

# Corporate Identity: The Case of the University for Development Studies

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## Abstract

The new competitive environment within the higher education sector is propelling most Universities to continuously embark on some thoughtful strategic and consistent marketization and planned effort to project their corporate image and reputation. Established a little over two decades ago, the University for Development Studies (UDS) as a higher educational institution is gradually moving from its growth stage to a matured stage. This requires the university to move from a comprehensive institution to a more focused entity. It is therefore extremely crucial to examine what makes the UDS unique and how the community perceive the University as an institution and finally, in what ways key stakeholders or actors can do to improve its corporate identity and reputation. The paper argues that the corporate identity and reputation of the University lie in its Community Development embedded programmes and the blended community-based teaching and learning model. The paper found that 69.84% of the respondents agree that the current corporate reputation of UDS was good. The paper also found several approaches to enhancing the corporate image of the university. These include a well-design marketing strategy; designing market-oriented academic programmes, establish more lecture series, and support quality research publications. Other recommendations for improving the corporate identity of the University are discussed.

**Keywords:** corporate identity, University, corporate reputation, survey, Ghana

## 1. Introduction

Across the globe, the big and famous universities have made their names over the years due to the thoughtful promotion of their institutions, programmes and projects, the calibre of applicants they admit, and the number and quality of students such universities turn out. Most of such products of these universities are those in managerial and leadership positions in various organisations, corporations and institutions, both governmental and non-governmental including the universities themselves. Due to the desire to maintain and promote their 'kingdoms', universities and other institutions of higher learning must compete in attracting students, quality staff and research funding. In recent times, universities and other higher institutions are increasingly competing at both national and international levels. Hitherto, universities' traditional roles were independent institutions, creating and disseminating autonomous knowledge (Jarvis, 2001). Now, these institutions have moved towards a business-like oriented focus, due to the competitive nature of the higher education sector in recent times. Melewar and Akei (2005) and Bunzel (2007) highlight that universities are no longer just institutions of higher learning but also business enterprises owing to the deployment of private sector business models in their operations. Even in some instances, universities have supported the formation of many businesses through the discovery of new products and services, particularly in most advanced countries. Primarily, universities have now been given the opportunity to create a true competitive advantage and positive reputation for the business world (Smith, 2007; Porter and Kramer, 2006). In the face of increased national and international competition (Chapleo, 2004; Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana, 2007), the University for Development Studies has begun a search for what makes it unique within the higher education sector and how it can build on its uniqueness and corporate image to attract more students and research funding to achieve its vision of becoming a university of excellence.

Although issues of corporate identity have always been part of the educational mission of the UDS, the need to use competitive and thoughtful strategies is of paramount importance. By developing such strategies the UDS would have the utmost competitive advantage of discovering the opportunities and benefits of moving beyond the classroom into other community operations within the wider society. Universities and colleges do not only adapt to more established national education markets (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006), but also adapt to some strategies that will address how higher education is organised and run to attract international students. Most importantly, under the current globalization and borderless society, many higher educational institutions are adapting a more business-like approach in order to compete and survive in the changing face of the educational industry (Gumpert, 2000; Gioia and Thomas, 1996). In the adaptations of business-like approaches, some higher institutions are discovering the importance of corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation as very key in these changing times. Primarily, every organisation is unique, and its corporate identity must spring from the organisation's own roots. The identity of an organisation must be clear and become the yardstick

against which its products and services, behaviours and actions are measured and form part of the corporate culture. This means that corporate identity cannot simply be a slogan, or a collection of phrases; it must be visible, tangible and all embracing. For example, global corporate organisations like Shell, Mercedes-Benz and Michelin in the early twentieth century, harnessed the powers of their visual identities to communicate their values to their key audience in order to make a big impact in the marketing of their products (Tench and Yeomans, 2006). This also applies to higher educational institutions like Harvard, Yale, MIT etc. in the US and the likes of Cambridge, London College and Oxford in the UK that have all harnessed many years of their visual identities to communicate their values to their key audience in order to make a big impact in the global educational market. Moving forward, Dahan and Senol (2012) opine that since it is not possible to turn back the clock in this globalized world, there is no alternative but to reform universities by making them more responsive to the new economic and social realities. The new ways of operations require universities to adapt similar models and concepts from the business world. Within this context, universities have realized the value of corporate identity as a strategic resource. Universities' corporate identities are now seen as bases for successful communication to various stakeholders, hitherto as colonizing universities were previously unrelated to the economy (Fairclough, 2010).

In response to the growing competition, the UDS has been undergoing some significant changes during the last five years to make its operations more effective and responsive and to position itself as a global institution. This will allow the University to clearly build a good profile in order to compete in the international education environment. Cornelissen (2011) argues that one surest way in which organisations manage their relationships with stakeholders is by building a corporate reputation and corporate branding. At the same time, due to the generic characteristics of higher education institutions, universities and colleges have paradoxically encountered challenges in distinguishing their products and services from each other, and the presentation of a distinct identity has been extremely difficult if not impossible. The UDS is still making efforts to improve its educational quality over other higher education institutions, so it can stay financially sustainable and compete with others at the same time. In order to be ahead of its competitors, the UDS is in search of sustainable differentiation strategies that would stand as successful examples of practice in its multi-campus orientation and nature. The corporate reputation of higher education institutions lies in their broader responsibility of teaching, research and community engagement (Gumport, 2000). In addition, higher educational institutions need to be managed with focus on its three key functions – teaching, research and community engagement – in order to meet the challenges of the increased competition. This reflects Stensaker's (2007) argument that the challenge for higher education institutions and their management is how to balance the need for adjusting to a changing world, while maintaining the organisational identities and their inherent characteristics. Arguing through the notion of product life-cycle, the UDS as a higher education institution is gradually moving from its growth stage to a matured stage, and as a result, it may necessitate moving from a comprehensive institution to a more focused entity. It is therefore extremely crucial to explore its corporate identity drivers and how the community perceives the University as an institution and finally, the ways in which key stakeholders or actors can contribute to improve its corporate identity.

The paper contributes to the corporate identity literature in several ways. First, many organisations are striving to develop and distinguish themselves from their competitors and some characteristics of corporate identity include a reputation for high quality goods and services, a robust performance, a harmonious workplace, and a reputation for social and environmental responsibility (Einwiller and Will, 2002). Therefore, this paper will provide the opportunity to influence the University's approach to building its corporate image. Second, corporate identity comes into being when there is common ownership of an organisational philosophy that manifests in a distinct corporate culture. At its most profound, the students and the staff must feel that they have ownership of the philosophy. Corporate identity also allows students and staff to derive their sense of belonging. Thus, the findings will bring to the fore the role of corporate identity in promoting the UDS. It will also help the University to strategize and adapt appropriate measures to promote itself. Third, the evidence presented in this paper will influence management to identify the roles and responsibilities of each of the categories of the University community to enhance its corporate identity. Finally, by effectively managing its corporate identity, the university can build an understanding and commitment among its diverse stakeholders. This can be manifested in the ability to attract and retain students and employees, achieve strategic alliance, gain the support of financial markets and generate a sense of direction and purpose.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Concept of Corporate Identity**

All organisations have their unique identities as they are usually associated with certain characteristics that distinguish them from the rest. According to Olins (1995), corporate identity answers three key issues: who is the organisation? What does it do? And how does it do it? Popa (2010) argues that corporate identity is the outward manifestation of an entity, a visual means of identification which includes not only the corporate logo, but also

the entity's style used on their letterheads and corporate publications, interior and exterior design of buildings, staff uniforms and packaging of products. Corporate identity represents the ethos, aims and values and presents the individuality that helps an entity to differentiate itself (Tench and Yeomans, 2006; Cornelissen et al., 2007). The main element is the organisation's logo-type, this is a visual emblem designed by the organisation (Balmer, 1997). In developing a logo, every corporate entity must make sure it conveys the right message with the aim of conveying several characteristics to its stakeholders and where appropriate, adapt or change the logo to reflect changes in the environment or changes in the organisation itself (Van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Balmer and Gray, 2003). Melewar et al. (2006) consider corporate identity as traits which include strategy, philosophy, company history, business scope, type of products and services offered, corporate personality as well as all forms of internal and external communications. The literature suggests that corporate identity was long associated with what is now more appropriately called visual identification, which is the logo and other forms of symbolism used by an entity (Melewar et al., 2006; Van Riel and Balmer, 1997). In recent times, company logos and other elements of visual design are regarded as part of the process of corporate image formation and presentation, leading to stakeholder perception and corporate associations (Van Riel and Balmer, 1997).

Cornelissen et al. (2007) describe corporate identity as an organisation's distributive public image that a corporate entity communicates. It is built internally by the organisation's stakeholders (Brown et al., 2006) and made visible in communications. Tench and Yeomans (2006) suggest that every organisation has a corporate identity and that this is so because organisations exist within a societal context. Tench and Yeomans (2006) are of the view that organisations place a great emphasis on the proactive element of their identity and reputation. As such, identity represents a 'strategic issue' that should be managed by organisations with several beneficial outcomes for the organisation. Atakan and Eker (2007) found universities corporate identity to entice more students and academic staff. Universities corporate reputation can also bring benefits such as increased industry partnership and research funding. Several studies have alluded to the fact that corporate identity strategies are embraced by tertiary educational institutions as part of their own competitive approaches, with a shifting focus beyond the classroom into wider community level engagement activities. Several studies further allude to the notion that many institutions are discovering the importance of corporate identity and corporate image (e.g. Stensaker, 2007; Porter and Kramer, 2006; Melewar and Akei, 2005). According to Popa (2010), state of the art represents corporate identity beyond the academia, the public and stakeholders. The author argues that many organisations have acknowledged the importance of corporate identity only after being surprised by public responses to issues they never thought were part of their responsibilities (Porter and Kramer, 2006). Organisations mission statements serve as common corporate reporting and promoting tools. Organisations or entities are urged to create mission statements to inspire enthusiasm for the entity (Melewar and Akei, 2005). Furthermore, mission statements are decidedly persuasive by nature, and they are employed as a part of corporate identity building (Williams, 2008).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Study Design**

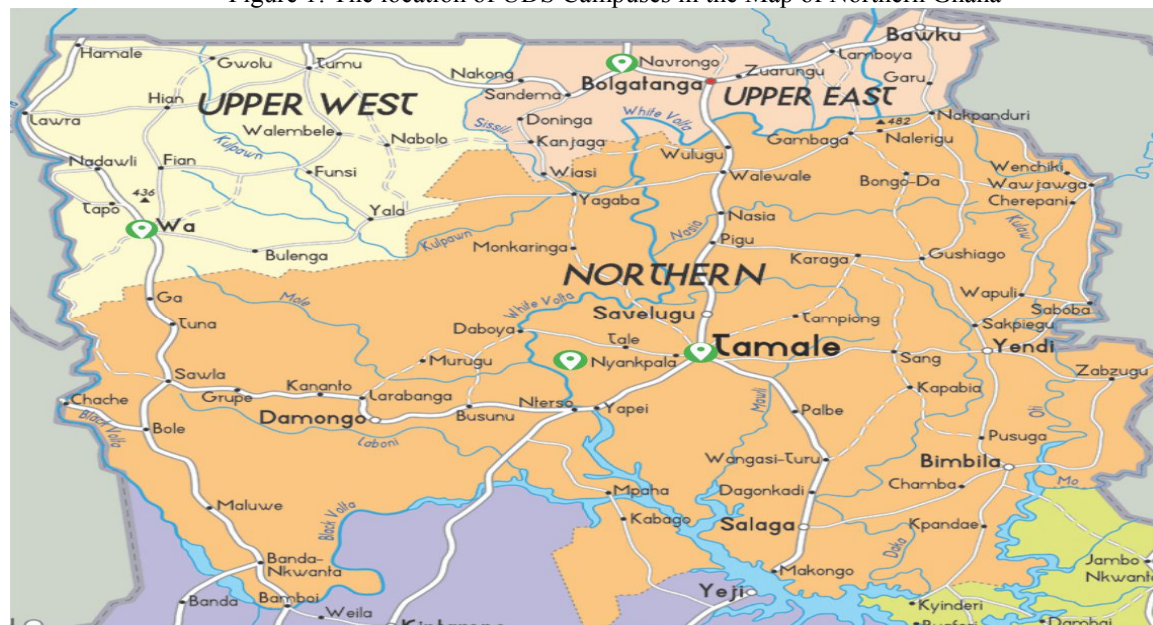
This research employed the descriptive survey design. The survey was conducted using some selected category of members of staff and students of the UDS. Using the descriptive survey method was considered the most appropriate because social scientists use it to collect original data for studying a population too large to observe directly and thus make generalization possible (Babbie, 1992). Saunders et al. (2009) contend that surveys provide reliable, valid and theoretically meaningful information compared to other study designs. According to Yin (1993), survey is simple and applicable to the study of all social problems by considering a large sample size. The survey is deemed appropriate as attempts are made by the researchers to describe some aspects of the population by selecting unbiased sample population. The descriptive survey design is also chosen because in considering the purpose of the study and the magnitude of the target population, it is the most appropriate design which could lead the researchers to achieve their purpose.

#### **3.2 Research Context**

The UDS was established in May 1992 by the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Law 279 to blend academic work with community outreach programmes as a way of providing constructive and meaningful interaction between the two for the total development of Northern Ghana specifically and Ghana as a whole. The University started academic work in September 1993 with the first batch of forty (40) students admitted into the Faculty of Agriculture. Currently, the University has four satellite campuses spread across the three regions of Northern Ghana, namely; Northern, Upper West and Upper East Regions. The mandate of the University for Development Studies is to bring University education closer to the regions of Northern Ghana, where educational opportunities and facilities were generally poor due to the development imbalance that was entrenched before and after independence. In line with the UDS objective of addressing the socio-economic deprivations and other challenges, as an institution of higher learning, it also faces stiff competition in getting

applicants admitted into the institution and academic staff employed. The core value of any university's corporate identity is made up of its history, beliefs, philosophy, technology, staff and students, ethical and cultural values and strategic vision. Figure 1 provides a pictorial evidence of the location of the university across the three regions of the North.

Figure 1: The location of UDS Campuses in the Map of Northern Ghana



### 3.3 Study Population and Sampling

The University has four (4) satellite campuses spread across the three (3) regions of the Northern part of Ghana, namely Wa Campus, Tamale Campus, Nyankpala Campus and Navrongo Campus. The University currently has a staff of one thousand, five hundred and seventy-three (1,573) and a student population of eighteen thousand, eight hundred and eighty-three (18,883) (Vice-Chancellor's Report, 2017). In view of this, the study selected some categories of staff and students because of their in-depth knowledge of the University. The demographic information below covers staff of all the four (4) satellite campuses of the University.

Table 1: Total Number of UDS Staff and Students on the various Campuses

S/N	CAMPUS	SENIOR MEMBERS	SENIOR STAFF	JUNIOR STAFF	SUB-TOTAL	STUDENT POP.	TOTAL
1.	<b>Tamale</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>4,861</b>	<b>5,139</b>
2.	<b>Navrongo</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>3,008</b>	<b>3,224</b>
3.	<b>Nyankpala</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>2,630</b>	<b>3,032</b>
4.	<b>Wa</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>8,384</b>	<b>8,704</b>
5.	<b>Central Admin.</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>-----</b>	<b>357</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>600</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>18,883</b>	<b>20,456</b>

Following this, a simple random sampling technique was used to select the category of staff (workforce) and students. These specific groups selected form the core groups for which the survey questionnaires were self-administered. On the part of staff of the University, close ended questionnaire were administered to twenty-five (25) Senior Members, forty (40) Senior and thirty (30) Junior staff. Apart from the open ended questionnaire, close ended questionnaire were also administered to seventy (70) Junior Members (students) and another set of forty (40) Senior Members. These brought the total number of respondents to two hundred and five (205). In all, the simple random sampling and purposive techniques were adopted to select the total respondents. The names of the key sub-units in the study areas were written on pieces of paper. The papers were picked one at a time from the box for the study.

Table 2: shows the total selected personnel in the various categories and the percentage of respondents used for the study.

*Table 2: Selection of Respondents*

S/N	Respondents	Closed-ended Questionnaire 'A'			Opened-ended Questionnaire 'B' & 'C'			
		No. Of Admin.	Quest	Returned Rate	%	No. Of Quest. Admin	Returned Rate	%
1.	<b>Senior Members</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>68.00</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>87.50</b>
2.	<b>Senior Staff</b>	<b>40</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>60.00</b>	-	-	-
3.	<b>Junior Staff</b>	<b>30</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>73.33</b>	-	-	-
4.	<b>Students</b>	-		-	-	<b>70</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>90.00</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95</b>		<b>63</b>	<b>66.32</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>89.09</b>

### 3.4 Data Collection & Data Analyses

Survey questionnaire is a well-established tool within social science research for collecting information (Bird, 2009). The design of questionnaire is fundamental to the success of any survey as an inappropriate constructed questionnaire can irritate respondents and affect the quality of the responses. Our choice of survey questionnaire data collection instrument was based on the assumption that our cohorts of respondents are highly educated, particularly academic staff and some administrative staff. Therefore, the problem of non-response associated with survey questionnaire was limited in this study. The respondents were provided with either closed-ended or opened-ended questionnaire in addition to information sheet and consent forms. Before we administered the survey questionnaire, the purpose of the study was explained to the respondents through the information sheet provided. Each respondent was assured anonymity and confidentiality as we did not solicit for respondents to provide their names, which can easily be identified. The survey questionnaires were personally distributed by the researchers to the respondents within the various campuses. The concentration was on all the campuses, that is, Tamale, Nyankpala, Navrongo and Wa Campuses. The relationship that was established between the respondents and the researchers were cordial and that increased the overall response rate across the various campuses of the University. The survey questionnaires were collected back two weeks after distribution with the view of given the respondents a bit of time to answer the questions. In relation to data analysis and for data to be meaningful, this must be organised properly. Twumasi (2001) describes data analysis as a critical examination of data so as to understand its components and relationships and find out the pattern that exist among the components. Saunders et al., (2000) argues that descriptive statistics describes data in terms of measures of central tendency and measures of spread disperse. Percentages were used in presenting the data, where appropriate, in order to present the data in an orderly manner. We used SPSS to analyse the data. The results were reported in tables.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This study is based on survey data from 205 respondents comprising of academic staff, administrative staff, and students. From the category of staff, it can be seen clearly that the selections were done from those who have been working in the University ranging from zero to twenty-one (0-21) years and above. The data revealed that respondents with work experience ranging from zero (0) to five (5) years were as many as eighteen (18) staff representing 28.57%. The category of those with work experience ranging from six (6) to ten (10) years represented 19.05% (12). About ten (10) respondents had work experience ranging from 11 to 15 years, representing 15.87%. Equally, those with work experience ranging from 16 to 20 years were 10 respondents. Finally, 13 of the respondents had been working in the University for the past 21 years and above representing 20.64%.

Table 3: Category of Staff and their working years in the University

S/N	Working Years so far in the University							Total Respondents	
		SM	%	SS	%	JS	%		%
1.	0-5years	1	1.59	7	11.11	10	15.87	18	28.57
2.	6-10 Years	3	4.76	4	6.35	5	7.94	12	19.05
3.	11-15 years	5	7.94	4	6.35	1	1.59	10	15.87
4.	16-20 years	3	4.76	4	6.35	3	4.76	10	15.87
5.	21 years and above	5	7.94	5	7.94	3	4.76	13	20.64
TOTAL		17	26.98	24	38.10	22	34.92	63	100

*Interpretation: SM = Senior Member, SS = Senior Staff and JS = Junior Staff*

With reference to the issue of the current corporate reputation of the University (Table 4), 69.84% of the respondents agree to the assertion that the current corporate reputation is good, while 30.16% disagree with the assertion. However, with respect to the view that ‘before the celebration of the UDS 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the corporate reputation of the University was regarded not being good, as many respondents (65.08%) describes it as nothing to ‘write-home-about’. In relation to the views of respondents on the corporate identity of the University at the national level now being among the best of the tertiary institutions, 63.49% agree to the statement. The respondents attributed this to the many recent international corporate branding the University had embarked on. However, 36.51% disagree with the statement.

Relating to the corporate identity of the University at the international arena, 65.07% of the respondents agree that at the international arena, the University’s corporate identity is encouraging. This finding reflects the UDS Strategic Plan (2017-2023), which clearly states “In a bid to build institutional capacity and enhance international visibility, the University for Development Studies has had very fruitful inter-university collaborations, notable amongst them are: United Nations University, University of Illinois, USA; Makerere University, Uganda; Montpellier SupaGro, France, etc. In addition, the institution of the annual “Africa Leadership Lectures” (ALLs) has created an international platform for distinguished former African leaders to share, not only their experiences in governance, but also their aspirations for a better Africa”.

Table 4: Perception of Respondents on the Current Corporate Identity of UDS

S/N	ITEM	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	The current corporate identity of UDS is good.	23.81	46.03	17.46	12.70
2	Before the celebration of the UDS at 20, the corporate identity of the University was nothing to ‘write- home-about’.	15.87	19.05	38.10	26.93
3	For close to 5 years now, that the University corporate identity started shooting up.	17.46	46.03	22.22	14.29
4	The corporate identity of the University at the national level now is among the best in the tertiary institutions.	26.98	36.51	20.63	15.87
5	The corporate identity of the University at the international arena is encouraging.	20.63	44.44	22.22	12.70

*Interpretation: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree and SD = Strongly Disagree*

#### 4.2 Communities Perception on UDS

Seeking information on the perception of the communities around the University was significant to examine how the communities surrounding the University perceive its activities (Table 5 below). On how the communities perceive the corporate identity of the University, the study found that 71.5% of the respondents agree that there is healthy relationship between the communities and the University. This finding also reflects in the objectives spelt out in the Strategic Plan (2017- 2023) of the University that requires the promotion of good relations with the stakeholders (governments’ agencies, NGOs, research institutions, business enterprise, religious organisations and communities). However, 28.5% disagree with the assertion that the University relates well with the communities around the Campuses. On the question of the inhabitants contributing positively in diverse ways to building the corporate identity of the University, 68.25% of respondents agree to the assertion that the communities contribute positively to the corporate identity of the University by spreading the works of the University as a leading centre of excellence with a unique teaching model that is entrenched in community-based teaching model in the country. For example, during annual community durbars and festivals, the community elders’ or opinion leaders and chiefs shower praises about the institution and ask for more support of community members in their advocacy work and in other diverse ways for the University. In contrast, 31.75% disagree with the assertion that the inhabitants contribute positively in diverse ways to the building of the corporate identity of the University. However, on the question of having frequent meetings between management of the University and the elders of these communities, 71.43% of respondents agree that these interactions with the management

of the University will enhance the promotion of the corporate identity of the institution, but 28.57% think otherwise. Some of these 28.57% respondents think that for good neighbourliness, menial jobs could be given to some of them. By this singular act, the University and the Community will be integrating very well.

Table 5: Perception of Respondents on how the Community perceived UDS to be

S/N	ITEM	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
6.	The communities around the Campuses relate well with the University.	19.05	52.38	12.70	15.87
7.	The inhabitants of these communities talk good about the University.	20.63	47.62	19.05	12.70
8.	The inhabitants contribute positively in diverse ways to the building of the corporate identity of the University.	22.22	44.44	17.46	15.87
9.	The community members contribute willingly to the development of the University through the advocacy work that they do.	20.63	34.92	26.98	17.46
10.	Frequent meetings between Management of the University and the elders of these communities will enhance the promotion of the corporate identity of the University.	33.33	38.10	15.87	12.70
11.	Building healthy relationship with the communities around the Campuses of the University will promote the positive image of the institution	33.33	42.86	12.70	11.11

*Interpretation: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree and SD = Strongly Disagree*

The communities now acknowledge that University education is closer to them than before and is also giving some community members several opportunities including employment, either directly or indirectly. The presence of the University has given community members hope for the future and has exposed them to higher education through their children who got opportunities to study. Others saw that the University was bringing development either directly or indirectly to their areas whilst others saw that some of the University's students were of bad influence on their children and wards. To others the University has come to take over their farm lands which hitherto were their source of economic livelihood. However, majority of the respondents agreed that the harmonious relationship existing between the community and University is positive and as such they talk positively about the School. Furthermore, they also agreed that having a higher institution in a rural community will surely imbued skills, values and enhance good attitude among members of the community. This they say will lead to a total outlook of the development of the community.

#### 4.3 Ways of improving the University's corporate identity

In respect of seeking to find the possible ways of improving the corporate identity of the University, the statistics in Table 6 below indicate the responses of respondents:

Table 6: Perception of Respondents on the possible ways to improve corporate identity of the University

S/N	ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
12.	There is the need that Management refocus its attention to the image building of the University.	44.44	28.57	14.29	12.70
13.	Management should re-orient both staff and students alike to help build positively the corporate image of the University.	49.21	22.22	15.87	12.70
14.	Staff should assist Management in all forms in promoting the corporate image of the University.	61.90	30.16	4.76	3.17
15.	Programmes and projects effectively and efficiently run by staff contribute to the positive image building of the University.	41.27	42.86	14.29	1.59
16.	That students output in academic work send out positive image of the University to the outside world.	46.03	34.92	15.87	3.17
17.	Students positively promoting the University's image in every possible area will enhance the image building of the University.	39.68	34.92	12.70	12.70

*Interpretation: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree and SD = Strongly Disagree*

Despite management's efforts in building the corporate identity of the University, both the workforce and the students alike hold the view that refocusing the image building of the University is of utmost importance moving forward. When the statement was posed as to whether there is the need for management to refocus its attention on building the image of the University, 73.01% of the respondents agree to the statement, with the indication that looking at how far the University had come and the need to also compete favourably with other higher institutions of learning at both the national and international platforms, there was the utmost urgency and

need to do more in building corporate reputation and identity. This finding is in consonance with a study by the Aalto University School of Business (2013) where the school agreed to the assertion of building corporate reputation and identity to be able to keep up with the current competition in the higher education sector. Fundamentally, universities are now moving towards the adoption of corporate business-like ideals and models as they strive to differentiate themselves. This is also in line with arguments put forward by Kaburise (2003), the second substantive Vice-Chancellor during one of his congregation speeches that “The main challenge facing the University is how to re-position itself as a national asset in the facilitation of life-long learning infused with a pro-poor philosophy, a university that is committed to the pursuit of knowledge for empowerment, which can be used as an instrument of access to economic opportunity, political participation, educational development and social mobilization”.

With respect to the staff assisting management in all forms in promoting the corporate image of the University, 92.06% of respondents agree to the statement. The views of the respondents were that staffs in all the Units and Departments of the University have greater roles to play in the promotion of the University. These roles according to them include, attending national and international conferences and making the presence of the University felt; writing of articles for international journals; creating linkages and collaborations with reputable higher learning institutions; bringing into sharp focus research works done which are of international and national significance and publishing on the UDS website, mile-stones chalked by the University. On the statement that programmes and projects effectively and efficiently run by staff contribute to the positive image building of the University, 84.13% agree to the assertion. Many of these respondents cited the University’s flagship ‘Third Trimester Field Practical Programme (TTFPP)’ and the Problem-Based Learning Approach adopted by the School of Medicine and Health Sciences as the unique programmes that have greatly shot the University into the lime-light. Accordingly, they are advocating that these programmes and projects such as the Harmattan School and the Inter-Faculty Lectures organised every year by the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research and Consultancy Services (IIRaCS) should be pursued vigorously, because they believe that at these programmes and projects the University has foreign students and reputable organisations and stakeholders part-taking, hence, the need to vigorously continue with the programmes.

With respect to the statement that students’ output in academic work sends out positive image of the University to the outside world, 80.95% of the respondents agree to the statement. Others even attribute some very significant data gathered by most of the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies and some development stakeholders to the work done by students during their Third Trimester Field Practical Programme over the years. As this can be clearly seen in the background study of the UDS Strategic Plan (2017-2023) which states that “The core mandate was and still remains “to foster a closer interaction between academic and the rural communities in the quest for practical and sustainable solutions to the myriad of challenges facing the country”. The UDS is building a visible presence in rural communities over the years through its outreach programmes such as TTFPP. On the issue that “students positively promoting the University’s image in every possible area will enhance the image building of the University”, 74.6% of the respondents agree to the statement, citing the students’ performance at the Zain Africa Challenge that was held at La Palm Beach Hotel in Accra, Ghana, in November 2009 which propelled them to the International competition held in Malawi in February 2010 where UDS became third at the International arena. This is one of such and many other ways that the UDS’ students contribute positively in enhancing the image of the University.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The promotion of the corporate image of the University is very important in this competitive higher education environment. The UDS has over the years strived to project its image at both national and international arena. There is therefore the need for all key stakeholders or actors of the University to have a positive attitude and mind set, and be responsible in their roles as individual employees and students to work towards building the reputation of the University. When individual key stakeholders – students, staff, alumni, management and community members – carry out the assigned roles properly, it will certainly project the University’s corporate image and identity.

It is important for all newly appointed staff and fresh students be given special orientation to understand and appreciate the value of the University, its strategic vision and how collectively all stakeholders can work to achieve its social goals. As a primary duty, management should take into cognizance all internal communications as an effective tool to disseminate information that will build a healthy relationship with other industry players and foster a good corporate culture of the institution. Building the corporate image of the University is very significant when linked with collaborators from reputable institutions and agencies.

There is the need to refocus the TTFPP and continue to expand into other regions and also partner with more reputable foreign institutions to obtain a niche in the international arena. It should be the primary concern of management to make all staff and students feel relevant in building the reputation of the institution. This will encourage them to contribute their quota to the building of the corporate image of the University.



The promotion of healthy relationships among staff and students is of utmost importance. This will also help project the corporate image of the institution. Equally, having the goodwill of the immediate communities around the Campuses will also propel some positive recognition. Positive students' academic experience will send out to the world that the UDS is an excellent academic institution, hence, winning more applicants and faculty staff into the institution.

## 6. Recommendations for Management

The following recommendations are made based on the findings:

- The network of partnerships is surely one way of building a high-quality corporate identity. Therefore, the University should construct a high-standard identity through its network of excellent partnerships.
- Management should project the institution through its social activities, such as its Public Lectures: Africa Leadership Lectures, UDS International Lectures, the Harmanntan School lectures and other important activities.
- The quality of staff should be the prime concern of management. This will lead to high academic excellence and make the UDS visible and competitive at the national, regional and the international arena.
- Management should provide conducive teaching and learning environment that will enhance quality staff output leading to quality graduate output.
- Management should strengthen the UDS International Office as a vehicle to reach out more to stakeholders and international partners for more recognition.
- Periodically, the University should take stock of the policies and programmes brought forth and see whether is in tandem with the set objective(s) for the promotion of the corporate image and take necessary steps to either reinforce or make changes where necessary.
- Research work by the academic staff and other reputable institutions should be encouraged and supported by management. In doing so, it becomes a vehicle of promoting the corporate identity of the University.
- Finally, Management should be able to harness the potential of its alumni in this competitive global village to project its corporate image.

## 7. Future Research Direction

While this paper contributes to the corporate identity literature, it opens up a number of avenues for future research direction. First, further studies can examine how newly established universities can develop appropriate strategies to enhance their corporate reputation and corporate image. Another research niche that requires further studies is how universities can use alumni and community members as an important avenue for building institutional reputation. Studies can also explore the effectiveness of marketing strategies in developing institutional reputation in developing countries.

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