Determinants of Private University Choices among Prospective Applicants in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

In 2006, private universities enrolled 9,500 students or about 8% of all tertiary students, while the polytechnics had 24,660 students or 20% of total enrolments. The growth of private tertiary institutions in Ghana is not unique. Similar developments have taken place in other West African countries such as Nigeria, Benin and Senegal, as well as in the East African countries of Tanzania and Uganda. We evaluated the extent to which branding can play an important role in effective high education marketing. The study revealed that branding positively affects awareness creation and this has a direct influence on prospective students purchase intentions of private universities in Ghana. In that regard, private universities must adopt a proper and effective marketing tool such as branding which has become the pivot around which private universities in Ghana depends on to lure their prospective students.

Keywords: Private University, Choice, Prospective, Applicants, Determinants

INTRODUCTION

Private universities have sprung up like mushrooms in Ghana. In 1999, there were just two but since then 11 new private universities and 19 private polytechnics or colleges have opened their doors. In 2006, private universities enrolled 9,500 students or about 8% of all tertiary students, while the polytechnics had 24,660 students or 20% of total enrolments. The growth of private tertiary institutions in Ghana is not unique. Similar developments have taken place in other West African countries such as Nigeria, Benin and Senegal, as well as in the East African countries of Tanzania and Uganda. There are several reasons for this rapid growth in private higher education: first, Ghana's education sector has been deregulated following a general trend of deregulation in Africa in the wake of a wave of democratisation. The process started in Ghana in 1993 when a structure for accrediting private universities was formed. The same year, polytechnics were upgraded to tertiary status. In the 2007 Ghana Education Reform, a goal was set to increase private sector participation in education services and aligned policies such as tax exemptions on imported books were created. Minister for Education Alex Tettey-Enyo is reviewing the reform and has called for continued expansion at all levels of education and better cost-effectiveness in tertiary education. Last month, the Minister said more graduates were imperative for development "to achieve our developmental goals, Ghana needs more university graduates particularly in science and technology". Second, the massive growth in private institutions is a result of the increased demand for higher
education. Enrolments have multiplied more than 10 times over the past two decades in response to social and political pressures for access to higher education.

Between 1999 and 2006, student numbers doubled to more than 118,000. But universities have still not been able to meet the growing demand and many more students knock on the doors of higher education than there are places. At the public University of Ghana, 22,865 students applied for admissions in 2008 but just over a third, or 8,774 students, were finally enrolled. Some youngsters who do not achieve a place in institutions seek admission in private universities. Finally, the decreased capability of public universities has encouraged growth in private higher education. Funding of public higher education has declined substantially since the optimistic post-independence years when Ghana’s first universities were founded - the University of Ghana in 1948 and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in 1952. Consequently, tuition fees for tertiary education were introduced in 1988-89. Over the years, Ghanaian - and African - academies have been adversely affected by domestic occurrences such as economic turmoil and disruptions of democratic governments. The shift towards a global knowledge economy is also putting enormous pressures on African universities, just as on higher education institutions all over the world. In many African countries a policy environment that pitted basic education against secondary and tertiary education reinforced the pressure. It was suggested that the economic returns on investment in higher education were lower than for primary education. Such findings - most often based on the spending and income tax of individuals, thus not taking other valuates into consideration - influenced international development policy to a large extent. Luckily, opinion has shifted away from scenarios of zero-sum games, to a more balanced view that both are indispensable. Unfortunately, the change in perception has not changed actual financial support. A study carried out in 2001 found that government support per student, in real terms, had decreased by almost 75% during the 1990s. Now government provides 70% of costs and public universities raise the remaining 30% from fees and donations. A survey in 2002 suggested that more than 70% of students were willing to pay higher fees for quality instruction. In terms of the factors that influence college choice for today’s students, a number of studies have been conducted in this regard.

**Geography** – Location is significant in many students’ minds, either because they want to live in a certain part of the country or because of financial constraints. The New York Times posted a study by the National Association for College Admission Counseling that indicates that the education level, income, and travel experience of parents are the easiest ways to determine how far away a student is willing to go for college. Still, 72% of Americans go to college in their home state. No huge surprise here, but it’s a nice reminder to keep the bulk of your digital media dollars close to home and focusing the rest on your key out of state pipelines.

**Financial** – A recent survey by The Higher Education Research Institute shows that the availability of financial aid heavily influences college selection. 48% reported that a financial aid offer was a “very important” factor, up from 33% in 2004. Overall cost is considered as well. More than half of first-generation students indicated that the cost of attending was a “very important” factor. Continuing-generation students consider cost also, but at a lower rate “only 43% rated cost as “very important” in their enrollment decision.

**Academic Excellence and Reputation** – Although students see academics as important, they’re not looking at ranking lists to judge them, according to USA Today. Students report that broader academic reputation leads their decision-making. And Inside Higher Ed (citing the book How College Works) says that faculty in particular play an important role in college decisions. At the right stage in the process, key faculty can be really influential in a student’s choice of college and their major once they get there. Of course, it’s pretty common that on most college visits students have the opportunity to meet key faculty. But, if you can connect students and faculty earlier through digital, you may be able to get an early advantage. Professors active (and engaging I might add) on social media could make for great digital recruiters.

**Parents & Peers** – As much as kids don’t like to admit that their parents affect their decisions, parental input does matter, according to higher ed consultants Noel-Levitz. Nearly 60% of prospective college students report they research colleges with their parents, and 61% of parents say that the final decision on where to enroll is made together. As expected, students are also affected by peers, but as a study by ACSD points out, that relationship is correlational. Researchers haven’t determined
whether like-minded students tend to become friends or if friendship affects college choices.

Marketing – Marketing still matters of course, but it’s changing. The 2014 Social Admissions Report, a survey of college-bound high school students, shows that institutions’ websites are the most heavily-accessed online resources, with 86% of respondents listing these as very or extremely useful. We all know mobile is a priority, but a key takeaway is the lack of interest in university apps. While 97% of students have viewed college sites on their phones, nearly ¾ of students said they had no interest in downloading a university’s app. If your college’s site isn’t yet responsive, we’d recommend this be the priority. However, this effort at an institutional level could be pretty monumental in its own right. Changing a college website is a little like turning a cruise ship. It’s not going to be quick. If that’s the case, it may be worthwhile to explore a microsite aimed specifically at prospective students. That can give you a quick, effective destination that you can use for other digital campaigns.

The report also included a few great insights on social media usage. Social is a huge play space, and it’s hard to understand where to focus. Even if you have that figured out, great content is still difficult to create. Students claimed that only 44% of the content was relevant, namely because colleges still need to communicate with current students and faculty. One way to combat this is to create specific groups for admitted students. 63% of students said they would join a Facebook group at a school they were admitted to. This is great info because you can focus content directly relevant to this audience, but you can also start conversations with them. 2/3 of students said that conversations over social directly influenced their decision. Many of these factors are things that institutions can’t change. Geography, cost, and faculty are all part of a college’s identity. There are more channels than anyone can probably manage, but if you can hone in on a few that are most effective and focus on content specific to prospective students, you’ll be giving yourself a nice advantage over your rivals.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, quantitative and qualitative data include both primary and secondary sources. Primary data involves the data originated by the researcher to address the research questions and hypothesis (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). It comprised of what the researcher originally gathered from the respondents during field survey. Regarding the secondary data, (Malhotra & Birks, 2007) asserts that, the data are collected from other sources other than the sample or population. Specifically, referred journals, published articles, and reports (ibid).

In this study, the primary data are the response of customers and staffs, accessed and contacted via questionnaires and interviews. The study made use of closed ended questionnaires and structured interviews that were arranged in properly order without ambiguity, complete but non-offensive and relevant items with logical ability to elicit exact and appropriate responses required for classic analysis. The purpose of the questionnaires and interviews was to have insight into branding, brand identity, brand awareness and purchase intentions of private universities in Ghana. The target population will comprise both the students and administrative workers of the case study in relation to the research objectives. All cases will be drawn from Accra and Koforidua in the Greater Accra Region and Eastern Region because of proximity and convenience in terms of data accessibility to the researcher. Both Accra and Koforidua remain topmost in commercial activities and education in Ghana. Consequently to that, the two cities contain exogenous inhabitant from different background both working adults and students of all educational categories. This salient features gives a true representation of different Higher Education Institutions which provides services to different category of students from different background. The research population therefore comprises all the university students of the selected high education institutions.

Sampling and Research Instruments

The selection of an appropriate sample and sampling method depends upon the aim of the study (Marshall, 1996). The current research employs the use of purposive sampling technique which is defined as selecting units (e.g. individuals, groups, institutions), based on a specific purpose associated with answering a research question (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). This method allows the researcher to actively select the most productive sample to answer the research questions (Marshall, 1996). Therefore, the purposive sampling technique was used to consciously select four hundred and fifty (450) participants made up of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents from each institution. The survey questionnaires are finally administered through personal contact by the researcher. An informed consent of information that explains the purpose of the questionnaires and the assurance of respondents’ anonymity and
Statistical Method Employed and Data Analysis

Gathered data in this study is presented and analyzed using descriptive statistic (such as frequencies and simple percentages), Cronbach’s Alpha Test of Reliability, Principal Component Analysis with Factor Analysis as an extraction method, multiple regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient. A test of validity and reliability of the items on each construct were conducted to measure the strength of the test items. Validity refers to the extent at which statistical instrument measure it intended purpose (Saunders et al., 2000). Simple linear regression analysis describes the linear relationship between two variables by fitting a straight line through the set of data that best represents them; hence such a line is usually called the line of best fit.

\[ y = \beta_0 + \beta_1x + \varepsilon \]

Where \( y \) is the value of the response variable (or dependent variable); \( x \) is the value of the predictor variable (or independent variable); and \( \beta_0 \) (intercept) and \( \beta_1 \) (slope) are the regression coefficients; and \( \varepsilon \) the random error terms. The random error terms, \( \varepsilon \), are assumed to be normally distributed with mean 0 and variance 1. This means that the average or expected value of \( \varepsilon \) for a given value of \( x \) is 0. Thus,

\[ E(y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1x \]

It is common practice to write equation (3) as \( y = \beta_0 + \beta_1x \), where \( y \) is understood to mean \( E(y) \). Since \( \beta_0 \) and \( \beta_1 \) are unknown parameters, they are estimated from sample data. In estimating regression coefficients, two main methods that are used, the method of least squares or the maximum likelihood estimation. In regression analysis, we often go beyond the fitting of an equation to data and make inference about the population from which the data were drawn. There are some underlying conditions that must be satisfied, at least approximately, before any statistical inference can be considered reasonable. These conditions according to (Gordon & Howard, 2006) are:

1. In the underlying population, the relationship between the response variable, \( Y \), and the predictor variable, \( X \), is linear, i.e. \( y = b_0 + b_1x \).
2. For each value of \( X \), there is a group of \( Y \) values, and these \( Y \) values are normally distributed.
3. The \( Y \) values are statistically independent. That is, the \( Y \) values chosen for a particular value of \( X \) do not depend on the \( Y \) values for any other value of \( X \).
4. For each value of \( X \), the variance, \( \sigma^2 \), of \( Y \) about the regression line (i.e. the amount of variation in the population of \( Y \) values) is the same.

Making Inferences on the Slope of the Regression Model

We can use these distributional results to test hypotheses on the regression parameters. In simple linear regression, one wishes to test the significance of the predictor variable. The null hypothesis states that the slope coefficient, \( \beta_1 \), is equal to 0. Since \( \beta_1 \) has normal distribution with variance depending on the unknown quantity \( \sigma^2 \), we can apply standard results for normal random variables with unknown variances. Thus, in order to test \( \beta_1 \) equal to some value, that is, to test hypotheses of the form \( H_0 : \beta_1 = 0 \) against \( H_1 : \beta_1 \neq 0 \)

we can use the \( t \)-test statistic, given by

\[ t_b = \frac{b_1 - \beta_0}{SE(b_1)} \]

where \( b_1 \) is the estimated value and \( SE(b_1) \), the estimated standard error of the estimator \( b_1 \). That is

\[ SE(b_1) = \sqrt{\text{var}(b_1)} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2}{n - 2}} \]

It can be shown that both the test statistic and \( t_b \) have \( t \)-distributions with \( n - 2 \) degrees of freedom (d.f.).

Table 1: Chi-Square Tests of Differences in the Effect of Location of School in Choosing a University between Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asympt. sig (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact sig (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact sig (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>5.750</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0164</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>4.791</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>5.817</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0116</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.414</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) 0 cells (25%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.32
b) Computed only for a 2x2 table

The location of a University is an important factor that people consider when selecting which one to attend. The location of the school is one of the conditional factors that Sheth et al (1991) described in the Consumption value theory explained in the
literature review. In this regard, the information in table 10 sought to explore possible influence of location on students in selecting a private university. The chi-square test is conducted in order to determine whether there are differences between male and female students when it comes to this choice. The Pearson Chi-square test of Independence value obtained is 5.760 and the degree of freedom is 1. The table also shows that the P-value = 0.414 which is greater than 0.05 significant level. This indicates that both male and female students are effectively influenced by the location of school to choose a private university they want to attend.

Table 2: Chi-Square Tests of Differences in the Effect of Location of Student on selected of University between Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asmp.sig (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Exact sig (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Exact sig (1-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>1.327</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2490</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>0.810</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3310</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>1.328</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2490</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td>0.312</td>
<td>0.171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The location of a student is an important factor that people consider when selecting which one to attend. The location of the student is one of the conditional factors which Sheth et al (1991) described in the Consumption value theory explained in the literature review. In this regard, the information in table 2 sought to explore possible influence of location on a student in selecting a private university. The chi-square test is conducted in order to determine whether there are differences between male and female students when it comes to this choice. The Pearson Chi-square test of Independence value obtained is 1.327 and the degree of freedom is 1. The table also shows that the P-value = 0.312 which is greater than 0.05 significant level. This indicates that both male and female students are effectively influenced by the location of student to choose a private university they want to attend.

Table 3: Chi-Square Tests of Differences in the Effect of Cost in Choosing a University between Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asmp.sig (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Exact sig (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Exact sig (1-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>0.351</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0221</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>0.810</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3310</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>1.328</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2490</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td>0.688</td>
<td>0.395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cost of a University is an important factor that people consider when selecting which one to attend. The cost of the school is one of the utilitarian factors which Samuelson (1967) described in the Consumption value theory explained in the literature review. In this regard, the information in table 3 sought to explore possible influence of cost on students in selecting a private university. The chi-square test is conducted in order to determine whether there are differences between male and female students when it comes to this choice. The Pearson Chi-square test of Independence value obtained is 1.351 and the degree of freedom is 1. The table also shows that the P-value = 0.349 which is greater than 0.05 significant level. This indicates that both male and female students are effectively influenced by the cost of school to choose a private university they want to attend.

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests of Differences in the Effect of Size of University in Choosing a University between Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asmp.sig (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Exact sig (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Exact sig (1-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>3.221</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0038</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>1.172</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>1.328</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2490</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td>0.688</td>
<td>0.395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The size of a University is an important factor that people consider when selecting which one to attend. The size of the school is one of both the aesthetic and social factors which Sheth et al (1991) described in the Consumption value theory explained in the literature review. In this regard, the information in table 4 sought to explore possible influence of size on students in selecting a private university. The chi-square test is conducted in order to determine whether there are differences between male and female students when it comes to this choice. The Pearson Chi-square test of Independence value obtained is 3.221 and the degree of freedom is 1. The table also shows that the P-value = 0.688 which is greater than 0.05 significant level. This indicates that both male and female students are effectively influenced by the size of school to choose a private university they want to attend.
The quality of programs of a University is an important factor that people consider when selecting which one to attend. The quality of programs is one of the functional factors which Sheth et al (1991) described in the Consumption value theory explained in the literature review. In this regard, the information in table 5 sought to explore possible influence of quality of programs on students in selecting a private university. The chi-square test is conducted in order to determine whether there are differences between male and female students when it comes to this choice. The Pearson Chi-square test of Independence value obtained is 1.347 and the degree of freedom is 1. The table also shows that the P-value = 0.314 which is greater than 0.05 significant level. This indicates that both male and female student is effectively influenced by the quality of programs of school to choose a private university they want to attend.

Table 6: Chi-Square Tests of Differences in the Effect of Family Influence in Choosing a University between Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Asym Sig (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>0.351</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.525</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Correction</td>
<td>0.351</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.525</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>0.351</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.525</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td>0.351</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.525</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>4549</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The family influence is an important factor that people consider when selecting which one to attend. The family influence on a student is one of the social factors which Sheth et al (1991) described in the Consumption value theory explained in the literature review. In this regard, the information in table 6 sought to explore possible influence of family influence on students in selecting a private university. The chi-square test is conducted in order to determine whether there are differences between male and female students when it comes to this choice. The Pearson Chi-square test of Independence value obtained is 1.351 and the degree of freedom is 1. The table also shows that the P-value = 0.313 which is greater than 0.05 significant level. This indicates that both male and female students are effectively influenced by the family influence to choose a private university they want to attend.

Table 7: Chi-Square Tests of Differences in the Effect of Peer Influence in Choosing a University between Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Asym Sig (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>1.241</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.224</td>
<td>0.280</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Correction</td>
<td>0.781</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.318</td>
<td>0.340</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>1.145</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.220</td>
<td>0.280</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td>0.781</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.318</td>
<td>0.340</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>4549</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The peer influence of a University is an important factor that people consider when selecting which one to attend. The peer influence is one of the social factors that Sheth et al (1991) described in the Consumption value theory explained in the literature review. In this regard, the information in table 7 sought to explore possible effect of peer influence on students in selecting a private university. The chi-square test is conducted in order to determine whether there are differences between male and female students when it comes to this choice. The Pearson Chi-square test of Independence value obtained is 1.241 and the degree of freedom is 1. The table also shows that the P-value = 0.296 which is greater than 0.05 significant level. This indicates that both male and female students are effectively influenced by the peers to choose a private university they want to attend.

Table 8: Chi-Square Tests of Differences in the Effect of Academic History of University in Choosing a University between Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Asym Sig (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>5.760</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Correction</td>
<td>2.107</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>2.107</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td>2.107</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>4549</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The effect of academic history of university is an important factor that people consider when selecting which one to attend. The effect of academic history of university is one of the functional factors that Sheth et al (1991) described in the Consumption value theory explained in the literature review. In this regard, the information in table 8 sought to explore possible influence of academic history of university on students in selecting a private university. The chi-square test is conducted in order to determine whether there are differences between male and female students when it comes to this choice. The Pearson Chi-square test of Independence value obtained is 5.760 and the degree of freedom is 1. The
table also shows that the P-value = 0.414 which is greater than 0.05 significant level. This indicates that both male and female students are effectively influenced by the academic history of university to choose a private university they want to attend.

Table 19: Chi-Square Tests of Differences in the Effect of Availability of Financial Aid in Choosing a University between Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asym.sig(2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact sig(2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact sig(1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>5.760</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Correction</td>
<td>4.791</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>5.837</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td>45.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The availability of financial aid in a University is an important factor that people consider when selecting which one to attend. The availability of financial aid in the school is one of the cost or utilitarian factors which Sheth et al (1991) described in the Consumption value theory explained in the literature review. In this regard, the information in table 9 sought to explore possible influence of availability of financial aid on students in selecting a private university. The chi-square test is conducted in order to determine whether there are differences between male and female students when it comes to this choice. The Pearson Chi-square test of Independence value obtained is 5.760 and the degree of freedom is 1. The table also shows that the P-value = 0.414 which is greater than 0.05 significant level. This indicates that both male and female students are effectively influenced by the availability of financial aid to choose a private university they want to attend.

Table 10 Chi-Square Tests of Differences in the Effect of Social Environment in Choosing a University between Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asym.sig(2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact sig(2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>5.760</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Correction</td>
<td>4.791</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>5.837</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td>45.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The effect of social environment of a University is an important factor that people consider when selecting which one to attend. The effect of social environment of the school is one of the social factors which Sheth et al (1991) described in the Consumption value theory explained in the literature review. In this regard, the information in table 10 sought to explore possible influence of effect of social environment on students in selecting a private university. The chi-square test is conducted in order to determine whether there are differences between male and female students when it comes to this choice. The Pearson Chi-square test of Independence value obtained is 5.760 and the degree of freedom is 1. The table also shows that the P-value = 0.414 which is greater than 0.05 significant level. This indicates that both male and female students are effectively influenced by the location of school to choose a private university they want to attend.

Table 11: Chi-Square Tests of Differences in the Effect of Social Environment in Choosing a University between Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asym.sig(2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact sig(2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>16.450</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>17.988</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td>45.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reputation of school of a University is an important factor that people consider when selecting which one to attend. The reputation of school of the school is one of the social factors which Sheth et al (1991) described in the Consumption value theory explained in the literature review. In this regard, the information in table 11 sought to explore possible influence of reputation of school on students in selecting a private university. The chi-square test is conducted in order to determine whether there are differences between male and female students when it comes to this choice. The Pearson Chi-square test of Independence value obtained is 16.450 and the degree of freedom is 1. The table also shows that the P-value = 0.0001 which is less than 0.05 significant level. This indicates that both male and female students are effectively influenced by the reputation of school to choose a private university they want to attend.

Table 12 Chi-Square Tests of Differences in the Effect of Emotional or Personality on selected of University between Male and Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asym.sig(2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact sig(2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-square</td>
<td>1.327</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>1.320</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td>45.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The effect of personality of a student is an important factor that people consider when selecting which one to attend. The effect of personality of the student is one of the emotional factors which Sheth et al (1991) described in the Consumption value theory explained
in the literature review. In this regard, the information in table 12 sought to explore possible influence of student’s personality on students in selecting a private university. The chi-square test is conducted in order to determine whether there are differences between male and female students when it comes to this choice. The Pearson Chi-square test of Independence value obtained is 1.327 and the degree of freedom is 1. The table also shows that the P-value = 0.414 which is greater than 0.05 significant level. This indicates that both male and female students are effectively influenced by the personality to choose a private university they want to attend.

CONCLUSION

The study was about brand identity communication, public awareness and purchase intentions of private universities in Ghana. It tried to find out how private universities are empowered to bridge up with the existing public ones that are already in the accreditation. The background of the research was based on the inadequacy of popularity on the part of private universities in Ghanaian communities. Therefore, the study threw more light on branding of private universities and how they create public awareness to influence students purchase intentions. This research worked with six specific objectives that was made to develop the general purpose as to examine the way branding of private universities are done and communicated to the general public and the extent of the public purchase intentions in Ghana. After the formulation of the hypotheses, the study revealed that branding positively affects awareness creation and this has a direct influence on prospective students purchase intentions. This research worked with six specific objectives that was made to develop the general purpose as to examine the way branding of private universities are done and communicated to the general public and the extent of the public purchase intentions in Ghana. We should not forget the fact that good branding help promote an institution’s enrollment and this is beneficial to increase an institution’s reputation in the midst of fairly new competitiveness that is present among private universities in Ghana. (Pinar, Trapp, Girard, & Boyt, 2011) explained, “vast numbers of universities and colleges (i.e., brands) in the marketplace often compete for the same students. Branding therefore creates a positive relationship between brand awareness and purchase intentions of prospective students of private universities if proper measures are taken into consideration with regards to its implementations. The purpose of this study was to examine brand identity communication and how it creates awareness and finally influence the purchase intentions of their prospective students. Some of the implications the study unravels is that; private universities must adopt a proper and effective marketing tool such as branding which has become the pivot around which private universities in Ghana depends on to lure their prospective students. Branding has become the catalyst for advancement in higher education through images used in new social-networking techniques. For example, social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace and others along with other technological means for communication (school websites, e-mail, news among others), all use branding and trademarks to identify the school to a new generation of students. (Moogan, 2011) depicted, the traditional promotions element of the marketing mix is frequently standard mass media advertising and hard copy promotions like the prospectus and direct mail, but e-documents and the use of technology are becoming increasingly important sources.

According to the findings of this study, it implies that private universities need to build a good name for themselves in order to compete with the public universities in Ghana which already have the numbers. The study disclosed the highest variance in brand awareness to brand name with a positive and significant regression estimate of 0.391. This implies that, students typically look for institutions with a remarkable reputation, which is parallel to the success of an institution’s brand. A school’s reputation goes a long way to determine how the school is excelling. If the performance the school displays is not highly regarded, the brand and the institution will be directly affected in terms of the popularity along with recognition. Students would not like to be linked with a school that has a bad reputation along with poor branding initiatives.

Currently, there are 7 public universities in Ghana. Private universities need to implement branding initiatives. The branding initiatives can assist private universities in the development of a distinct identity in the social world. The education market is becoming more competitive and far more crowded (Moore, 2010). Brand efforts can positively help distinguish the characteristics of an institution in comparison to others. Yet again, institutions can take a stance on the benefits of the implementation of brand initiatives as they relate to enrolment, community, and the traditions they assist in developing. Having a distinct helps consumers solidify and select where they want to attend without reservation. The unique ways private universities sell their services is what will stand out to students interested in attending, which directly affects the enrolment, recruitment and retention of the school. Various recommendations are made based on the findings of the study. Outlined below are some of the recommendations.
The private universities should strongly consider brand identity as a means of creating awareness and influence the purchase intention of the Ghanaian populates. This is because the traditional purchasing tool for advertising their institution to the populates is not affecting positively the universities brand awareness and with its associated problems of inadequacy of enrolment and lack of brand image. There are various media available to support the brand identity, therefore introducing this structure should not be a problem. Private universities in Ghana should consider the need

- To organize technical education for their advertising departments on brand identity to stakeholders such as suppliers, internal users, government representatives.
- To create a group of internal branding experts.
- To organize special training on purchase intention practices by business service providing experts.
- To perceive customary purchasing procedures.
- The branding should be done with the e-commerce since this is fast and convenient today.

Despite the importance of brand identity adoption and the private universities efforts in pushing the use of the available resources and media in business, the adoption rate of purchase intentions in Ghana is low. This may be because the choice of medium and e-commerce adopted for its implementation as well as perceived impediments, and how these vary between organizations and between activities, is lacking.

Related to the observed low rate of brand identities there is an urgent need for research that can ascertain variations in purchase intentions adoption based on organization differences, business size differences and complexity of products for exhibition. This is a necessary prerequisite to enable the development of a predictive framework or model of brand identities and purchase intentions. This can also assist in identifying organizational management styles and activities where purchase intention is likely to either excel or lag.

Brand identity is still a relatively recent phenomenon and the need for the research framework examined in this paper is apparent in terms of the inconsistency between proclaimed national and organization benefits deriving from a faster uptake, and the slowness of adoption. A predictive model of brand identity processes can be used to improve the advertisement and progression of private universities. Innovation policy can be used on how to access these advantages and the removal of impediments. Improvement in the rate of brand identity adoption will have national economic benefit through improved productivity that can strengthen the national competitive advantage in rapidly adopting organizations like the private universities. However, there is no call for the organizational sector to be innovative in the use of brand identity, for the sake of innovation. Management orientation needs to be towards effectiveness and practicability. Frameworks and models on brand identity for small and medium scale enterprises and other organizations must be studied.

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