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1   Introduction

Higher education strategic marketing and brand communications in Africa.

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Strategic marketing of higher education encompasses the efforts made by tertiary or higher education institutions to develop a better understanding of the needs of their prospective customers in order to design products and services to meet and exceed these needs. These marketing activities of tertiary institutions should usually be carried out through the execution of purposeful conversations with all the university brand stakeholders, and this is the function of brand marketing communications. Brand marketing communications seeks to integrate multiple consumer contact points that occur through the purchase of commercial messages in paid, earned, and owned media to deliver persuasive and impactful statements about higher education brands. Persuasive brand communications is a critical pillar in the successful marketing efforts of universities worldwide, and this new edited book focuses on marketing and brand communication issues from an African perspective. This chapter introduces the coverage and contents of the book, highlighting the different themes and chapters.

Keywords: Strategic marketing, marketing communication, higher education, universities, Africa, edited book, introduction

Introduction

Strategic marketing of higher education encompasses the efforts made by tertiary or higher education institutions to develop a better understanding of the needs of their prospective customers in order to design products and services to meet and exceed these needs. These marketing activities of tertiary institutions should usually be carried out through the execution of purposeful conversations with all the university brand stakeholders, and this is the function of brand marketing communications (Mogaji, 2016). Brand marketing communications seeks to integrate multiple consumer contact points that occur through the purchase of commercial messages in paid, earned, and owned media to deliver persuasive and impactful statements about higher education brands. Persuasive brand communications is a critical pillar in the successful marketing efforts of universities worldwide, and this new edited book focuses on marketing and brand communication issues from an African perspective.

Africa is the second-largest continent, both in area and population, of the seven continents in the world. The continent is vast as is its education system designed to meet the educational needs of its citizens; however, there is a dearth of insight into this vast education system, especially its higher education institutions despite the fact that higher education is known to support countries' social, economic, and cultural progress (Alcaide-Pulido, Alves, & Gutiérrez-Villar, 2017). While acknowledging the limited theoretical insight into marketing higher education in Africa (Maringe & Foskett, 2002; Ivy, 2008) research abounds on higher education in the developed countries, highlighting a gap in knowledge that needs to be filled.

Universities in Africa are continually advancing towards providing better quality education (Olaleye, Ukpabi, & Mogaji, 2020). While there is a shortage of funds for existing universities, governments are still creating more universities, private institutions are also establishing universities to meet these growing demands, and likewise, universities in the developed countries are opening international branch campuses in Africa (Chee, Butt, Wilkins, & Ong, 2016; Maringe, 2009). The changing demographics of prospective students in Africa is also changing – they are more demanding, mobile, and tech-savvy and take time to search for information (Michael, 2004). These dynamics within the sector is necessitating the need for strategic marketing of higher education as universities are becoming more business-oriented in the competitive higher education market (Ndofirepi, Farinloye, & Mogaji, Forthcoming).

Marketing of higher education is necessitated based on the need to deliver a service to the market to those who can afford it (Mogaji & Yoon, 2019). In other words, some prospective students want to acquire tertiary education, and likewise, some universities need more students in order to remain commercially viable. Universities need to be strategic to portray how different and unique they are as this becomes a competitive advantage (Mackelo & Drūteikienė, 2010) and building this unique brand image as a university means more significant advantages are possible (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). The African context with these marketing dynamics, however, needs to be acknowledged.

A significant challenge that colleges and universities in Africa face apart from the state and standards of the campuses is that they are not deemed to be competitive enough for consumers to perceive them as offering better products and services than their competitors. Besides, there are external challenges, often not in control of the university. There are challenges with the countries in terms of safety, security, and opportunities, as well as the macroeconomic stability living standards, inflation, and unemployment.

The challenges of African universities are multifaceted. They face unique developmental challenges located in narratives of poverty, postcolonialism, coloniality, and more recently, decolonisation (Maringe, forthcoming). There is a gap in knowledge with regards to the marketing of higher education on the continent as the strategies adopted in the developed countries with a developed educational sector may not necessarily work in Africa (Mogaji, Farinloye, & Aririguzoh, 2017). Even though there are some developed higher education systems in Africa, such as in South Africa and Egypt, there is still a gap in knowledge about the African higher education market. Thus, there is need for better understanding of the

higher education market and importantly their marketing challenges which informs the marketing communications strategies to be adopted.

This book fills that gap in knowledge. It addresses one of the many sectors involved in developing the capacity of universities in Africa. While there are challenges with the administration of the universities, funding structure, curriculum, and quality of education (Maringe, 2005; Mogaji, 2019), this book focuses on the strategic marketing communications of the universities as they engage with various stakeholders and enhances managers' decision-making capacity. This book offers empirical insight into the higher education market across the continent. It offers significant theoretical and marketing practice implications for academics, higher education administrators, and practitioners on how best to reach out to prospective students in the competitive higher education market using digital media and creating a brand that stands out. Likewise, international practitioners aiming to market to prospective African students or wishing to start partnerships with existing African universities will also find this relevant in understanding the dynamics of the African higher education market. We hope that this book meaningfully advances our comprehension of marketing higher education in Africa and that it will stimulate further research.

Coverage and content of the book

Following a process of double-blind refereeing, 12 articles were selected that reflect some of the main challenges and themes of higher education marketing in Africa which represent a relevant area of research, both for scholars and practitioners. The chapters are grouped into four different themes. Part I has four chapters with a focus on the *marketisation in African universities*. There are four chapters in Part II that explore digital marketing in African universities. Part III is *branding and reputation management* explored over three chapters. Part IV is *moving from research to practice* explained in one chapter.

This first chapter provides a background to the study and introduced the coverage and contents of the book, highlighting the different themes and chapters.

Felix Maringe opens with the second chapter titled 'Marketisation in African universities in an era of decolonisation: Continuities and discontinuities'. The chapter argues that marketisation in higher education had become a widespread phenomenon across the world. Driven by neo-liberalism, and the strengthening of global capitalism, marketisation has influenced higher education sectors across the world to adopt business and profit-motivated strategies. In the process, the language and practices of business have become endemic in higher education sectors. The chapter calls for marketisation, which seeks to mitigate these

effects in higher education sectors of the Global South. With the increasing pace of decolonisation, the chapter notes the potential this has to increase and widen inequalities between higher education sectors of the global North and South and identifies ways in which global imperatives could speak to the imperatives of decolonisation in new marketisation arrangements.

The third chapter, 'An integrative model for marketing higher education in Africa: Branding beyond survival for posterity' by Christine Mwebesa and Felix Maringe, further builds on the marketisation of higher education in Africa. These two chapters set the pace for understanding the sector before developing marketing strategies. The authors recognise the impact of globalisation and commercialisation on the higher education market in Africa. The chapter noted that African universities are failing to engage the appropriate marketing practices to preserve the future and remain viable through enhanced student recruitment strategies. Qualitative interviews with senior executives of universities in Uganda gave insight into the changing higher education value system in Africa. The chapter concludes by developing an integrative model for marketing higher education in Africa.

The fourth chapter presents a more focused idea of exploring the challenges of marketing tools adopted by universities in Africa. The chapter titled 'Digital marketing of higher education marketing in Africa: Challenges, prospects, and opportunities' recognises that while some higher education institutions still report success in some traditional marketing techniques, such as open days, there are still challenges in adopting digital marketing communications in marketing African universities. This chapter identifies and explores the critical challenges of higher education marketing in Africa and provide recommendation for university marketing managers and administrators and policymakers, which addresses the identified challenges.

With a specific focus on Morocco, Sebti Hicham and Sandrine Simon present their research which focuses on student recruitment on a new programme. The chapter titled 'Missing a trick: Challenging the harmful effect of informational dissonance on new programmes students' recruitment: A Moroccan case study' acknowledges that theoretical knowledge about marketing strategies to influence prospective students' choice in Africa remains weak. In this chapter, they attempted to understand students' recruitment in the context of a young North African university. The study explored rational and emotional issues that influence students' choice for a higher education institution, distinguished students' self-centric criteria referring to social and self-esteem motivations, and university centric issues related to the perceived value the university offers. The chapter also identified three 'informational

cognitive dissonance' situations where university messages mismatch with prospective students' representations. The chapter concludes with a set of strategic and operational marketing recommendations for managers and practitioners.

Mark Camilleri's chapter titled 'Higher education marketing communications in the digital era' examines the global marketing environment of today's higher education institutions (HEIs). The chapter recognises that universities are increasingly behaving like for-profit organisations as they seek new opportunities and resources to prioritise revenue creation. The chapter further deliberates on contemporary integrated marketing communications that are intended to support HEIs to promote their quality, a student-centred education, as well as their high-impact and meaningful research in global markets. It concludes on the need for universities to keep investing inadequate resources, competences, and capabilities to leverage themselves amid intensifying competition in challenging socio-economic environments.

The seventh chapter provides a holistic view of social media as strategic communication for universities. The chapter titled 'Social media marketing: A strategy to reach university stakeholders' by Temitope Farinloye, Emmanuel Mogaji, and Josué Kuika Watat notes that social media have transformed how consumers interact with brands and how brand-related content is consumed. The advent of readily available social media applications has created opportunities for dialogic, and more interactive engagement between brands and consumers and universities are not excluded from this use of social media to engage with their stakeholders. Unlike most other brands, universities do have a diverse range of stakeholders which inadvertently influence their communication strategies, suggesting the need to recognise and embraces the benefits and opportunities that social media can bring as a tool. This chapter briefly discusses seven social media networks that are often used by universities and also recognises the African context that makes strategic communications on social media unique. The chapter concludes with recommendations on how African universities can adopt social media for strategic communication.

With a specific focus on social media in a specific country, Sunday Olaleye, Dandison Ukpabi, and Emmanuel Mogaji presented how Nigerian universities are using Facebook to communicate with their stakeholders in Chapter 7. The chapter, titled 'Social media for universities' strategic communication: How Nigerian universities uses Facebook', notes that while several studies have examined modes and methods of HEIs communication with stakeholders, there is a shortage of knowledge about how universities in the developing countries are using social media. The study employed stakeholder theory to give new understanding to social media marketing as a strategy to reach university stakeholders in

Nigeria. The study utilised an inductive, generic, qualitative approach in a netnography context to achieve the aim of this study. The study adopts a unique methodology to capture the usage of social media by the universities and explored their level of activity and analysed stakeholder responses.

Chapter 9 by Omolola Oluwasola provided insight into digital marketing strategies by private universities. The chapter, titled 'Digital marketing communication strategies for private universities in south western Nigeria', investigates the digital marketing tools private universities in Nigeria deploys to promote their institutions. The study interviews universities' public relations officers who disclose the digital marketing tools they are using and the challenges they are facing in fully adopting and integrating digital marketing in their student recruitment process. The study concludes by recommending the continuous integration of both offline and online channels for integrated marketing communication.

The third part of the book focuses on branding and reputation management strategies of African universities. Chapter 10, 'University reputation management' by Ruth Kiraka, focuses on the Kenyan higher education market. The chapter interviews senior university administrators of both public and private universities to understand reputation management strategies. The chapter further presents strategies for managing reputation, dealing with reputation crisis, and challenges in sustaining university reputation. The chapter concludes that reputation is an asset that must be managed like any other assets of the university. Importantly, all employees in the university have a stake in building and sustaining a good reputation. Where challenges are experienced, or in case of a reputation-damaging event, the university must face them head-on with speed, clarity, and focus.

Universities are making efforts to present themselves as unique brands as they reach out to their stakeholders. Branding in universities has become an increasingly topical issue among practitioners, as universities invest a huge amount of money in repositioning themselves. In Chapter 11, 'Analysis of African universities' corporate visual identities' by Temitope Farinloye and Emmanuel Mogaji, presents the result of the analysis of the brand identities of the top 200 universities in Africa. The study seeks understand the creative elements adopted in creating visual brand identities for African universities. While there are many forms of visual brand identifies, this chapter focuses primarily on logos. The study finds that overall there appears to be a lack of understanding with regards to creative design of brand identities by African universities, though with some exceptions as illustrated in the top 20 logos selected in the chapter. The chapter concludes with some suggestions to extend the current body of knowledge in the literature on the corporate logo and corporate visual identity,

especially with focus on HEI brand and in the African context. This study presents a theoretical framework of universities' brand identities which focuses on the shape, colour, and typeface of the logo.

'Leveraging university's value through branding' by Abina Babatunde, Ajayi, Oluseyi, and Lawal Azeez Tunbosun is presented in Chapter 12. They focus on the need for universities to leverage their values through branding, as the perception of African universities has changed drastically in contemporary times, particularly with the globalised and highly competitive nature of the university environment. This contribution identifies ways universities can adopt and deploy branding strategies to improve the brand image of their institutions. This is because like all other brands in the market, universities should also strive to earn high equity by working towards delivering on their brand promises.

The Chapter 13, 'Marketing higher education in Africa: Moving from research to practice' by Kieu Tai, Emmanuel Mogaji, Christine Mwebesa, Sarofim Samer, Taiwo Soetan and S Pee Vululleh, brings together collective insight from several expert contributors to present critical recommendations for university managers working on marketing communications. The chapter moves away from research to present the practical implications of strategic marketing communications. With the market expansion by international higher education institutions and the emergence of private higher education institutions, African higher education institutions, private or public, are facing and will soon have to adopt a marketing orientation. The chapter briefly discusses the new reality of marketing higher education in Africa, followed by a marketing orientation checklist for a higher education marketing manager to keep to their hearts. A large part of the chapter discusses ideas drawn from emerging research and well-proven practices to build, integrate, and develop the brand for African higher education institutions.

The final chapter, 'Conclusion: Emerging challenges, opportunities and agenda for research, practice, and policy on strategic marketing of higher education in Africa' written by the editors Emmanuel Mogaji, Felix Maringe and Robert Ebo Hinson, provides a summary of the book. It presents the practical implications and critical insights into strategic marketing and brand communications of higher education institutions in Africa. Agendas for future research ware also provided. It is anticipated that this will shape further discussion and theoretical advancement which will be relevant for scholars, students, managers, practitioners, and policymakers in the field of higher education marketing.

Conclusion

This book has been conceptualised to offer empirical insight into the higher education market across Africa. It provides significant theoretical and marketing practice implications for academics, higher education administrators, and practitioners on how best to market higher education in Africa and reach out to prospective students.

The selected chapters provide a wide variety of stimulating insights into knowledge advancements in marketing higher education in Africa. We believe this book represents a significant milestone in the study of marketing higher education in Africa, which has been under-researched. Finally, we thank all the authors who submitted articles for consideration in this edited book; over 24 papers were initially received.

All chapters were subject to a double-blind reviewing process. We are grateful to the reviewers who contributed their valuable time and talent to develop this edited book and ensured the quality of the chapters with their constructive comments and suggestions. We believe this book contains significant work which is profoundly meaningful for the higher education marketing field, and not just for Africa.

This book on higher education marketing and brand communications in Africa that focuses on strategic marketing and communications of higher education institutions in Africa has delivered profound insights into African university marketing and communications from both brick-and-mortar and digital perspectives. The authors have covered different geographies on the continent and employed different methodological approaches to reach their study conclusions. The authors' affiliations are also international in scope. The collection reflects the diversity and breadth of current research within this stimulating and evolving research area.

We hope you will find the chapters in this book both enriching and thought-provoking and that the insights provided in the collection of research materials will enhance the understanding in this area, inspire further interest in marketing higher education in Africa, and provide a basis for sound management decisions and stimulate new ideas for future research.

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