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# The Effect of Brand Awareness Campaigns due to Identity Rebranding of Multimedia University of Kenya

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**ABSTRACT:** Rebranding creates a differentiated position in the mind of stakeholders from its competitors through a new name, term, symbol or design. The study assessed brand awareness campaigns carried out due to identity rebranding of Multimedia University of Kenya. The study was guided by organizational image management and used qualitative research using purposive sampling to data from 32 internal and external key stakeholders of the University using in-depth interviews guided by two interview guides. Informants were asked questions that focused on brand recall, brand recognition, brand advantage and activities for visibility. Stakeholders felt proper marketing had not been done but acknowledged that the history of the University of transitioning from a college to a university while still maintaining the prowess in telecommunication engineering, ICT and media communication enhanced awareness of the university. The university had attempted marketing the university facilities but there had been resistance from government organizations who resisted using it as a training ground because it would deny them a chance to earn allowances awarded to government employees when attending training outside their workplaces. The only opportunity that the university could explore to make the hotel lucrative was to appeal to stakeholders outside capital city and the private sector.

***KEYWORDS:*** *activities for visibility, brand advantage, brand recall, brand recognition, rebranding*

## I.        INTRODUCTION

Rebranding creates a differentiated position in the mind of stakeholders from its competitors through a new name, term, symbol or design[1].It involves strategic change within an organization from an original brand to a new concept through a new name or visual identity requiring communication with both internal and external stakeholders to change their mindsets[2]. Rebranding is the repositioning of an organization so as to create new meanings of a brand then communicating them to stakeholders [3].

Rebranding can damage or even destroy reputation as it abolishes years of branding efforts in terms of creating awareness which is a key component of corporate image. Universities often believe that they can survive on reputation and that this gives them sufficient attention[4].Older Universities that were the first to be established in the country, are highly rated in terms of reputation for establishing themselves with names that stand out among the rest. There is a desires that branding does not need to be for the older universities only and suggests that newer universities should market themselves more to improve their reputations [5].

The declining subsidies of public universities is motivation for universities to supplement their income through strategies such as specific targeting of stakeholders by introducing courses that have market demand[6]. University education in Kenya is increasingly facing competition in both public and private sectors owing to globalization and technological improvement. Universities are going through massive transformation efforts in order to cope with the constantly changing business environment. The ever changing needs of the education industry have seen the gradual modification of the positioning and representation of the corporate brand which is a natural aspect of managing a brand [7]. Therefore, this study sought to assess the effect of brand awareness campaigns due to identity rebranding of Multimedia University of Kenya.

## II.        LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand awareness is the ability of stakeholders to recall and recognize a brand, reflected by their capacity to identify a brand under different conditions and are able to link the brand name, logo and symbols to particular associations in memory [8]. Brand awareness of the corporate name acts as an anchor to which everything else about the brand is linked which enables the organization to transform brand commitments into employees' attitudes or an anchor for tying all associations about development and reinforcement to the corporate brand [9].

For a stakeholder to buy a brand, they must they first be made aware of it to help them form brand attitude and buying intention [2.]
Image emphasizes the awareness about a university which is a major aspect of students' choice of an institution in terms of its services. For organizations to succeed in creating effective strategic brand awareness, they should develop and execute an interactive communication strategy that they can continue to update throughout the development of their brand. An organization with high brand awareness is easily recognizable and accepted by the market in a way that, it is differentiated from similar organizations operating in the same field as competitors. Brand awareness can be built through some marketing mix elements like advertising which boosts positivity by exposing brands to stakeholders repeatedly and also increasing the chances of being included in a consideration set and distribution [11].

Brand awareness has a component of recognition which is an indicator of stakeholder knowledge about a brand, the strength of a brand's presence in their minds and how easily that knowledge can be retrieved from memory. The key assumption is that brand recognition drives brand performance through two mechanisms: brand recognition reduces stakeholder information costs by reducing the resource requirements associated with collecting necessary information for a purchase decision [5]. Brand recognition suggests to stakeholders that the organization has been in business for a long time and also functions as a strong signal of service quality and commitment. There is also reduction of perceived risk as decision-makers prefer to buy a brand associated with high awareness levels stakeholders may assume that the brands they know well are likely to be acquired by many other stakeholders[7]. Therefore, they have reason to expect that the purchase of a well-known brand will not result in any competitive disadvantage.
Brand awareness also has another component of brand recall which is the stakeholders' ability to recall a brand when some cues related to the brand are given, requiring them to correctly generate the brand from memory[9] Increase in brand awareness leads to better brand recall at the point of purchase and stakeholders prefer to purchase brands which portray higher recall . Brands that are recalled easily are evaluated favorably by stakeholders giving them a high chance of being purchased as they are based on stored information in stakeholder memory that can be retrieved when the cue is given[11]. Brand recall and recognition should be investigated in terms of media advertising to make better investments decisions related to increasing brand awareness which can be the base for future brand loyalty and repeat purchases.

## III.        RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
This study adopted qualitative research design carried out in Multimedia University of Kenya on a target population comprised of the internal and external stakeholders who have dealings with the university. The study utilized a sample size of 31 internal and external key informants of the university by use of purposive sampling to select information-rich cases. This study utilized primary data collected using an interview guides with open ended questions and data was analyzed using thematic analysis

## IV.        RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Description of research variables
**1.        Brand recall**
The informants were asked what they recall about MMU and results were as summarized in table below:

Table 1: Brand recall

| External stakeholders | Frequency of brand recall |
| --- | --- |
| External 1 | I know it is an institution and I think of people who are welcoming. It is a place where people enjoy themselves; there is a swimming pool up there. So it is an institution and a recreational place. |
| External 2 | I might not know much but what I know is that it is the  former KCCT, a former college that was attached to Telkom and they were majoring in supporting Telecommunication to train the human capacity |
| External 3 | I know it is a technical university, that was formerly called KCCT and in those days it never used to have a lot of degrees like five years back, they had a lot of technical diplomas but of late they have introduced degrees . |
| External 4 | It's a public university I think initially it used to do communication but after getting to know more about it I got to know it offers all kinds of courses at all levels, certificate, diploma I guess to degree and masters. |
| External 5 | It is a university teaching people things to do with Journalism |

| | |
|---|---|
| External 6 | I know it's just about students going to study. I used to think it's a private university before I started going there because of the name because it sounds like Nazarene. So where I am working they have an MOU with MMU so that's how I came to know it's a public university. |
| External 7 | I know it's a public university located in Ongata Rongai |
| External 8 | I know it's an institution which offers things to do with communication |
| External 9 | MMU has a long history as it was previously KCCT which was under Telkom, which was well positioned in terms of training and research. This was the basis for the Kenya Korea Partnership. |
| External 10 | I know it is a private university, I know its location, its located in Karen. I assume it offers courses that other universities offer like Kenyatta but am not sure. |
| External 11 | I used to know MMU offers communication and journalism but when got selected by university placement board to join MMU that is when I got to know they offer other courses |
| **Total frequency** | **External stakeholders brand recall** |
| 52% | Majority recall it is a university |
| 23% | Recall it as a university that offers communication and journalism |
| 17% | Recognize the history of MMU as former KCCT that is the best in Telkom courses |

Primary Data, 2021

The findings on brand recall show that majority of external stakeholders were able to recognize MMU as a university and they gave explanations such as the one below:

"I know it is a technical university that is one, it was formerly called Teleposta something, those days then, it never used to have a lot of degrees, they had a lot of technical diplomas but of late they have introduced degrees".

This shows that stakeholders had a good brand recall of the university because as Prashar et al (2012) put it brand recall is refers to the extent to which stakeholders can recall a brand when given a certain situation. It is the stakeholders' ability to recall a brand when some cues related to the brand are given, requiring that consumers to correctly generate the brand from memory[3].

Brands that are easily recalled are evaluated favorably by stakeholders giving them a high chance of being purchased as they are based on stored information in stakeholder memory that can be retrieved when the cue is given[6]. Majority of the stakeholders were also able to recall part of its history and the courses that created its reputation;

"What I know is that it is a former KCCT a former college that was attached to Telecommunication and they were majoring in supporting Telkom to train the human capacity".

Others knew it majorly because of the communication and journalism course;

"I know it's an institution which offers things to do with communication"

Majority of the external stakeholders were able to recall MMU and knew its location although some were under the impression that is located in Ongata Rongai, Kajiado County instead of Karen Nairobi County. This could be because of being at a distance from CBD and being closer to Ongata Rongai town (Author, 2021).

Majority of the stakeholders recalled the university because of journalism and communication courses which Aaker (2011) corroborates with by positing that stakeholder may assume that the brands they know well are likely to be acquired by many other stakeholders. Brands that are recalled easily are favorably evaluated by stakeholders giving them a high chance of being purchased as they are based on stored information in stakeholder memory that can be retrieved when a cue is given [12]. Other stakeholders still recall the university as KCCT and the courses of Telecommunication that trained majority of government workers and Safaricom. The history of the university has been used by international organizations like Korea to foster its relationship with Kenyan partners through technological support anchored within MMU. Korea has created a center within the University where it supplies technology and seminar facilities that can be utilized by the community.

**2. Brand recognition**

The informants were asked what enabled them recognize the university and their responses are presented in the Table 2 below:

Table 2: Brand Recognition

| External stakeholders | Recognition of MMU |
|---|---|
| External 1 | The colors of blue and red on the bus, the beautiful gate, If I see the name and the color I know it automatically |
| External 2 | It is the logo |
| External 3 | Nothing. It is just referred to as those students of MMU |

| External 4 | The colors and the logo, the combination. The logo speaks a lot, it is outstanding because of the design |
|---|---|
| External 5 | The logo is outstanding |
| External 6 | Their bus, their blue color then at the gate, the way it is decorated |
| External 7 | The logo MMU, so anywhere I see it I know it though I don't know their brand colors. |
| External 8 | It is the name itself because I don't know how their logo looks like |
| External 9 | The logo MMU |
| External 10 | The colors are good |
| External 11 | The logo |
| **Total frequency** | **External stakeholders brand recognition of MMU** |
| 35% | Logo |
| 29% | Colors |
| 11% | Name |
| 5% | Nothing |

Primary Data, 2021

The findings show that the most recognized feature of the university is the logo MMU at 35% because of the unique design that is beautifully done making it outstanding. The combinations of corporate colors are good at 23% and are the most recognized feature. About 11% do not know the corporate colors but know the Multimedia university name itself. The least majority at 5% don't know anything about MMU, because the informants feels if proper marketing could have been done, the features of recognition would be coming out naturally.

The majority of stakeholders know the name, the corporate colors and logo MMU that is unique from the other public universities because of the combination of the corporate colors that makes it unique. The design of the gate also made it outstanding for stakeholders who accessed the university or passed by. Brand recognition functions as a strong signal of service quality and service provider commitment [3].

An organization with high brand awareness is one that is easily recognizable and accepted by the market in a way that, it is differentiated from similar organizations operating in the same field as competitors. The majority of stakeholders know the name, the corporate colors and logo MMU that is unique from the other public universities because of the combination of the corporate colors that makes it unique.

Brand recall and recognition should be investigated in terms of media advertising to make better investment decisions related to increasing brand awareness which can be the base for future brand loyalty and repeat purchases [6]. The university rebranded from KCCT when it became a university college by changing the corporate identity including the name, the logo and corporate color under Jomo Kenyatta University of Technology (JKUAT). Once it matured it became it was then granted a charter to become a public university and no longer operated under JKUAT. Once it became a public university with a charter, the management had to be restructured from being headed by a principal and two deputies to being headed by a university council headed by a chairman in charge of making decisions, a vice chancellor assisted by two deputies in charge of academics and finance (Author, 2021). The university also had to offer academic programmes within a university structure by introducing faculties to manage different courses. The management formed a corporate affairs department that is headed by a manager in charge of the corporate image of the university (Author, 2021). For the university to promote itself outside the information must originate internally from the university and packaged to fit different stakeholder groups.

 Since the award of the charter in 2014, the population had grown from slightly 2800 students to over 7000 as of 2021 (Author, 2021). The growing population had impacted on the capacity of the university in terms of physical infrastructure because the facilities were inadequate as compared to the growing population. The university had managed to build an image for itself to be that of a media and communication journalism university, an image which had extended to the media industry where a lot of MMU alumni worked (Author, 2021).

Brand recall and recognition should be investigated in terms of media advertising to make better investment decisions related to increasing brand awareness which can be the base for future brand loyalty and repeat purchases. Multimedia University of Kenya seems to only advertise occasionally during the graduation period by placing academic programmes in the newspaper because it is very expensive and not sustainable due to the fact that in every advert there is a difficult to catch market. This leads to alternative campaigns like using current students to talk to their friends and refer them to MMU. The university needs to do community outreach as a way selling itself by donating things like equipment and supplies when doing school visits (Author, 2021).

## 3.      Brand Competitive advantage

The informants were asked what they felt gave the university a competitive advantage over the other public universities as presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Brand Competitive Advantage for internal stakeholders

| Internal stakeholders | Competitive advantage |
|---|---|
| 1 | We are a small university so we are able to give personalized training to students. |
| 2 | The location which is within Nairobi but not in CBD |
| 3 | First of all it is the location, then we have been branded as the epitome of media and communication |
| 4 | Sports where the hockey team has been ranked the best in all universities. |
| 5 | Spacious rooms and conducive facilities especially in the hostels. Our mess has high quality food, there are no shortcuts to passing exams or privileges just because one is a student leader |
| 6 | It is location, it has a big land and is not squeezed so students can enjoy such an environment. |
| 7 | Location and capacity in the sense of I don't think it is that crowded |
| 8 | I have never done that research. |
| 9 | Where we are located |
| 10 | People now know if you want to do media and communication journalism, even the leading media houses know if you want to train in media you go to MMU. |
| 11 | Strong brand in Engineering, Media and Computer science |
| | Location, Industry linkages |
| **Total Frequency** | **Internal stakeholders brand advantage** |
| 42% | Majority identify the location of MMU of being outside the CBD, makes it a conducive learning environment. |
| 35% | Others felt the courses of media, engineering and ICT gives MMU a competitive advantage |
| 28 % | Most employees are also pro-technology |

Primary Data, 2021

The findings on competitive advantage show that for majority of internal stakeholders at 42%, the location of the university makes it very conducive for learning because it is located outside the Central Business District, making it accessible for students who can walk from the nearest town Ongata Rongai to school making studying less challenging. For the other 35%, the long history of the universityof being well positioned in terms of training and research gives it a competitive advantage. About 28 % stated that Most employees are also pro-technology and therefore can easily agree on the various requirements and availability of technical staff and space for international partnerships or scholarships.

The study also sought to establish the level of brand competitive advantage by external stakeholders as and the results were as summarized in Table 4:

Table 4: Brand Competitive Advantage for external stakeholders

| External stakeholders | Brand competitive advantage |
|---|---|
| External 1 | It is the accessibility you know the students are not many and the lecturers I think have a one on one contact with students compared |
| External 2 | They are good in Telecommunication and Multimedia Journalism |
| External 3 | The school fees is quite fair because I know a couple of students who have been there who were struggling but they have graduated. |
| External 4 | I don't know |
| External 5 | Media information it's a top level |
| External 6 | MMU doesn't go for strikes all the time like other public universities. They only demonstrate during their students' elections but it's just that. |
| External 7 | Affordability in terms of school fees |
| External 8 | Affordability in terms of school fees |
| External 9 | Its long history it was well positioned in terms of training and research. Most people also were pro-technology and therefore they could easily agree on the various requirements and availability of technical staff and space. |
| External 10 | The location is good and the environment is very nice |
| External 11 | The school fees is not so expensive |
| **Total frequency** | **Brand competitive advantage for External stakeholders** |
| 35% | conducive learning environment |
| 24% | affordable school fees |
| 24% | History of technology and media |
| 12% | One-on-one contact between lecturers and student |

Primary Data, 2021

On competitive advantage, about 35% of external stakeholders find the location of MMU of being outside the CBD to be very conducive for learning which gives it an advantage over the other public universities. About 24% stated that affordability of school fees is an advantage for majority of external stakeholders because a lot of students, even those known to them who struggle financially do graduate. About 24% stated that the other advantage for external stakeholders is the history of the university transitioning from a college to a university while still maintaining the prowess in telecommunication engineering, ICT and media communication. The last advantage according to external stakeholders is that MMU being an upcoming university (12%), lecturers are able to have one-on-one contact with students leading to better learning and guidance. Majority of external stakeholders know something about MMU and the category it belongs to in terms of services they provide or are known for. Both internal and external stakeholders are in agreement that the location of MMU makes gives it a big advantage. The university has attempted marketing the university facilities but there has been resistance from government organizations in using it as a training ground because that will deny them a chance to earn allowances awarded to government employees when attending training outside their workplaces (Author, 2021). Marketing the hotel to the rest of the market has proved futile because it has not generated income as expected despite hiring managers to market it. The only opportunity that the university can explore to make the hotel lucrative is appeal to people outside Nairobi County like neighboring counties and also by targeting the private sector (Author, 2021). Brand awareness enables brand selection leading to stakeholder commitment to an exact brand with some favorable, strong and unique associations in memory leading to brand reputation[11].

## 4. Activities for visibility

The informants were asked what activities of the university they were aware as presented by Table 5 below:

Table 5: activities for visibility

| Internal stakeholders | Activities for awareness |
|---|---|
| 1 | We have been doing school visits with a focus on form three and four and having career talks which lead us to MMU programs and how they can join. We also attend Nairobi International Trade Fair, street light adverts and billboards in CBD. |
| 2 | We have clubs, we organize activities when we invite people from the industry and also visit the industry like the Nairobi Stock Exchange, the Central Bank of Kenya and see how they are performing. We also organize for corporate social responsibility where we do cleaning like in Ongata Rongai town. We also visit children's homes |
| 3 | Competitions that MMU students have been able to excel and gotten awards like sporting activities. |
| 4 | Sports and drama have really brought us a good name. We also go for strikes. |
| 5 | There was this competition the Heart Price that took students to Malaysia, we also had a meeting with Haki Nawiri and some other human rights organizations that train us on leadership, human rights and drug abuse. |
| 6 | Graduation |
| 7 | We do go for all these competitions like Samsung, communication Authority of Kenya and Huawei, but because of our financial constraints we seem to be on our knees. |
| 8 | I know none of them |
| 9 | Graduation, showground, strikes |
| 10 | Faculty clubs, community outreach activities |
| 11 | Organizing research and innovation activities, holding local and international Conferences and seminars, participating in students' academic activities such as boot camps, competitions such as top story. Participating in co-curricular activities such as rugby, drama, academic staff participating and presenting in conferences and seminars |
| | **Activities for visibility** |
| **Total frequency** | |
| 57% | Competitions by various student activities |
| 42 | Extra-curricular activities by students on dram and sports |
| 14% | We have also been the champions of strikes from 2013 |
| 7% | Organizing Research and Innovation activities |

Primary Data, 2021

On activities for visibility, about 57% of internal stakeholders are aware of competitions by students who participate in various faculty clubs and extra - curricular activities like sports and drama. 42% also identify extra-curricular activities by students on drama and sports. About 14% of internal stakeholders identify research

and innovation and also championing of strikes when there is failure of reaching an amicable agreement with the university. Stakeholder assessment of the attractiveness of a corporate brand's identity depends on their perceptions of that identity through the organization's controlled internal communication via corporate activities, paid, earned, owned media and via uncontrolled external communication [5]. Majority of activities for visibility are centered on activities by students participating in students' academic activities (Author, 2021). The study also sought to establish the level of activities for visibility by external stakeholders and the results were as summarized in Table 6 below:

| External stakeholders | Activities |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | showground, activities like sport I know MMU is there, I also know it with students striking |
| 2 | No not much |
| 3 | Strikes |
| 4 | Just the normal cycle especially graduation nothing out of the ordinary. |
| 5 | Servicing of cars |
| 6 | Journalism and television mass communication shooting |
| 7 | Striking until we could not go home |
| 8 | Graduation |
| 9 | I know of sports because I see once in a while the hockey team participating in the national championships<br>Students also participate in global competitions about technology, students from the faculty of CIT winning competition about innovation |
| 10 | Strikes |
| 11 | I used to belong to Christian union, I was a member of handball team |
| **Total frequency** | **External stakeholder perspective of activities** |
| 41% | Competitions undertaken by students in sports and TV competitions |
| 23% | Striking |
| 11% | Graduation |

Primary Data, 2021

The findings on activities for visibility show that majority of external stakeholders at 41 % identify striking by the external stakeholders is the main visible activity about the university. The other activity they know at 23% is competitions undertaken by students in sports and TV competitions and also graduation ceremonies at 11%.

Multimedia only advertised itself occasionally during the graduation period by placing academic programmes in the newspaper because it is very expensive and not sustainable due to the fact that in every advert there is a difficult to catch market. The university utilized alternative campaigns like use of current students to spread the word of mouth to do referrals to MMU. The university needed to do community outreach as a way selling itself by donating things like equipment and supplies like donating computers when doing school visits. Both internal and external stakeholders were in agreement that the location and affordable school fees of MMU gave it a big advantage.

The university had attempted to market its facilities but there had been a lot of resistance from government organizations who resisted using it as a training ground because that would deny them a chance to earn allowances awarded to government employees who attend training workshops outside their workplaces. Marketing the hotel to the rest of the market had also proved futile because it had not generated income as expected despite hiring managers to market it. The only opportunity that the university could explore to make the hotel lucrative was to appeal to people outside Nairobi County like neighboring counties and also by targeting the private sector.

Activities that increased visibility for the university by internal stakeholders had been student based activities like by students' participation in student academic activities like competitions that took them to Malaysia, faculty level clubs that did community outreach activities and extracurricular activities like drama and sports. For employees the main activities were organizing research activities that led to several academic staff to earn research grants while attending conferences and Innovation activities. Striking was also another activity that internal stakeholders engaged in, both employees and students, that was a result of miscommunication from top management and forces beyond the university like calling of countrywide strikes of all university employees by the national union. The university also relied on the graduation magazine to create awareness on all events of the university throughout the year.

Advertising by the university was only done on newspapers during graduation time in addition to posters on streetlights and billboards which had never been updated. This was due to lack of enough funds that was not sustainable for the university that had been working on cost cutting as opposed to spending. Since the award of the charter to from a college to a public university, it got allocated Joint Admission Board (JAB) student placements by the government who paid subsidized fees. This fees paid by government students was not

sufficient to generate income that could pay lecturers, support outreach activities and still carry out advertisements(Author, 2021).

Activities recognized by external stakeholders on the university to increase the visibility were students' sports, competitions  and strikes that featured on national media stations.  Majority of external stakeholders only associated the university with ICT, journalism and engineering courses but lacked knowledge on other academic programmes. Majority of stakeholders of external stakeholders had interest in furthering their studies but the lack of evening classes and lack of satellite campuses had made them choose other universities over MMU even though the university had fair prices and an ideal location (Author, 2021).

In summary, the findings of the objective on assessing brand awareness campaigns carried out due to identity rebranding of Multimedia University of Kenya show that brand recall, brand recognition, brand advantage and activities for visibility impacts corporate image of the university.

## V.    CONCLUSION

The identity rebranding of the university left a gap in the market by affecting the corporate image of the university where people far from the capital city either failed to recognize the name MMU or upon explanation of where it was located, still recognized it as the former KCCT. The university had  no budget for advertising all year round on the media which meant that there was need for the university to capitalize more on other activities it engages in like students extra-curricular activities  or research and innovation activities  that increased its visibility that would lead to increased awareness. Lack of adequate awareness inevitably affected   the university's power to attract more   self-sponsored students and   only focused   more on joint admission board(JAB) students whose tuition fee was too meager to pay for lecturers and supplies which lead to a financial crisis. The financial crisis over unpaid dues to various stakeholders led to frequent strikes by both students and employees which led to negative portrayal of the corporate image. External linkages with international universities were also encouraged to further advance the corporate image of the university.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There is need for further research on the strategy of creating brand awareness campaigns to enhance corporate image that leverage on other organizational activities in a way that reaches target stakeholders due to identity rebranding in the absence of the  an allocated advertising budget.

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