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Conceptual Tools for Building Higher Education Institutions Corporate Image and Reputation

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ABSTRACT

This paper draws from the concept of corporate identity as a socially constructed activity of strategising, approached with an understanding that promoting institutional image and identity is among the critical functions of an organisational strategy. Corporate image is most often seen as a compilation of optical fundamentals, which are used in promoting the picture of an institution, because every organisation has an identity and in this, it articulates the shared culture, values and aims, and present a sense of uniqueness that, can help to distinguish the organisation in its spirited educational environment. This conceptual paper draws from secondary and grey literature sources to explore how higher education institutions can promote their corporate identity and reputation in response to the changing competitive educational environment across the globe. We highlight several areas that can be supported in fostering higher education institutions corporate integrity and status.

Keywords: Corporate Identity, Reputation, Higher Education Institutions, Corporate Image

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1. Introduction

This paper sought to articulate that corporate identity presents a sense of individuality within a competitive higher education environment where the core value of any university's corporate identity is made up of its history, beliefs, philosophy, ethical and cultural values and strategies. Therefore, the promotion of higher education institutions corporate image will help in re-positioning such institutions regarding their marketability and differentiation. In present times, higher educational institutions face pressure from both national and international fronts as they struggle between the tendencies of innovation or maintaining existing systems to remain relevant and sustainable. Universities across the world are expected to be innovative and distinctive in building a robust institutional profile to preserve and safeguard their competitive advantage. Across the world, both academic and business interests in corporate identity and reputation have increased significantly in recent years (Awugah et al., 2018). Universities have now recognised that a strong institutional identity can help them survive within the marketplace, attract investment, motivate employees and help differentiate their products and services from competitors (Balmer, 2008; Melewar et al., 2006). Corporate identity is now widely recognised as a useful strategic instrument, and a means to achieve competitive advantage (Schmidt, 1995). Melewar and Akei (2005) contend that the globalisation of business has finally been embraced by higher education institutions in which the sector is seen as part of the service-based organisations that could be marketed far and near. Institutions of higher learning compete with others to attract high-quality students and academic staff at both national and international levels. Stensaker and Norgard (2001) suggest that universities may have to respond to economic, societal and cultural demands by two different ways of adaptation. First, universities must respond for reasons of legitimacy and survival, which

means a change towards standardisation. The outcome is that institutions of higher education are increasingly becoming similar in what they deliver. Second, universities need to look for a strategic niche to successfully compete for students and academic staff from both external and internal environments. Similarly, Ng and Forbes (2008) noted that university creation involves various parties, and it is a co-created and new process rather than a series of promotional actions. Therefore, corporate identity in every organisation is so crucial that when positively built over the years should be maintained or improved upon (Awugah et al., 2018).

The paper potentially contributes immensely to the corporate identity literature in many ways. Studies have revealed an upsurge of growing interest in universities around the world to create and enhance their corporate identity as part of their growth and sustainability strategies (Baker and Balmer, 1997; Melewar et al., 2005; Curtis et al., 2009). Thus, this paper will add to the emerging corporate identity literature. The paper contributes to the literature by highlighting the role of corporate identity in promoting higher education institutions. Furthermore, the object purpose of organisational identity promotion is to establish a strong visual identity for institutions with a unique character. A university can only achieve its best when every member of the institution has the collective desire and purpose to build a reputable institution (Baker and Balmer, 1997). Thus, our conceptual paper extends the corporate identity literature with practical and managerial implication for the management of higher educational institutions.

2. The concept of corporate identity and reputation

This conceptual paper draws from corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation literature (Osman, 2008; Palli et al., 2009; Cornut et al., 2012) to examine the role of corporate identity in promoting a university. Corporate identity describes an institution

strategically planned, purposeful presentation of itself to gain a positive corporate image or in other words, it is the visual system for controlling how you look (Cornut et al., 2012; Osman, 2008). Corporate identity corresponds with a corporate image which represents attributes of corporate identity perceived by individual stakeholders; the end-product of branding or the impression created by individuals (Balmer and Greyser, 2002). Corporate reputation is the sums of the different images of an organisation or the number of identities an individual has accumulated at a given period that help form an opinion about an organisation (Palli et al., 2009; Cornut et al., 2012). Balmer and Gray (2003) argued that corporate identity arises from the sub-cultures, strategy, structure, performance and communication. For others, corporate identity refers explicitly to those visual elements organisations used to portray themselves to their public (Cornelissen et al., 2007; Palli et al., 2009). Balmer and Greyser (2002) argued that there are four (4) kinds of identities present in any organisation or entity. These are:

- (i) *Actual identity*: This involves the current attributes of a company and refers to organisational structure, ownership, and product range.
- (ii) *Communicated identity*: This is often clearly revealed through controlled forms of corporate communication.
- (iii) *Conceived identity*: This refers to perceptions of an organisation held by its stakeholders.
- (iv) *Ideal identity and desired identity*: These are related to the optimum positioning of an organisation, which is the prospects and vision held by strategic planners and top management.

The corporate image reflects an organisation's reputation in the eyes and minds of its publics (Tench and Yeomans, 2006; Alessandri, 2001; Balmer, 2008). Internal and external stakeholders expect a new name to explain the corporate image, or what the organisation

promises them (Curtis et al., 2009; Argenti, 2000) and beyond the name change, stakeholders expect to see evidence that the image is being upheld (Lam et al., 2010). The purpose of a symbol is to present the central idea of the University with impact, brevity and immediacy (Lam et al., 2010). Corporate reputation speaks much more than just being an ordinary optical character. It is an image in the eyes of a variety of stakeholders, made up of jigsaw pieces ranging from optical elements to perceptions of campus culture, language issues, academic standards and service delivery experiences (Olins, 1995; Lam et al., 2010). In-house stakeholders would be looking to see names that mirror the standing of universities. However, both sets of stakeholders would also be looking to see evidence that these promises were moving towards fulfilment. Bernstein (1984) and Tench and Yeomans (2006) opined that most organisations pay a great deal of attention to the image their publics hold of them, and that image should be considered as true reality by an organisation.

Corporate images are premeditated actions and efforts by organisations to communicate with stakeholders and influence them, and that some organisations tend to change stakeholders' image through unintentional actions and factors outside their control or volition (Tench and Yeomans, 2006). They also alluded that there are some elements that organisations do not have control but play an important role in the formation of the image in a customer's mind. They concluded that every organisation has an organisational identity, whether it is deliberate or not. By their existence organisations portray and send messages to their various stakeholders, and it is those messages that influence the stakeholders' image of the organisation. Furthermore, corporate image and uniqueness do not have to be planned and built by an establishment at all times; they also can be accredited to it by other interpretations (Awugah et al., 2018). An organisation's image

is among its most valuable corporate resources. It is a priceless asset which must be both nurtured and readjusted in keeping with events and the times, and with changing business realities (Skinner et al., 2010). When an organisation is expected to reposition its image, it is critical for future success that these changes are efficiently and professionally introduced, and that the ultimate results reflect management's new or desired image. Skinner et al. (2010) came to the assertion that an organisation with an excellent corporate identity has the following advantages:

- It attracts the best employees and customers (students);
- It is trusted as being ethical and behaving with integrity;
- Products or services provided by the organisation can command premium pricing;
- A strong brand delivers emotional and functional benefits, thus creating loyal customers.

3. The Importance of Promoting Corporate Identity

In the current competitive higher education environment, the need for consistent visibility and communication, as well as innovative measures to counter escalating identity is becoming more critical than before. A distinct and definite corporate identity is essential for the success and growth of any institution. For example, such a corporate identity will make higher education institutions stand out among their competitors both nationally and internationally. It will help universities to attract academics, non-academic staff and students, as well as commercial and industrial partners towards the attraction of research funding (Awugah et al., 2018). An organisation's name is to a great extent more than a universal optical character, it forms an image in the eyes of a variety of stakeholders, made up of jigsaw pieces ranging from visual elements to perceptions of campus culture, language issues, academic standards and service

delivery experiences (Lam et al., 2010; Tench and Yeomans, 2006). The following four essential requirements are critical for a successful corporate identity strategy:

- *Differentiation*: In a competitive market, corporate identity needs to have a clear distinction. What is required to stand out from others to be noticed, make an impression, and to be preferred ultimately.
- *Relevance*: Promotions need to connect to what people care about in the community/environment. To build demands that there is the need to understand and fulfil the needs and aspirations of the intended audience.
- *Coherence*: For credibility with the audience, promotions must be coherent in what to say and do. All the messages, marketing communications, promotion experiences, and product delivery need to hang together and add up to something meaningful.
- *Esteem*: A promotion that is differentiated, relevant and coherent is one that is valued by both internal and external audience. Esteem is the reputation a promotion has earned by executing clearly on both its promised and delivered experience.

Besides, particular attention should be paid in times of organisational change, and once a new corporate identity is implemented, attention to organisational identity-related issues generally tends to decrease (Awugah et al., 2018). Corporate image needed to be managed on a fundamental starting point, to be internalised by its staff and harmonised with future organisational developments (Stensaker, 2007). Stensaker (2007) suggest that corporate identity characteristics of an entity differentiate it from others. Corporate identity is used to distinguish institutions from their competitors and present marketing opportunities. It is imperative to be told that organisation communicates the strategic aspects of corporate identity and members of staff need to have knowledge of the corporate visual identity-

not only the general reasons for using the corporate visual identity but also aspects of the story behind the corporate visual identity (Balmer, 2008; Alessandri, 2001). The identification should explain why the design fits the organisation and what its elements are intended to express to employees and the external public.

Hatch and Schultz (2003) point out that many organisations have attracted interested scholars and practitioners based on their corporate marketing strategies which incorporates perspective from multiple disciplinary domains. It is also noticeable that corporate identity equally projects the image of the organisation by focusing mainly on the external and the symbolic dimension of identity. The interest should be initiated by universities to re-position and integrate their visual identity, corporate public relations and management communication messages. They should also articulate the corporate ethos, aims and values and present a sense of individuality that can help to differentiate the institution within the current competitive higher education environment (Stensaker, 2007). It is essential to argue here that when a university's reputation is well-managed, it can be a powerful means of integrating the numerous disciplines and actions vital to their success. This can promote a sense of continuity and respect for the past (Awugah et al., 2018).

Corporate identity changes that do not preserve at least some aspects of the entity's past character can or maybe less effective (Lomax and Mador, 2006) and in higher education, create an antagonistic relationship with specific stakeholders (Lowrie, 2007). Management may be challenged to balance stakeholders' attachment to the historical character of the entity with the necessary cultural change towards its new strategic vision (Awugah et al., 2018). Van Riel (1995) argued that the importance of corporate image is one of the reasons behind its growing interest, especially in the higher education sector. The

transmission of a positive image is an essential precondition for establishing a commercial relationship with target groups and key stakeholders. On the one hand, other schools of thought contend that corporate identity is a term recognised world-wide which gives an immediate impression of a large and imposing organisation. It is a concept that is usually found in the commercial-business world and does not feature so well within the context of academic institutions. Despite the contrary view, the concept of corporate identity has the additional advantage of placing universities firmly ahead of their competitors (Lomax and Mador, 2006; Lowrie, 2007). Balmer and Soenen (1999) contend that for a name to be successful, it should preserve aspects of the organisation's identity or character.

4.0 The Role of Corporate Image in Tertiary Education Promotion

Although universities are generally concerned in providing public goods rather than a corporate company, they have somehow embodied a corporate outlook in its quest to realise their mission statement as an agreed philosophy outlined (Cornelissen and Elving, 2003). It is interesting to note that universities today are highly prudent in their effort to achieving what they have been set out to accomplish by rallying on tools and means to communicate their identity within their operational environment. This is consistent with assertions by Birkigt and Stadler (1986) and Alessandri (2001) who argue that corporate identity needs to be founded upon the mission statement by promoting academic excellence and allowing the mission statements to reflect in their logo. In a similar vein, Olins (1995) outlines four ways in building an identity as universities are concerned, they should consider factors such as position, market share, core values, growth patterns, corporate culture and competitiveness in setting their goals. The next step is to develop the identity utilising behavioural change, identity structure and name. Corporate identity is also communicated through the

behaviour of an entity where target groups can judge the actions by the entity in dealing with external forces (Birkigt and Stadler, 1986). Markwick and Fill (1997) pointed out that it is vital to ensure consistent corporate communication is delivered to all stakeholders. Melewar and Akei (2005) study of the corporate identity of the University of Warwick classified its stakeholders into two categories – internal and the external stakeholders. The external stakeholders cover a wide range of audience from opinion leaders (business, media, think-tank, education specialist, government/political) to alumni and teachers. Whereas, the internal audiences are divided into three main groups- students, academic and non-academic staff (Melewar and Akei, 2005). On the contrary, Baker and Balmer (1997) are of the view that in an academic institution, agreement on a single value set is difficult to achieve compared to the business world. They concluded that the problem arises mainly from the fact that each member of the University is a specialist in a definite area and has, therefore, a firm view about how to proceed in this area. The absence of a general direction for the academic community to precede this sub-cultures and multiplicity in identities may harm the successful implementation of a corporate identity programme (Baker and Balmer, 1997). Increasingly the academia acknowledges that a corporate identity which refers to an organisation's unique characteristics is rooted in the behaviour of the staff and students as well (Balmer and Wilson, 1998). The similar characteristics of higher education make the projection of a differentiated identity difficult. According to Melewar and Akei (2005), some universities have succeeded in addressing this difficult task by incorporating marketing strategies to promote the institution internationally. Melewar and Akei (2005) cited the University of Warwick's promotion strategies, particularly on the international stage and slogans such as maintaining and developing the strengths in institutional

governance and management (Melewar and Akei, 2005). For example, such efforts may suggest that universities can carefully plan to continue to adopt business-like operational models (Melewar and Akei, 2005).

Corporate and marketing strategies not only determine the desired future states of the organisation, but they also influence the formation of organisational perceptions. The way a university defines its corporate strategy has a significant impact on how its stakeholders perceive it. Moingeon and Ramanantsoa (1997) explored the interaction between the history of a university and its corporate identity and highlighted that history influences the definition of corporate citizenship. The authors concluded that "identity is the product of the history of the organisation" (p.28). Corporate identity shapes the perceptions and actions of the organisation and its members. History creates an identity in support of the entrepreneurial self-image and income generating orientation of universities (Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002). Whelan et al. (2010) suggested that public universities, in particular, have naming challenges given the expectation of responsiveness to public needs that are not faced by private entities and the tendency of public entity managers to often overlook the benefits and importance of marketing strategies. The corporate identity of a higher education institution has been recognised as a strategic resource and source of competitive advantage (Awugah et al., 2018). Effective management of corporate identity can serve to address the needs of the entity's essential stakeholders by generally inspiring confidence in the institution to all target groups (Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002; Whelan et al., 2010). The general view in the marketing strategy is that prospective students will often attend a leading university because of its overall reputation, even though it may be weak in some specific areas (Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002). The ranking of universities creates the space to recognise that certain universities are more respected and perceived

to be general leaders in the higher education field. For example, Harvard, Yale, and MIT in the United States (US), and Oxford and Cambridge in the United Kingdom (UK) are recognised as some of the most respected universities in the world.

Today, higher education institutions are encountering pressure from both the internal and external environment as they struggle between the tendencies of innovation and standardisation (Awugah et al., 2018). Therefore, universities are expected to be innovative with a specific organisational mission and distinct profile. They also need to be an integrated part of a growing, highly international and standardised higher education industry network (Stensaker and Norgard, 2001). Universities have set up departments responsible for corporate communications with the oversight responsibilities of managing their information and sending positive image about them (Osman, 2008). As Bulotaite (2003) suggests, universities are complex organisations and identification can simplify the complexity and promote attraction and loyalty to the institution. In a similar vein, Jevons (2006) maintains that for the benefit of existing and potential students and staff, universities should develop a meaningfully differentiated identity to communicate their strengths. Promoting corporate identity of higher education can be incorporated into a broader trend of marketing and branding entities that are non-commercial by their very nature (Fairclough, 2010). A deep transformation in public services and institutions; they have begun to resemble commodities. Along with this shift, public institutions such as universities have moved closer to the economy (Fairclough, 1993). He further believed that the recent changes affecting higher education are a typical example of the processes of marketisation in the public sector. Universities have become strong image names providing clear positioning in stakeholders' minds, and the audience will exactly know what those names stand for

(Moogan et al., 2001; Curtis et al., 2009). A large number of universities have begun to create and enhance corporate identity programmes as part of their strategic positioning and expansion (Baker and Balmer, 1997; Curtis et al., 2009). Higher education institutions use corporate imaging to differentiate themselves and stand out in the rising competition (Michelsen, 2004; Curtis et al., 2009). As Levine (1997) points out, there are many universities, and most of them are fundamentally alike. Even though each university has its history and culture, they still look very much similar to each another through their functions, governance and degree system.

5. The Strategies Used by Universities to Build their Corporate Identity and Reputation

There are several strategies noted in the literature to have supported universities to build their corporate identities (Awugah et al., 2018; Michelsen, 2004; Curtis et al., 2009; Levine, 1997). A well-managed corporate identity can offer the optical structure required to make certain that all company communications are consistent with each other and build an image steady with the organisation's ethos and character (Michelsen, 2004). By effectively managing corporate identity, universities can build an understanding and commitment among their varied stakeholders. This can be manifested in their capability to catch the attention of students and staff to themselves and retain them, achieve strategic alliance, gain the support of financial markets and generate a sense of direction and purpose (Husted and Allen, 2001; Awugah et al., 2018). Corporate identity is a strategic issue, and in the current global market environment, the social pressure exerted on businesses and universities have increased, and the concern for corporate identity is not only manifested by academics but by the community and stakeholders as well (Smith, 2007; Popa, 2010). Unfortunately, many universities awoke to the importance of corporate identity barely after they were

surprised with public responses to issues they had thought previously were not part of their tasks (Porter and Kramer, 2006; Husted and Allen, 2001). For example, after the negative public responses, there has been a trend towards promoting corporate identity implications that are associated with the strategies of the institution (Filho et al., 2010; Porter and Kramer, 2006).

Melewar et al. (2006) alluded to the fact that an organisation's location is a significant part of its corporate identity. Having a suitable place is essential for a successful organisation in projecting the desired image. The authors argued that a crucial position might provide an organisation with constant exposure to the community and sustain its business strategies. Also, the architectural works on the building will have some influence on how corporate identity is perceived (Melewar et al., 2006). As part of a more corporate approach, universities corporate identity needs to be more coherent and with these developments, internal marketing becomes more important (Awugah et al., 2018). A clear corporate identity is a valuable asset, which provides both an internal focus for employees and a comprehensive network of consumer perceptions (Love and Roberts, 1997; Harris and De Chernatony, 2001). Van den Bosch et al. (2005) visualise corporate identity as a reflection of the corporate name, symbols, logotype, typography, colour and slogan. These codes are used in presenting the central ideas of a corporate institution to gain favourable stakeholder perceptions (Van Riel and Balmer, 1997). Baker and Balmer (1997) revealed that visual identity has a significant role in communication to both internal and external stakeholders. They further noted that a university's consistent visual identity communicates its strength and reputation to the outside world while providing a source of identification to the employees internally (Baker and Balmer, 1997). Dowling (1986) and Olins (1995) argue that corporate identity is reflected

in five main components of an institution. These include corporate name; symbol or logotype; typography; colour, and slogan. These components "present the central idea of the organisation with impact, brevity and immediacy" (Olins, 1995, p.29). Van Riel (1995) suggests that this can be done effectively through management by using corporate communication to harmonise favourable relationships with external and the internal stakeholders.

Corporate identity, image and reputation need to be part of the main agenda of an organisation with corporate communication activities addresses the distinctive attributes assigned to an organisation (Mohamad et al., 2007). Regarding corporate name, several institutions have adopted corporate identity initiatives to justify the grounds that they will improve the entity's identity, fortify its product, cheer up morale, and even lift up the worth of its supply (Porter and Kramer, 2006). A name is created eventually by repetitive impressions of the organisation's image whether good or bad (Gray and Balmer, 1998). According to Mohamad et al. (2007), reputation also needs to be based on accomplishments or worthwhile efforts to gain goodwill. Moreover, it is frequently established that a good name can fashion a strong spirited gain and sustain business growth (Filho et al., 2010; Smith, 2007). Wolverton (2006) assert that differentiation of a university has to do with how they identify themselves and the audience they choose to serve. Corporate identity stakeholders involve individual constituents in the university setting which include internal stakeholders such as current students, faculty and staff and external stakeholders such as prospective students and faculty, companies and recruiters, alumni, media, donors and local community (Melewar and Akei, 2005; Argenti, 2000). The stakeholders may, however, hold a different level of importance for a university. Pinar et al. (2011) identified student learning experience as the driving force for all value

creation networks in a university setting; therefore students must be recognised as the most important constituent. Corporate identity helps determine the positioning of an organisation concerning its markets and competitors. Teaching and research represent the core value creation activities for students' learning experience (Awugah et al., 2018). Therefore, supporting value creation activities include student life, sports and community activities. Every one of these actions has contributed to the overall experiences and perceptions of a university student (Pinar et al., 2011).

6. The Benefits of Promoting Corporate Identity in Higher Education

Hatch and Schultz (2003) argue that differentiation in today's business environment requires positioning, not only product-wise but also regarding the whole entity. The values and emotions symbolised by an organisation become key elements of differentiation strategies. A strong corporate identity breeds loyalty from a wide range of stakeholders (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). It expresses values that attract key stakeholders to the organisation and encourages them to feel a sense of belonging (Morsing and Kirstensen, 2001). A successful corporate identity is a valuable source of differentiation and competitive advantage (Balmer and Gray, 2003; Morsing and Kirstensen, 2001). Melewar et al. (2006) argue that the reasons for the growing interest are that corporate identity has arisen as a potential strategic resource and provide a university with various benefits: (i) corporate image is an important foundation of segregation tactic, which may lead to a sustained competition; (ii) corporate identity inspires stakeholder commitment; (iii) a clearly defined corporate identity is precious for a multiplicity of inside and outside stakeholders to whom the features are communicated; (iv) corporate identity breeds employee motivation; personnel will feel more motivated if they are identified with a reputable organisation; (v) a well-defined

corporate identity creates commitment in an external audience ; provide them with unfailing signals and messages, which may aid them develop an understandable image of the association, and (vi) corporate identity inspires confidence in customers, financial stakeholders, potential employees, and society at large. Argenti (2000) opined that the value of strong corporate identity to an individual university is that it will be able to attract faculty members and have fewer crises. Bulotaite (2003) contend that university corporate identities have the potential to create stronger feelings than most institutions which do not have a tough corporate image. Furthermore, a strong corporate image has the likelihood of providing employees with recognition to the corporate traditions and ethics. The responsibilities of workers in delivering the product standards to stakeholders are therefore essential, and studies have emphasise the importance of internal processes and employees' engagement in the corporate identity process (Whisman, 2009; Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana, 2007). Skinner et al. (2010) state that the success of a corporate identity programme is dependent on several factors which include:

- total commitment and active participation on the part of senior management;
- the development and selection of suitable and relevant visual concepts, which can be promoted and communicated to achieve the desired objectives;
- the quality and standard of the design of the visual elements, which in turn are themselves dependent on an accurate establishment of objectives, adequate research, and a systematic and creative approach in the actual design process;
- the impact and the clarity of the messages being communicated;
- the standard of control both in the implementation of the programme and in

the ongoing management of the programme;

- the institution of systems and processes to ensure that the communicated image is reflected in all the activities of the organisation.

7. Educational Programmes and Projects that Enhances Corporate Identity

Organisations can design specific activities and programmes to enhance their corporate identity and reputation. Most importantly, due to the restructuring of higher education, universities have adopted more business-style thinking in their operations, and education has now moved towards a service offer. Gray et al. (2003) argued that institutions with extensive experience in offering courses and programmes by distance education (online platforms) tended to develop global identity be more effective in the international arena and had to focus on achieving greater consistency across the University regard as its corporate image. Gray et al. (2003) suggest that a set of promotional features that education marketers could employ to develop an effective positioning strategy. Among them are the most salient features that help to attract international students, learning environment and academic instruction (quality of lecturers and resources), graduate career prospects, and campus life. Moogan et al. (2001) emphasise that institutions with a popular image, a good reputation and easily accessible information will have better chances to recruit students as well as faculty and staff. Universities might have to provide students with a range of educational products and services by focusing on students experience as the core of the branding process (Pinar et al., 2011). Most universities wishing to attract international students might be expected to adopt standardised strategies including the introduction of programmes and courses that are attractive to students (Gray et al., 2003). Additionally, components such as delivery methods, entry requirements or previous qualifications could be adapted to meet the

needs of various target markets (Gray et al., 2003; Melewar and Akei, 2005). Takeuchi and Porter (1986) point out that those standardising activities across the international arena and linking other enterprise functions to support the overall marketing effort support universities to achieve economies of scale. Mazzarol and Soutar (1999) contend that marketing activities of some universities in the United Kingdom (UK) have enhanced their marketing strategies through the British Council which generally coordinate UK universities marketing activities outside the UK. There are several individual attributes on which higher education institutions can promote themselves via their academic programmes. Some of these attributes are the quality of lecturers, resources, facilities, campus life and services (Curtis et al., 2009; Pinar et al., 2011). Wolverton (2006) emphasises the importance of both identity and audience in the context of business schools determining their programme uniqueness. The starting point for creating a sturdy image lies in the running of distinctive programmes as well as purposefully targeting the audience to be served. Wolverton (2006) identified several behaviours on which business schools have established their identities over time, with a conclusion that the institutions with strong identities can:

- Recognise what the overall organisational identity is and use it to frame its view of the community to be served;
- Determine their strengths and build on them;
- Remain focused in their programme offering, and
- Stay connected to the community they serve

8. The Contribution of Staff and Students to Building Corporate Identity and Reputation

Corporate communication covers management, marketing and organisational communications. Among these three, management communication is seen as the most important

(Awugah et al., 2018; Van Riel, 1995). In every institution, top-level managers are the main medium of management communication since they are responsible for transmitting the corporate philosophy and vision to internal stakeholders (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002). The component of behaviour consists of management behaviour and employee behaviour. Given the current need for economic accountability and the increased focus on consumer choice, universities are viewing students and staff as customers. Consequently, to sustain the desired level of service quality, the relationship between administrative staff, academics and students has become more structured. The behaviour of management at universities increasingly resembles that of a commercial company. Olins (1989) argues that symbolism guarantees consistent quality standards and contributes to the loyalty of students and staff alike as customers to the University and other target groups. The third stage of Olins' corporate identity formation is launched and introduced to communicate corporate vision. The identity of universities must be communicated through the mass media, another medium of identity formation. The final stage of identity formation is implementation. In alignment with its mission statement to market the University as a first choice, universities should collaborate with other organisations in their quest to raise awareness. Tench and Yeomans (2006) alluded to the fact that the feelings of belongingness and perceptions are genuine for those whom they affect and might have a degree of influence in the way these stakeholders behave and communicate among themselves and with others. Furthermore, other scholars have alluded that employees need to have a clear picture of the overall direction and ambitions of the entity and a clear sense of wherever they fit in and how they contribute to the entity's goals.

The managerial aspect of the institution will have a direct impact on the type and style of

those elements that are proactively planned by an institution as part of its identity activities (Awugah et al., 2018). However, the managerial aspect can also affect the reactive and unintentional elements of the identity. This influence must be reflected in both staff and students alike. Staff and students need to rely on their initiatives but with guidance and in doing this; they shape the corporate identity of the organisation in projecting towards other stakeholders. The employees' role in delivering corporate identity values is crucial as they can be considered a link between the organisation's internal and external environment (Balmer and Gray, 2003; Hatch and Schultz 2003). The success of a corporate identity depends on the extent to which there is harmony between the managerially defined values, the implementation of values by employees, and appreciation of these values among external stakeholders (De Chernatony, 2002). This reflects Hatch and Schultz (2003) argument that the foundation of corporate identity includes an interplay of strategic vision, organisational culture and corporate images held by the stakeholders and that employees are part of the corporate identity creation.

The connection involving a university and a student is an exceptional one and is far more than a marketer-customer relationship (Balmer and Liao, 2007). Argenti (2000) suggests that universities should focus on building an overall reputation by strengthening the interface between the school's corporate identity and its various stakeholders rather than solely marketing to a particular customer group. According to Bunzel (2007), there seems to be an implicit assumption that the promotion of corporate identity is desirable and increasingly necessary for universities. Drawing from Bunzel's assertion above, a question is posed as of whether the promotion of corporate identity of a university creates a competitive advantage. Instead of differentiation, identity seems to have become a tool of standardisation (Argenti, 2000; Melewar and

Akei, 2005). Individuals are more likely to find a match between their preferences and abilities about the university's programme and admission standards. The more likely such a match will occur, the higher the actual accessibility and participation in the university system. Elements of choice and competition are in fact already present under the current system. Levine (1997) suggests that higher education has moved from its growth stage to a mature stage industry with stable or declining resources, and universities are therefore forced to move from "full-service department stores to more specialised boutiques". Consequently, they should be able to make selections in their contributions and place themselves purposefully and distinctly manner (Levine, 1997).

The objective of profiling work is to define each school's identity, while at the same time, strengthen the University as a particular entity in the stakeholders' minds (Awugah et al., 2018). This dual goal may be concerned as a special challenge of the identity work and how to build a consistent identity while, at the same time, promote a distinctive identity of each school (Cornelissen, 2011). Melewar et al. (2006) assert that identity work strives to enhance stakeholders' commitment to the university and strengthen students and faculty recruitment marketing. The emphasis of the strategy documents is therefore on teaching, research and community engagement. Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana (2007) examined the views of students and other stakeholders on the promotion of corporate identity; their research revealed that universities had utilised their mission statement and focused on their core values as a key tool for market positioning and for providing a focus for the strategic direction. The students and other stakeholders stress the importance of exhorting the values of universities in all activities undertaken and through an integrated marketing communication approach. Cornelissen (2011) shows that a distinct

corporate identity creates commitment in an external audience which helps the public develop a clear picture of the institution. Eeva (2014) argue that besides being internationally competitive, becoming a world-class university essentially requires providing high-quality operations. Excellence is projected on a broad level and from the viewpoint of different stakeholders'. First, potential students are attracted with arguments of the University's excellence with an emphasis on the study environment, and secondly, the argument of quality from the potential employees' perspective. In their strategy, recruiting qualified faculty and researching high international standard as its central objective. Finally, universities also emphasise the quality of their administrative services supporting the core activities. Accordingly, these services meet high criteria, which is in line with the ideals of universities as focused entities. Running effective administrative services allows universities to concentrate on their key priority areas: conducting excellent research and provide students with a serene learning environment. Eeva (2014) stated that in projecting a university, several strategies are employed. The degrees offered are generally presented to meet high international standards with the assumption that teaching is based on high-quality international research and close cooperation with the business community.

Furthermore, universities provide academic career paths and international programmes of good quality. These are deemed as indicators of a first-rate university: recruiting top-level researchers and adept teachers, and supporting their professional growth can be seen as building a first-rate business school image. Jarvis (2001) notes that the learning process has recently turned from disseminating knowledge through teacher-centred methods and face-to-face lecturing into a more student-centred model that emphasises learning as a process of individuals constructing and transforming experience into knowledge and

skills. The corporate identity of the University emerges from the world-wide campaign to attract more international students through the promotion of their corporate identity. Universities are undergoing a transformation process to be position among world-class universities (Jarvis, 2001). Smith (2007) identifies that a well-planned corporate identity covers both internal and external organisational advantages. Inner organisational strengths support top management to discover the motivating power behind the organisational behaviour of its entity and employees.

Additionally, human resource managers can better understand employee personality requirements for their corporate environment, and that can help in hiring employees that will be beneficial to the organisation. Corporate identity is not consisting of only corporate design and symbols, but the connection between the internal and external corporate stakeholders, culture and corporate philosophy, which aims to find how the best images and messages are delivered to the public. Every entity needs to involve their stakeholders in every step taken. The success will come with both internal and external stakeholders embracing the identity, culture, philosophy and the story of the entity. Institutions that are strong on creating corporate identity can be recognised easily with their excellent services, public relations and advertisement, and they quickly catch the true corporate image (Jarvis, 2001; Smith, 2007).

9. Conclusion

The rising influence in the local and international competition among universities can be detected even by a quick look at the admissions of students and the employment of faculty staff over the years. In line with the new competitive environment, universities must embark on some deliberate strategic and consistent marketisation approaches to remain sustainable. Therefore, higher education institutions would require a strong, pragmatic, deliberate and planned effort to project their

corporate image and reputation. It will also require commitment and active participation on the part of the management of higher education institutions to the development and selection of suitable and relevant visual concepts, which can be promoted and communicated to achieve the desired objectives. The design of visual elements, which in turn are themselves dependent on an accurate establishment of goals, adequate research, and a systematic and creative approach in the actual design process, must be appropriately developed. The standard of quality control in the implementation of academic programmes must be given priority. In summary, universities must strive to establish proper systems and processes to ensure the advancement of their corporate image and reputation.

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