



CORPORATE REBRANDING AS A MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR BRAND IMAGE IN THE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Every University is unique in terms of profile, organizational structure, organizational culture, developmental stages, resources availability, politics, strategic goals, different faculties and other different issues. It is expected that the Management of Universities create a social, friendly and academic atmosphere that will enhance the interplay between the Management and other stakeholders in the building of a formidable corporate brand. Unfortunately, when multiple crisis happens, the Management of University reputation is at stake. Hence, the need for rebranding. This paper theorizes the effects of corporate rebranding on brand image in Lagos State University from a social constructionist point of view. With the aid of taxonomy of brand perspectives and the theory of Social construction, this paper was able to analyze labor relations, Management policies and brand image to conclude that continuous communication of information to stakeholders via formal and informal signals is very vital in creating formidable corporate brand image. Also, improved service quality and good public relations are very important for the development and management of University brand image.

Keyword: University, Branding, Brand Image, Social Construction, Brand Perspectives.

JEL Classification: M31, M37

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I. Introduction

Corporate brand according to Balmer and Gray (2003) is defined as the face of an entity since it embodies different multifaceted units of a body in a simple form. Brown, (1998) also observed that the function of a corporate brand is to limit the capacity of competitors to imitate, thereby endowing organizations to have a competitive advantage. Another position by deChernatony and Mc Donald (2005) is that successful brands create sustainable competitive advantage which results in higher profitability and market performance. This therefore may account for the global brand leadership status of brands such as Coca-Cola, Mercedes Benz, Nike, Microsoft, Toyota and Ford amongst others, as beneficiaries of strong and strategic brand building efforts (Edigin, 2011). Nevertheless, firms with global status and their marketing communication agencies have continued to create rebranding strategies, so as to distinguish and serve as directional tools for different stakeholders for the purposes of employment, investment and influencing the behavior of customers, in order to persistently signify that their promise and agreement with stakeholders are kept (Abubakari, 2016; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Grayser, 1999). It is therefore not surprising to find governments and countries using different brand strategies to sell their products and countries to the rest of the world to increase their international profile so that foreign direct investments with other trade and tourism potentials can be achieved (Edigin, 2011).

While countries, governments, private and public sector organizations pursue to achieve their branding objectives in order to enhance their sales, growth and developments; educational institutions too are not left out in exploring rationales for branding (Chapleo, 2011). Literatures on University branding have looked at key factors for students' recruitment (Tas & Ergin, 2012, 146); identified the trends and strategies involved in the branding of Universities (Drori, 2013) or knowing the players, interests and politics involved in the University branding game (Aula et al., 2015) to mention a few. According to Aula, et al (2015), academics and practitioners have been able to research on University branding based on the share of increased attention of literatures that reflects the changes in the universities operational environment, marketization and demands for external accountability in order to attract students, faculty and appeal to corporate partners with governmental regulators while becoming more visible and better positioned than competitors. As Research on University branding is gathering momentum in developed nations on how branding activities affect Universities, or how it serves as a marketing and communications activity that is not only manageable but also a-political



(Aula et al., 2015); very few studies exist on the effects of University branding in a developing nation like Nigeria. Furthermore, Tas & Ergin (2012) observed that works on University branding are limited on international level as they are written in areas of perception, success of branding, brand harmonization, choice-model of college students, University brand components and the positioning of University brands in Asian countries. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, there are quite limited empirical findings on University branding studies. Suffice to say, that a handful of Nigerian Universities can be observed to have fully developed successful brands like commercial organisations in the private sector. Similarly, a number of Universities can be said to have clear ‘reputations’ but not necessary ‘brands’. As at August 2017, there are 84 public Universities and 69 private Universities in Nigeria (NUC, 2017). Considering the number of Universities and the size of young population targeted for higher education as stated by Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), there was 1, 543,739 applicants pursuing admission into the different Universities. Specifically, 1,534,083 candidates sought admission into public Universities, while 9,656 candidates applied to the private Universities. However, for these Universities to enjoy a near equal patronage from target audiences, while avoiding clustered admission request structure that is elicited above, Nigerian Universities must possess a corporate brand image that will influence stakeholders as a University of first choice. Thus, research studies on University branding in Nigeria is crucial.

I.1 Research Objectives

This paper sets out to explain the effects of rebranding as a Management strategy on brand image of Lagos State University. It is also to contribute to the limited research in the area of University Branding with special focus on LASU.

I.2 Research Question

To what extent has the use of corporate rebranding as a Management strategy in Lagos State University enhanced the University’s brand image?

To achieve the goals set above, this paper is divided into seven sections. This section (Introductory section) gives a background on the need for this paper. Section two is a review of extant literatures eliciting the conceptual, empirical and theoretical positions of past literatures as related to the research topic. Section three discusses the method of data gathering and analysis. This is followed by section four that gives a critical review of LASU’s rebranding project and section five discussed the linkage between theory and practice by giving the position of the paper based on its findings. Section six concludes



the discussion of the paper while section seven discussed the limitations and recommends areas for future studies.

II. Literature review


Several authors have developed different definitions to express their meaning for the branding concept. According to Abubakari (2016), there is consensus among scholars that the essence of branding is to create product differentiation and brand preference in the minds of customers. Furthermore, the author argued that for a brand to be a symbolic statement, image or message that is packed and conveyed to customers should be able to create strong emotional bonds in order for them to know what the organisation stands for. Coleman (2011) observed that there are nine brand themes under three perspectives (input, output and evolutionary) that are used to categorize brands according to deCharnatony and Dall’Olmo Riley (1997) taxonomy of Brand Perspectives.

Table 1- Taxonomy for Brand Perspectives by de Chernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley, (1997)

<u>Input Perspective</u>	<u>Output Perspective</u>	<u>Evolutionary</u>
Legal instrument Logo Company identity	Image Personality Relationship Adding value	Evolving entity

Source: Coleman, (2011: 19)

He explained input perspective of a brand as something the marketer creates such

as legal instrument ‘®’ or ‘™’; a logo , a company ‘LASU’ or a more holistic identity system in terms of how the organisation wants consumers to perceive it. From an output perspective, Coleman (2011) observed that a brand can be considered as being on the minds of customers. Hence, brands can be considered as the image in consumers’ minds. This is detected as a way of adding value to the purchase; while a personality is developed where the brand is perceived to have a quasi-human quality. This eventually develops into a formidable relationship between the consumer and the brand. Finally,



evolutionary perspective sees a brand more of a fluid and dynamic entity which evolve or develop from a brand owner to consumer focus. Consequently, Academy of Marketing (AMA) (2014) defined a brand as “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. This posits why deChernatony's (2009) defined a brand as “a cluster of values that enables a promise to be made about a unique and welcomed experience”. From the above definitions, one can conclude that branding is a major marketing activity that emphasizes an organization's continual connectedness to its external environment of which customers are a major component (Abubakari, 2016). It enables both small and large firms to create, nurture and innovate their market based assets; develop perceived brand value and customer based brand equity while at the same time build strong brands which enhances the firm's ability to link its internal and external environments successfully (Abimbola, 2001, 97-106). Therefore, the corporate visual identity elements like name, logo, slogan and colour play a vital role in awareness creation and recognition as they further act as symbols of assurance to stakeholders (Balmer & Gray, 2003) thereby if successfully created organisations will achieve competitive advantage that results in high profitability and market performance (DeChernatony & Mc Donald, 2005).

II.1. Corporate Branding

Abubakari (2016) observed that the corporate branding concept is gradually gaining acceptance in marketing literature because it has been able to describe how organisations connects their vision, organisational culture and corporate images through the managerial skills of top Management. Citing Muzellec and Lambkin (2006, 803-824); Knox and Bickerton (2003); King (1991) & Balmer (1998, 2001); Abubakari (2016) observed that corporate branding requires a multidisciplinary practice that aids the combination of strategic elements, culture and communication to create differentiation and preference within a competitive landscape so that the wider set of stakeholders associated with the organisation can be assured of strong brands. For instance, King (1991) and Balmer (2001) argued that corporate branding involves all stakeholders and commitment across the organisation. Variables such as physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection and self-image defines the brand and outlines the boundaries within which it can change and develop (Kapferer, 1997; Abubakari, 2016).

II.2. Corporate Rebranding

As an emerging area of research (Goi and Goi, 2011), various researchers have



been able to show their understanding by coming up with definitions and conceptual models to explain the corporate rebranding concept in corporate marketing literature (Roy and Sarkar, 2015: 340-360; Abubakari, 2016). According to Muzellec et al. 2003: 31-40), corporate rebranding is the renaming of a corporate entity so as to signify a major strategic change or positioning. This is a signification to stakeholders that something about the organisation has changed, thereby reshaping stakeholder images through formal and informal signals (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006: 803-824; Dowling, 2001; Abubakari, 2016). Above all, Knox & Bickerton (2003), Otubanjo & Amujo (2012: 403-417) are of the view that for corporate rebranding to be effective, all personnel should be involved. This is because the achievement of corporate rebranding involves changes in corporate visual identity elements which is normally communicated through the use of communication mix elements and visual, verbal and behavioral expressions of the organizations unique model communicated through interaction and stakeholder experience with organization's personnel (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Stuart & Muzellec, 2004: 472-482; Abubakari, 2016).

II.3. Drivers of Corporate Rebranding

Over the years, scholars of corporate marketing have been able to develop scholarly articles eliciting the drivers of corporate rebranding strategies by Management of organisations. Citing studies of Kapferer (1997); Muzellec, et al. (2003); Stuart & Muzellec (2004: 472-482); Muzellec & Lambkin (2006: 803-824); Stuart & Muzellec (2006) and Goi & Goi (2011); Abubakari (2016) acknowledged that underperformance, change in ownership structure (due to mergers, acquisitions, spin-offs, demergers), change in market dynamics, change in corporate strategy (due to diversification, divestment, internationalization or localization), change in competitive position (due to erosion of market share), outdated image or reputational problems, change in external environment (as a result of legal obligations), major crisis and catastrophes, change in the structure or management structure of business organisations, external forces (such as nature of competition, external stakeholders, macro-economic situation, regulatory environment and major shifts in the marketplace) are drivers of corporate rebranding. However, the success of corporate rebranding strategy is dependent on the relevance of information (news) and effective communication to stakeholders at the time of change (Abubakari, 2016; Stuart and Muzellec, 2004: 472-482).



II.4. Corporate rebranding and Corporate Brand Image

Earlier sections above have been able to inform about the growing saturation of markets and the aggressive competitions between organizations in the delivery of products offered to their different target publics. Unfortunately, other aspects such as perceptions and interpretation of brands, implied determination of organization's ability to compete and translation of consumers emotional experiences are factors that also affect the corporate brand image (Abubakari, 2016; Brown, 1998; Brady & Cronin, 2001). According to Dobni & Zikhan (1990), brand image is not formed by the technical or physical attributes of the product but is defined by the perceptions and interpretations of the emotional experiences the customer gets from the brand. On the other hand, corporate brand image is referred to as the overall impression of the brand that resides in the minds of the stakeholders (Zikhan et al., 2001). These two definitions indicate that organization is seen as a brand and the perception of the organizational reality is more important than the organization's technicality of the product when it comes to image.

While trying to identify the mediating role of marketing communications in corporate rebranding and corporate brand image, Abubakari (2016) identified several literatures to argue that sources such as direct experience with the organization, exposure to marketing communication, study of consumer behaviour towards the brand, knowledge of different experiences and contacts that the different stakeholder groups experienced with the organization determines how organization develops corporate brand image. This posits why Davis et al. (2004); Keller (2001); Gray & Balmer (1998); Muzellec & Lambkin (2008: 283-299); Roy & Sarkar (2015: 340-360) and Abubakari (2016) emphasize that corporate brand image is one of the main sources of brand differentiation and brand strength because it provides valuable sources of brand equity and brand positioning while at the same time enhances a wide spread recognition of corporate brand elements among stakeholders.

II.5. Empirical Review

Competition in the global market has enhanced product differentiation thereby requiring more innovative and effective marketing techniques in order to inform, persuade and remind target audience about the need to acquire the product promoted. Consequently, new product research firms are evolving with a specific focus on the academic market (Tas & Ergin, 2012) so that Universities and Colleges can be able to gain from the benefits of successful branding (Helmsley et al. 2016). Furthermore, Melewar & Nguyen (2015) posited that great potentials exist for researchers to contribute



with new branding concepts, theories and fundamental frameworks because higher educational sector has much to gain from the benefits of successful branding, especially the public sector organizations (Watkins & Gonzenbach, 2013: 15-33).

However, Helmsley-Brown et al. (2016) noted that in spite the considerable debate and uncertainty about how to capitalize on the opportunities globalization offers; findings from studies seldom have much relevance and application in the higher educational sector. This perhaps supports why findings of earlier studies by Chapleo (2011); Tas & Ergin (2012); Iqbal et al. (2012) and Aula et al. (2015) have not been really felt on the performance of higher institutions. Chapleo (2011) observed the likelihood of controversy for internal audiences who question the suitability and efficiency of branding among Universities. The paper concluded that University branding is inherently complex and therefore applying commercial approaches may be over simplistic. Tas & Ergin (2012) observed the key factors for students' recruitment by considering the number of Universities and size of young population targeted for higher education in Turkey. Findings of study indicates that students emphasize on career advancement and job opportunities as a factor of choice of institution. Likewise, brand reputation, ranking and accreditation issues are also deciding factors. But information on these factors was advised to be promoted for knowledge of target audience, otherwise, students may not choose a university as an institution of choice.

Iqbal et al. (2012) used a semi- structured interview to investigate the effects of attributes such as awareness, acceptance, prestige, incentives and quality on brand image of Universities. The authors concluded that for a University to be an institution of first choice, the image of the University is dependent on quality, prestige, acceptance and financial incentives to be gained through the institution that creates the image on the minds of the people. Thus, increasing awareness is most desirable to consider the name of the University. In another research, it is argued that a University can be understood as a political game characterized with players with different interest positions and means of influence (Aula et al. 2005). The study exemplifies the importance of identifying critical players that is likely to engage in the branding process because branding is a political-strategic act.

While previous studies such as Robertson & Khatibi (2013: 17-32) explored associations between branding and performance in order to improve employee commitment, reduce staff turnover and increase productivity; majority of the studies adopted business sectors and industries as research samples (see Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Hankinson, 2012; Hsiao & Chen, 2013) underplaying the diversity of the higher



educational sector. Therefore, the uniqueness of every University in terms of profile, organizational structure, organizational culture, development stages, resources, politics, strategic goals and different issues in different faculties (Asaad et al. 2013: 838–856) require further researches on brand meaning, brand identity, creation of desirable brands, building and rebuilding strong brands and the management of reputations in the higher education sector (Helmsley-Brown, et al. 2016).

Findings in corporate branding literatures (such as Stuart & Muzellec, 2004: 472-482; Abimbola & Otubanjo, 2013: 87-93; Abubakari, 2016) observed that the rationale behind corporate rebranding exercise occurs as a result of changes in the internal or external environment of the organisation. According to Abubakari (2016), earlier studies on impact of name change on company's value; corporate rebranding and firm's performance; brand preference; perception of rebranding; impact of multiple rebranding on brand loyalty; and consumer's reaction to service rebranding have been able to influence increased return, market recognition and position for organisations but does not significantly affect customers attitude towards the rebranded organisation because customers are interested in improved service quality and good customer relations.

II.6. Theoretical Framework

This is an epistemological position that investigates how individuals, groups, institutions, firms construct, acknowledge or see reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). It does not only examine the ways that social phenomena and trends are produced, shaped, entrenched and made into custom by groups and individuals (Hackling, 1999; Otubanjo, 2008); but can also be seen as a changing activity that is continuously created and recreated by the public based on their understanding, knowledge and interpretations of such changing processes (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Thus, social construction is based on common belief that is maintained by individuals and firms about how reality is seen within their environment and how it is constantly reinforced (Searle, 1995) by maintained social interactions (Gergen, 1994).

There are two major assumptions that support this epistemological position. First is that people tries to understand their environment or society they exist as an external, objective reality. That is, societies impose generational practices, norms, customs, values and ways of life that are passed down by members of earlier to later generations in a preserved, unalterable form. Thereafter, the societal dictations and impositions are habitualised and institutionalised as objective reality by individuals, groups or firms within such environment that conform to the dictated norm over time. The failure to



conform to these norms informs the use of assigned actors to invoke sanctions in order to ensure strict compliance. On the other hand, when individuals, groups or firms try to make sense of their own world or environments but not being influenced by the external, objective reality that they exist, this is perceived as internal subjective reality. In this case, people groups or firm select from the environment people they identify to be of their own class, thoughts and beliefs. By the nature of the individual, group or firms' ability to consistently criticize the objective reality to make other meanings in which they can act upon; it makes the individual, group or firm to create a subjective coherent identity that will consequently influence the society on the long run. This eventually becomes an objective reality when the society accepts, engages and enforces a continuous practice. Impliedly, there will be a continuous or evolving process between external, objective reality and internal subjective reality due to the prompt of a new idea or experience. This never-ending cycle of change (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) is based on the development of a subjective version of reality that is presented, accepted, habitualised and institutionalised as objective reality by the society.

II.7. Research Method

This study intends to gain insights, if changes in how management strategy or behavioural changes of stakeholders can affect brand image. In the earlier paragraphs, it was stated that a study of this nature has not been carried out in this part of the world as many related studies were carried out in western nations which prompted the research the design of this paper to be exploratory. The target population of study is students that applied for admission in LASU through JAMB between 2014 and 2016 calendar year. This is because in looking at corporate image, it is assumed that their perception or perception of those individuals that can influence the students' choice of institution to seek admission sees LASU in a good perspective, hence, the candidates' application for admission. Data gathered (which are mostly primary) will be analysed with the aid of descriptive / discourse/content analysis as it is used to identify relationships in texts.

II.8 Why LASU Rebranding?

Lagos State University (LASU) is a public University which was established in 1983 by the enabling law of Lagos State for the advancement of learning and academic excellence. According to the institution's 2016 annual report, the University's vision is to provide Lagos State with required human capital for the sustenance of her position as the commercial and industrial hub of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the strategic



transformation of the industrial capacity of the state in particular and the country in general. Also, the University is poised to provide qualitative education to the large populace of Lagos State in particular and Nigeria as a whole by preparing them for challenges of managing the public and private sectors of the state (LASU, 2017).

Although the University has a philosophy of utilizing all available resources to provide every deserving candidate the opportunity to further higher education and be a seat of learning, (in) pursuit of truth and character as well as (achieving) excellence in teaching, research and community service (LASU, 2017); the institution had been bedeviled with a mirage of crisis that have over the years stained her brand image in the minds of stakeholders. For example, newspaper reports by Olugbamila and Clement (2014) and Asomba (2015) expressed the unending restiveness and turmoil that has occurred in the 33 years old University. The writers observed that despite promulgation of policies by both the University Management and the Lagos State Government to abate the internal wrangling; students' riots, unions strike, lockout, picketing and closures held sway and paralyzing academic activities during the 2011/ 2012, 2012/ 2013, 2013/ 2014, 2014/ 2015, academic sessions.

Figure 1 - Picture of LASU Bulletin (online) indicating University's closure



Lagos State University shut down indefinitely ~ Winnies

Source: Google Pictures (Downloaded 08/08/ 2017)

Policies seen to be anti-developmental to the staffers' growth and students' welfare such as no vacancy no promotion or the increment in students' tuition fees were vehemently rebuffed. Evidence to support the negative effect of the hike in tuition was a sharp drop of students' enrolment from 4,570 to 1,416 within the crisis ridden years. Unfortunately, 84 students dropped out after the first academic session. Landscaping of



the University and road network was in a dilapidated state. Regrettably, a vote of no confidence was passed on the then Vice Chancellor by the staff unions of the University as they demanded for his removal. These negative internal problems developed a negative image on the minds of stakeholders of the University. Hence, the need for rebranding the University.

Figure 2- Picture of LASU Dilapidated Road Network as at 05/03/2016



Source: Picture taken by Author on 05/03/2016

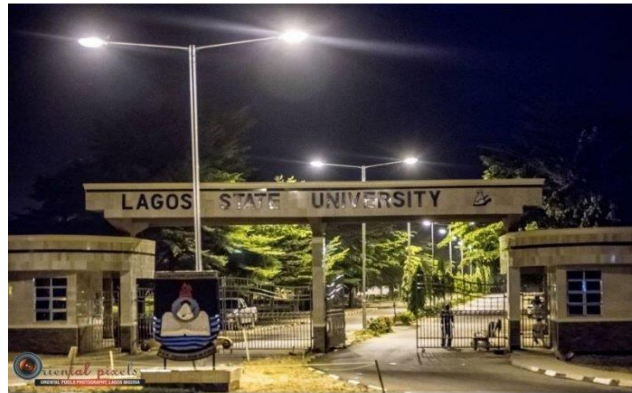
By January 2016, a new Vice Chancellor assumed office while the new Governor of Lagos State in collaboration with the Management of the University had a collaborative discussion with the warring stakeholders to find lasting solution to the lingering crises that has affected the image and development of the institution. Consequently, policies were developed and executed to resolve all lingering crises while the University Management advocated for an open, honest and constructive communication with all stakeholders on critical issues bothering on welfare of staff and students, provision of top quality education that will produce graduates whose qualifications are socially applicable and internationally recognized, improving the relevance of existing programmes in line of national socio-economic needs (Fagbohun, 2017).

Also, the State Government provided funds to create structural, physical and environmental changes in order to create a more conducive and relaxing environment that will enhance academic learning (www.lagosstate.gov.ng). Thus, the building of a formidable corporate image for the University became sacrosanct. In order to achieve this fete, the University Management made commitment to deepen international cooperation and collaboration; create and extend industry – University partnerships a strategic priority,



transformed the institution into a hub for knowledge creation, checked indiscipline and abuse of office, institutionalised capacity building, excellence in teaching, research and academic citizenship and finally ensure that the brand image of LASU positively worth its name (Fagbohun, 2017).

Figure 3- Picture of Newly Redesigned and reconstructed Entrance



Source: Oriental pixels on Google Pictures., Downloaded 08/08/ 2017.

In response to the above physical, structural, environmental and policy changes; positive behavioural changes in response became evident towards the end of the first year in office of the new University Management when it presented awards of excellence to members of staff who distinguished themselves in the discharge of their official duties (see www.lasu.edu.ng). Likewise, 160 students that had 4.5 Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) and above were presented cheque of #25,000 each as a reward for success. It is not surprising thereafter, that prizes external to the University were being won by students of the University such as Don Etiebet's prize for computer science (Vanguard, 2016) and Hesselbein Global Academy of University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US, fellow award (The Nation online, July, 2017). This perhaps supports why 11,533 applicants jostle for available space for admission for the 2016 admission year (see www.jamb.gov.ng/statistics) since the image of the institution is no more of a strike ridden institution.

II.9. Discussion

In the sections above, the review of extant literature has been able to exhibit the need for rebranding whenever necessary in order to have a positive brand image.



However, there is need to discuss the relationship that exist between the theory of social construction, corporate rebranding and the place of study - Lagos State University.

A critical look at the literatures on corporate brand management suggests that most of them belongs to a positivist realm of thought due to their assertiveness, critical nature of the authors hypothetic, deductive logic and analysis that assumes social world exists independently of human beings. But unfortunately, studying brand management should not be limited to positive thinking because the nature of brand management is of critical concern and central to social relationships which is the basis of social constructionist or interpretive orientation (Gioia, 1998). Likewise, the literatures fail to recognize the notion of continuous change or evolutionary perspective (DeChernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley, 1997) which is responsible for making an ever-changing set of interactions between the input and output perspectives (see table 1 above). According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), persons and groups interact together in a social system. Over time, each individual or groups conceive mental representations of each other's actions. The conceived representations become habitualized and played by actors to one another in the society. Invariably, they become institutionalized as meaning is embedded in the society. This implies that knowledge and people's conception or belief of what reality is, becomes embedded in the institutional fabric of the society (Dube and Pare, 2003).

Replicating the above description of the social constructionist ontological assumptions with the LASU brand, it is observed that the University is built on the philosophy of being a seat of learning that pursues truth, character and excellence while at the same time interacting with the society (LASU, 2017). These behavioural qualities supports the first and second ontological assumptions of Berger and Luckmann (1966) social constructionist theory of social order, direction, stability and social interaction. These are cardinal points that organisations must pursue in order to enhance their corporate brand image. An institution of higher learning must be guided by rules, regulations, policies, procedures and programmes that will enhance cordial social interactions within the organisation and between the organisation and external environment. This enhances stable power of authority to achieve institutional goals and objectives.

Habitualization, institutionalism, historicity and control are other ontological assumptions that are based on believe that institutions have a past which they are products of. The last ten years (2006 – 2016, before the assumption of the present University Management) have been more of a negative history which negatively affected the brand



image of LASU. This posits why there was a shortage of applicants to fill up the required admission quota as directed by NUC. But as information on the positive policy and procedural changes remain to be communicated and experienced by Management, internal and external stakeholders since the beginning of 2016; people have been able to develop a pattern of positive mental representation about the University on their minds. At this juncture, a new behavioural pattern becomes habitualised and institutionalized i.e. general norm in the University. Also, stakeholders are able to create brand knowledge - stored personal meanings about the brand in memories of consumers or stakeholders- (Camiciottoli, Ramfagni and Guercini, 2014) about LASU.

Furthermore, it is worthy to note that as LASU institutionalizes the positive values as stated in the vision, mission and philosophy (LASU, 2017), she is expected to ongoingly or continuously communicate information of stable or changed actions in response to the environmental changes or demand, so that stakeholders will have a transparent knowledge and understanding of how reality (policy, rules, procedures, programmes, decisions, etc.) are created in a continuous or ongoing process. It is therefore expected that past history will guide in the control of activities of actors either in cases of policy formulation or administration because the University must avoid any reason for a reoccurrence of crisis. Thus, the outward behaviour of LASUs Management and other stakeholders is to influence the development of positive brand image, brand personality, the development of relationships between self and other external personalities that will create desired value.

The above explanation can further be associated with the taxonomy of brand perspectives by DeChernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1997). Before LASU can develop a positive brand image, it must be able to satisfy the input requirements which are (i) legal



instrument (LASU is a registered organisation that is backed by law); (ii) a Logo (which is synonymous to the name) and (iii) a Company Identity (Lagos State University, LASU). These three input perspective items are used to create an output perspective by both Management and staffers of the institution through interactions and in-depth understanding of the changing nature of the system. Output perspective such as image, personality, relationship and adding value are developed. It is worthy to note that these output perspective indicators are apparent in the present day LASU. The University has been able to build relationships between the Unions, students and other stakeholders within the Institution. This evident in the peaceful, crises-free, continuous academic



calendar. Also, is the enhancement in structural, landscape, human and capital development within the University.

The effects of existing relationships have been able to influence the personality of LASU brand on the minds of stakeholders. The consequence of this brand personality is the positive perception of the LASU's brand quality, positive attitude towards the LASU brand and trust in LASU brand which has influenced the incremental rate at which the University is sought for as institution of first choice. Above all, many organisations such as Lagos State Government, UPS, Zenith Bank, Tony Elumelu Foundation, UBA, Canadian High Commission etc. within the last 20 months have been able to relate, attach and show intentions of future behaviour partnerships and being committed to the prosperity of the LASU brand.

It is also noticed that the prevalent strikes in LASU has also reduced. This can be associated to the open relationship between the University Management and Unions. Especially, the satisfaction of demands from either party and the use of committee based system of management which has enhanced the delivery of administrative activities and drastically reduced authoritarian and anarchy minded policies. Furthermore, noticeable is the behavioural changes of students. The reorientation programme has led to the reduction of students riots and protests while there is massive engagement of students in career developing activities from the State Government, University Management and the Students Union (i.e. Ready Set Work initiative of the State Government for final years students, different seminars and symposia organised by the University and quiz debate by the Student Union) has increased the educational performance of the students which is globally reflected (a student of LASU is a 2017fellowship award recipient of Hesselbein Global Academy of University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA).

Finally, the rating of the University has increased as the Institution is ranked first amongst State Universities in Nigeria for 2016 (NUC). On this note, it is believed that LASU is able to add value both internal and external stakeholders. Finally, the evolutionary perspective which sees the consequence of output perspective as an evolving entity is similar to social construction's notion of continuous or ongoing change. This is because the dynamism expected of the brand is for it to be able to continuously evolve to meet stakeholder needs. This perhaps suggests that LASU's Management should be able to develop management practices that are not rigid in nature but have fluid capacity to evolve as the changes in the environment deems necessary and vital to the progress of the University.



III. Conclusion

This paper has been able to conceptually underscore the need for rebranding by academic institutions in order to enhance their brand image amongst others. The reviewed literatures on corporate branding and rebranding has been able to emphasize that corporate branding occurs due to changes in the internal or external environment of the University. This fact is also evident in the behaviour and response or expression of actors to the environmental changes in LASU. Furthermore, it is noted that for corporate rebranding to be effective as desired, the Management of the University must continuously create awareness and disseminate vital information that is necessary to make stakeholders conscious of the changes through formal and informal lines of communication. Nevertheless, the Management must also be alert to identify critical political players within the institution that can influence the development of the branding or rebranding process because of the necessity to always deploy relevant and essential political strategies. Above all, University rebranding can only be noticed when there is improved service quality, good customer relations, enhanced University ranking, continuous accredited courses and outstanding brand reputation that is based on quality, prestige, acceptance and financial incentives that will further motivate patronage.

Limitations and Recommendations for further studies

This study is limited in that it is conceptual in nature. Future empirical work could study the components listed in the taxonomy of brand perspectives in relation to University brand image. Also, such a study could include other Universities in Nigeria and develop ranking information about their reputation and brand image. Also, empirical work could study why Universities are chosen as the first University of choice by either student or staff. This perhaps will indicate other reasons that are salient factors that University's must consider when branding or rebranding self.

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