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The Role of the Administrator in Branding a New University amidst Limited Resources: The Case of the SD Dombo University of Business and Integrated Studies, Wa.

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the role of administrator towards university branding strategies. The paper reviewed the significance of branding higher institution and its marketing strategies. The study applied quantitative techniques and multiple regression analysis for the sample of 350 students of the SD Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development studies to examine the role of administrator towards university branding processes. The study added value to the literature with an improved branding strategies such as bridging program, 21st century program of study, flexible payment systems of fees, GPA scholarship, international exchange program, the need for branding officer and lecturer specialization. The results showed that bridging program, flexible payment, branding officer, 21st century program and lecturer specialization improved university branding element. The finding of the study also identified the factors influencing branding strategic processes such as: the needs of students, market complexity, brand perception, infrastructure, available funding and stages of development towards branding. The study recommended the effective and strategic implementation of students' flexible payment systems of fees to help students in registration of courses mounted every trimester. Again, the introduction of bridging program for potentially successfully senior high school candidates who had average results to be organised with two months access course for admission process to help them bridge the gap between high school and tertiary level based on specific core courses as key branding element.

***Keywords**: Strategic Branding, Administrator, Bridging program, Limited Resources*

1. 0 Introduction

Higher institutional branding has become necessary for developing countries that prioritise higher education as one of their main economic gains. The modern competitive nature of our institutions called for an effective marketing strategies to promote and attain international standard in terms of branding processes. The university administrators have other responsibilities aside the academic and professional duties such as branding processes and management. Tthe core brand values of higher education for most universities focused on branding initiatives using online brand communication Alexandra S. (2017)**.** Effective branding processes provides a critical competitive advantage for numerous higher education in the country Anholt (2007).

Various universities and other tertiary institution globally apply marketing theories and principles to attract students, parents and guardians to gain competitive advantage (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka 2007). The aim of applying such theories and principles is to reduce the rate of illiteracy, and provide opportunities to potential senior high school student in cities and surrounding villages to have access to quality university education. (Abbas 2014). Students from high-ranking universities expect university's management and administrators to apply various sources to promote university branding in terms of effective marketing principles and strategies other than the use of social media (Abbas , 2014) .There are many factors influenced the choices of the students for a specific institution such as the brand name, vision, mission, core values, program of study and management

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procedures. Branding should protect the vison, mission and core value of any university using visual identity that will withstand all types of modern changes and situation throughout the lifetime of the institution (Vijander, 2007).

Society perceived university branding differently based on the brand image and identity. Most administrators focused on vision, mission, core values, brand image and identity. Strategically, there is the need to think wide beyond these elements of branding and explore more branding characteristics with young university having limited resources. Hence this study explore an improved strategies of university branding with students perspective actively planned by university administrators. The factors influencing the strategic branding processes were also be examined.

1.2 Related Works

Market perceptions in higher institutions and the student experience are essential elements of any higher educational institution and are pivotal elements of its brand promise. university that decides to actively manage their educational brand must first consider how the marketplace perceives their brand promise Abbas (2014). Branding higher education served as criteria make up the quality of the university (Jevons, 2006) and universities require strong brands to enhance students and societal awareness of their existence and courseof study, to distinguish themselves themselves from rival institution and to gain market share (Bennett, Ali-Choudhury and Savani, 2007).The concept of differential pricing strategies, connected to expansion of tuition fees has also been provided as an argument to support the application of commercial branding methods (Ambler et al, 2002). In branding higher education, there is the need to factor student engagement as sense of belonging. ffeeling as though they are a part of a larger community is a critical aspect of a student's choice to remain connected to that community. The choice to stay enrolled in school is heavily influenced by student engagement. Again, the extend of student engagement correlate strongly to many of the outcome's institutions care about: retention, graduation rates, achievement gains, and alumni.

Branding has been in existence for practice in the business world for decades, but it's a relatively new idea in the educational sector Brown & Mazzarol. (2009). Branding in higher education gives institutions an identity that identify them in the social world. Although branding goes far beyond recognition, students need an engagement in their institution and to associate themselves with a history of academic excellence (Lamboy, 2011). Branding entails creating a logo, brand name and other visual components that will assist in setting the institution apart from its rivals (Allan et al., 2017). Again,,it entails developing messaging that highlights the mission and core principles of the institution as well as its characteristics and advantages (Sujchaphong et al., 2015) and creating marketing and communication strategies that will assist the school's brand promotion in order to bring in potential students and other stakeholders (Widarni, & Bawono, 2023). Brand building process in university is closely related to the competitive environment, so these institutions tended to apply multiple strategies to distinguish themselves from other institutions.

In Higher Education Branding Strategies, Black and Walsh (2020) were of the view that institution's brand should be created with the consultation with the school's marketing team and should reflect the school's mission, values, and goals and should also use Social media: to connect with prospective students and faculty members.

1.2.1 The Role of Marketing in Branding University

Brands created should be effectively integrated with the business strategies of the university or to help in establishing an operational model and marketing becomes a platform to communicate brand uniqueness and differentiation (Dwyer 2014. Further, the use of marketing could be used as a tool to show and demonstrate what you have in stock for your students, where you can promote your brand and how you can convince your them. Mmarketing helps to explain the content of the university brand and the process of executing it. to meet the market needs and demands using communication and distribution to attract students (Beneke ,2011).

1.2.2 Branding Higher Institutions

Harsha and Shah (2011) identified five universalstrategic plans in branding higher institution as uunderstand the needs of students, identify market segments, determine brand attributes with less barriers, utilize brand attributes for competition and ddifferentiate your institution with unique campaigns, promotions and communication strategies. There is the need to identify whether the created brand suited to the student' tastes and able to compete with the existing brands in the market (Higher Education Network 2012).

1.3 Methodology

Primary data based on the designed questionnaire were distributed to purposely sampled of 350 students from various department of SD Dombo university. The obtained data were analysed quantitatively based on multiple regression analysis of the improved strategic branding element and the strategic branding characteristics with SPSS version 20. The analysis showed the model summary for the correlation, R-square and adjusted R-square values respectively. Again, ANOVA tables were created to determine the level of significant of the variables as well as descriptive statistics based on the performance criteria ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

1.4 Results and Discussion

Table 1: Improved Branding Strategies Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Social Media	350	3	5	4.07	.319	.102

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Flexible Payment	350	2	5	4.12	.973	.946
Bridging Program	350	2	5	4.09	.383	.146
Branding Officer	350	3	5	4.21	2.640	6.969
21st Century Program	350	2	5	4.63	.832	.692
GPA Scholarship	350	3	5	4.17	.425	.181
Int_Exchange Program	350	2	5	4.41	.925	.856
Lecturer Specialization	350	2	5	4.06	.648	.420
Valid N (listwise)	350					

Table 1 showed the descriptive statistics for the improved branding strategies for university branding. identified the descriptive statistics for the general strategies for university branding using the sample size(n=350), the minimum and maximum value described as (strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, Neither=3, agree=4 and strongly agree=6) in relation to students' satisfaction on the perceived constructs on various questionnaire items. The mean values for social media of lies between agree and strongly agree (4.07)but very close to agree indicating that the respondents agreed that is an improved university branding element .The mean values for flexible payment of fees lies between agree and strongly agree (4.12) but very close to agree indicating that the respondents agreed that flexible payment is an improved university branding element. Again, The mean values for bridging program of fees lies between agree and strongly agree (4.09) but very close to agree indicating that the respondents agreed that bridging program is an improved university branding element while The mean values for the 21st - century program lies between agree and strongly agree (4.63) but very close to strongly agree indicating that the respondents strongly agreed that 21st century program improves university branding. The mean values for GPA scholarship lie between agree and strongly agree (4.17) but very close to agree indicating that the respondents agreed that GPA scholarship is an improved university branding element.

Furthermore, the mean values for branding officers les between agree and strongly agree (4.21)but very close to agree indicating that the respondents agreed that there is a need to have branding a officer at the university for branding activities.

The mean values for international exchange programs lie between agree and strongly agree (4.41)but very close to agree indicating that the respondents agreed that international exchange program is an improved university branding element

Moreover, lecturer specialization lies between agree and strongly agree but very close to agree which implies that the majority of the respondents agreed that recruiting lecturers based on the area of specialization is a strong element of university branding,

Lastly, the least standard deviation value for social media is (0.319) which shows how close the respondents' data were followed by flowed by bridging program (0.383) with the corresponding variances.

Table 2 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.654[a]	.427	.416	.244

a. Predictors: (Constant), Lecturer Specialization, Branding Officer, Int_Exchange Program, 21st Century Program, Bridging Program, Flexible Payment, GPA Scholarship

Table 2 gives the model summary of social media as the dependent variable against the various predictors listed under the table. There is correlation of (0.65) between the predictors and the social media and the R-square (40%) and adjusted R-square 39% which indicates the percentage of variability of the needs of students explained by the predictors. The adjusted R square catered for the level of variability for additional predictors should be added to the regression model.

Table 3: ANOVA for Improved Strategic Branding

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15.169	7	2.167	36.473	.000[b]
	Residual	20.320	342	.059		
	Total	35.489	349			

a. Dependent Variable: Social Media

b. Predictors: (Constant), Lecturer Specialization, Branding Officer, Int_Exchange Program, 21st Century Program, Bridging Program, Flexible Payment, GPA Scholarship.

The ANOVA table showed the regression and the residual values as well as the significance of the model as indicated by (sig=0.000) which is less than 0.05 significant level. The degree of freedom (7, 342) gives the F ratio of 36.473 based on the sum of squares and mean square values respectively

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Table 4: Coefficients 1

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.912	.382		7.614	.000
	Flexible Payment	-.099	.020	-.302	-4.873	.000
	Bridging Program	.103	.046	.123	2.242	.026
	Branding Officer	.020	.005	.167	3.994	.000
	21st Century Program	.081	.024	.212	3.341	.001
	GPA Scholarship	.183	.057	.245	3.246	.001
	Int_Exchange Program	.070	.017	.204	4.128	.000
	Lecturer Specialization	-.097	.024	-.198	-4.076	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Social Media

The constant of the model is 2.912 and the coefficient of the independent variables are Flexible payment,(-0.099), Bridging program(0.103), Branding Officer(0.020), 21st-century program (0.081), GPA Scholarships (0.183), International exchange program(0.070) and Lecturer specialization (-0.097) respectively . This implies the effect of the model such that each unit increase social media as branding strategy will decrease flexible payment of fees by (-0.099) and lecturer specialization by (-0.097)). Again, a unit increase in social media activities as a branding strategy will increase the bridging program by (0.103), the need for a Branding officer by (0.020), 21st-century program by (0.081), GPA Scholarships by (0.183) and international exchange program by (0.070).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Funding available,	350	2	5	4.12	.525	.276
Stage of development	350	1	5	3.92	.763	.581
Market complexity,	350	2	5	3.68	.940	.884
Iinfrastructure	350	1	5	3.06	1.077	1.160
Brand perception	350	4	5	4.85	.353	.125
,Brand launch	350	1	5	2.76	1.068	1.141
Needs of students	350	2	5	4.22	.747	.558
Valid N (listwise)	350					

Table 5 shows the mean values for stages of development, infrastructure and brand launch are (3.92), (3.06) and (2.76) respectively. This implies that on average, stages of development values lie between neither and agree but very close to agree which indicated that the majority of the student agreed that stages of development influenced strategic branding processes. Again, on the average, infrastructure lies between neither and agree but very close to neither. Hence, the respondents neither agree nor disagree that the infrastructure influenced strategic branding processes . The brand launch lies between disagree and neither but very close to neither which indicated that the respondents neither agree nor disagree that the level of brand launch influenced branding processes.

Furthermore, the mean value of funding, market complexity and needs of students are (4.12), (3.68) and (4.22) respectively. The mean of funding lies between agree and strongly agree but very close to agree indicating that on average the respondent agreed that funding influenced branding processes. The mean value of market complexity lie between neither and agree but very close to agree is an indication that most of the students agreed that market complexity influenced branding processes. The needs of students lie between agree and strongly agree but very close to agree is an indication that the students showed that the needs of students influenced strategic branding processes.

Finally, brand perception lie between agree and strongly agree but very close to strongly agree which implies that the majority of the respondents strongly agree that brand perception influences strategic branding processes and the least standard deviation value for brand perception is (0.353) which shows how closer the respondents' data were followed by funding available (0.525) with the corresponding variances.

Table 6 : Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.634[a]	.401	.393	.582

There is a correlation (0.63) between the predictors and the needs of students and the R-square (40%) adjusted R-square 39% showed the percentage of variability of the needs of

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students explained by the predictors. The adjusted R square catered for the level of variability for additional predictors

Table 7: ANOVA 1

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	78.137	5	15.627	46.152	.000[b]
	Residual	116.480	344	.339		
	Total	194.617	349			

a. Dependent Variable: Needs of students

b. Predictors: (Constant), Funding, market complexity, brand launch, infrastructure,stages of development and Brand perception

The ANOVA table showed the significance of the model as indicated by (sig=0.000) which is less than 0.05 significant level. The degree of freedom (5, 244) gives the F ratio of 46.152 based on the sum of squares and mean square values respectively.

Table 8 Coefficients 2

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.002	.444		11.259	.000
	Stage of development	.330	.045	.337	7.333	.000
	Market complexity,	-.203	.046	-.256	-4.401	.000
	Iinfrastructure	-.271	.033	-.390	-8.284	.000
	Brand perception	-.172	.072	-.121	-2.368	.018
	Funding available	.075	.039	.108	1.947	.052

a. Dependent Variable: Needs of students

The constant of the model is 5.002 and the coefficient of the independent variables are the stage of development, (0.330), market complexity (-0.203), infrastructure (-0.271), fundraising (-0.172) and brand identity (0.072),. This implies the effect of the model such that each unit increase of needs of the student as a strategic branding process will increase the stage of development by (0.330), increase funding available by (0.072), decrease, market complexity by (-0.203), decrease infrastructure by (-0.271), and funding by (-0.172).

1.5 Conclusion, Recommendation and Future Works

Branding has been in existence for practice in the business world for years and it is one of the key areas that the university could apply to develop the institution. The research used quantitative research design using multiple regression analysis on the effective role of administrators in branding higher institutions using improved strategic branding. The study identified flexible payment systems of fees, bridging programs, recruiting branding officers from the administrators, and the usage of social media platforms as the great elements of branding the university. The study recommended the effective and strategic implementation of student's flexible payment systems of fees to help the students for registration of courses mounted every trimester. Again, the introduction of bridging programs for potential Senior High School candidates who had average results to be organized with two- month access course for the admission process to help them bridge the gap between high school and tertiary level based on specific core courses. .Further recommendation is based on recruiting lecturers who are specialized in the specific required area of studies to increase and motivate students towards teaching and learning as well as high academic achievement and successful graduation.

The future work is to consider investigating the university's societal based-factors as well as lecturers' perception towards university branding strategies.

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