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The Effect of Brand Reputation on Emotional Attachment of Public Universities in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the extent to which brand reputation can affect the emotional attachment of post-graduate students in public federal universities in south-south Nigeria. The population of this study is drawn from postgraduate students from four federal universities in South-south namely; University of Port Harcourt, University of Calabar, University of Benin and University of Uyo. These schools have a population of 34, 984 postgraduate students. The sample size was determined through the use of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. For a finite population of 34,984, a sample of 379 was derived. Simple regression was used in testing the stated null hypotheses. The results from the test of hypotheses revealed that brand reputation significantly has effect on the affection, satisfaction and passion of post graduate students. The study further recommended conscious actions towards ensuring that marketing department in these schools are carried along in brand policy development.

Keywords: Brand reputation, affection, satisfaction, passion, universities, south-south

I. INTRODUCTION

All over the world, tertiary education has become a major concern for government, citizens and other stakeholders(Akunyili, 2010). According to Schiffman (2005), tertiary education influences economic well-being in three ways which are; influence from direct expenditures by the institutions, their employees and their students which impact the local economy. The second influence is that higher education provides financial and non-financial benefits to the individual who pursues an advanced education and to society in general. Lastly, institutions of higher education are increasingly focused on knowledge creation. With such knowledge, competition is intensified all over the globe as every institution wants to be ranked highly by several corporate ranking bodies. These bodies such as Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), Times Higher Education (THE), and a host of others presents statistics each year to show the global position of institutions of higher learning.

In a recent publication by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) world university ranking, a list of some of the top ranking universities were published and these top universities were located in countries like United States, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Singapore, China, Japan, Australia and Hong Kong (QS, 2019). The result further showed that the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) topped the list for the seventh time. Some of the indicators used in this judgment include academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty/student ratio, citations per faculty, e-learning facilities, exchange and linkage programs, international faculty ratio as well as international student ratio.

Furthermore, Times Higher Education (THE) have ranked five (5) best universities in Africa 2019 and they include; University of Cape town, the second is University of Witwatersrand, third is Stellenbosch University, fourth is University of Kwazulu-Natal (all in South Africa) while the fifth is Makerere University in Uganda (THE, 2019). However, according to world ranking, these universities were ranked between 156th to 600th positions (THE, 2019). The Nigerian Universities that made the sixth position in Africa were Covenant University which happens to be a private university and University of Ibadan (THE, 2019). However, these Universities had world ranking of 601st to 800th position respectively. The university of Nigeria which was ranked one of the 30th University in Africa was ranked the 1001st in the world (THE, 2019). This shows the extent to which our higher education is undervalued in the committee of universities worldwide. The question often arises such as “what possible strategy have these universities adopted that has made them so renown and have taken top rank in the world?” Universities and other higher education institutions are increasingly using their distinctiveness to compete for the brightest students, academic and professional staff at local and international levels. At the same time, they

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adopt a business-like competitive model to meet with the demands of future generations.

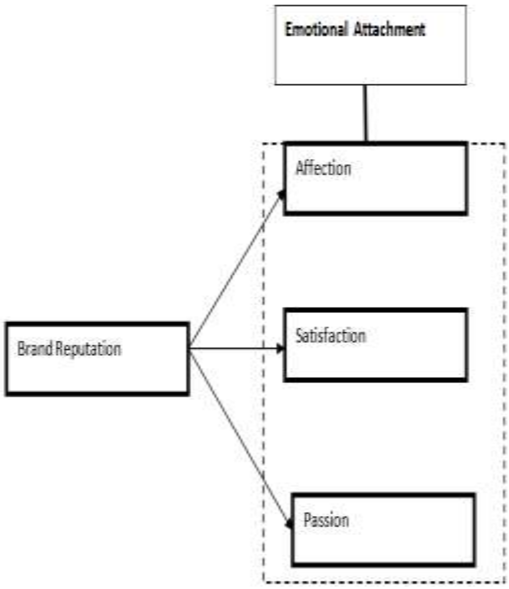

Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Hypotheses

$H0_1$ Brand reputation does not bring about affection in public tertiary institutions in South-South, Nigeria.

$H0_2$ Brand reputation does not bring about satisfaction in public tertiary institutions in South-South, Nigeria.

$H0_3$ Brand reputation does not bring about passion in public tertiary institutions in South-South, Nigeria.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Brand Equity Theory

Brand equity theory postulates that a firm can generate premium value from a product/service with a recognizable name when compared to a generic equivalent (Davcik, 2013). Companies can create brand equity for their products and services by making them memorable, easily recognizable, and superior in quality and reliability. A brand is not a mere name for a product. Rather, a brand is a supplier's guarantee that it will continuously and consistently deliver on its promises, including promises explicitly or implicitly made on tangible features, specific quality thresholds, and benefits and convenience to the consumer (Choi and Coughlan, 2006). A brand signals to the consumer the source of the product and should act in a manner that protects consumers and producers from competitors who attempt to provide identical products (Davcik, 2013). In other words, a brand has to help in product differentiation when stakeholders have asymmetric information about its quality and performance as well as in providing product loyalty mechanisms against new entrants in the market (Schiffman, 2005). A modern approach to branding includes a comprehensive list of elements that overlap traditional understandings of the brand concept and includes not only distinguishable tangible product-related features, differentiation by name, color, or any other visible characteristics, but also intangibles, such as utility expectations or consumer subjectivism. Contemporary paradigms on branding issues and scholarly thought have focused mostly on consumer attitudes, loyalty, perceptions, etc., as well as on organizational marketing investments in a brand.

Authors like Quiston, (2004)have thoroughly disagreed with the revenue premium concept and have suggested that there may be a potentially positive outcome for pioneering brands if they are to establish a new brand category. They later demonstrated that customer equity is a measure of brand value, and should therefore not be misinterpreted as an independent equity measure, but say nothing about how this is related to firm performance. Souiden, Kassim, & Hong, (2006) also suggest new avenues for future research that focus on brand value formation and separation from the brand equity construct. Brand value represents the sale or replacement price of a brand and depending on whoever owns the brand this value differs. Customer equity is also a partial measure of brand value, and thus should not be considered as an independent equity construct (in comparison to other equity approaches). All of these themes are open questions that deserve careful scrutiny in future research programs, which will certainly contribute to their much needed clarification.

The implication is that a company with a high brand equity will drive higher emotional attachment for the brand including, emotional attachment of investors to the brand. Hence, corporate brand strategy development should consider the brand equity valuation of the company or product and service brands (Kotler, 1991). In developing and executing corporate brand strategy, the value of the brand from the customer experience and all other stakeholders is important. Organizations should build better brand value to drive stakeholder positive experience. In development of corporate brand strategy for better customer emotional connection, building strong brand equity is imperative, the business community is always connected to brands with high value.

Brand Reputation

Brand reputation is the aggregate perception of outsiders on the salient characteristics of organizations (Fombrun and Rindova, 2000). The development of brand reputation means more than keeping consumers satisfied, it is something a company earns over time and refers to how various audiences evaluate the brand. Companies and brands with a good reputation are likely to attract more customers and a brand will lose its positive reputation—and eventually develop a negative reputation—if it repeatedly fails to fulfill its stated intentions or marketing signals (Milewicz and Herbig, 1994).

The various audiences recognize brands as independent market organisms. Consumers perceive them as characters, while both managers and the environment sustain them. For example, research indicates that consumers can think of brands as if they are celebrities, or as if they have a character of their own (Bird, Channon & Ehrenberg, 1970). In this respect, it is an output of the brand identity that the company proposes, the promises the company makes and the extent that consumers experience the offer that the company promises. The management of the brand reputation is continual. The brand name and the brand image, and as a consequence its reputation will be managed over the brand’s life, via the selection of a brand expression, its introduction in the market and its further expansion, defense and enforcement over time (Park et al., 2006).

Reputation is one of the primary contributors to perceived quality of the products carrying the brand name. Consumers expect that products manufactured today have a similar quality as products manufactured in the past, since the brand is adding credibility (Milewicz and Herbig,1994). Individuals form positive views only for the brands they perceive credible. They assess the incomplete brand information collected overtime and companies in order to secure the development of a sound reputation have to tried to project consistent messages. It is not easy to drastically alter a brand's reputation over a short period of time. People tend to classify brands in categories and have a specific opinion on these categories. In addition, there is always a time lag effect, which is expected to influence the future opinion that consumers form on the brand. The brand's current reputation will influence the prediction for its actions. Customers anticipate a brand will meet their expectations, formed by its existing reputation. In this respect, the market expects consistency from the brand, both in terms of its projected identity and the support of this identity. Mixed signaling (saying one thing and doing another) damages reputation. Customers will not perceive a brand as reliable and credible when it does not deliver what it promises (Herbig and Milewicz, 1995).

Concept of Emotional Attachment

The pioneering work on emotional attachment was conducted by Bowlby (1951) in the realm of parent-infant relationships. Bowlby (1979) proposed that human infants are born with a repertoire of (attachment) behaviors designed by evolution to assure proximity to supportive others (attachment figures). This proximity provides a means of securing protection from physical and psychological threats. It also promotes affect regulation and healthy exploration. According to Ball& Tasaki,(1992), the desire to make strong emotional attachments to particular others serves a basic human need, beginning from a child’s attachment to his/her mother (Bowlby 1979) and continuing through the adult stage with romantic relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), kinships, and friendships (Bricker &Kerstetter, 2000).

Defining attachment as an emotion-laden, target-specific bond between a person and a specific object that varies in strength, Bowlby (1979) sought to understand the adverse influences of inadequate maternal care during early childhood on personality development (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). A primary conclusion from Bowlby’s (1951 & 1979) pioneering work was that early patterns of interaction between a child and his/her primary caregiver result in the development of different attachment styles (secure, anxious-ambivalent, avoidant). These styles, once developed, impact future relationships. To illustrate, Zamanou, et al, (1994) found that adults with a secure attachment style had more balanced, complex, and coherent self-structures compared with those with insecure attachment style.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this study, the research design adopted was quasi-experimental research design. The population of this study is drawn from postgraduate students from four federal universities in South-south namely; University of Port Harcourt, University of Calabar, University of Benin and University of Uyo. These schools have a population of 34, 984 postgraduate students. The choice of these institutions is firstly because they

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are federal universities with higher allocation unlike state universities secondly, because these universities are the only federal universities that offer postgraduate programs. This data was gotten from school website and direct interaction with post graduate admission office of these universities. For this study, the sample size was determined through the use of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table . For a finite population of 34,984, a sample of 379 was derived. Simple regression was used in testing the stated null hypotheses.

IV. DATA ANALYES AND FINDINGS

$H0_1$Brand reputation does not bring about affection in public tertiary institutions in South-South, Nigeria.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.615[a]	.378	.376	2.205

a. Predictors: (Constant), BRAND_REPUTATION

In testing for the cause effect relationship amongst our study variable in hypothesis seven, we realized a regression coefficient of 0.615 which is significant, we also realized a coefficient of determinant of 0.378 which implies that the outcome of our predictor variable "brand reputation" affects the outcome "affection" by 37.8%.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	897.138	1	897.138	184.582	.000[b]
	Residual	1477.555	304	4.860		
	Total	2374.693	305			

a. Dependent Variable: AFFECTION

b. Predictors: (Constant), BRAND_REPUTATION

Our ANOVA table also reveals a p-value of 0.000 which is less than alpha of 0.05 along side an f-value of 184.582. This indicates that our predictor variable can significantly bring about the outcome of our criterion variable.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standa Coeffi
		B	Std. Error	Be
1	(Constant)	8.550	.630	
	BRAND_REPUTATION	.500	.037	

a. Dependent Variable: AFFECTION

From of coefficient table, we also confirm the regression coefficient of 0.615 as seen in the model summary as well as a p-value of 0.000 which is less than alpha of 0.05. we therefore reject the stated null hypothesis and accept the alternate.

$H0_2$ Brand reputation does not bring about satisfaction in public tertiary institutions in South-South, Nigeria.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.518[a]	.268	.266	2.290

a. Predictors: (Constant), BRAND_REPUTATION

In testing for the cause effect relationship amongst our study variable in hypothesis eight, we realized a regression coefficient of 0.518 which is significant, we also realized a coefficient of determinant of 0.268 which implies that the outcome of our predictor variable "brand reputation" affects the outcome "satisfaction" by 26.8%.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	583.381	1	583.381	111.256	.000[b]
	Residual	1594.057	304	5.244		
	Total	2177.438	305			

a. Dependent Variable: SATISFACTION

b. Predictors: (Constant), BRAND_REPUTATION

Our ANOVA table also reveals a p-value of 0.000 which is less than alpha of 0.05 alongside an f-value of 111.256 this indicates that our predictor variable can significantly bring about the outcome of our criterion variable.

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Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.442	.654		15.960	.000
	BRAND_REPUTATION	.403	.038	.518	10.549	.000

a. Dependent Variable: SATISFACTION

From of coefficient table, we also confirm the regression coefficient of 0.518 as seen in the model summary as well as a p-value of 0.000 which is less than alpha of 0.05. We therefore reject the stated null hypothesis and accept the alternate.

$H0_3$ Brand reputation does not bring about passion in public tertiary institutions in South-South, Nigeria.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.654[a]	.428	.426	3.556

a. Predictors: (Constant), BRAND_REPUTATION

In testing for the cause effect relationship amongst our study variable in hypothesis nine, we realized a regression coefficient of 0.654 which is significant, we also realized a coefficient of determinant of 0.428 which implies that the outcome of our predictor variable "brand reputation" affects the outcome "passion" by 42.8%.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2877.438	1	2877.438	227.499	.000[b]
	Residual	3845.032	304	12.648		
	Total	6722.471	305			

a. Dependent Variable: PASSSION

b. Predictors: (Constant), BRAND_REPUTATION

Our ANOVA table also reveals a p-value of 0.000 which is less than alpha of 0.05 alongside an f-value of 227.499 this indicates that our predictor variable can significantly bring about the outcome of our criterion variable.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	15.828	1.016		15.577	.000
	BRAND_REPUTATION	.886	.059	.654	15.083	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PASSION

From of coefficient table, we also confirm the regression coefficient of 0.654 as seen in the model summary as well as a p-value of 0.000 which is less than alpha of 0.05. We therefore reject the stated null hypothesis and accept the alternate.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings indicates that Brand reputation have a significant effect on both affection, satisfaction and passion of customers of these universities. These test of hypotheses revealed regression coefficients of 0.615, 0.518 and 0.654 respectively. It also revealed a coefficient of determinant (r square) of 0.378, 0.268 and 0.428 respectively. All these tested hypotheses had p-values less than alpha (α) of 0.05. This made us reject the stated null hypotheses revealing that brand reputation has significant effect on both affection, satisfaction and passion of post graduate students.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion the study had revealed that brand reputation by universities can be a catalyst for achieveing affection, satisfaction and passion from its post graduate students. Moreover, customers view on these branding strategies as they are implied in universities were awesome. An unprecedented majority of the respondents had adequate knowledge of these resultant effects of brand reputation. Although some respondents acknowledged that branding is about logo, service quality, pricing, coverage image, signage and slogan. A whopping majority seem this as combination of all the above. In conclusion the present study was conducted to determine the effect of corporate brand strategies on customer emotional attachment of universities in South-South Nigeria. The study had discovered that universities deploy brand reputation to create awareness of their products and services as well as gain customers emotional attachment.

VII.RECOMMENDATIONS

i. University management should ensure that the marketing department is effectively utilized.

There is no way one would talk about branding without mentioning the custodians of branding domiciled within marketing department. The school administration should also make a conscious effort in visiting the department of marketing to obtain more ideas on several areas that corporate branding can bring about the emotional attachment of customers.

ii. In setting up committees within the university, at least a representative member from the department of marketing should be nominated because while other members are making suggestions along the line of operation, the marketer present would raise concerns and contributions on customers reception to committee outcomes.

iii. University management should ensure that its reputation is protected in all their activities ranging from academic to non-academic. They should understand that whatever is being done within the university signals information to people far and wide and this can make or destroy the institution.

iv. In setting up committees, competent people should be appointed so that whatever be the outcome of their decision would add value to the university.

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