

RE- BRANDING NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES FOR ENHANCING CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF NIGERIAN CUSTOMERS

Aja E. Egele & Johnson U. Ozo

Marketing Programme,
Ebonyi State University
Email: ajaebekegele@yahoo.com & johnsonubaka@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: The exodus of Nigerians to foreign universities as a result of negative perceived brand image associated to Nigerian Universities has become a source of worry because of its adverse effect on national development. This study is therefore, aimed at establishing re-branding Nigeria Universities, by its students/graduates, as a strategy for improving the contribution of Nigerian Universities to national development and customer satisfaction. The method adopted in the study is conceptual review from which it was deduced that the application of re-branding strategies by students/graduates to Nigerian Universities will improve the level of customer satisfaction from purchasing Nigerian Universities. It identified modification of brand purchase behavior as the critical factor for re-branding upon which learning theory, word-of-mouth, intellectual disposition, moral exhibition, unique achievements and good alumni ambassadorship serve as re-branding strategies. These re-branding strategies will automatically re-build the brand image of Nigerian Universities for the world to perceive Nigerian Universities as brand equity associated with high standard, moral value, cultism-free and disciplined-culture oriented. Hence, increased number of foreign students will be attracted, while the rate of our indigenes seeking to study abroad will drastically be reduced. This in the long-run will make Nigeria's economy education tourism-sector driven, positioned to earn foreign currency for the country, helping Nigeria's currency to appreciate in value, positively impacting on Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product, Gross National Product and Per Capita Income, as more employment opportunities will be created and more infrastructural facilities developed. The implication of this finding is that, both the Nigerian Universities Commission and all the Universities should use re-branding strategies as an instrument for re-building Nigerian Universities' image

Keywords: Re-Branding, Nigerian Universities, Customer Satisfaction and National Development

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Aja E. Egele & Johnson U. Ozo (2016), Re- Branding Nigerian Universities for Enhancing Customers' Satisfaction and National Development: the Role of Nigerian Customers. *J. of Social Sciences and Public Policy*, Vol. 8, Number 1, Pp. 138 – 157.

INTRODUCTION

No matter how good any organization's offering is, be it goods, services, ideas, persons, or places, it cannot achieve huge success in the market without promotion. Therefore, if an organization does not blow its own trumpet, nobody would blow it or give the desired attention to the organization or its products. This implies that there is need for all stakeholders of a firm to give proper attention to promotion as a means of informing the society of their existence and the services they have for satisfying their target market needs. Stakeholders include the organization itself, customers, employees and shareholders of the organization. Promotion is defined as any form of communication employed by a firm to inform, educate, persuade or remind its actual and/or potential customers about itself, its products, image, ideas and activities in the community (Olakunori' and Ejionueme 1999). Promotional tools are advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations/publicity. The tools of promotion are all about promoting brands, through influencing consumers to establish brand value in their minds. This implies that universities must make use of promotional tools to promote its educational services through branding.

Successful brands create strong positive and lasting impressions, all of which are perceived by audiences to be of value to them personally (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Individuals can perceive brand value without having purchased or having direct experience of the brand. The success of brands in the market is achieved not only through promotional strategies of the producer but also relies on consumers' past and present experience, since consumers are always involved in communicating their purchase experience of brands to the target markets and the general public. On the other hand, customers also contribute to the level of satisfaction they receive from consuming a product. Customer's satisfaction expresses the total happiness experienced by a customer in buying goods/services (Ndolo and Ozoani 2008). Among the ways customers are involved in determining the level of satisfaction from consuming a product are through expectations and post-purchase attitude change to reduce or eliminate consumer dissonance. Customers to Nigerian Universities are students and graduates. Customer and consumer will be used interchangeably in this study as they are synonymous and the technical difference in the words as it applies to marketing is not taken into consideration in this study. In a more comprehensive way of describing consumers in Nigerian Universities, it will also include potential customers, that is, those school certificate holders who have the intention to acquire higher educational services. University education is the main component of higher education which aims at developing the whole man physically, mentally, morally and technologically, so as to be able to function effectively in any environment he finds himself, and as well become more productive, self-fulfilling with attainment of self-actualization (Udu, 2014).

The role of the educational sector in national development is not questionable in which universities play a vital role. Therefore, levels of performance of Nigerian universities will have direct impact on National development. While this level of performance of Nigerian

universities is measured by customer satisfaction. Ideally, the determining factor for customer satisfaction of university education, is only when a graduate must have acquired the established goals of the university education at a level acceptable by the society. However, generally the determining factor for actualizing customer satisfaction is subjective, in the sense that, individual customer's purchasing behavior has also been identified to play a major role. Truly, a university is able to perform its own task if it has the crop of intellectuals in the right number, quality and composition for customer satisfaction (Udu, 2014), and also when customers (students and graduates) play their complementary role task of right purchase and post-purchase behaviors. It is from this view-point that this paper is discussing re-branding Nigerian universities as an unavoidable task for the Nigerian universities' students and graduates that will in return improve Nigerian universities' educational service value, for effective and efficient contribution to national development.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the present day Nigeria, customers complain much on reduced or less satisfaction being received from consuming goods and services virtually in all sectors of the economy. This situation seems to be worst in the Nigerian University educational system, faced with competitive market environment, as a result of increased number of approved universities. Thus, the issue of quality and relevance of the products of the institutions to the contemporary market is challenging (Nwaizugbo 2009/2010). It is challenging in the sense that, the expectations of Nigerians from universities is to produce high quality graduates that will showcase theoretical and practical knowledge, to understand, exploit, and if necessary, change their environment (Ezenyilimba and Onah, 2009). But it seems that this expectation is not being achieved. Consequently, the labour market perceives Nigerian universities as brands that produce low quality graduates. This bad brand image associated to Nigerian universities is causing switch over purchase behavior of Nigerians to foreign universities. Nigerians studying abroad have increased tremendously and those who are still seeking to be enrolled in foreign universities are increasing, the negative effect of this to Nigeria's economy is high demand for foreign currencies which helps to devalue the Nigerian currency. Other negative effects are: It helps to create unemployment in Nigeria and it also makes Nigeria's economy not to be education tourism-sector driven which would have contributed positively to national development through improving Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Product (GNP) and Per Capita Income.

One of the reasons for going abroad for higher education is that the standard of Nigerian Universities' education is low, may not be absolutely correct or validated as many Nigerians who did their undergraduate studies in Nigerian Universities before going abroad for post-graduate studies have been noted for doing creditably well, while those that did their undergraduate studies in Nigerian universities but employed abroad are performing excellently with their foreign counterpart graduates. In addition, the worst scenario is that many also travel to neighboring African countries with the hope to

acquiring high quality university education, whereas Nigerians claim to be the super power of Africa. But, one most critical question here is, "can the blame that Nigerian university graduates are unable to meet the needs of the labour market or enjoy the prestige of having received high quality education, be wholly rested on Nigerian universities alone? The extant literature in marketing have established that a product can fail to meet its customers' expectations or offer maximum satisfaction to consumers, not only because of low quality of the product, but could also result from the consumers' side with respect to their attitude, perception or even from the inability of consumers to use the product appropriately. The fifth element of the "Gap Theory for unsuccessful service delivery of value" supports the above claim. It holds that consumers can misperceive the service quality and/or be unable to consume the service correctly to receive optimum level of value (Babalola, 2005, Kotler, Bowen and Marken, 2010). However, marketers always attempt to use promotional tools to avoid the occurrence of this ugly situation from consumer dimension.

From the consumer dimension of Nigerian Universities' educational services market, the specific problems are: one, consumers (students/graduates) of Nigerian Universities do not know the value of educational services they are enjoying with respect to the contents of their programme curricular. Hence, they de-value themselves and become less prestigious among their counterparts from other Universities in the world; two, It is an obvious fact that in many cases some students/graduates do cast blame on the service providers (Universities) for not receiving high satisfying value, and atimes do switch to other competing brands, ending in paying more prices (fees) without experiencing higher satisfaction; but rather still continue to experience consumer dissonance; three, It is not disputable generally that no value provider can provide absolute or 100% consumer satisfying value; consequently, this poses challenges to consumers, and thus transfers a vital role to consumers themselves to reduce or eliminate consumer dissonance through post-purchase behavior; and four, There is a misconception of value-delivering strategies of Nigerian Universities by their students/graduates, who differentiates the Nigerian Universities from other Universities of the world, based on this misconception of hence, consumer dissonance occurs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to establish re-branding Nigerian Universities by its students/graduates as a strategy for improving the contribution of Nigerian Universities to national development and customers' satisfaction. The specific objectives are to:

1. Expose Nigerian University students/graduates to the concept of re-branding as a strategic tool for modifying their purchasing behavior toward Nigerian universities.
2. Inculcating in the individual Nigerian University students/graduates the skill of re-branding their University through creating high value perception of Nigerian Universities to the general public and the whole world so as to avert the ugly scenario of Nigerian University students/graduates continuing to be victims of the

saying, "a child that brings down his/her parents, automatically brings down him/herself".

3. Increase the level of satisfaction students/graduates receive from purchasing and consuming a particular Nigerian University's educational services through modified consumption behavior during their studentship.
4. Establish re-branding Nigerian Universities as a strategic tool for making Nigeria's economy an educational tourism-driven economy for national development.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Before the first half of the 20th Century, all Nigerians that received university education did that outside the shores of Nigeria. The history of Nigerian University education began with the establishment of University College, Ibadan, in 1948, as an affiliate of University of London. The first autonomous University in Nigeria is University of Nigeria, Nsukka, established in 1960 – the year Nigeria gained political independence from Britain (Eze and Ile, 2005). In 1962, University College, Ibadan, became a full-fledged University, known as University of Ibadan. In the same year, came the establishment of the then University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and University of Lagos (Okoje, 2012). Later University of Benin was established, making them six first-generation Universities in Nigeria. The first-generation Universities was "steady State" with public funding as the sole basis of financial support, with the universities geared towards educating national elites to manage and rule the country (Fielden, 1999). In the late 1970's was the establishment of seven second-generation Universities and subsequently other generations of universities including states' and private-owned Universities. Now there are about 124 Universities consisting 37 Federal, 37 State and 50 private-owned, conventional and specialized Universities in Nigeria (Okoje, 2012). Irrespective of the form of ownership, these Universities are under the regulatory and supervisory control of the National Universities Commission, a Federal Government Agency committed to the on-going process of public sectors reform (Eze and Ile, 2005).

In a literal perspective, a University can be conceptualized in many ways. The Oxford Dictionary (2010) defines a university as an educational institution for advancing learning. Learning in this context, refers to the process for knowledge acquisition; while, Adebayo and Adeoye (2012) view a University to be a global community; a community of light where knowledge on a universal scale is meant to be diffused to the community at large. A University is the highest educational institution where the best of knowledge, skill, competencies, beliefs and attitudes are acquired (Oladosu, 2012). This is why Msheliza (2005) posited that the content of higher education (University) programme should include intellectual knowledge, problem-solving and skill for social interaction. This means that the intellectual knowledge and problem-solving skill imbibed through University programme must help University graduates to be socially and economically relevant in the society. A University is also described as a place to first go to learn before

you practice what you have learnt. That is why it is the laboratory from which potent and transformational ideas are hatched (Adebayo and Adeoye, 2012).

Having explained the concept "university" from literal viewpoint, there is need to explain University from marketing perspective. A university can be seen as a marketing organization that deals with marketing services for higher education which offers intellectual knowledge, moral, leadership and entrepreneurial skills and services in various fields of human endeavour through training, teaching and instruction for human development. Or, it is a marketing organization that offers the service value for advanced knowledge, skill and learning, for social and economic relevance to the society at large. In other words, university service is offered to raise the dignity of graduates (consumers), through acquiring higher economic and social skills as to contribute to the general economic and social development of the society at large. The value of university products are in part shown by the graduates' certificates, diplomas and degrees as evidence for having acquired university education and/or on the other part, effectively and efficiently, practically and theoretically, solving economic and social problems of man, by the university graduates. The extent to which university services contribute to the prestige of the university graduates improves satisfaction received, and helps to position such University as a brand. In essence, this contributes to brand purchase behavior towards the university in any part of the world. The University brand purchase behavior refers to cognitive and perceptual activities that deals with why consumers choose a particular university for studies both for undergraduate and post-graduate studies and other post-purchase behavior such as recommending the University to others or not, repeat purchase or not, etc.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES MARKETING BY NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

The assumption in presenting re-branding from customers' perspective, in this paper, is that the individual universities in Nigeria must have developed and packaged quality educational services for their customers. Therefore, to effectively market their educational services, Nigerian universities are required to engage in the right strategies for marketing services. Educational services marketing is about promises – promises made and promises kept to customers (students and graduates). A strategic framework known as the services triangle visually reinforces the importance of people and use of appropriate strategies in the ability of universities to keep their promises and hence succeed in building customer relationships (Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2006).

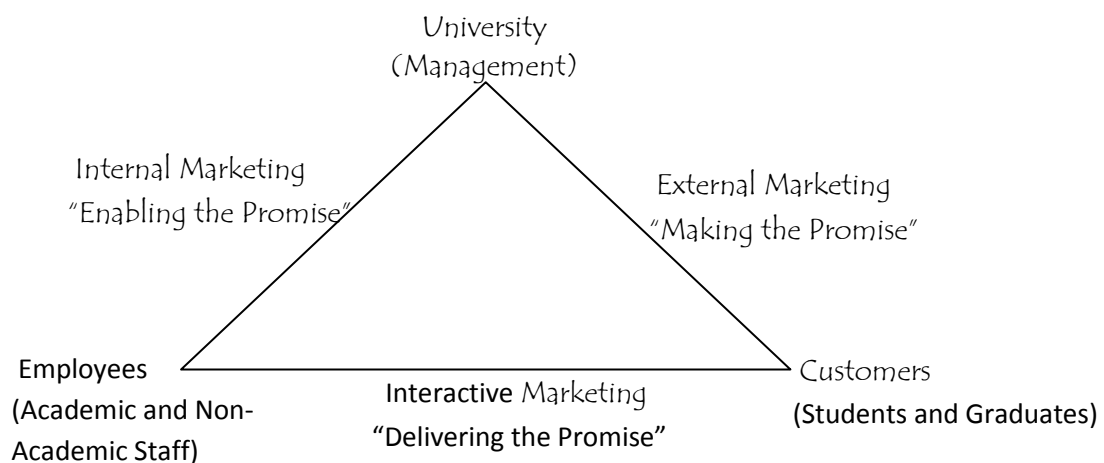


Figure 1: The Educational Services Marketing Triangle

Source: Adapted from Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, (2006)

The triangle (Figure 1 above) shows the three interlinked groups that work together to develop, promote, and deliver quality educational services in Nigerian universities. These key players are labeled on the points of the triangle namely: the university (or management or faculty or department); the customers (students and graduates) and employees (academic and non-academic staff). Between three points on the triangle, three types of marketing must be effectively and efficiently carried out for quality educational services to be provided to customers: external marketing, internal marketing and interactive marketing.

- (1) **External Marketing** – This refers to efforts that a particular university engages in to set up its customers regarding educational services to be delivered. Anything or anyone that communicates to the customer before service delivery can be viewed as part of external marketing functions. However, external marketing is just the beginning for educational services marketing. Promises made by a university to its customers must be kept.
- (2) **Internal Marketing**– Internal marketing entails that management of a university should undertake and engage in those activities that aid educational service providers (i.e. academic and non-academic staff) in their ability to deliver the service promises. Internal marketing, therefore involves recruiting qualified and competent staff, training, motivating and rewarding them, providing equipment and technology and instilling in all staff marketing orientation or philosophy which focuses on giving delightful satisfaction to customers. Unless service employees are able and willing to deliver on the promises made by a university to its customers, the university will not be successful, and the services triangle will collapse.

- (3) **Interactive Marketing or Real-time Marketing** – Here is where promises are kept or broken by the university employees (academic and non-academic staff). People are critical at this juncture. If promises are not kept, customers become dissatisfied and eventually leave. Therefore, university staff must exhibit competence and effectiveness in rendering educational services to customers (students and graduates).

It is pertinent in analyzing or discussing this framework, to note that all three sides of the triangle are essential to complete the whole, and the sides of the triangle should be aligned. In other words, what is promised through external marketing to customers, should be the same as what is delivered, and the enabling activities and environment inside the university should be aligned with what is expected of service providers.

UNIVERSITY BRAND PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Purchase behavior also known as consumer behavior refers to the acts of individuals directly involved in obtaining and using economic goods and services including the decision process that precede and determine those acts (Engel, Blackwell and Kollat, 1978). In a similar view, Schiffman and Kanuk (1987) define consumer behavior as the behavior consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products, services and ideas which they expect will satisfy their needs. In the context of this paper, by consumer behaviour we mean the behavior students and graduates of universities display in searching for universities to purchase, using, evaluating and disposing of the universities' services, which they expect will satisfy their educational needs. The buying decision process of every student and graduate theoretically consists of five stages which include: (1) need recognition, (2) search for information, (3) alternative evaluation, (4) purchase-related decision and (5) post-purchase behavior. These five stages serve as determinant of brand purchase for universities and contribute to brand equity of the university. The university brand purchase decision process is hereby explained as follows:

1. **Need Recognition:** This is the beginning stage of the process; the stage a person recognizes the need to acquire University education or his parents recognize the need for their son or daughter to acquire university education. This desire for university education may probably be when the person has obtained the required O' Level Certificate for university education. So the need for university education can originate in the individual personally, or be prompted by promotional activities of universities or through interaction with friends etc. At this point, the person becomes university prospect.
2. **Information Search:** At this stage, the university prospect goes for information search to identify various institutions of higher learning that can offer the needed or required educational service, and thus various brands of Universities are identified, those in Nigeria and those outside Nigeria including their differences in service delivery. Such information could be sourced from friends, undergraduates, graduates, internet and published sources like Newspapers, magazines etc.

3. **Alternative Evaluation:** The University prospect weighs the different brands (Universities) in order to arrive at the best brand that would guarantee maximum satisfaction. The weighing of brand equity of various universities are in the areas of quality education, moral standard, discipline, cultism rate, location, school fees, etc.
4. **Purchase-Related Decision:** At this stage, university prospects are usually faced with purchase conflicts because of series of information received. This is the stage when a consumer is faced with a number of equally desirable brands from which to make a choice (Ehigie, 2000). This results to brand comprehension, Lidipo, Olufayo and Bakare (2012:42) defined brand comprehension as the cognitive state of the buyer that reflects the extent to which the consumer has sufficient knowledge to establish well defined criteria for identifying the brands he encounters and to have available words for discussing a particular brand. One important fact to note here, is that the university prospect must not have had personal purchase experience with any university, but his coming in contact with students and graduates of various universities is a source of information, which is responsible for his brand (university) comprehension. Based on this, the University prospect will make a choice of a brand (university) based on his evaluation on the belief of the brand that is consistent with the consumer's attitude and solution to the type or quality of educational service needed. Other decisions include when and at what price, and finally he enrolls in the university he hopes to receive quality educational service or value expected which automatically makes him to become a student and finally a graduate
5. **Post-Purchase Behavior:** In this final stage, the student or the graduate is no longer a university prospect but becomes a customer. He evaluates the educational services being received or received respectively, whether they met his expectations and impression held about the University as a brand. At this stage, the student is as well evaluating the respect or honour accorded to him by the public for being a student or graduate of such university and considers his ability to intellectual and practical problem-solving in the society, whether they met his expectations. This contributes to the satisfaction the student receives for being a student of the University. If the educational services being received or received meet up with his expectation and impression formed about the brand, the consumer is likely to be satisfied with the university.

When satisfied, one or all other post-purchase behaviors may likely occur; that is being happy, talking good of the brand (university), recommending the brand to others and repurchase the service if the need arises. If the educational service does not meet his expectations and impression, dissatisfaction will occur, which may likely lead to the consumer talking bad about the brand (university), discouraging other consumers, avoiding repurchase and having post-purchase conflict. Post-purchase conflict is a state of conflict experienced after the purchase of goods and services that result from cognitive dissonance. Consumer post-purchase dissonance

produces discomfort; i. e. unhappiness. In Ehigie (2000) dissonance is a negative state that occurs whenever a consumer simultaneously holds two cognitions (ideas, beliefs, opinions) about a product which are psychologically inconsistent. Generally, people are motivated to maintain a state of psychological harmony (consistency) within their attitude system, because disharmony (inconsistency or dissonance) is a tension-producing, uncomfortable state. Usually consumers, resort to attitude change. Among the attitude change strategies a consumer would adopt to reduce or eliminate dissonances are:

- (i) To avoid situations and individuals who will give him information that would likely increase the dissonance
- (ii) To quickly refute perceived information that will increase the dissonance
- (iii) Look for information that will talk positively of the brand
- (iv) Develop positive ideas, beliefs, and opinions about the brand.

Post-purchase dissonance being experienced by Nigerian University students/graduates may relate to functional risk or psychological risk. Cox and Bauler (1967) state that these two types of consumer risks are responsible for post-purchase dissonance. In essence, graduates could experience either functional risk or psychological risk. Functional risk is when a university fails to perform (i. e. deliver the standard of education) as expected by the student/graduate while psychological risk is the failure to meet the hope of the student/graduate for attending the university that might attract prestige to the student/graduate from the general public. It is an obvious fact that the above two risk types reduces the level of satisfaction graduates receive from the university.

Logically, if brand equity are the assets and liabilities linked to a product, then graduates showcasing expected/or overwhelming theoretical and practical knowledge to solving problems, must be linked to the university, it implies that graduates contribute to the brand equity of the university. Having reviewed consumer behavior with much attention to buying decision process, it is important to deductively establish that information or communication serves as input to consumer decision process and has strong influence on consumers at every stage to the point of making choice for brand and as well as determining level of satisfaction from consuming the brand. Marketing communication is the process of creating and exchanging message within a network of interdependent relationship to cope with environmental uncertainty (Ndolo and Ozoani, 2008). The network of interdependent relationship of marketing communication involves:

- i. Messages and their how, purpose, and direction;
 - ii. People and their attitude, feelings, relationship and skills; and
 - iii. Its occurrence within a complex open system which is influenced by its environment.
- Thus, branding is a communication instrument and therefore, must be vital for influencing purchase behavior at all stages, most especially as it concerns consumer satisfaction and dissonance. It is also established that consumers are also involved in the information process that determines their satisfaction from consuming a product.

This implies that students and graduates of universities have a role to play in determining their satisfaction through their purchase behavior by using communication tools including branding.

BRANDING

A boy went to his father and asked for a university to attend. The father replied "Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki or University of Nigeria or University of Lagos". This implies that any of these universities is a brand. A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these elements that is intended to identify the goods or services of a seller and differentiate them from competitors' (Kotler, Bowen and Makens, 2010). Nigerian universities are a brand of universities in the whole world. This indicates the country of location and as well type of quality of educational service offering. Consumers view a brand as an important part of any good and service and can add value to a product. From this view-point, Kotler (2012) opines that ultimately, a brand resides in the minds of consumers and it is a perceptual entity rooted in reality but reflecting the perception and idiosyncrasies of a consumer. Branding is all about creating differences between products using a name, a term, a symbol, design or a mark or a combination of these to identify a product. Branding is an important dimension of product which management uses to aim at adding value to consumers exchange relationship commitment. This is because branding creates a mental structure that helps consumers to organize their knowledge about products in a way that enhances their decision making.

Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2010) are of the view that the strongest brands in the world own a place in the customers' mind and when they are mentioned almost everyone thinks of the same things. Therefore, branding is recalling communicating value, mission, and vision to the company's employees and customers. Thus branding is described as the process of endowing products with the power of brand. The attributes that are components of branding are:

- 1. Brand Name:** This refers to that part of a brand which can be vocalized or spoken, eg. The words "Ebonyi State University", Caritas University".
- 2. Brand mark:** This refers to that part of a brand which can be recognized but is not utterable such as a symbol, design or distinctive colour. For example Ebonyi State University trademark as the symbol, design and colors in its logo shown as figure 2.



Figure 2: Ebonyi State University Logo

The green, blue, white and black colors in the logo and shape of the logo of Ebonyi State University Abakiliki, establish its identity and differentiate the University from other Universities. The symbols in the Ebonyi State University logo are with the following value interpretations:

(i) The flowering rice with tarsels is a representation of the popular Abakiliki rice; (ii) The two diamond like objects symbolize the presence of solid mineral deposits which Ebonyi State is richly endowed with; (iii) The dominating pastoral green color background represents Ebonyi agricultural landmass; (iv) The blue color spanning from top to the bottom of the logo represents the Ebonyi River from which Ebonyi State derives her name; and (v) the white color running through the hood-like object symbolizes academic excellence from which EBSU motto stems (Ebonyi State University 4th -6th Convocation Ceremonies Brochures, 2015).

3. Trademark: It is a brand or part of a brand that is given legal protection, because it is capable of exclusive appropriation. The term "development and excellence" in Ebonyi State University logo is the trademark. This means that no university again can use the term "development and excellence" in the Ebonyi State University logo without permission from the university, even the name Ebonyi State University, no other university will use it. Other trademarks include the "crop" and two stars in the logo. University of Nigeria Nsukka has a trademark, "To restore the dignity of man".

4. The Role of Branding:

Branding has roles to play in the purchasing behavior of consumers and as well for the organization.

- i. Brand names help consumers identify products that might benefit them
- ii. Brand signals a certain level of quality, so that satisfied buyers can easily choose the product again. For instance, outside Nigeria, Oxford University, Harvard University etc, and inside Nigeria University of Nigeria, University of Ibadan, Covenant University etc, are associated with certain level of educational quality.

- iii. Buyers who always buy the same brand know that they will get the same features, benefits and quality each time they buy (brand loyalty)
- iv. Consumers learn about brands through past experiences with the brand and build brand image. Brand image refers to a set of beliefs consumers hold about a particular product as in the case of this study, image of high quality education, low quality education, education with morality, malpractice, discipline, education that is expensive or affordable.
- v. Consumers may evaluate and identify products differently depending on how they are branded, eg University of Science and Technology, University of Agriculture etc.
- vi. Brands also perform valuable function for firms as it offers the legal protection for unique features or aspects of the product
- vii. Branding helps sellers/producers to segment a market, for instance, state and federal universities in Nigeria, use the word "state" and "federal" to segment their markets.

RE-BRANDING

Re-branding is the act of modifying a brand name, term, symbol, design or mark or combination of these elements aimed at improving or establishing value for identification and differentiating a product. Re-branding involves the use of the marketing variables (product, price, promotion and place) to improve the image of a product or to change identified consumer negative perception of the product to positive perception. However, promotion tool is presumed to play a prominent role in re-branding. Rebranding is the enforcement of branding strategies, which lies heavily on the use of promotional tools – advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, and publicity. To target audience based on this, re-branding relies heavily on communication to tell people what the brand represents and what the brand does not represent which may have been misconceived by the consumer through personal experience or information from the public. In essence, if re-branding relies on communication, the power of a brand lies on what customers and the general public must have seen, read, heard, learned, thought, and felt about the brand over a time through being exposed to brand name, brand mark and trademark.

Every University must ensure that it establishes brand equity for its educational services. Brand equity is the added value endowed to a product or brand. It may be reflected in the way consumers think, feel and act with respect to the brand as well as in the prices, market share, and profitability the brand commands for the firm. Brand equity is a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product to a firm or to that firm's customers (ISMN, 2012). Such assets and liabilities that may impact on brand equity include brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality and brand association.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Most times, national development and economic development are interchangeably used because the indices for measuring each of them are synonymous. This synonymity is applicable in this paper. Development is a concept that has multiple technical meanings according to the subjectivity of many disciplines. Within the context of this paper, development can technically be said to mean an improvement in living condition for the average person (Ikuli, 2006). This implies that development entails increase in workers' income; and more than that, it means access to housing, education, healthcare, nutrition and greater life expectancy. Individuals within any society refer to the increase in the above variables as development. When such living conditions are experienced by a great majority or even all members of the population, it becomes national development. National development could mean increased economic efficiency, expansion of national economic capacity and a country's advancement in technology (Offor, 2012)

One of the ways of measuring or determining national development is through economic growth. A nation's economic growth is an increase in real per capita income of the nation over time irrespective of the source of the increase in the price (real output of goods and services of the nation over its population) among the nationals or whether changes are made in the factor supply or demand structure of the economy generally (Inyang, 1998).

From this perspective, economists determine a nation's development level by measuring people's income through the use of:

- (1) Gross National Product (GNP),
- (2) Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and
- (3) Per Capita Income (Ikuli, 2006; Offor, 2012).

GNP is the total value of all goods and services produced in a state in any given year divided by the population of that state for the particular year. The total number of university graduates produced by Nigerian universities is part of services produced in the country, and this has direct impact on the country's level of GNP. GDP refers to the total domestic income in a country. Domestic income is total revenue generated in a state within a given year from public, private and self-employment. Per capita income is the average level of national income for each member of the population. University education sector which is a source of income to both individuals and government invariably contributes to the country's Gross Domestic Product and Per Capita Income. In other words, national or economic development connotes movement or progress made from a low level of growth stage to a high level stage. However, the degree of progress or movement must be high and sufficient enough to make positive impact on people as it concerns their economic and social values. The economic and social values of people are proved by high level of growth. Therefore, a country is developed when the nation is characterized by high economic productivity; high standard of living; technological advancement, stable political order; the satisfaction of basic human needs such as food, clothing and shelter, high level of literacy and education etc.; the per capita income of the population; the high economic growth rate; the high level of life of industrial production

measured against primary production; the high range of commodities produced by a people both for internal consumption and for export and so on (Ikuli, 2006). Therefore it can be seen that University education is a veritable tool for human development that is responsible for economic development of a nation. Therefore, re-branding of Nigerian Universities in line with higher educational goal is pertinent to Nigerian national development.

DISCUSSION

RE-BRANDING NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Having pinpointed that consumers are also stakeholders in re-branding services through modifying their purchase behavior, especially during purchase related behavior and post-purchase behavior through managing consumer dissonance to achieve satisfaction or maintain harmonious state of consuming a product, Nigerian universities' students/graduates are obliged to engage in re-branding their respective Nigerian Universities in order to reduce or eliminate dissatisfaction and dissonance and maintain harmonious state (satisfaction) from consuming the brand or specific Nigerian University (i.e. adding value to the brand purchased).

In other words, Nigerian Universities' students/graduates should carefully manage the brand-name of their Universities so that their brand equity do not depreciate. This however, calls for concerted efforts of students/graduates of Nigerian universities to maintaining or improving overtime the value, the brand "Nigerian universities education" and what it stands for and what are contained in Nigerian universities curricular; such values are:

- i. Providing entrepreneurial skills
- ii. Providing basic knowledge and skills for the understanding and analysis of problems related to individual disciplines.
- iii. Equipping Students with knowledge and skills of decision-making; especially the analytical skills needed for recognizing, defining and solving problems
- iv. Developing the students' critical judgment, their ability to observe, understand, analyze and synthesize data on socio-economic problems using quantitative methods and technologies for value creation.
- vi. Developing in graduates, leadership and interpersonal relations skills
- vii. Developing in graduates theoretical, practical and innovative minds, self reliance and entrepreneurship

The above Nigerian universities' educational services content qualities stand to be promoted and used to differentiate Nigerian universities' system from other universities in the world.

RE-BRANDING STRATEGIES

The proposed re-branding strategies by Nigerian students and graduates for re-branding Nigerian Universities include: Learning theories, word-of-mouth, intellectual disposition, moral exhibition, unique achievement and ambassadorship of alumni.

- i. **Learning Theory Strategy:** One of the basic levels for re-branding Nigerian universities by their students and graduate is to start from changing their learning behavior (attitude, beliefs and perceptions). This is in the sense that it is only when the students must have learnt all the theoretical and practical knowledge/skills in the universities' curricular designed for them, that they will turn out to be high quality graduates for the labour market and society in general. From the viewpoint of learning theory, Rogers (1979) posits that learning is essentially humanistic, therefore can best be facilitated. He holds that the aim of education and hence the role of educators (university) is the facilitation of learning. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2012) captures the word "facilitate" as "to make it easier for a process or activity to happen" In other words, university is to make it easier for learning to take place in every individual that seeks intellectual knowledge and skill. Ten points raised by Rogers (1979) as principles that underlie successful facilitation of learning as summarized by Ezenyilimba and Onah (2009:62) are as follows;
1. Human beings have a natural potentiality for learning (ie curiosity)
 2. Significant learning takes place when the subject matter is perceived as relevant by the learner
 3. Learning which involves change in oneself is threatening and tends to be resisted.
 4. Learning which appears threatening can best be acquired, and exploited, when external threats are at a minimum
 5. Much significant learning is acquired through doing.
 6. Learning is facilitated when the learner participates responsibly in the learning process.
 7. Self-initiated learning, involving the whole person (emotionally and intellectually), is the most lasting and pervasive form of learning.
 8. Independence, creativity and self-reliance are all facilitated when self-criticism and self-evaluation are encouraged rather than external forms of evaluation.
 9. Learning about the process of learning is essential to enable individuals to cope with change
 10. The task of the facilitator is to provide an environment in which individuals can set their own learning goals.

It is undoubtedly logical that the humanistic view of learning holds the view that unless an individual university student is ready to learn a set-up standard or quality of university education developed for him, the university cannot do that alone. This theory of learning can be validated by some Nigerian university graduates at various points in time, who have displayed high intellectual problem-solving skill in the world. Also some Nigerian university graduates still go for post-graduate studies in the western world universities and still beat their counterparts intellectually and scholarly.

Another analogy that supports humanistic theory of learning is that of Obafemi Awolowo's statement, that, "Put a developed man in an undeveloped environment, and

he will develop it; but put an undeveloped man in a developed environment and he will destroy it" (Onah and Onah, 2004). The concept "developed man" here refers to a student who is willing to learn set-up standard of the University, while "undeveloped man" is a student who is not prepared to pass through all the rudiments of learning, who just wants certificate but not intellectual and practical knowledge. The undeveloped man in quote gets involved in vices, cultism, exam malpractice, destructive student demonstration etc; all these will even destroy the university and as well the quality of theoretical and practical knowledge received as a graduate. While the "developed man" will acquire all the theoretical and practical knowledge/ skills in the curriculum of his programme and exploit knowledge by himself using the acquired knowledge as a base.

- ii. **Word-Of-Mouth (Wom).** This is a communication between individual consumers within a group. In this context, it means the communication of Nigerian Universities students/graduates within various groups they find themselves. They should speak as satisfied consumers of the specific Nigerian university brand they have consumed or are consuming; Speaking good of Nigerian universities as universities with designed high academic and moral standards, for offering graduates the opportunity for acquiring entrepreneurial skills, innovative minds, and broad knowledge of the society of man in terms of religion, economics, culture, science, technology and politics.
- iii. **Intellectual Disposition:** Nigerian Universities students/graduates must always display academic excellence anywhere they find themselves as it will improve the image of the universities academically, and in return attract high value to the graduates. It is not disputable generally, that it is due to excellent academic display of some graduates of University of Nigeria, Oxford, Harvard, Cambridge etc that made them to be highly rated in the world.
- iv. **Moral Exhibition:** Many scholars and educationist hold the belief that education goes with morality. Education with morality to man is dignity as it builds the society but education without morality is human destruction to the society. Students/graduates Nigerian Universities are expected to exhibit moral life wherever they find themselves, knowing quite well, that high moral standard attracts high value in the society. The behavior that depicts morality was explained by St. Paul as, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things". Anybody that exhibits high moral behavior attracts value to himself, to his family and to the institution that made him.
- v. **A Unique Achievement:** Students/graduates should endeavor to always accomplish something difficult that attract national or international recognitions or to occupy a respectable leadership position as a result of exceptional performance. This type of achievement usually also attract recognition and value to the university the person attended.

- vi. **Being Ambassadors of Nigerian Universities Alumni:** This involves participating in the activities of your Nigerian University Alumni, and contributing to the development of the university; being proud of the university by using their bag etc that will always showcase the university to the society.

CONCLUSION

Re-branding Nigerian universities by its students/graduates is not only beneficial to the university but as well to the students/graduates of the university and the economy of Nigeria. Such benefits are:

- (i) The students/graduates will succeed in maintaining a state harmonious post-purchase behavior.
- (ii) Enhancement of the connection status of graduates through increasing number of alumni which might be occupying high positions in the society.
- (iii) Re-branding Nigerian universities may likely position many Nigerian universities among world-class universities that will in return make its graduates world-class graduates. The resultant effect is that the world will perceive Nigerian universities' brand equity as being associated with high standard, moral value, cultism-free and disciplined-culture oriented. Hence, increased number of foreign students will be attracted, while the rate of our indigenes enrolling in foreign universities will drastically be reduced. This in the long-run will make Nigeria's economy education tourism-sector driven that will generate foreign currencies, for the country, help Nigeria's currency to appreciate in value and positively impact on the Gross Domestic Product, Gross National Product and Per-Capita Income, as employment opportunities will be created and more infrastructural facilities developed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Every Nigerian university should start holding re-branding strategy orientations every year for both incoming students and graduands.

The National Universities Commission (NUC) should establish Nigerian Universities' Alumni Unit to coordinate the activities of Universities' Alumni to ensure efficient and effective functionality of the associations in order to contribute to the development of the universities.

REFERENCES

- Adebayo, A.O. and Adeoye, A.B. (2012) Conceptual Framework & Overview of Chapters, in I.I. Uvah (Ed) Practical Guide on Academic Planning in Nigerian Universities, a Compendium of Academic Planning Tools, Ibadan: Attantis Books, P1-6.

- Cox, D. and Bauler, R.A. (1967) Self-Confidence and Persuability. In D.F., Bauler (Ed) Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior Harvard: Harvard University Press, Pp. 82-108
- Ebonyi State University (2015) 4th-6th Convocation Ceremonies for the Conferment of Diplomas, Bachelors, Higher Degrees and Award of Honorary Degree. Order of Proceeding. Tuesday 21st – Saturday 25th April.
- Ehigie, B.O. (2000) Consumer Purchase Conflict and Post-Purchase Dissonance Psychological Issues for Marketing Management in *Marketing Journal, Nigerian Institute of Marketing*, Vol. 5 No. 2.
- Eze, F.C. and Ile, N.M. (2005) Market – Model Approach to University Governance: A Fitting Strategy for the University Organization in Nigeria, *Journal of Business Studies & Research*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp 56-70.
- Ezenyilimba and Onah (2009) Tertiary Marketing Education and Professionalism in Nigeria and Africa Sub-Sahara, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 3. No. 3. No. 1. Pp-154-190.
- Fieden, J. (1999) Government/University Relationship, London, London: CHEMS.
- Ikuli, B.Y. (2006) The Philosophy of the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD), A Critiques. Ibadan – Nigeria: Hope Publication.
- Institute of Strategic Management Nigeria (2012) Study Pack, Examination Regulation and Direct Membership Information
- Inyanga, J. (1998) Marketing for a Developing World. Owerri-Nigeria: Global Press Ltd.
- Kotler, P. Bowen, J.T. and Makens, J.C (2010), Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism, Fifth Edition, New Jersey. Pearson Education Inc Kotler and Keller (2009) Marketing Management 13th Ed. New Jersey: Pearson.
- Ladipo, P.K.A., Olufayo, T.O. and Bakare, R.D. (2012) Learning Construct. It's Implication for Marketing and Buyer's Perception of Product Stimulus, in *Journal of Business Studies Research*. Vol. 6 No. 3.
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2012).
- Msheliza, K.M. (2005) Conceptual Issues in Training the Nigerian Marketer: the Role of Tertiary Institutions, *Marketing Journal*, August, Vol. 1, No. 2 P. 22
- Ndolo, I.S. and Ozoani, E.C. (2008) Delivery Communication and Service Excellence in the Banking Industry, in *Journal of Business Studies & Research*, Vol. 6 No. 3
- Nwaizugbo, I.C. (2009/2010) An appraisal of the Application of Marketing Concept to Marketing Education Delivery in *Nigerian Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 5 No, p. 33.

Aja E. Egele & Johnson U. Ozo

Offor, A.O. (2012) Ethnicity as Constraint to Nigeria's Development. *Journal of Social and Policy Research*, 7(1), pp 21-30).

Okoje, J.A. (2012) Forward, in I.I. UVAH (ED) Practical Guide on Academic Planning in Nigerian Universities, a Compendium & Academic Planning Tools, Ibadan: Attantis Books, Pp VI-VII

Oladosu, A.G. A.S. (2012) Quality Assurance in the University System, in I.I. Uvah (Ed) Practical Guide on Academic Planning in Nigerian Universities A Compendium of Academic Planning Tools, Ibadan; Attantis Books, PP 106-130

Olakunori O.K. and Ejionueme, N.G. (1999) Introduction to Marketing, Enugu: Amazing Grace Publishers.

Olakunori, O.K. (2002) *Dynamics of Marketing*, Second Edition, Enugu: Providence Press (Nigeria) Limited.

Onah, J.O and Onah, B.N. (2004). The Role of Aluminae in University Development in J.O. Onah and B.N. Onah (Eds) *Perspective in University Management*, Enugu Institute for Development Studies, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus, pp 143 – 156

Onah J.O. and Onah, B.N. (2004) Role of Parents in Education of Students, in J.O. Onah and B.N. Onah (Eds) *Perspective – University Managements*, Enugu Institute for Development Studies, University of Nigerian Enugu Campus, pp. 137-142

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010)

Ozo, J.U. (2005) *Product Development and Management*, Enugu: Enizol Ventures

Rogers, C. R. (1979) *Freedom to Learn*, Merrill Publishers.

Udu, A.A. (2014). In-System Human Capital Development in Nigerian Universities: The Case of National Universities Commission on Doctoral Degree. *EBSU Journal of Contemporary Management*, Vol. 2 No. 1, 34 – 42.