Brand Communication of Higher Education Institutions in Ghana: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

Two decades ago, Ghana could only boast of three government universities. However, with the bill that established the National Accreditations Board (NAB) in 1993, to ensure the private participation in the provision of tertiary education, the number of private university colleges has increased dramatically. This paper analyses data on brand communication of higher education in Ghana. The chapter constitutes the historical background of the study context. It examines studies related to branding and its various aspects, branding in high education, brand communication, brand awareness, purchase intentions. It also reviews the technology acceptance model to provide a theoretical tenet for technology adoption in brand communication among private universities in Ghana.

Keywords: Brand, Communication, Higher, Education, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

The study was conducted in Ghana. Ghana is located in sub-Saharan Africa, a region known for its political, tribal, and economic polarization and therefore very unstable but Ghana stands out tall. However, being the first country in that part of Africa to have gained political independence and gone through various political turmoils for a period and then having stabilized with democratically elected governments from different opposing political parties for nearly three decades, Ghana stands out as a stable country politically, economically and socially in relative terms. Such relative stability has translated into various human and non-human resource developments. In addition, one area that has seen tremendous transformation under various governments is tertiary education. Two decades ago, Ghana could only boast of three government universities. However, with the bill that established the National Accreditations Board (NAB) in 1993, to ensure the private participation in the provision of tertiary education, the number of private university colleges has increased drastically. According to Jegede (2012) the National Accreditations Board (NAB) (charged with overseeing accreditation processes and procedures) mentioned that Ghana could now boast of thirty-one (31) Private University Colleges, seven (7) Private Theological Seminaries, ten (10) Tutorial Colleges, and two (2) Distance Learning Institutions in addition to the seven (7) Publicly Owned Universities.

Branding
Brand as a concept requires the concerns of both product and service providing firms (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993; B. R. Lewis & Mitchell, 1990; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; Wodie, 1984). Currently, the tactical approach for increasing market share and influencing customers’ continuance intention to purchase so as to attain competitive advantage among both products and service firms includes communicating quality brand to intended market (Rahaman, Abdullah, & Rahman, 2011). Congruent to this is why (Kotler, 2000) emphasis that, branding plays an essential role in the success of a business, especially in a competitive environment where survival of a business depends on the customers’ preferences. In the higher education context where consumers have many alternatives, importance of effective branding prevails (Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007). Current market trends show that homogeneity of product and services has increased, meaning that few functional differences between key competitors currently exist in most highly competitive markets (M. D. Johnson & Fornell, 1991). Therefore, the importance of branding is greatly sufficient to facilitate position in market environment.

Brand is a combination of name, symbol and design representing product, service or organizational characteristics at large. This is affirmed by (Wood, 2000) who concludes that, brand is a name, terms, logo, signs, symbols and designs that differentiate providers of the same service or products. Current definitions factor on the characteristics that identify one item, family or institution through name, logo, symbols and terms. In diverse perspective, (Balmer, Mukherjee, Greyser, Jenster, Vällaster, et al., 2006) conceptualization of brand contradicts on logo, name and terms as the only aspects of brand but includes values of a product or service that facilitates purchase intentions of customers. Brand consist of any feature of a product, service, family or institution that boost the covenant between brand owner and customers by meeting their shared expectations (Webster Jr & Keller, 2004) affirms.

According to (Balmer, Mukherjee, Greyser, Jenster, & Kay, 2006) a brand increases the value of a product or a service by differentiating them from the competition and creates positive associations by forming emotional relationship with the customer. Likewise, it provide businesses with the means to free themselves from constant price competition, to increase the value of their services and reduce their marketing cost (Crosby & Stephens, 1987). It is not a wonder that Philip Kotler said “if you are not a brand, you are a commodity”. Then price is everything and the low cost producer is the only winner (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). A powerful brand is one which resides in the mind of the consumer (Kotler, 2001). Brands differ in the amount of power and worth they have in the marketplace while other brands show a high degree of awareness. The word “brand” was derived from then work “brand” meaning to burn (Keller, Apéria, & Georgson, 2008). A brand is said to identify the maker or supplier of a particular product or service which also helps in differentiating one’s goods from other competitors. To the customer, it shows the promise of what the goods, service or firm stand for and the experience that can be derived from it (Morrish, Miles, & Deacon, 2010). In (V. E. Johnson, 2008) brand is the added value concerning what a consumer is willing to pay more compared to an ordinary, unnamed or unidentified product or service that fulfills similar desire. In Keller’s perspective, brand exists whenever an organization creates new name, logo or symbol that communicates to the public the characteristics of products and or services to its intended market (Keller et al., 2008).

**Brand Image and Corporate image**

Brand image have attracted increasing interests among scholars and practitioners during the past decades (Jo Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Kanitvan, 2012; Melewar, Bassett, & Simões, 2006). As in (Aaker, 2012), brand image involves the general perception of a brand perceived by a consumer. This is not different from (De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998) view of brand image as the way by which particular groups decode information resonating from the use of a product or service. It is the emotional elements and values associated with an organization perceived by a consumer (Ellwood, 2002). Consequently, (Balmer, 2008) evinces that, brand image is currently in the forefront of corporate marketing and management literature. Brand image interests and the resultant discussions in extant studies however incorporates perspectives from multi-disciplinary domains and literatures: corporate communications, management, marketing, organizational behavior, social and organizational psychology and human resources (Cornelissen, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007).

Currently several organizations invest in research and resources developments to enhance their brands so as to foster positive image formation by their customers. Among Higher Education institutions are massive investment in several resources to enhance brand image in fiercely competitive market arena (Chapleo,
The need arises from creating and maintaining distinct images to attain competitive advantage in the global market context (ibid). The general perception of the public about a product or service characteristics is viewed as brand image. (De Pelsmacker & Geuens) describes brand image as any feature that facilitates the perception and interpretation held by consumers in respect of brand’s identity. (Keller et al., 2008) defines brand image as user profiles, purchase and usage situations, personality and values including history, heritage and experiences. According to (Czarniawska & Genell, 2002) achieving sufficient differentiation requires the projection of an image of perceived added value in the competitive market of an organization. The reason is that a brand that is aligned with its target audiences performs better in market context (Burmann, Jost-Benz, & Riley, 2009).

Empirical deduction from the above discussion could be summed that, distinct images of institutions influence consumers’ choice, and therefore in higher education context, branding affects students’ willingness and their decision formation to apply to certain institutions of their choice. This is supported by (Ivy, 2001) who claims that distinct image in customers’ mindset influences their willingness to choose particular institutions in area of higher education.

### Branding in Higher Education Institutions

Branding in higher education institution has gained tremendous recognition of higher education marketers, research authors and other stakeholders (Wæraas & Solbak, 2009; Westcott Alessandri, 2001). Currently, the latest focus of higher education is to attract students (Harsha & Shah, 2011). It is not a surprise that findings from the study conducted by (Gray, Shyan Fam, & Llanes, 2003) evinces brand as a key factor when marketing or promoting universities and positioning higher education institutions in the competitive global environment. Branding of higher education institutions is seen to be of great importance (Wæraas & Solbak, 2009) due to the shrinking global boundaries and technological changes that intensifies market competition in higher education (Harsha & Shah, 2011). Higher educational brands involve the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images and experiences linked to the brand in the minds of audiences (ibid). The advantages move from attracting students from high income families to providing information, projecting image, improving institutional cooperation, instigating internal change and re-discovering the basic purposes of the institution (Stensaker, 2005). Branding in higher education institutions includes but not limited to the use of trademarks such as word, name, symbol or device, or combination of all these to identify and distinguish their source of service from others (OSTROW, 2014) establishes. In higher education context, brand name reflects the identity of the university (Davies & Chun, 2002).

The insight gained from several studies reviewed above goes to suggest that, in higher education, branding is the projecting of the physical and behavioral features of the institution in context. This is done for the purpose of communicating meaningful distinct services to influence the purchase intention of the general populace on the institution (Bulotaite, 2003). (Lamboy, 2011) supported by emphasizing that, creating distinct identity enables students of a particular high education institution solidify and choose their preferred institutions without reservation. This study asserts branding of Ghanaian high education as names, logo, in addition to any peculiar qualities that differentiate, add value to higher education institutions and influence the choice of student seeking to be enrolled in such institutions.

### Corporate Branding of Higher educations

Corporate branding has emerged as a management discipline and practice that aims at meeting and embracing challenges. The ultimate objective of corporate branding is to secure an enduring and consistent identity internally and image externally in an innovative and flexible way (Paul Jaworski & Fosher, 2003). However, to successfully position a brand above one’s competitors, one requires continuous fight for customers and a brand proposition must be developed in such a way that when conveyed in marketing and advertising campaigns, will provide an attractive, unique, and relevant message to current and potential customers. Though brand development is by no means a new idea, today consumers have more access to information and more choices than ever before. The result is higher expectation. Therefore, the brand's message must captivate the consumer immediately. Companies seeking to experience long-term success will have to create the most compelling, relevant, and consistent brand experiences for their customers. The concept of corporate branding embodies the notion of communicating the values of the organizations to the network of stakeholders, both internal and external to that organization, using various communication vehicles. However, this kind
of communication is special as it involves creating messages that represent what organizations stand for and want to be seen accordingly, carefully selecting various communication channels through which such messages are diffused to targeted population. It is not surprising that researcher(s) have argued that the whole branding process ends with communication. Today, service providing firms of which higher education institution is not exception are in era of corporatizing. The phenomenon has gained tremendous interest and attention of institutions due to its observed importance in facilitating organizational performance. Accordingly, (Boateng, 2014) records that, from being the center of academia, universities are in no different from business organization as much as their existence are purpose of maximizing profit. Modern Higher Education institutions are corporatizing in view to ensure efficiency in operations, management of their institutions and to increase returns of investment (Juliatto, 2013) affirms. Adoption of the strategy is in proliferation among higher education institutions. Successively, to handle corporate issues, Public universities have embraced the new trends corporate culture by their establishing corporate communications departments (Boateng, 2014). Corporate branding has gained tremendous interest and attention not only from organizations but publications from scholars and researchers as well. (Muzellec, 2006) describes corporate branding as a systematic planned and implemented process or procedures for creating and maintaining favorable images and reputation that result consequently from effective marketing strategies. Similarly, (Barnett, Jermier, & Lafferty, 2006) describes corporate branding as the means for an organization to project and promote its inner identity or defined values to all stakeholders involved in its operation. In this context, (Karjalainen & Snelders, 2010) affirms that, corporate branding involves creating image and reputation by incorporating an organization’s brand name in its audience or consumers mind. Hence, in consistence to extant studies, corporate branding in higher education institutions encompasses all the relevant strategies which facilitates higher education institutions to market their core values, vision, mission and programs to their targeted market.

**Brand Awareness**

Brand awareness is the extent to which a consumer recognizes and recalls a brand in different situations (Mohd Yasin, Nasser Noor, & Mohamad, 2007). Therefore, brand awareness involves two key construct; brand recall and brand recognition. While brand recalls refer to consumer’s ability to see a product or service category and recall its name exactly, brand recognition is concerned with consumer’s ability to identify the brand associated to the brand owner (ibid).

In (Hoefliler & Keller, 2002) brand awareness can be distinguished from depth and width. Depth is explained as the means to make consumers recall or identify brand easily, while width expresses the brand names that comes to consumer’s mind duration purchase intention. Brand name is important element in brand awareness (Davis, Golcic, & Marquardt, 2008). Ability to recognize, recall and to identify a brand facilitate the intention and choice of product or service purchase. Consequently, brand awareness affects purchase decision through brand association, in that, a product associated with positive brand image attracts great interest of its target customers in marketing activities (Keller, 1993). A brand name, symbols and signs can assist consumers to identify service providers and to predict service results (Herbig & Milewicz, 1993; Janiszewski & Van Osselaer, 2000; Turley & Moore, 1995). Brand awareness refers to how mindful potential customers are of a business and its products or services (Keller, 2001). Primarily, achieving successful brand awareness means a brand is well known and is easily recognizable by the general public or its potential customers (Aaker, 2012). Brand awareness is critical to differentiate one product from others and similar products and competitors (Aaker, 1996). It is the first and fundamental dimension of the entire brand knowledge system in consumers’ minds, reflecting their ability to identify the brand under different conditions (Fournier, 1998). Thus, the likelihood that a brand name will come to mind whenever products or services are needed by a consumer’s (Mohd Yasin et al., 2007).

According to (Malik et al., 2013), brand awareness concerns with the probability that, consumers are accustomed to availability and accessibility of a company’s product and service. An organization with successful brand awareness means that, its products and services are of good repute in the market and simply acceptable (Gustafson & Chabot, 2007). Hence it is no doubt that brand awareness is important to researchers and managements of organizations due to its relevancies.

**Consumers’ Purchase intentions**

Intention is the cognitive illustration of a person’s readiness to perform a given behavior or action, and that, intention is the best predictor of behavior. The
Theory of Reason Action explains in detail the relationship between intention and behavior of a person. In (Ajzen, 1991), as intention of an individual to perform a particular behavior increases, the greater that particular behavior is performed. Similarly, (Byrd & Brown, 2003) asserts that, consumer with intentions to buy a particular product will exhibit higher buying rates than those who demonstrate less or no intention of buying such products or services.

Basically, purchase intention represents the extent of what consumers think they will buy (Park & Stoeel, 2005). (Whitlark, Geurts, & Swenson, 1993) defines purchase intention as the purchase probability associated with an intention category at the percentage of individuals that will actually buy product. It is one of the components of a consumer’s cognitive behavior on how that consumer intends to buy a specific brand or product.

Contemporarily, consumers’ buying decision is very complex in market context. Usually purchasing intention is associated with consumers’ behavior, perception and their attitude to buy or accept certain product or services. Successively, purchase and the behavior associated with purchasing decisions are important for consumers during consideration and evaluation of certain product (Keller, 2001). Likewise, (Jaafar, Lel, & Naba, 2012) states that, purchase intention is an effective tool for predicting purchasing process. Once the consumers decide to purchase a certain product or services, they are driven by their intention. Nonetheless, several factors affect purchase intention. (Zeithaml, 1988) identifies price, quality perception and value perception as the ultimate predictors of purchase intentions which are in line with (Grewal, Monroe, & Krishnan, 1998) view that price, quality perception and value perception are significant in influencing an intention of a consumer to purchase a product or service. On the contrary, (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012) classifies factors that influence purchase intentions of a consumer into two namely; internal impulse and external environment. In addition, consumers will be interrupted by internal impulse and external environment during purchasing process. In recent times, the influential factors of purchase intention and purchasing decision making has be in contention that, several studies have conceptualized many factors in addition to price, quality and value perception. Brand and brand awareness have brought to fore as other salient factor predicting purchase intentions of customers. Brand and brand awareness as predictor variable on purchase intention has gain tremendous interests of researches of (Esch, Langner, Schmitt, & Geus, 2006) hence needs to be studied in the context of higher educational marketing context.

Brand awareness and purchasing intentions

Recent studies have recorded the importance of brand not only as a tool for differentiation but also to justify the purchase decisions of consumers (Duncan & Moriarty, 1997). The interests of several research studies concern with the measurement of brand equity because its necessity in today’s market place in the development and maintaining brand to attain competitive advantage is less doubt (Keller, 2002; Prasad & Dev, 2000; Shrestha & Campus; Venable, Rose, & Gilbert, 2003). Accordingly,(Ailawadi, Lehmann, & Neslin, 2003) records the symbolic values associated with brand names as the basis for product differentiation and the leading strategies to emulate key factors affecting behaviors associated with consumer purchasing patterns. This has led to various points of view and perspectives on brand equity dimensions, the factors that affect it and concepts worth studying in social science research (Aaker & Equity, 1991).

Behavioral trend and purchasing intentions of consumers have seen dramatic change in the past decade (Moutinho, 1987). The behavior that consumers display in searching, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing products and services that satisfies their needs relative to their available resources is found to be related with consumer behavior (ibid). Consumer behavior focuses on how individuals make decision to spend their resources (time, money and effort) on consumption related to their needs. How they evaluate it after the purchase, the impact of such evaluations on future purchases and how they dispose the product is concerned with brands (Warrington & Shim, 2000). Well recognized models of consumer purchase decision-making are credited to (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995), that models consumer purchase decision process in five stages consisting of problem recognition, purchase decision, information search, alternative evaluation, and post-purchase behavior. Also, recognized in (Mowen & Michael, 2001), further explanation of these studies takes into accounts brand as predictor of purchase intentions (ibid).

It is no different in meaning from (Shocker, Ben-Akiva, Boccara, & Nedungadi, 1991) voice that, the need for brand consideration when making a decision to purchase a product or service is much imperative and that, without something to be considered, the probability is that there is nothing to be chosen. Therefore, the awareness of a brand plays a
significant role while purchasing a product or service may have control on perceived risk evaluation of consumers and their level of assurance about the buying decision due to awareness with the brand and its uniqueness (Netemeyer et al., 2004). (Stokes, 1974) records that, brand awareness creates a great association in consumers’ memory about a particular brand. The ability to create a strong brand image in consumers’ mind depends on how a brand owner can create an optimistic brand assessment, reachable brand approach, and a reliable brand representation (Farquhar, 1989).

Indubitably, brand awareness is recognized to be of great influence on purchase intention and that consumers tend to buy a familiar and well known product (Keller, 1993; Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). (Percy & Rossiter, 1992) findings go to reinforce that, brand awareness facilitates the intentions of consumers to recognize a brand from a product category and make purchase decision. Brand awareness and purchase intention are observed to be closely related in the works of prominent authors such as (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991; Grewal, Monroe, et al., 1998; Hoyer & Brown, 1990). It also acts as a critical factor in the consumer purchase intention and certain brands will accumulate in consumers’ mind to influence consumer purchase decision (Pickett-Baker & Ozaki, 2008) affirms. A product with a high level of brand awareness will receive higher consumer preferences because it has higher market share and quality evaluation (Grewal, Krishnan, Baker, & Borin, 1998) concludes. Brand awareness has a positive and significant relationship with product or service quality hence purchase intentions. Many researchers also maintain that, high brand awareness means high perceived quality and the related interest on purchase (Aaker & Equity, 1991; Assael; Chang & Chieng, 2006; Chi, Yeh, & Yang, 2009; Dodds et al., 1991; Gupta et al., 2006; Oh, 2000; Oliver, 1999; Wall, Liefeld, & Heslop, 1991; Wang & Kan, 2002; Wong & Merrilees, 2007).

Besides, (Aaker & Keller, 1990) mentions that, a brand with high awareness and good image promotes brand loyalty to consumers, and higher brand awareness translate higher brand trust and purchase intention. Similarly, (Peng, 2006) indicates that, brand awareness has the greatest total effects on brand loyalty which is not different from the ideas of (Chi et al., 2009; Washburn & Plank, 2002; Wu & Yen, 2007). Nonetheless, consumers with higher brand familiarity usually exhibit higher purchase intention (Kamins & Marks, 1991). Likewise, if a product has higher brand awareness it will have a higher market share and a better quality evaluation (Dodds et al., 1991; Grewal, Krishnan, et al., 1998) accords. In (Chi et al., 2009), a well-known brand is expected to be have a higher purchase intention than a less known brand. As such, it worth studying the trend of consumers’ brand awareness and their purchase intentions in higher education marketing context. The matter has seen tremendous attention due to the importance associated with unraveling high education brand awareness and potential students’ intentions to choose or enroll in such institutions. Hence fore, this study brings to fore the effect of brand communication, brand awareness on purchase intentions of private higher education students in Ghana

**Brand communication of higher education institutions**

For communication to be successful, (Cooren, 2000) suggested that, the aim of the communication and the expected result must be aligned. That is, any communicative act involves the development of a link between the parties involved in the communication, with the outcome not necessarily always resulting in a shared meaning in (Cooren, 2000). When the interactions are appropriately framed and the transmission media support the appropriate understanding on both sides, then a common understanding can be established between actors (Cooren, 2000). In today’s world, where there is a proliferation of communication channels, the choice of which channel to use to achieve the sender’s desired goal can be complex. Since there is a general fear of miscommunication because words can mean different things to different people and that certain ideas are easier to express in certain media than others are. The implication here is that, before a brand is communicated, it is the responsibility of the communications team of an organization to be able to put it in such a way that the target population can appreciate the core message being presented. Therefore, organizations need to be conscious of this and choose channels that would communicate their ideas as they intended to the target population. This situation is particularly important because the target population is heterogeneous; therefore, allowing varied channels to communicate creates an allowance for a broader reach. It also allows the targets to select from their preferred channel(s) through which to receive the message embedded in the communication.

However, with the numerous communication technologies that have been developed to enable a sender to contact a recipient at almost any time and any place as seen in (C. Schmandt, Marmasse, Marti, Sawhney, & Wheeler, 2000), becomes hard for
senders to identify which one would appeal to which stakeholders. This notwithstanding, the sender should correctly determine the appropriate channels to drive effective campaigns for measurable outcomes. (Gitlin, 2007), who suggested that, recipients would not be over-burdened with instant information nor become confused and simply begin to ignore the messages they receive, noted the importance of appropriate channels. (Cooren, 2000; Kavaratzis, 2004; C. Schmandt et al., 2000) gave an example that showed the importance of choosing the right channels to reach out to various stakeholder groups. These researchers stated that consumers are principally interested in the price, quality, and reliability of the company's products and services whereas financial institutions are concerned with financial structure and performance. Employees on the other hand are mainly concerned with wages, working conditions, and personnel policies. Logically, then, a company should tailor its communication to each stakeholder group individually to address the special concerns of that group.

The above arguments could be explained further by using (Rogers, 2010) innovation diffusion model. The theory of communication regarding how information is dispersed within a social system over time was reviewed. Rogers argued that, people place different emphases on how much they rely on media and interpersonal communication for new ideas and information. In addition, which as innovations (messages) is communicated to individuals, each individual will perceive the innovation (message) differently according to (Rogers, 2010). (De Chernatony, Drury, & Segal - Horn, 2004) also believed that, two main factors thus (internal and external) account for why people perceive particular messages differently even when given through the same medium. Bass further proposed that, potential adopters of messages are influenced by mass media (external influence) and word-of-mouth (internal influence).

(Rogers, 2010) adds two additional factors to those suggested by Bass, and outlined the following, the nature of the message being transmitted; the channel used the receiver characteristics and the potential noise that might affect the message. In addition, the compatibility of the message to the values, needs perceptions of the receiver is also a key ingredient. However, both (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2003) and (Rogers, 2010) believed that, the role channels play in this whole innovation diffusion process could not be overlooked. However, to help close communication gaps between the communicators and their targeted audience. (Rogers, 2010) further advised communicators to be innovative in the choice of channels. He therefore classified channels into participatory and non-participatory channels of communication and explained that participatory channels like expos, trade shows, exhibitions and so on to allow communicators tap into the perceptions of their receivers of their messages and have the opportunity to provide or receive feedbacks. Such channels are good for attracting more individuals as they tend to give much detailed information especially from word-of-mouth communication (Kempf & Palan, 2006), (Rogers, 2010), on the other hand is of the view that, non-participative channels like specialized magazines, media presentations, radio and television broadcast, pamphlets, leaflets and so on are a good source of information for individuals who are eager to try something new.

Rogers model, attempts to suggest ways by which organizations could adopt if they want to attract their stakeholders’ attention. As pointed out by Rogers, each channel has its own way of attracting certain group of people and by innovatively combining various channels, organizations can reach out to many audiences. Attracting stakeholder attention has been argued (Dowling, 1988) as very important in organizational communication. This is because corporate image is most commonly related to the receiver side of the organizational communication processes (Dowling, 1988). Thus, upon receiving information from organizations through specific channels, stakeholders use the messages they received to build a mental image of such organizations. The image so formed is the sum of the accepted opinions, which are formed via perception of the different sides of the company by the employees and the target audience. In short corporate image, in describes the reception of an organization in its surroundings.

Organizations need to manage the opinion people form about it carefully as it can heavily influence their continual existence and operations. For instance, the business environmental climate in the world has become complex and change constantly. This has therefore, forced many business enterprises significantly to alter their strategies to better compete and survive. One of the ways businesses survive is by constantly creating positive mental images about themselves in the minds of their target populace. This is because the image that stakeholders have of the company will influence their willingness to either provide or withhold support. Thus, if customers develop a negative perception of a company or its products, its sales and profits assuredly will decline, meaning the company will soon be out of business and will be close down completely. That is the more reason why companies...
try to use various channels of communication that have high audience acceptability to present themselves with the hope that their target audience will form positive images and reciprocate by giving back some level of commit as well. However, maintaining a consistent image among the several stakeholder groups is vital and according to (Karadeniz & Cdr, 2009) organizations use various communication channels to project themselves, but Karadeniz et al cautions that to have a successful outcome of such communication, organizations should avoid projecting inconsistent images about themselves, as this could be costly. Bringing the above arguments to the current situation of the private university colleges in Ghana, it is realized each of them are trying to reach out to prospective students, financial institutions and other interested stakeholders through various communication channels. For example, bill boards, specialized magazines, educational fairs, radio, television adverts, newspaper publications are some of the ways they communicate their uniqueness to the populace. Critical observation and assessment of the messages in the various identified channels, one would see some differences in the messages each institution presents in the adopted channels whereas certain specific kinds of messages run through all the channels. What is not clear is whether or not there is congruence between the messages institutions present and those that are received by the targeted population. The argument here is that there is the likelihood that the channels used by the private universities colleges to communicate their institutional identities to their publics might not be the same as those through which their targeted populace has received their messages about such institutions.

From several decades till date, different and many communication systems have been developed to enable a sender to contact a recipient at almost any time and any place (M. J. Schmandt, 2000). Branding embodies the notion of communicating the values of the organizations to the network of stakeholders, both internal and external to that organization, using various communication vehicles (Lynch & De Chernatony, 2004). (Till & Baack, 2005) describes brand communication as an advertisements involving essential mechanisms for transferring images from organizations into the minds of consumers and audience. Similar to this view is (KOCABIYIKOGLU, 2004) idea that, brand communication is advertising the purpose, services, products and its usage to potential customers and audience for the purpose to attract and mention existing ones. As such several communication tools comes to play when brand communication is concerned. According to (B. K. Lewis, 2009) various media such as magazines, newspapers, television, radio, movies, video games, and internet and bill boards comes to mind whenever an organization wants to communicates its brand to the general public. In (Belch & Belch, 2003) currently, the use of social media in brand communication and the use of sophisticate tools in communicating brands and creating sufficient brand awareness is on the increase as technology adopters keeps proliferating. For instance (Keller, 2009) records that the use of social media is increasing in modern times for communicating brands to consumers. As observed, there are number of channels through which brands are communicated to the public however it is harder for senders to identify which communication tool appeal to which stakeholders. As several research studies describes the positive word of mouth and human communication to most effective in selling brands of organizations, several other studies also conclude on the use of technology as a salient channel in brand communication. The contentions on the use of traditional tool such as magazines, newsletters, flyers, brochures and other print media and the use of technological tools like social media, internets, mobile phones and the rest varies from instance of faster communication to well presentable brand images. Whilst communication and technology used in brand communication reduces the time and space of interacting with the general public, traditional means are seen to be closely associated with such problem. In no doubt that, the need for owners to determine the most appropriate and productive channels for brand communication is important in marketing strategies when the aim is to drive effective campaigns for measurable outcomes. Therefore, relative to the aim of this study is to examine the productive channels for brand communication in private universities of Ghana and to assess the important influence of brand awareness facilitated by brand communication channels on the purchase intentions of customers.

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