

The Influence of University Image on Students Admission

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Abstract

Institutional image is a very critical concept that nations globally are benchmarking and capitalising on as a strategy to ameliorate the alarming increase in competition for students' admission and dependency amongst institutions at varying levels. In spite efforts by Nigerian institutions that has led to the promulgation of varying institutional image policies, regulations and programmes to promote and enhance students admission yet, a reasonable number of institutions are faced with the challenges of admission and meeting their required number of students. Meeting institutional admission's targeted number of potential students to develop and inculcate in them knowledge and skills in various disciplines has to date become more worrisome. This paper assesses the influence of institutional image on students' admission within the Nigeria's university system. The methodology employed survey design to collect data from 285 undergraduate students of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai, Niger State-Nigeria and analyzed via SPSS statistical Package. The study established that academic reputation, campus appearance, effective technology and favourable attitude/behaviour are reputable image model constructs that affect students' admission. Results revealed that academic reputation and campus appearance have significant positive influence on admission, while technology and favourable attitude have no significant positive influence on admission in the Nigeria's university system. Further, the study argues that although numerous image constructs have been responsible in determining admission of varying institutions, hence a construct that might be a key determinant in one situation might not be suitable in a different situation. This is more so in countries where admission and educational curricular ideally reflects the yearnings and aspirations of the citizenry. The study envisaged the need for remodelling of Nigeria's educational institution's image policies and programmes to accommodate global standards; considering the human and material resources abound in Nigeria. It recommends that institutional reputation practices should focus less on theoretical applications and more on the practical-test and supported with governmental regulations and standard schemes to enable educational institutions attract and gained admission of competent students.

Keywords: Image, Education, Institution, Remodelling, Benchmarking, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The need for both governmental and non-governmental educational institutions to meet the ever changing needs and aspirations of their stakeholders has led to promulgation of varying policies and programmes. Globally, higher educational institutions in different countries have experienced prolific transformation due to competition and that has threatened the continued survival of a number of these institutions bearing in mind the ratio of limited resources to the number of existing and probable applicants (Hashim, Abdullateef & Sarkindaji, 2015; Alves & Raposo, 2010).

Studies have argued that with the collaboration of the varying academic degrees; the movement and employability of professors, students, researchers as well as specialists will be higher and hence less-competitive universities might come to lose a reasonable portion of their students and their human assets. The complexities and dynamic nature of

academic sector couple with the capital intensive nature of operating academic institutions as well as the current per capital and knowledge aspects of funding academic industry. A good number of universities might not persist. Hence, higher educational institutions need to identify options to compete and stay alive (Mohamad & Awang, 2009). Studies have affirmed strongly that institutional survival is determined by a number of factors prominent amongst them is image (Hashim, Abdullateef & Sarkindaji, 2015), and it constitute a precious asset to successful competition in universities (Landrum, Turrisi & Harless, 1998).

According to Kotler and Fox (1995), an institution's current image and reputation is often more important than quality because it is the perceived image that actually influences choices made by prospective students. It influences who applies (Landrum, Turrisi & Harless, 1998; Fielder, Hilton & Motes, 1993; James,

Baldwin & Mcinnis, 1999), student satisfaction (Mohamad & Awang, 2009; Palacio, Meneses & Pérez, 2002; Eskildsen *et al.*, 1999) and student loyalty (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001). Accordingly, several universities have already increased their investments in institutional reputation in order to distinguish themselves from their competitors (McPherson & Shapiro, 1998). As the theme of this conference focuses on capacity building opportunities in business management, innovation and entrepreneurship, it is pertinent to note that institutional image cannot be apprehended and sustained without appropriate technology in place. A study on the impact of ICT on universities administrative and student's services suggested the need for Nigerian universities to widen the scope of ICT application in delivering services to fully reap the benefits of ICT and competition (Egoeze *et al.* 2018). In this sense, appropriate management strategies should include efforts to determine both the institutional image and how it can be modified. To Fellers (1982), this effort should include assessments not only by external entities but also by students, faculty and staff.

Managing institutional image appropriately offers educational colleges the privilege to devise results-oriented communications to their respective areas, specifically potential students and obtain a more competitive market position and improve its competitive eminence (Mohamad & Awang, 2009; Wilson, 1999). The role of higher educational institutions in ensuring socio economic and political developments in the whole of Africa and Nigeria in particular cannot in anyway be undermined (Nura & Tukur, 2019), and attained without institutional reputation. This is in fact dependent upon their ability to cope with many challenging issues such as lack of enough budgets (Odia & Omofonmwan, 2007), lack of enough facilities for conducive learning (Idoko, 2005), lack of technology support services (Adegbite, 2007) and perhaps, the biggest "nightmare"- the brain drain (Odumasi-Ashanti, 2003). In spite of the fact that there are a lot of measures underway to get these problems checked and reduced to the lowest ebb, evidences of ill performance in terms of research outputs, infrastructures, frequent strikes, low quality teaching, too much and unbearable workload are undeniably still threats to contend with. As a result of the identified problems above, the loyalty and continued survival of higher education institutions specifically in Nigeria is becoming a topical issue especially among academics and students (Ferraira & Otley, 2009). Thus, leading to the continued eroding of educational institution's overall reputation in the eyes of stakeholders.

Further, several studies on university image, have called for higher educational institutions to work out and uphold a unique reputation as a strategy to

attaining competitive advantage in the ever changing competing markets (Hashim, Abdullateef & Sarkindaji, 2015; Yavas & Shemwell, 1996; Landrum, Turrisi & Harless, 1998). They however, argued that, institutional image is a core determinant of student admission. University image is also important when donors are considering endowments or companies selecting an institution to undertake contracted research and development. Although numerous image constructs have been responsible in determining admission of varying institutions, hence a construct that might be a key determinant in one situation might not be suitable in a different situation. This is more so in countries where admission and educational curricular ideally reflects the yearnings and aspirations of the citizenry. Corporations do not have just one image but multiple images (Dowling, 1988).

In spite of the aforementioned arguments, literature on university image as perceived by its students and other external stakeholders specifically in the Nigerian context and how this image affects their behaviour in terms of admission remains uncommon. This research examines the influence of institutional image on students' admission within the context of the university system. The study is divided into sections comprising of the introduction, review of literature, methodology, analysis and results presentation and concluding remarks.

Research Objective

The main aim of this study is to examine the influence of university image on students' admission patronage. Other specific objectives are:

1. To examine whether academic reputation influence students admission patronage
2. To investigate the extent to which campus reputation affects students' admission patronage
3. To find out whether effective technology influence students admission patronage
4. To analyze whether favourable attitude/behaviour impacts on students admission patronage

Research Questions

1. Does academic reputation influence students' admission patronage?
2. Does campus reputation affects students' admission patronage?
3. Does effective technology influence students' admission patronage?
4. Does favourable attitude/behaviour impacts on students' admission patronage?

Research Hypotheses

1. Academic reputation has significant positive influence students' admission patronage
2. Campus reputation has positive significant effects on students' admission patronage

3. Effective technology has significant positive influence on students' admission patronage
4. Favourable attitude/behaviour significantly impacts positively on admission patronage

Concept of Institutional Image and Patronage

With increased competition globally, higher educational institutions are continuously advancing and repositioning their strategy in an effort to ensure long term student admission patronage. Since institutions are competing for loyalty using different marketing strategies, students trust to the institution might be influenced by favourable image and perceived value of products or services offerings. And that both student perceived value and institutional image/reputation are key determinants of customer loyalty (Tarus & Rabach, 2013), and exceptionally for specialised service firms (Zabala *et al.*, 2005). Hence vision about student loyalty as well as the factors responsible for their loyalty behaviour should be of ultimate concern when determining the most suitable organizational strategy (Yap *et al.*, 2012; Helgesen & Nettet, 2007).

Institutional image is conceived as the outcome of the interactions among person's impression, prevailing beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about an entity (Lin and Lu, 2010). In a study to ascertain the degree of students' satisfaction with their university in UAE, factors such as lecturers' excellence, accessibility and quality of resources, and effective technology in use were to be most influential (Wilkins & Balakrishnan, 2013). Several studies have examined the association between institutional image/reputation and students behaviour (Alves & Raposo, 2010; Weiwei, 2007; Helgesen & Nettet, 2007), loyalty (Hashim, Abdullateef & Sarkindaji, 2015; Hart & Rosenberger, 2004), satisfaction and trust (Harsandaldeep & Harmeen, 2013). To date, institutional image/reputation has remained the focus and concern of both students and other stakeholders in the choice of an institution instead of internal specific-attributes such as excellent infrastructures, quality staff, and sound admission requirements (Hashim, Abdullateef & Sarkindaji, 2015). Corporate image performs a moderating influence in student's behaviour (Tarus and Rabach, 2013). Knowledge of what inform students' behaviour toward choice of a particular university offers ample opportunity for management to develop effective loyalty strategy. Reputation management is one major factor that accounts for students' loyalty (Helgesen and Nettet, 2007).

Within the higher education context, Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001) established that higher tendency of student loyalty exist when perception of institutional image/ reputation are favourable. That the interaction between the two constructs explains more on student loyalty. Tarus and Rabach (2013) emphasised that

realizing the benefits of customer loyalty depends on a company's ability to invest in good corporate image. They however, contended that ordinarily firms with good corporate image may influence the manner customer's sense their products value. Offering quality products or services and responding more efficiently to students' needs and preferences that could result in good image/reputation requires institutions focusing more on innovation (Hashim, Abdullateef & Sarkindaji, 2015). Studies have found image to have strong influence on higher education student's loyalty (Mohamad & Awang, 2009; Weiwei, 2007). It is recommended that to successfully compete in a dynamic and complex world of academic excellence universities must be seen to portray favourable image/reputation in terms of practices and actions that invariably transforms to higher perceived value and student loyalty behaviour (Hashim, Abdullateef & Sarkindaji, 2015). In addition, for higher educational institutions to compete through image there is need to evaluate the university image held by its students and that image is vital to attract and retain student (Alves & Raposo, 2010).

Furthermore, patronage as a concept is widely comprehended as covering all forms of bias and discrimination, is universal in organisations as well as professions, including academia (Matins, 2009). Martins (2009) stressed that the degree of patronage practices differ extremely across nations. In some nations, patronage is highly rooted, with god-professors acting as doorkeepers in the academic career: where only one with high-level personal authorization has the chance of getting on. "In some places, this becomes what might be called corruption, with university places available for purchase, out-groups denied access to study and excluded from academic jobs, degrees given as favours to powerful figures, and senior academics chosen on political rather than academic grounds. In other places, Australia for example, where student selection and staff hiring operate with more observance of merit principles and where anti-discrimination legislation is taken seriously, patronage typically takes less blatant forms". In the context of this research patronage is considered from a general perspective: the study area is Nigeria, but the frameworks are meant to apply universally to practice in a variety of higher educational systems.

Academic Reputation and Patronage

In student admission patronage, an important consideration may be whether the students identify a university's product or services themselves or the university identifies the products or services for public consumption. In which ever fashion, reputation in terms of academic practices is a key determining factor in the choice of educational institutions by students. Academic reputation in any institution is a function of

quality academic practices, product or services offerings and satisfaction derived from usage.

Hashim, Abdullateef and Sarkindaji (2015) examined the relationship between institutional image and student loyalty to higher educational institution. The study recommended that to successfully compete in a dynamic and complex world of academic excellence universities must be seen to portray favourable image/reputation in terms of practices and actions that invariably transforms to higher perceived value and student loyalty behaviour. Since institutions are competing for loyalty using different marketing strategies, students trust to the institution might be influenced by favourable image and perceived value of products or services offerings

In a study to examine the role of institutional reputation in the formation of customer loyalty using 395 students of business school. The results affirm that the extent of student loyalty has a tendency to be higher when perceptions of institutional reputation and institutional image are favourable. Findings also reveal that the addition of the interaction term between institutional reputation and image constructs assist to explain more on student loyalty (Nguyen_ & LeBlanc, 2001). It should however be noted that even at personal or individual level everyone would wish to associate him or herself with persons of good reputation and same apply to business firms or academic institutions.

Campus Appearance and Patronage

Hashim, Abdullateef and Sarkindaji (2015) in their study of institutional image stressed that the concept of image is vague as such what forms image constructs in one institutional location may not be suitable given a different situation. Hence, varying image constructs exists and will continue to exist depending on the nature, location and structure of the educational institution in question. Campus appearance or physical outlook in any institution is a symbol of standard academic practices but may not be real in terms of application and adherence. Institutions having excellent physical appearance in terms of structures or beautification of landmark may be presumed to have higher academic standards. However, haven beautiful campus or structures should not be placed a primary priority in the choice of educational institution instead attributes such as quality of human power, and infrastructures that facilitates effective teaching and learning by students. Campus or physical outlook of an institution is secondary and provides the learning atmosphere for academic excellent.

In the same vein, Fatt *et al.* (2000) noted that in a dynamic and competing atmosphere firms ought to involve in projecting a positive image between their varying stakeholders i.e. the employees, public,

students as well as the government. Educational institutions can attain positive corporate image, through involving in numerous activities undertaken domestically and internationally for instance engaging in research and development exhibitions and competitions, and arranging corporate philanthropic activities such as sponsoring charitable events and conducting community service projects. Institutional image has significant influence on students' behavioural patronage (Carlos, Miguel & Eduardo, 2005). Thus, it is also interesting to know how students' perception of an institution's image could influence their satisfaction and loyalty

Effective Technology and Patronage

Several studies conducted on image and institutional entrants have attested strongly that institutional technologies have positively enhanced academic patronage (Sarkindaji, Abdullateef & Hashim, 2014; Hashim, Abdullateef & Sarkindaji, 2015; Tarus & Rabach, 2013). Technological advancement world over has to date transform activities in different sectors i.e. academia inclusive to a highly complex and competitive arena in a manner of survival of the fittest. Such that organizations must either inculcate in them the spirit of technology or face extinction in whatever industry it belongs. Unfortunately, while some Nigerian universities have been striving overtime to update themselves with technological advancements in order to meet-up the challenges of global educational practices, a good number to date are unable or inefficient in terms of technology requirements thereby limiting the chances of linking up with global admission patronage. Within the Call Centre industry in Malaysia, Abdullateef *et al.* (2010) found a significant positive relationship between technological effectiveness and Call Centres performance. They argued that Call Centres whom are technologically conscious in their CRM strategies tend to have significant positive influence on the loyalty of their customers visa vis overall organizational performance.

Technologies have transform the world into a global village so much so that educational institutions need not to have physical contact with existing and potential students not necessarily in seeking new entrants. Technology is one key defensive strategy that mobile telecommunication services firms employed to retain and maintain subscribers; and that improvement of GSM companies' service quality, as well as customers' satisfaction and patronage is likely to increase with continuous technological advancement (Mawoli & Sarkindaji, 2019). Mohamad and Awang (2009) stressed that recognizing the competitive nature of higher education sector in Malaysia, institutions had initiated the design of strategic promotional efforts, in terms of advertising their academic programmes via numerous printed as well as electronic media and

participating in educational exhibitions or fairs organised both locally and internationally in attempt to gain student patronage.

Favourable Attitude/Behaviour and Patronage

No doubt the attitude of educational institutions to their community has significant influence on the rate of admission patronage. A favourable attitude displayed by an institution tends to build intimacy, love and togetherness by the people from the immediate community which the institution is located. Favourable attitude reflects higher admission tendency and vice versa for unfavourable attitude by institutions. A study to examine the relationship between attitude and purchase intention of online shopping in Malaysia found that attitude had stronger direct effect on online shopping intention (Delafronz1, Paim & Khatibi, 2011).

Martins (2009) studied four key variables influencing academic patronage and established that relationship amongst the institution and individuals in terms of personal interactions has significant influence on student's level of patronage. Bringula and Basa (2010) in a study to determine the student profile and enrollment in universities affirmed that institutional image indicators served as the basis for attracting prospective entrants. Overall university image comprising of the cognitive and affective images statistically and significantly impacts on the students' satisfaction with the university (Palacio, Meneses & Pérez Pérez, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey research design to investigate the influence of university image on admission patronage using students of the Department of Business Administration, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai, Niger State-Nigeria. The population comprised of 1122 undergraduate students at varying levels. However, simple random probability sampling technique was used to administer questionnaires to a sample size of 285 students as respondents based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table. A total number of 27 measurement items were used for academic reputation, campus appearance, effective technology, and favourable attitude/behaviour i.e. ACR, CAP, TEC, and FAB respectively and that are found to be reliable and valid. Also, there was absence of multicollinearity problem among the study variables.

RESULTS PRESENTATION

Reliability Test

Reliability of a scale shows how random error free it is (Pallant, 2011). Once the result of factor analysis is

computed and loadings for each items on a scale determined. All items with factor loadings below 0.6 were excluded in the reliability test. Cronbach's alpha value that measures internal consistency of each item in a construct was computed for both independent i.e. ACR, CAP, TEC, and FAB. The values obtained were compared to ascertain whether it has agreed with the minimum range of between 0.5 to above 0.7 based on scholarly suggestions. George and Mallery (2003) recommended an acceptable minimum value of 0.5 to be poor. Therefore, the outcome of the reliability analysis is presented in the table below, and that each construct confirms an acceptable value of above 0.6, indicating reliability of all measurement scale used in the analysis.

Table 1 *Results of Reliability Test of Constructs and Items*

Variables	Pilot Study		Actual Study	
	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
ACR	10	0.702	7	0.604
CAP	10	0.803	8	0.877
TEC	8	0.856	7	0.805
FAB	8	0.821	5	0.931
Total	36		27	

From the preliminary stage a pilot study test was observed to ascertain the reliability of the study's constructs and that all values were above the acceptable standard suggested by literature (see Table 1). Similarly, result of the final reliability test indicated overall Cronbach alpha values of 0.504, 0.877, 0.805, and 0.931 for ACR, CAP, TEC, and FAB dimensions respectively. The predictor variables i.e. ACR, CAP, TEC and FAB show a total of 27 items. This confirms that Cronbach alpha values range between 0.60 to 0.931 and have met the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.5 (George & Malley, 2003) to above 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978; Hair *et al.*, 2010). Thus, indicates the existence of adequate internal consistency amongst the items on each scale and that they are measuring the same underlying construct (Pallant, 2011).

Correlation Test

In order to ascertain the relationship between the study variables a pearson product- moment correlation test was carried out. Correlation describes the association amongst two or more continuous variables that are linearly related (Coakes & Ong, 2011). A moderately weak correlation values of between 0.2 and 0.7 is considered suitable to establish the relationship between variables that are theoretically related (Mayer, 1999). The correlation coefficient is measured using a range of possible values of negative 1 or positive 1 which dictates the direction of the relationship.

Table 2 *Correlation between the Variables*

Variables	ACR	CAP	RCG	FAB	IM
ACR	1.000				
CAP	0.175	1.000			
TEC	0.295	0.765**	1.000		
FAB	0.186	0.106	-0.128	1.000	
IM	0.339**	0.338**	-0.266	-0.011	1.000

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

From the result of the test in the Table 2, 4 predictors i.e. ACR, with $r = 0.339$, $p < 0.01$ and CAP with $r = 0.338$, $p < 0.01$ are positive and significantly related to students' admission patronage in Nigeria's university system. RCG and FAB variables are affirmed to be insignificantly associated with admission patronage. Also from the result ACR with correlation value of 0.339 contributed most to admission patronage. Also TEC and FAB variables have significant negative influence on students patronage with correlation values of $r = -0.266$ and -0.011 respectively, this has been affirmed by numerous researches that Nigerian educational institutions are more of programme/curricular centred and product/revenue-oriented centred instead of building and sustaining image/reputation of the general system in their operations. In the same vein, some correlations as observed in the table ranges from 0.419 to 0.765 which

implies that the association among the variables are not too weak or extremely strong (i.e. > 0.90) to signify multicollinearity problem. However, a few have indicated extremely weak or zero correlation as their values ranges between 0.106 to -0.006 respectively, thus indicating that the factors are not perfectly correlated.

Hypothesis Testing

To examine the influence of Institutional Image (IM) dimensions i.e. ACR, CAP, TEC, and FAB on students' admission patronage, multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate the hypothesized relationships of each predictor variable on the dependent variable. Admission Patronage was regressed on respective IM dimensions to ascertain individual predictor contribution. The output of the final analysis was summarised in the table as follow:

Table 3 Result of Regression Analysis on Institutional Image (IM) and Admission Patronage

Predictors	Std. Beta	t-value	Sig.	Decision
IM Dimensions:				
Academic Reputation	0.224	2.749	.003***	Supported
Campus Appearance	0.205	2.153	.016**	Supported
Technology Effectiveness	-0.044	-0.470	.319	Not Supported
Favourable Attitude	-0.045	-0.760	.225	Not Supported
R ²			0.156	
Adjusted R ²			0.140	
R ² Change			0.156	
F-Change			9.648	
Durbin-Watson			1.601	

*** $P < 0.01$, ** $P < 0.05$, * $P < 0.1$

From the table 3 above, overall result revealed that 15.6% i.e. R² value of 0.156 of the variation in students admission patronage was explained by Institutional Image (IM) dimensions used in the study model (Adj. R²=0.140, F-Change= 0.156, $p < .05$). According to Cohen (1988), R² values for endogenous latent variables are assessed at 0.26 as substantial and 0.13 to be moderate, while 0.02 is considered weak. An acceptable minimum R² value of 1% is recommended (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Similarly, Lohmoller (1989), argued that path coefficients range greater than 0.1 is likely to be significantly different from zero. Based on the aforementioned arguments, future researches could further investigate the relationships between the study's exogeneous and endogenous variables. Of these dimensions only two i.e. ACR and CAP have significantly contributed positively to predicting student's admission patronage and with beta values of

($\beta = 0.224$, $p < 0.01$) and ($\beta = 0.205$, $p < 0.05$) respectively. The remaining dimensions i.e. TEC and FAB were found not to be significant predictors of students' admission patronage. Therefore, hypotheses H1 and H2 are supported while hypotheses H3 and H4 are not supported.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the regression model of this survey explains the research questions raised as to whether IM dimensions i.e. ACR, CAP, TEC, and FAB impact on admission patronage of students. The questions were developed to ascertain the extent to which IM application in the Nigeria's educational institutions could enhance students' admission patronage. The questions comprises of four hypotheses developed for each variable. Overall results showed that only 15.6% of the variation in Nigerian students admission patronage was accounted for by IM application

dimensions used in the study model (Adj. $R^2=0.140$, F-Change= 0.156, $p < .05$) (see R^2 in Table 3). This has proved the deficiency in the implementation of IM practices by Nigerian educational institutions as established by numerous studies. Similarly from the study's model only two dimensions i.e. ACR and CAP significantly contributed positively to admission patronage. However, hypothesis one, establishes ACR to have significant positive influence on students admission patronage which has a beta value of ($\beta=0.224$, $t=2.749$, $p < 0.01$), hence H1 supported. The results affirmed that the extent of student loyalty has a tendency to be higher when perceptions of institutional reputation and institutional image are favourable. (Nguyen_ & LeBlanc, 2001)

The second hypothesis was supported which establishes that CAP has significant positive influence on students admission patronage with a beta value of ($\beta=0.205$, $t=2.153$, $p < 0.05$). Result has concurred with the assertion that campus appearance or physical outlook in any institution is a symbol of standard academic practices but may not be real in terms of application and adherence.

Furthermore, TEC dimension was found not to be a significant predictor of admission patronage, hypothesis H3 not supported. Meaning that Nigeria's educational institutions have been unable to capitalize on technological advancement as a strategy inbuilt into their IM practices to gain the patronage of existing or potential students.

Similarly, FAB dimension in this study was affirmed not to have significant positive relationship with students' admission patronage, hypothesis H4 was not supported. The result is inconsistent with a study of online shopping in Malaysia that found attitude had stronger direct effect on online shopping intention (Delafrooz1, Paim & Khatibi, 2011).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study tries to investigate the relationship between institutional image and students' behaviour towards patronising higher educational institutions. Based on the review of related studies independent variables comprising of academic reputation, campus appearance, technology effectiveness and favourable attitude/behaviour were regressed on the criterion variable i.e. admission patronage. However, the findings revealed significant positive association between academic reputation and campus appearance on admission patronage, while technology and favourable attitude established negative relationship. Findings indicated that there is need for Nigeria's educational institutions to employ strategic plans capable of leveraging on global technological applications to survive in the competitive education atmosphere. Also, Nigeria's education institutions need

to admit the fact that institutional attitude towards their respective stakeholders i.e. students, firms, government, and public is key to building and sustaining students' loyalty. Further the study recommends the following:

1. The design of a strategic promotional tool capable of creating insight and understanding about institutional image and of what relevant it could be to students' loyalty to institutions.
2. The controversies surrounding the conceptual definitions of what constitute image and varying image constructs need to be clearly understood by respective institutions in order to identify what exactly are the constructs that most likely influence students patronage at varying situations.
3. The dynamism in the education world has led to the continuous emergence of new image constructs which need to be revisited by institutions to identify constructs that might be most suitable when applied in boosting students' patronage.
4. Building and sustaining institutional reputation in the Nigeria's education system should be made a thing of past by making it a policy document in the institutional strategic plan.
5. Institutions must desist from exhibiting some deceptive attitude or window dressing of their respective institutions claiming they are instilling reputation.
6. That institutional reputation practices should focus less on theoretical applications and more on the practical-test and supported with governmental regulations and standard schemes to enable educational institutions attract and gained admission of competent students.

STUDY LIMITATION

Further the study is limited by some factors such the population which comprised of only IBB university undergraduate students, specifically of Business Administration Department with no consideration to students of sister departments within the faculty and across faculties in the University. Sampled respondents ought to have integrated students at varying levels in each department/faculty for generalizability of results. Although undergraduate students' in Nigerian universities were believed to share and exhibit similar features on campus, yet variations exists due to nature and location of campus. Future studies are advised to expand the scope and sample of this research and focus on investigating other measures of image constructs within the education sector. In addition, considering the gaps in the literature on institutional image and student admission a better conceptual research framework could have been proposed that incorporates other unique image constructs aside the ones used in this study.

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