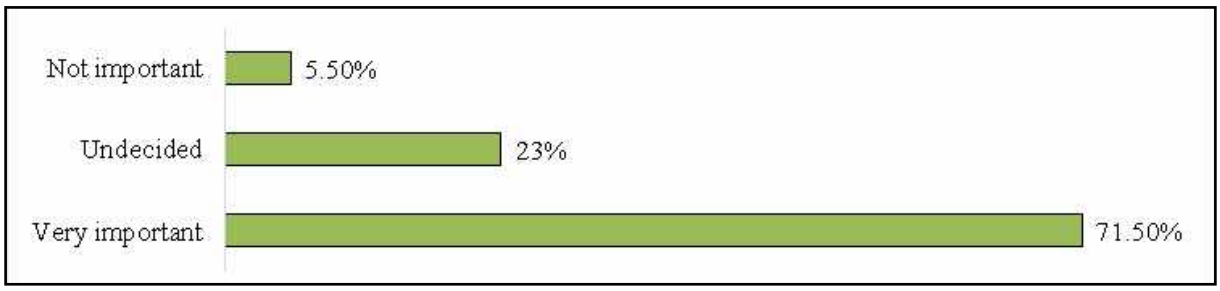
4.5 Architects' perceptions on the integration of marketing in architectural education

One factor identified in the literature that contributed to the disconnection between marketing and architecture professional practice is the system of architectural education. Previous empirical studies in developed countries have received unanimous support (Nakhaee& Arab Nasrabadi, 2019; Hodges & Young, 2009). On this account, the results of this study indicated that the majority (71.5%) of practising architects surveyed agreed that marketing should be an integral part of the curriculum structure of Nigerian architectural education and that it is important. Fragmentary portions of 23 percent of the architects were undecided about whether integration was necessary. The remaining small section (5.5%) supported the notion that such integration is not important and thus not required as presented in Figure 4.Not surprisingly, this study's outcome also supported the empirical findings of other

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

scholars on the need to review the curriculum structure of architecture education (Mitrache, 2012). Nigerian architecture schools' curricula evaluation is vital in an ever-changing job market and economy.

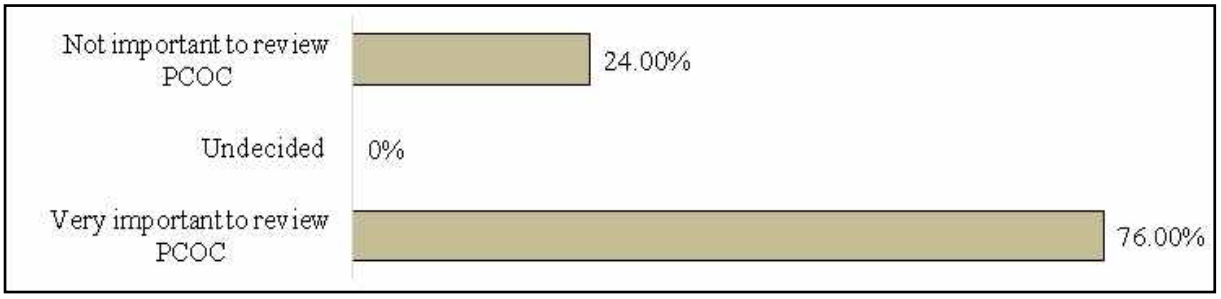
Figure 4: Architects' perceptions on the integration of marketing in architectural education



4.6 Architects' perception of the need to review Professional Code of Conduct (PCOC) on marketing

Over 76 percent of the surveyed architects concurred that the PCOC for marketing and advertising needs to be reviewed, just as they unilaterally indicated support for the inclusion of marketing within the educational framework of architectural training. Just 24% of architects do not believe it is important to review the marketing and advertising rules in their professional practice (See Figure 5). One possible explanation for this research outcome is that the professional bodies (ARCON and NIA) have not imposed any fees on their members who use internet and social media marketing, even though the aforementioned marketing strategies (online and social media) are not listed or approved in the PCOC in Nigeria. ARCON's undaunted disposition toward virtual marketing could be a strong reason why some architects feel it is not important to review the architecture professional code of conduct. However, for the same reason, the majority of architects believed it was critical for the profession to take a stand against unregulated marketing to better reposition architecture professional practice.

Figure 5: Architects' perception of the need to review Professional Code of Conduct (PCOC) onmarketing



The justification of the supporters of the review of the PCOC for marketing, advertising, and promoting architecture professional services is that it is vital in the present competitive economy as reaffirmed bynotable scholars in the literature (Singh&Singh, 2017; Epead & Othman, 2014; Low *et al.*, 2016). It is critical to comply with global practice and technological advancements that are transforming the way architects work and practice. Therefore, acceptance and adoption of the digital transformation journey are unavoidable in Nigeria's competitive economic climate.

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

ISSN : 2734-2751

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Technological advancement is transforming the way architects work and practice and need to adopted digital transformation journey is unavoidable in the current Nigeria economic climate. As competition in the construction industry increases and clients become more sophisticated at both local and international level, so also, professional architects and their practice need upgradation in the current technological-based economic. Technological advancement has revolutionized physical market to virtual and borderless market that is altering operational system of modern profession of architecture. Globalizations have led to the entry of multinationals architectural and construction firms into Nigeria which is creating numerous economic rivalries for the Nigerian architectural businesses. It is understood, however, that most architectural firms in the nation confine themselves to identifying the needs and values of their clients and rely on the traditional man-know-man marketing strategy to get jobs. A majority of Nigerian architecture businesses, with the exception of a small number that are also involved in design and build, construction, and real estate development, are not aggressive in using formal marketing strategies to advertise their professional services.

From all the parameters used to assess Nigerian architects' perception on the acceptance and adoption of marketing in their professional practice, result showed a good understanding of the marketing concept and even though few applied comprehensive marketing plan in their professional practice. The logical explanation is that the profession is inherently quite conservative based on the professional code of conduct which have contributed to reluctance toward marketing trends and social expectations as fundamental to the contemporary architectural practice. The technological advancement that is currently associated with new social media trends are powerful networking and marketing tools that have come to stay in peoples and businesses world. Creating a network of connected virtual markets is crucial for Nigerian architecture businesses since it would improve their exposure locally, nationally, and even worldwide. These channels include online sites, blog sites and posts; profiles on social media; smartphone apps; online commercial transactions; email lists; and professional exhibitions and publications. Architectural enterprises in the present economic climate need hybrid models of marketing tactics to maintain market leadership, discover new markets, and provide novel services that attract new clients and put the firm ahead of its competitors. Also, architectural firms that prioritize marketing in their business operations have a higher client satisfaction rate than those that do not.

With a constantly changing economy and labour market, curriculum evaluation in Nigerian architectural schools is essential. Delivering high-quality architectural training requires a multidisciplinary curriculum. Given the present duration of architectural education, it is crucial to understand which elements should be included or excluded from the curriculum to accommodate fundamental principles of marketing. Architects' code of conduct on marketing and advertising needs to be reviewed, just as the architects' responses in this study. Their unilateral support for the inclusion of marketing principles within the educational framework of architectural training is an indication for the professional bodies to have a rethink and reform the existing code of conducts to reflect international contemporary practice. In conclusion, the novelty of this study is not in deciding who wins or loses in the debate over whether marketing is relevant to professional practice in architecture but rather in developing a common path toward positive transformation for repositioning architects and their businesses in a competitive local and international economy.

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

REFERENCES

1. **Ameh, J. O.,** &Chukwujekwu, C. E. (2020). Employers' Demand for Built Environment Professionals' Employability Skills in Nigeria: Content Analysis of Job Advertisements. *International Journal of Real Estate Studies*, 14(1), 28-37.
2. **ARCON, (2017).** Register of Architects Entitle to Practice in Federal Republic of Nigeria, (Architects Registration Council of Nigeria – ARCON). Available at: https://arconigeria.org.ng.
3. **Baker, J.,** & Lamb, Jr, C. W. (1994). Measuring architectural design service quality. Journal of Professional Services Marketing, 10(1), 89-106.
4. **Barksdale Jr, H. C.,** & Clopton, S. W. (1995). Patterns of marketing activity among architectural design firms. Journal of Professional Services Marketing, 11(1), 101-126.
5. **Brown, K. O. (1990).** Marketing for the architectural profession: Applying marketing principles to the business of architecture. The University of Arizona.
6. **Dong, X., & Lian, Y. (2021).** A Review of social media-based public opinion analyses: Challenges and recommendations. Technology in Society, 67, 101724.
7. **Epead, A. A. H., &** Othman, A. E. E. (2014). Marketing strategies for promoting the architectural engineering profession in a rapidly changing business environment. In IAC Conference (pp. 1-3).
8. **Esperdy, G. (2005)**. The odd-job alleyway of building: modernization, marketing, and architectural practice in the 1930s. Journal of Architectural Education, 58(4), 25-40.
9. **Gabbianelli, L.**, & Pencarelli, T. (2021). Exploring some marketing practices in management consulting firms: evidence from small service firms in Italy. The TQM Journal, (ahead-of-print).
10. **Gafar, M.** & Raji, A. U. (2018). An Assessment of Architecture Students' Perception on the Soft and Practical Skills Integration into The Curriculum Structure for Sustainable Development in Nigeria. *Journal of Technology Management and Business*, 5(2).
11. **Grosskurth, L. K. (2008).** Marketing architectural services: the role of the internet in marketing architectural services in the Western Cape (Doctoral dissertation, Cape Peninsula University of Technology).
12. **Hodges, S.,** & Young, L. (2009). Unconsciously competent: Academia's neglect of marketing success in the professions. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 8(1), 36-49.
13. **Hogben, P. (2000).** Marketing fever. *Fabrications*, 11(1), 79-95.
14. **Ikoli, B. D. (2018).** Challenges and prospects of architectural practice in Nigeria. *Journal of Environmental Sciences and Resources*. 10(2), 122-139.
15. **Ipe, M. F.,** & Pepple, A. T. (2018). Architectural Personnel and The Challenge of Unemployment in Nigeria.*Journal of Environmental Sciences and Resources Management*, (10)1, 86-98.
16. **Karam, A. H. (2003).** Marketing and architects in South Africa. Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management, 10(6), 402-412.
17. **Khaidzir, M.,** & Anwar, K. (2007). Shaping the future of the architectural profession. FAB Journal, 1-6.
18. **Lawrence, A. (2000).** Changing architectural practice paradigms and their implications for professional education. Journal of Architectural and Planning Research, 196-205.
19. **Low, S. P., Gao,** S., &Mohdari, M. M. (2016). Marketing importance and marketing performance measurement of architecture firms in Singapore: an exploratory study. Construction Management and Economics, 34(11), 739-750.
20. **Lu, W., Ye, K**., Flanagan, R., & Jewell, C. (2013). Developing construction professional services in the international market: SWOT analysis of China. *Journal of Management in Engineering*, 29(3), 302-313.
21. **McDonald, R. E.,** & Madhavaram, S. (2007). Marketing of Professional Project Services: An Exploratory Study of The Role of Operant Resources in The Context of Architectural Firms. Marketing Management Journal, 17(1).
22. **Merz, J., & Fink, F. (2006).** Regulation of Professional Services: Lawyers & Notaries, Accountants, Architects & Engineers, Pharmacists. for Employment and Growth in Austria.
23. **Mitrache, A. (2012)**. Branding and marketing–an architect's perspective. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 62, 932-936.
24. **Murtagh, N.,** Roberts, A., & Hind, R. (2016). The role of environmental

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing

sustainability in marketing of small architectural design practices. *Construction management and economics*, *34*(4-5), 258-271.

25. **Nakhaee, J.,** & Arab Nasrabadi, M. (2019). Strategies for research-centered education of architectural designing by examining the research-centered activities of the top universities. *Journal of Humanities Insights*, 3(02), 50-56.
26. **Nobre, H.,** & Faria, J. (2017). Exploring marketing strategies in architectural services: the case of the architecture firms in Portugal. International Journal of Business Excellence, 12(3), 275-293.
27. **Obianyo, J. I**., Okey, O. E., &Alaneme, G. U. (2022). Assessment of cost overrun factors in construction projects in Nigeria using fuzzy logic. Innovative Infrastructure Solutions, 7(5), 304.
28. **Othman, A. A. E.**, & Hafez, M. G. (2019). A framework integrating corporate social responsibility for marketing architectural design firms in developing countries. *Journal of Engineering, Design and Technology*.
29. **Richardson, B. (2003).** Marketing for architects and engineers: A new approach. Taylor & Francis.
30. **Saif, N. M. A. (2015)**. How does marketing strategy influence firm performance? Implementation of marketing strategy for firm success. International Journal of Innovation and Economic Development, 1(3), 7-15.
31. **Santos-Vijande, M. L.**, López-Sánchez, J. Á., Loredo, E., Rudd, J., & López-Mielgo, N. (2022). Role of innovation and architectural marketing capabilities in channeling entrepreneurship into performance. Journal of Innovation & Knowledge, 7(2), 100174.
32. **Sawczuk, B. (2009).** Marketing and selling professional services in architecture and construction. John Wiley & Sons.
33. **Singh, E.,** & Singh, D. P. (2017). Architectural profession in India: perception towards service marketing. *Journal of Engineering, Design and Technology*.
34. **Stang Valand, M**., Svejenova, S., & Clausen, R. T. J. (2021). Renewing creative work for business innovation: Architectural practice in the trading zone. *European Management Review*, 18(4), 389-403.
35. **Viet Ngo, L.,** &O'Cass, A. (2010). Value creation architecture and engineering: A business model encompassing the firm-customer dyad. *European Business Review*, 22(5), 496-514.
36. **Winch, G. M. (2008)**. Internationalization strategies in business-to-business services: the case of architectural practice. *The Service Industries Journal*, 28(1), 1-13.
37. **Zelenskaya, E.**, & Elkanova, E. (2021). Designing place brand architecture: the potential of a sub-brands strategy. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 30(1), 167-179.

© Faculty of Environmental Sciences Publishing