

# Young African Leaders Journal of Development

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Volume 3

Article 35

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1-1-2021

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### Recommended Citation

Seke, Mbougou Mouyabi (2021) "The Expensive Commodity of Education in Africa Versus Customer Experience," *Young African Leaders Journal of Development*. Vol. 3 , Article 35.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/yaljod/vol3/iss1/35>

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# THE EXPENSIVE COMMODITY OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA VERSUS CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

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## **ABSTRACT**

Moving into the time of the customer, the landscape of education has changed globally, including its model of leading business. The observation through the crystal of market-exchange in Africa shows students as customers and universities as service providers. For the reason that a business cannot exist without its customers, and higher education institutions are concentrating on the best way to win new business through multiple channels, customer experience arises to create value. It is within this context that this paper looks at higher education as an expensive commodity in Africa versus Customer eXperience. It also raises issues for talk and begins to express an assessment inspiration that may add to the idea of customer experience by service providers of Africa, here higher education.

**Keywords:** *Commodity, higher education, customer experience.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since Universities and colleges are constrained into turning out to be productive lucrative endeavours, they face an epic money related requirement. While Education is free in Germany and Norway alike, in Africa as well as in some countries like Brazil, China and Italy, education has become a product that people must buy themselves. The relationship among students, universities, lecturers and sponsors are the consequences of an incentive for money. Schools and Universities accept that the education that they offer is now a "product" and they treat the students they enrol as customers or "shoppers". The world of work is fast evolving and with it are the requirements of universities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Customer eXperience in return, plays a crucial role in servicing and retaining the clientele deriving from the range of changes in higher education in Africa.

## **Problem/Issue Statement**

The majority of qualities related with education on the African continent have gotten subordinate to a solitary mature expression of significant worth: "Cost". Social versatility is down the channel. We all know that this phenomenon results from the regularly expanding education costs and the expulsion of state subsidising in Higher education in several African countries if not all. The student and lecturer relationship takes place through the vehicle of the market, with the purchasing and selling of commodities taking the presence of education.

The social and cultural mission of higher education has been obscured by the interest for it to contribute in a more straightforward manner to every nation its aggressive edge in the worldwide economy. Universities have in this manner, become increasingly like organizations or businesses, and they try to build income by changing degrees into worldwide products. This has given competitive advantage to market rivalry and compelled universities to change themselves.

The aim of this paper is to discuss higher education as an expensive commodity in Africa versus Customer eXperience (CX). It outlines the weights prompting the change of Higher education into a costly product on the continent before making key recommendations of core university elements on customer experience. Beyond this aim, the paper raises issues for discussion and starts to express an examination motivation that may add to the thought of customer experience by specialist co-op of Africa, here Higher education.

## **Significance and Justification**

The observation through the crystal of market-exchange makes it evident that in higher education, students or graduates are the customers while Universities and colleges are specialist co-ops or service providers. The final product today is a source of many problems. Because of this cash-based relationship, numerous inquiries have found ground in this paper.



How often have we heard somebody saying he or she did not pay the mentioned fee for a talk or lecture to complete sooner than booked? Alternatively, for the workforce to not respond to their email on time or at all? Sometimes people claim that the incentive for money is not justified, despite any potential benefits. The analysis of these questions establishes the why of this topic. Hence, education as a whole has become a commodity and Universities are now businesses.

### **BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW**

Words or ideas convey various implications to various individuals. Concerning this paper, the definitions or depictions referenced here comprise the ground of talk and contentions completed. The paper takes in account definitions as business terms or as scholastic approvals.

In addition, though numerous authors express hopefulness with respect to future possibilities for advancement of hypothesis and strategies, the writing normally takes note of the requirement for progressively modern procedures to address an assortment of deficiencies, and furthermore recognizes an assortment of significant methodological inquiries. Two key concepts, namely “Commodity” and “Customer eXperience” constitute the basis of this brief review in helping to understand the shapes of the topic in exploration.

#### **What is a commodity?**

A commodity is any product or service delivered by individuals which both fulfils some human need, for example, it has use- value, and which is sold in exchange for cash or trade value. A sensibly exchangeable product or material purchased and sold unreservedly as an article of trade.

A product is a commodity when all units of production are indistinguishable, paying little heed to who produces them. In any case, to be a separated product, an organization's product is not quite the same as those of its rivals.

In other terms underscored Amadeo (2020), commodity can be characterized as any good or service that is purchased and sold simply on cost. These incorporate the exchanged products. They can likewise incorporate products not excluded from others dependent on brand, benefits, or other distinctive highlights.

She provides a practical example of a world well-known brand in the likes of Coca-Cola. For her and the author concurs, Coca Cola is a marked product that gets extraordinary dedication, and a more significant expense, because of its apparent separation from other cola drinks. A minimal effort store brand is even more a commodity since it is not vastly different from other store marks and is purchased basically on account of its low cost, not its taste.

Finally, yet importantly is **Customer eXperience (CX)**. Customer experience includes each part that an organization is offering—the nature of customer care, obviously, yet in addition publicizing, bundling, product and administration highlights, convenience, and unwavering quality. With this definition in hand, the main concern is customers consistently having an experience - great, terrible or uninterested - at whatever point they buy a product or service from an organization.

From the abovementioned, analysts or scholastics despite everything need to look for the response to this inquiry: **What is CX?**

There are wide ranges of definitions for CX, yet at its centre, everything boils down to how an individual feels about the experience of interacting with a brand. CX considers everything the customer contacts, tastes, smells, hears, sees all through the experience with the brand or an organization of any nature. What customers are going to feel or think? It is in effect practically over the top about the experience the customer has with the brand — the frame of mind of 'I need to be here,' as opposed to 'I must be here. Customer experience implies caring.

Along the lines of contacts of CX, direct contact for the most part happens during buy, use, and services and it often begins with the customer . Circuitous contact frequently includes impromptu experiences with portrayals of an organization is products, services, or brands and appears as verbal proposals or reactions, publicising, news reports, surveys, etc..

In 2018, Mr. Seke went to UNC (University of North Carolina) as an international exchange student from WBS (University of the Witwatersrand – Business School) in South Africa. The Associate Director from



UNC Accountable for Global Program, air posted an enrolled SIM Card for correspondence to him, at no charge. UNC continued updating him for his schedule from South Africa to Chapel Hill (North Carolina, USA) with climate conditions; orchestrated somebody to get him from the air terminal at arrival to his place of stay, at no charge. The University organized a welcome supper at no expense to him with an American Family. Pick up and drop off back at his place of stay after the supper, at no charge. How can one think Mr. Seke feels about UNC and its administration now?

That does not constantly mean free stuff, which not all organizations and not all plans of action support. Nevertheless, it means treating a customer like an individual, not a unit. A person, not a wallet with legs. Customer experience is the most energizing chance to organizations now and the explanation is straightforward; the organizations that emphasize on customer experience diminish agitate and increment incomes – prompting higher benefits!.

### **DETAILED TREATMENT OF TOPIC IN WRITING**

Given the significance appended to the point of change of Higher Education into a costly commodity versus CX, the development of a solid research base is pivotal for limit working in Africa.

#### **Is Higher Education Becoming a Commodity in Africa?**

The prompt response from this paper is a big – Yes! Reason being, a developing number of open and private non-benefit colleges have joined revenue driven aggregates in abusing new market openings in Africa. Enhancement of products and services through the series of framework are also among the components of expansive scope of changes that have affected higher education and moulded commodification in the continent.

Despite the fact that several authors, researchers and academics express different views on the issue, higher education has been purposely spoken to and portrayed by numerous legislatures as a commodity. For Hlatshwayo, Marawu, & Author (2016), the fact that recognition of higher education as a private decent, trading open enthusiasm for business contemplations and bared of social and open reasons for existing, is indefensible. Higher education, “is too important to society to allow its future to be determined by market forces”.

In fact, the outcome of the commodification of education is an intrinsically opposing connection between few stakeholders inclusive but not limited to academic staff and students only. Specialists in the field argue that these moves are the consequences by state and government subsidizing cuts suggesting that leaders of colleges are changing to maintaining their schools like a business with their leading group of trustees going about as professional boards.

In Africa today, when spurred by benefit, numerous universities are bound to offer projects in disciplines, which produce income to the detriment of orders that are costly or hard to educate. They conceal their eagerness behind the pertinence of the degrees granted versus the interest of the public on the loose. If Commodification is the way toward treating something like a commodity. In other terms, everything changes over either to products or merchandise, services, or articles of exchange. Giving a progressively conceptual idea to something like Higher education, the author agrees with advocates who accept that education has become a costly commodity in Africa. Private colleges and universities are price discriminators

The important question to ask is why schools and colleges have become a commercial centre that treats students' candidates like customers. Different experts might have different views, but the author coincides to the fact that the way higher education took to turning into the business it is today, is a wonder that has seriously distorted the experiences of candidates to most specific schools in various nations in Africa. Tragically underscored Williams (2016), in the past 25 years, higher education has moved from being an open assistance entity by governments to the largely purchased and sold private commodity globally inclusive of Africa.

#### **Why Customer eXperience and How It Connects With Higher Education?**

Since the relationship between the student and lecturer is done through the vehicle of the market, with the purchasing and selling of commodities under the umbrella of education; experience of interaction before, during and after degree or course completion is nowhere to be barred.



Customer experience is the inward and emotional reaction customers have to any immediate or circuitous contact with an organization, in this case higher education. Additionally, a trade esteem, empowering Higher education to take the state of a contending product and be gone into a serious market structure establishes the connection with Customer experience. To be sure, the Competition and Market Authority as of now regulate universities in some nations worldwide.

With reference to contacts of CX underlined in the literature review, both direct and indirect contacts are now visible in education through open day, information sessions, flyers, radio shows and other gatherings. The above set of events respond partially to the why of customer experience. The number of recruits and brand recognition complete the answer. Beyond this debate of recruitment events, numbers and brand recognition, how CX connects to higher education?

Today in higher education and elsewhere in the society, perceptions represent everything. Perception connects and convinces people. One of the characteristics of customer experience is perception. Through this view, alumni perceived their institution as a superior product offering over other institutions of higher education. A differentiated product should not be a superior product underscores Hofstrand (2019); it is however the responsibility of the purchaser to see it as a superior product. In reality, a significant part of the broadcasting and development that happens in our society of which there is price focused on attempting to persuade shoppers that their product is superior to those of contenders. Regardless of whether it is in reality better is insignificant.

A positive customer experience brings about fulfilment to a customer, yet it can likewise prompt extra income. The best advertising money can purchase is a customer who will advocate a business - because they will encourage their loved ones to that brand, for nothing out of pocket. Alumni play a crucial role here in advocating their educational institutions to peers or other people from their network.

Since schools and colleges are run like businesses; the main thing that differentiates public and private universities these days is in the event that they can persuade the customers that they are better than their counterparts are. Higher education connects to CX through perception and inducement. These connect through direct and indirect contacts. Subsequently, ranking and history of an institution set the ground for advocacy to alumni. For instance, there is an intense debate between alumni of two South African based institutions: is Wits Business School (WBS) better than the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS)? Why and how? Alternatively, vice versa.

Customer experience is of basic significance to the continued development of a business. Because higher education is now a business, CX continues to build sustainability for many institutions equally. It is essential through connection with CX that higher education institutions guarantee a positive customer experience so customers construct brand reliability and proclivity, proselytize their product or support and allude their companions, and leave the institutions with positive customer surveys that will enable them to hold income and gain new customers.

### **CHANGE COMPONENTS – EXPENSIVE COMMODITY VERSUS CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

Before April 1993, higher education was not a product. Education was everything except a product. To date, more is required from all stakeholders. Since commodification of education has interfered with the basics of educational procedures and refined the conventional technique for education into sellable bundles of things; the higher education sector has become an expensive product and a sole business looking for customers to keep up supportability and development. To keep up sustainability and development for higher education, the customer (student) matters like never before. For business to survive today, customer centricity is key.

With what is occurring in the business landscape of the 21st century underscores Plante (2016), lecturers have become commodity makers and deliverers, and students have become customers of more commodities. With the price tag associated to this commodity, customers have power, not the vendors. Who gave them this power? Money and everyone of us - with assistance from the internet (Web). It is no longer a taboo in Africa for price increase activities from higher education institutions through their offerings justified by the economic developments and supported by their database of successful alumni.

The new power represented by the students (Customers) require a reward in exchange of the price tags joint to every product or service from the vendors, and that reward is “eXperience”. Customers have more choices



than any time in recent memory through institution is contenders; more prominent simplicity of exchanging power than any time in recent memory with a large number of memberships and premium choices. In addition, more capacity to influence any business than any other time in recent memory utilizing web-based social networking and online audits. Africa has embarked on an immense and dynamic higher education landscape, impacted by various drivers of change.

However, it is certainly a change for the best the author accepts. Customers are presently the best asset for growing a brand mindfulness in a positive manner - because their suggestions imparted to loved ones are more dependable than any marketing and publicizing channels. Accordingly, the question to ask every individual is – what happened the last time the individual in question had either an extraordinary or horrible customer experience? One presumably went to a companion or collaborator to disclose to them the story, or went to his or her social media channels to communicate their emotions to the world.

Ever since the shift of higher education into a commodity has taken place, the relationship of key resources in the current setup remains between the customer and specialist co-op. In this unique circumstance, universities remain the force places of scholarly and social capital, hence makers of focused markets. For that reason, it is behind this perception of universities as makers of competitive markets that CX arises to create value. Africa still wants the rationales, impact and the domino effect of education as a commodity and the relationship deriving from this expensive commodity with CX. Higher education has changed, it continues to change, and this incorporates the pattern of commodification in full.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In spite of the changing interest of higher education in this time and age, its value is in what their customers find through this exploratory period in their life. Much of what they escape at school is the exertion they put into it. Since value has different features and achievement relies upon on how one measures it or see it, beneath are the proposals made by the author considering the topic in question.

Meanwhile, the main thrusts of commodification of advanced education are more than the limiting powers; change process is required to restore harmony. The treatment of the client must be with inspirations of experience prize and varsities should focus on the client experience methodology. Universities and colleges should drive campaigns for first year customer experience; seek to incentivise some advocates through referrals and other strategies.

For the reason that higher education institutions are running like a business, they ought to consider utilizing customer fulfilment studies all the time, or after significant period along the customers (students) venture. The application of this recommendation will give them a thought of their customers' experience through their product or service contributions.

They ought to recognize rate and purposes behind customer beat as any business does or will do. They should ensure they are doing an ordinary examination of their stirred customers with the end goal for them to distinguish if agitate rate is expanding or diminishing.

## **CONCLUSION**

Students or customers are not exclusively answerable for their prosperity. The school or university does make a difference. A great part of the discussion about higher education being or turning into a costly commodity versus CX concerned essentially colleges and universities as teaching institutions and the degree to which the advantages of adapting, directly and indirectly, go past the private advantages gained by their alumni.

Practically speaking, a great part of this discussion resides on the endorsement of customer experience practices by higher education institutions. The state of CX in business today in addition to the association with the costly commodity of education in Africa and the remainder of the globe is undeniable. However, if the certificates or degrees granted by higher education organizations resemble to the manner in which an individual leaves a retailer with a TV or the other way around, at that point one cannot separate CX from this costly commodity.



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