

**BRANDING AS A MEANS OF POSITIONING ITSELF IN THE MARKETPLACE –
A CASE STUDY OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF BUEA – THE
ENTREPRENEURIAL UNIVERSITY**

Evaristus Nyong Abam,

MSc. in international hospitality management

Catholic University Institute of Buea, College of Business, Department of Tourism and
Hospitality Management

ABSTRACT: *Branding is the process involved in creating a unique name and image for a product in the consumers' mind, and this happens mainly through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme. It aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers. Brand not only creates loyal customers, but it creates loyal employees and gives them something to believe in, something to stand behind and finally it helps them understand the purpose of the organization or the business. A strong brand is invaluable as the battle for customers intensifies day by day. It's important to spend time investing in researching, defining, and building your brand after all; your brand is the source of a promise to your consumer. Brand serves as a guide to understanding the purpose of business objectives and it enables the business or a company to align a marketing plan with the objectives and the effectiveness of brand doesn't just happen before the purchase, but it's also about the life of the brand of the experience it gives a consumer. A business or companies' brand is one of your greatest assets and it is not just the logo, slogan and design scheme, but the customers' total experience of your business.*

KEYWORDS: Brand, Branding, Marketplace, Consumers, Business Objective

INTRODUCTION

There is a lot of confusion around branding and there are numerous definitions, so decades ago branding was defined as a name, slogan, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these elements that identify products or services of a company. The brand was identified of the elements that differentiated the goods and or service from the competition. Today brand is a bit more complex, but even more important in today's world of marketing, it's the perception that a consumer has when they hear or think of your company name, service or product (www.thebalance.com). By building a website that describes what you offer, designing adverts that promote your goods and services, selecting specific corporate colours that will be associated with your company, creating a logo, and featuring it across all your social media accounts, you are branding your company. That is, you are shaping how and what people's perceptions of your business are and what your customers say about your brand is the reality and not what you'd like them to think. It's the impression that cracks into their minds when they hear your business' name and it's based on a feeling they have that is based on their experiences they've had with you, good or bad (www.marketingdonut.co.uk).

Background of the Catholic University of Buea

The Catholic University Institute of Buea (CUIB) South West Region, Cameroon, was approved as a non-profit making university in two separate letters.

The authorization to create CUIB on 09/01/0194 of 11 June 2009 and the authorization to start was signed by the Honourable Minister of Higher Education Prof Jacque Fame Ndongbo by decision no 10/02173/N/MINSUP/DDES/ESUP/SAC/NJE/ebm dated 26th of May 2010.

Its primary purpose is to train professional servant leaders with moral and spiritual values so that they may be responsible to their communities. The proprietor/chancellor of the Catholic University of Buea is the Bishop of the Diocese of Buea. In June 2011, another arm of the University, the Business and Research Park was created as a legal entity of its own by the Cameroon laws no RC BUC.2031-B023 with the name CUIB-Centre for entrepreneurship research and innovation.

From the president's message of 2015/2016 academic year, he reiterated that anyone who steps into the CUIB campus will notice that CUIB has a strong sense of community and campus pride. It clearly makes a difference in the lives of students and the surrounding communities in Buea. The students, staff and faculty go out weekly to carryout volunteerism in surrounding communities. Just five years old, the rest of the country has begun noticing its accomplishments through its students who are not only likeable and humble but are strong academically as they can compete with their peers internationally and win internal awards. Examples include, the Tony Elumelu entrepreneurship awards, the Anzisha award etc.

The Catholic University Institute of Buea Sport Academic (CUSA), Went operational in December 2014 with authorisation no 1106/G37/C84/VOL II/SAAJP with the main aim of assisting young, talented and excellent skilled Cameroonians in the various field of sport like football, volleyball, basketball, handball etc.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The word "brand" or "branding" is a moving target and evolves with the behaviour of consumers, it is a mental picture of who you as a company represents to consumers and this is influenced by the elements, words, and creativity that surround it and branding is all of the ways you establish an image of your company in your customers' eyes (www.thebalance.com).

A brand is the idea or image of a specific product or service that consumers connect with, by identifying the name, logo, slogan, or design of the company who owns the idea or image and this is when that idea or image is marketed so that it is recognizable by more and more people, and identified with a certain service or product when there are many other companies offering the same service or product. Advertising professionals work on branding not only to build brand recognition, but also to build good reputations and a set of standards to which the company should strive to maintain or surpass. Branding is an important part of Internet commerce, as it allows companies to build their reputations as well as expand beyond the original product and service, and add to the revenue generated by the original brand (www.brickmarketing.com).

When working on branding, or building a brand, companies that are using web pages and search engine optimization have a few details to work out before being able to build a successful brand. Coordinating domain names and brand names are an important part of finding and keeping visitors and clients, as well as branding a new company. The harmonization of a domain name and brand names lends identification to the idea or image of a specific product or service, which in turn lets visitors to easily discover the new brand. Branding is also a way to build an important company asset, which is a good reputation, and whether a company has no reputation, or a less than stellar reputation, branding can help change that. Branding can build an expectation about the company services or products, and can encourage the company to maintain that expectation, or exceed them, bringing better products and services to the market place (www.brickmarketing.com).

The purpose of branding is to merely and easily help your customers understand what you offer and how you're different, it's not only a unique selling proposition, it is the combination of all the ways you communicate what you stand for (www.shopify.com).

To succeed in branding, you must understand the needs and wants of your customers and prospects and this is achieved by integrating your brand strategies through your company at every point of public contact. You also have to think of branding as the expression of who you are as a company or organization and what you stand to offer to your customers (www.thebalance.com).

An effective brand strategy not only gives you a major edge in increasingly competitive markets but it simply tells them what they can expect from your products and services, and it differentiates what you are offering from your competitors. Your brand is derived from who you are, who you want to be and who people perceive you to be and the foundation of your brand is your logo, your website, packaging and promotional materials, all of which should integrate your logo and communicate your brand as developing your brand can be very complex (www.entrepreneur.com).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The need of using a case study approach allows the researcher to keep hold of the holistic and significant characteristics of real-life proceedings; Altinay and Pavaskevas (2008) think that a case study approach has been a popular research strategy among researchers in the hospitality industry in the investigations of a number of areas. Veal (2006) indicated that an empirical approach is the collection and analysis of data; it could be quantitative or qualitative, primary or secondary. No research is purely empirical; it is usually informed by some sort of theory or conceptual frame work. Some researchers are of the opinion that a single research method may use both quantitative and qualitative techniques and procedures in combination as well as use primary and secondary data. The quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedure each have their own strength

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Economic of Communion (Eoc): Chiara Lubich, Foundress of the Focolare's Economy of Communion Philosophy was overwhelmed by the poverty of her members and the inequalities

between the rich and the poor and she realized that something more radical needed to be done. It is in this light that in 2007, Bishop Immanuel Bushu, Bishop of the Diocese of Buea - Cameroon had an inspiration to found a Catholic Professional University to address the problems of unemployment, poverty, youth idleness and dependency and overcrowding in public universities. The Bishop surprised the world by declaring it an EoC university. The Bishop and proprietor's vision was not only to train job creators versus Job seekers but to form a "new people," "new men and women", —Christian business leaders, saints and scholars, entrepreneurs, workers, directors, consumers, scholars, administrators, students, economic workers, rich and poor, families—who could be called "homo donator," persons who would be capable of putting into practice the "culture of giving" in a new society that puts solidarity and sharing at the heart of its understanding of relationships and so bring the authentic transformation that the African continent needs through living out the "culture of giving"(www.cuib-cameroon.org). To achieve this vision of the proprietor, the Catholic University Institute of Buea has design and built what is now known as the CUIB – Economy of Communion village. This is a series of "boukarous," circular buildings, seven in number to express perfection and to remind anyone who enters the campus to know that sharing is our culture. These structures are meant also to facilitate collaborative work, learning in groups, and sharing (www.cuib-cameroon.org).

Economy of Communion and the CUIB Business and Research Park

The Catholic University Institute of Buea has created its own business park known as centre for entrepreneurship, research and innovation (CUIB - CERI). The idea of the business park is to demonstrate that economic activity can be viable when performed in a climate of freedom, equality, and fraternity. It is important to note here that all businesses that are in partnership with CUIB - CERI must be willing to share a percentage of their profits in three parts – to the poor, to sustain the business, and to foster the culture of sharing (www.cuib-cameroon.org). The Catholic University Institute of Buea – The Entrepreneurial University has thus bring internship to campus.

Volunteerism: the Catholic University of Buea strives to promote volunteerism in a society where the culture of volunteerism is not well valued. There is also the CUIB- volunteerism network program which is also to help encourage student's community engagement service. A lot of the community work is done during the volunteerism week and the monthly volunteerism work carried out by the students, staff and faculty (employees) of various schools and also the college of business and technology. CUIB is deeply committed to corporate responsibility initiatives through pro bono service, community engagement, diversity and environmental sustainability.

Colloquium Guest Speaker Activities

In collaboration with CUIB's institutional partner Go Ahead Africa Ltd, CERI (centre for research and innovation) organizes every second Wednesday of the month from 1pm a colloquium inviting distinguished professionals as Guest speakers to share experiences with and inspire students to dream and start the journey to greatness, review success stories and identify matching models. This monthly entrepreneurial and academic activity is meant to maximize exposure and experience of CUIB students. Students are encouraged to participate, take notes, ask questions and make succinct summaries of activity, research and lessons learnt following prescribed guidelines which shall be considered as part of student annual Entrepreneurial continuous assessment test (www.cuib-cameroon.org).

Entrepreneurship Training and Practice (ENP) Program

The Entrepreneurship Training and Practice (ENP) project is designed to create a new breed of individuals that use entrepreneurial values and approaches to solve major entrepreneurial problems. In this guise therefore, the different services offered by CERI are designed to instigate students to learn to apply imagination to challenging problems, to conceive prototype and create solutions that deliver environmental, social and economic value. Typically, as budding entrepreneurs all students regardless of professions, schools or levels are trained to be on a personal mission to make the world a better place for people around them upon completion.

Booth Camp Activities

CERI organizes a boot camp and/or Start-up compulsory program for Seniors which is open to Freshmen, Sophomore and Juniors as well as the general public who participate against a fee. The essence is to bring together developers, designers, sales people, product managers and curious entrepreneurs to share ideas, form a team, create products and launch start-ups within 54hrs. It begins with individual 60 seconds presentations, leading to the formation of teams around the best projects. The teams spend the rest of the weekend to work, seek the opinion of potential customers, validate their ideas and create prototypes with the help of experienced mentors and coaches. The last day the teams present their projects and receive guidance from a professional jury. Participants are trained into the art of pitching entrepreneurial ideas to gain recognition.

CONCLUSION

Branding is one of the most important aspects of any business be it large or small, retail or business to business and an effective brand strategy gives you a major edge in increasingly competitive markets. Consistent, strategic branding leads to a strong brand equity, which means the added value brought to your company's products or services that allows you to charge more for your brand than what identical, unbranded products command. Businesses or companies have to create a unique name and image for a product in the consumers' mind, mainly through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme.

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