UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

BRAND SELECTION OF GHANA'S PREMIER BUSINESS SCHOOL: POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE.

BY

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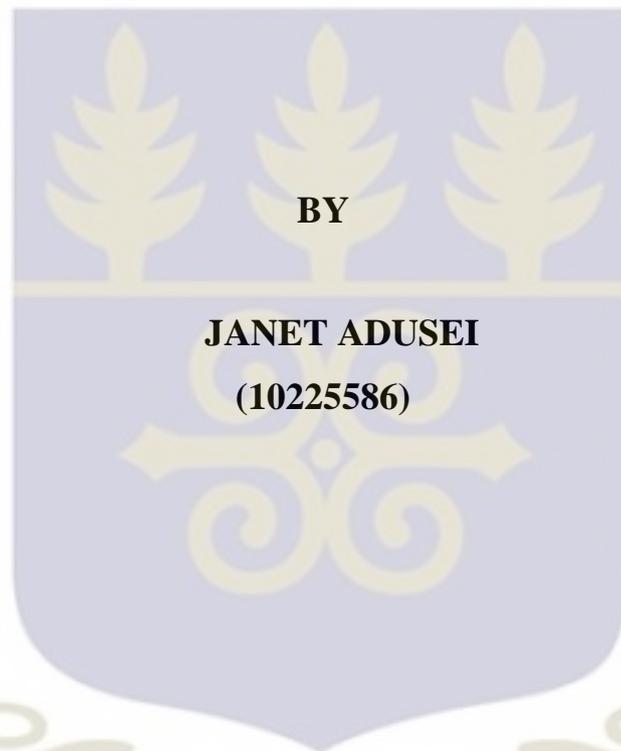
THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MPHIL MARKETING DEGREE.

JUNE, 2015

DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my research and has not been presented by anyone for an academic award in this or any other university. All references used in this work have been fully acknowledged.

I bear sole responsibility for any shortcomings.

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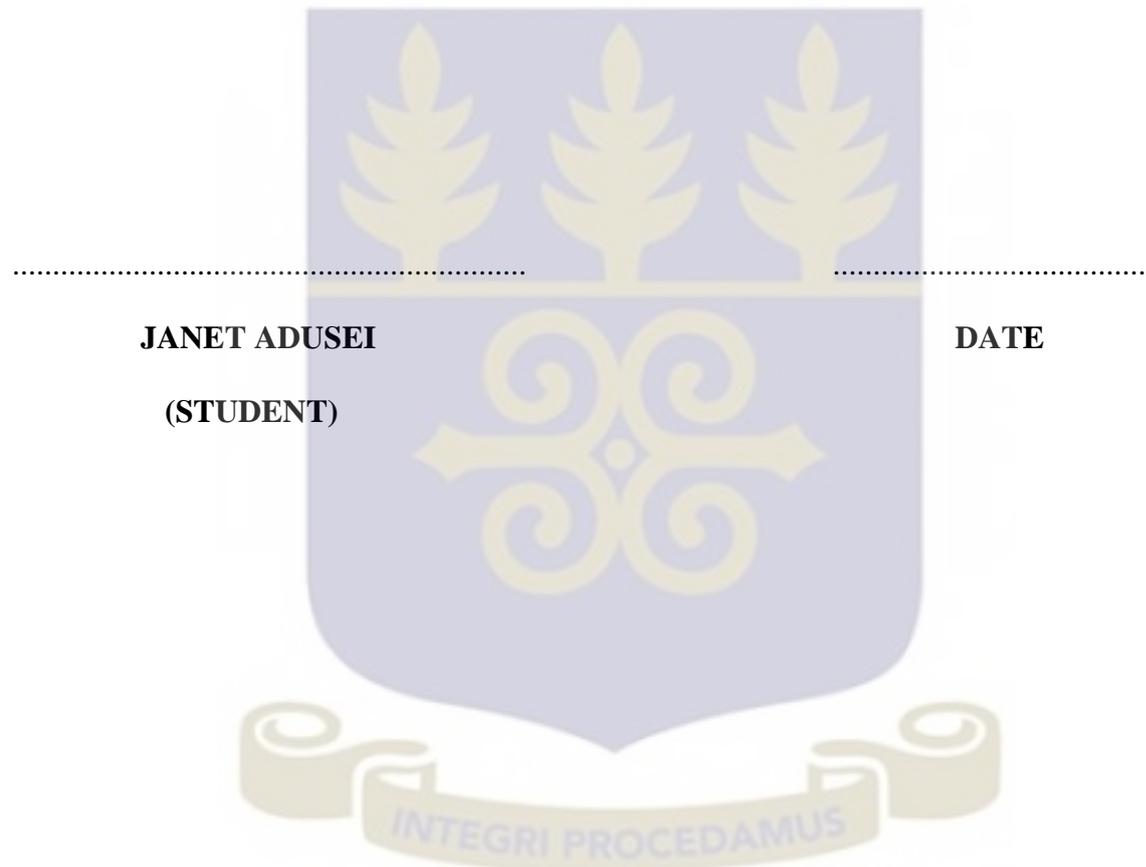
CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this work is done under our supervision according to the rules and regulations of the University of Ghana.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my creator and Giver of life; God, for without Him, I would not have come this far.

 The Companion of the Holy Spirit and Grace and Mercy of God has indeed made all things possible and beautiful in His time. (Ecclesiastics 3:11)

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Last, but certainly not the least, I would like to appreciate the Volta hall Café staff for helping to proof read and print this thesis. May God in His own wisdom and mercies abundantly shower His blessings on all who have been of help to me in diverse ways throughout my Mphil Programme.

Thank you!.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

AABS-   Association of African Business School

AACSB-   Association of Advance Collegiate Schools of Business

AACSB-   Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

CBBE-   Customer Based Brand Equity

CV-   Curriculum Vitae

GIMPA-   Graduate Institute of Management and Public Administration

GMAT-   Graduate Management Admission Test

GNAM-   Global Network for Advanced Management

HE-   Higher Education

HR-   Human Resource

KNUST-   Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

OECD-   Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OMIS-   Operations and Management Information Systems

PAHSM-   Public Administration and Health Services Management

SOA-   School of Administration

TOEFL-   Test of English as a Foreign Language

UGBS-   University of Ghana Business School

UK-   United Kingdom

UN-   United Nations

USA-   United State of America

WOM-   Word of Mouth

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ABSTRACT

Brand Selection of Higher Education by students has become an important concept in this service institution. This is basically due to the fact that students are paying higher tuition fees especially for their postgraduate studies and as such they increasingly see themselves as customers in the service delivery and encounter process.

This research centred on postgraduate students brand selection of Ghana's Premier Business School also known as University of Ghana Business School (UGBS), focusing on the decision process, and, in particular the factors that influenced them in their selection of this institution for their postgraduate studies.

In conducting this study, a qualitative research approach using an in-depth interview was conducted on twenty (20) postgraduate students currently enrolled in the institution. The data were audiotaped, transcribed and analysed using various themes drawn from the interview.

The findings established that the factors that influenced postgraduate students in their brand selection of Ghana's Premier Business School included; Good image/reputation, Knowledge about UGBS, tuition cost, emotional bond / attachment, premiership of UGBS, expert/knowledgeable faculty, conducive environment/ availability of educational facilities, proximity / convenience and course content/ career prospects ranking and that they go through a decision making process during their brand selection and that the decision process is based on a combination of information, word of mouth, individual attitude and institutional reputation at each stage.

The new theoretical and empirical insights into factors that influence postgraduate students brand selection of Ghana's Premier Business School from the study will be significant to Higher Education institutions especially business schools in developing countries such as Ghana.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background to the study. This focuses on an introduction on the need for Higher Education branding, statement of the research problem and gap, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study and chapter disposition.

1.1 Background

Branding has become a strategic managerial issue for Universities (Jevons, 2006). Universities all over the world compete to recruit students and faculty in response to globalization and quality standards. It has therefore become expedient that Higher Education (HE) managers build strong brands locally and globally, in both, short and long term, since consumers are daily presented with an array of brands to meet their ever-growing needs.

It seems to be the case that higher and further education institutions are behaving increasingly as corporations, with increasing competition among Universities, both internationally and nationally (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). Branding is particularly important as people choose brands, the same way they choose friends. It follows therefore that HE institutions may need to adopt a marketing orientation, including mastering brand management as a central competence (Louro & Cunha, 2001), since branding makes the difference between the success and failure of any institution/service or product.

According to Mourad et al (2011) and Jevons (2006), most HE institutions are focusing more on been customer oriented and as such view their students as customers/consumers of their service. Despite the unclear purpose, vast quantities of money are spent on

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promoting whatever it is that universities are, do, and how they do it, without publicly available research on the efficacy or the outcomes of these investments (Jevons, 2006).

In recent years there has been a trend among most Universities in Ghana to seek to employ the techniques of branding, often expending considerable sums in the process. Substantial financial resources are spent on branding activities by many of these Universities. Branding is considered as an antenna to HE and requires central control and consistency in its management. Consequently, the upsurge of private business schools in HE have led to an increasing application of marketing management skills and concepts of which branding is key.

The challenge for HE institutions, however, is that application of branding theory and practice to specialist areas of marketing, such as education, is not necessarily fully developed (Hankinson, 2004).

Hence, the general purpose of this study is to contribute to the limited research in the area of University branding, and in this context brand selection of Ghana Premier Business School also known as University of Ghana Business School (UGBS).

This study was exploratory in nature, seeking to investigate the factors that influence postgraduate students in their brand selection of UGBS for their postgraduate studies.

This was approached through examining the perspective of opinion-formers precisely the postgraduate students who are closely involved with the sector and constitute a key stakeholder group in Ghana HE.

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1.2 Research Problem and Gap

There are various discrepancies (gaps) in literature that this thesis was set out to address and fill. Boateng (2014) identifies five gaps that may necessitate a research; however, this study seeks to fill three of those gaps. These are issue, context and method gaps.

The HE branding literature in developing countries remains under reported, thus the need to fill the context gap. In particular, there have been almost no research or literature on HE institution specifically business schools brand selection from postgraduate students perspective, thus the need to fill the issue gap. Most importantly, the various studies conducted on HE branding, were mostly quantitative in nature, hence the need to fill the method gap.

From previous literature reviewed, there was sufficient evidence that there is the need for HE branding to be examined at a more in-depth level. Although, significant research into HE branding has been established, relatively less students' perception and their brand selection research has been conducted on business oriented institutions such as Ghana Premier Business School. For instance, there has been a study on "students perception of Higher Education in Ghana by Seini (2012) and another by Shadow (2012) on "Branding Ghana Premier University: A look at Prospects and Constraints". With respect to students' perception, Hinson et al (2010) has undertaken a research in that regard, but it was in relation to the banking industry.

In African economy context, HE studies focusing on postgraduate students' perception and their brand selection of HE are rare and this study attempts to fill that gap. Again, on students' perspective, Hinson (2011) did a paper on Internet browsing behaviour: A case study of executive postgraduate students in Ghana. It is very obvious that, little or no study on brand selection of Ghana's Premier Business School has been conducted.

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Additionally, In South Africa, studies on students brand selection focused mainly on the banking sector (Chigamba & Fatoki, 2010).

Although the concepts of branding, brand selection and students perception of HE have been emphasized in some studies, its focus has basically been on the European, Asian or American countries (For instance studies by Manning 1984; Devinder & Datta, 2003 ; Hill et al, 2003; Chua, 2004 ; Gallifa & Batalle, 2010; Chapleo 2010;).

In Ghana, Narteh et al (2012) did a study on HE but it was quantitative in nature. Seini (2012) and Shadow (2012) equally did studies on HE branding, but both adopted quantitative approach.

Thus, the problem of this research was to assess the factors that influenced postgraduate students in selecting UGBS for their postgraduate studies and the decision process that they go through in selecting it.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study explored and assessed the factors that influenced postgraduate students in their brand selection of University of Ghana Business School (UGBS) for their postgraduate studies.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To investigate the factors that influence postgraduate students brand selection of UGBS for their postgraduate studies.

2. To understand the decision making process that postgraduate students go through in their brand selection of UGBS.

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1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the factors that influence postgraduate students brand selection of UGBS for their postgraduate studies?

2. What decision making process do postgraduate students go through during their brand selection of UGBS?

1.6 Significance of Study

Contribution To Literature:

This study invariably contributes / supports HE branding theory/literature that already exists based on its findings.

An added knowledge on HE branding in developing countries emerged from this study to aid in further research by scholars and researchers.

Industry Practice:

It aids policy makers and practioners in taking a critical look and interest in their branding or re-branding decisions so as to overcome the increasingly competitive evolving market in international education.

Overall, the study serves as a guide to policy makers in the formulation and implementation of policies that will lead to improving the branding concepts of HE sector in the country.

1.7 Scope of Study

The study focused on the Ghanaian Higher education sector with specific focus on Ghana's premier business school .The study looked at the factors that influence postgraduate students to select the UGBS brand for their postgraduate studies. This implied that all other activities that the Business school undertakes did not form part of

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this study unless it is relevant to the concept under investigation. The unit of analysis is the postgraduate students of UGBS.

By way of limitations, to start with, even though a few studies on branding of HE in the education sector as a unit of analysis do exist for reference, research on brand selection of Ghana's Premier Business school from students' perspective or the use of students as a unit of analysis is not available in Ghana and for that matter studies that will be cited will be mostly from the developed context.

The research was supposed to be completed within a specified period of time which was not enough for a thorough analysis on the postgraduate students brand selection of the Premier Business School, hence making time another important limitation to the study. Again, since the focus was just on postgraduate students in the Business school, the sampling size was smaller in this research.

In spite of the limitation enumerated above, the core objective of determining the factors that influence brand selection of UGBS from its postgraduate students' perspective was achieved with a high degree of confidence.

1.8 Chapter Disposition

This thesis was structured as follows:

Chapter One (1): Introduction

This chapter presented the background of the study, introduced the research problem and gaps, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study and organization of the study.

Chapter Two (2): Literature Review and Conceptual Model/Framework

This chapter consisted of reviewing the relevant literature on the topic. Areas such as services marketing, branding, higher education branding, brand selection, customer based brand equity model and consumer decision making process model and conceptual framework for the study was covered and presented here.

Chapter Three (3): Context of the Study

The third chapter of the study discussed the industry information. This included the overview of Ghana's Premier Business School; (University of Ghana Business School) and a discussion on students as main consumers of Higher education service.

Chapter Four (4): Research Methodology

The fourth chapter comprised a detailed explanation on the research methodology employed for the study. It encompassed the following: research approach, research strategy, sampling selection, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, research limitations and ethical considerations of the study taken into account.

Chapter Five (5): Data Presentation and Discussions

This comprised analysis and write-ups from the interviews and also highlighted on the discussions thereof.

Chapter Six (6): Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter contained the summary of the study, implications, research limitations and avenues for future research.

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Summary

This chapter provided a background to the study and focused on the key areas such as research problem, research objectives, research questions, purpose of the study, relevant literature and chapter disposition.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses literature relevant to the research topic. It commences with issues of Services and service quality in marketing, its brief overview, then the evolution of Branding is also looked into, thereafter; the Global overview of Higher Education Branding is researched into from the developed to developing countries including West Africa of which Ghana is part. The conceptual models considered for this research is also dived into in addition to an adapted framework developed from the literature review.

2.1 Services and Service Quality in Marketing: Brief Overview

The American Marketing Association (2004) defines services as "activities, benefits and satisfactions which are offered for sale or are provided in connection with the sale of goods". The service sector consists of the "soft" parts of the economy; it involves activities where people offer their knowledge and time to improve productivity, performance, potential and sustainability. The basic characteristics of this sector are the production of services instead of end products.

Service quality can be defined as being a measure of how well the service level delivered matches customer expectation (Gronroos, 1984). In such a competitive service industry, quality issues are increasingly relevant for institutions and Universities. For customers, having a good opinion of the organization is necessary to satisfy all their needs and expectations. Service quality can be a strategic differentiating element for institutions that are trying to achieve success (Ruiz-Olalla, 2001). Wight and O'Neil (2002) for example found that service quality has a high value as a means of ensuring competitive advantage.

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Due to the shrunk enrolment for HE, a University must focus on enhancing service quality to students in order to be more competitive (Tseng et.al, 2009).

2.1.1 Key Features/Characteristics of services

I.   Intangibility

Services are intangible and do not have a physical existence. Hence services cannot be touched, held, tasted or smelt. This is most defining of a service and that which primarily differentiate it from a product.

II.   Heterogeneity/Variability

Given the very nature of services, each service offering is unique and cannot be exactly repeated even by the same service provider. While products can be mass produced and be homogenous, the same is not true of services.

III.   Perishability

Services cannot be stored, saved, returned or resold once they have been used. Once rendered to a customer the service is completely consumed and cannot be delivered to another customer.

IV.   Inseparability/Simultaneity of production and consumption

This refers to the fact that services are generated and consumed by a customer simultaneously.

2.1.2 Dimensions of Service Quality

I.   Assurance

This is defined as "the employees' knowledge and courtesy and the service provider's ability to inspire trust and confidence" (Zeithaml et al., 2006)

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II.   Empathy

Empathy is defined as the "caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customer (Zeithaml et al., 2006). The customer is treated as if he is unique and special.

III.   Reliability

Defined as "the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately" or "delivering on its promises" (Zeithaml et al., 2006).

This dimension is critical as all customers want to deal with firms that keep their promises and this is generally implicitly communicated to the firm's customers.

IV.   Responsiveness

This is the "willingness to help customers and provide prompt service" (Zeithaml et al., 2006). This dimension is concerned with dealing with the customer's requests, questions and complaints promptly and attentively.

V.   Tangibles

This dimension is defined as the physical appearance of facilities, equipment, staff and written materials.

Tangibles are used by firms to convey image and signal quality (Zeithaml et al., 2006).

2.2 Branding: Evolution and Definitions

Historically branding as a concept can be traced back to the late nineteenth century with the development of branded consumer products such as Quaker Oats and Gillette (Low & Fullerton, 1994). In modern times, the topic of branding in marketing literature appeared for the first time 60yrs ago, when Banks in 1950 wrote the first paper on branding(Banks,1950), and it has become the core foci of modern marketing (Keller,1998). In addition authors such as Aaker, de Chernatony, Kapferer and Keller contributed significantly to the evolution of branding theory.

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Also, Whisman (2009) asserts that branding traces its root from ancient Greek, where Romans painted walls to announce wars, and pottery workers marked their clay jugs to indicate origin. Additionally, the growing need for talented craftsmen to distinguish their pottery wares from not so impressive ones; led to some sort of branding, this commenced the era of increased written initials on pots, jugs and other objects by craftsmen to portray their distinct identity (Hieronimus, 2003). These initials became the yardstick by which consumers used and loyally sort after in their purchase decision (Hieronimus, 2003).

The term "brand" is also linked to an old Norse word "brandr" meaning "to burn" (Adamson, 2006; de Chernatony & McDonald, 2003) since branding was also linked to property ownership. It has been alluded by great scholars such as Kotler and Armstrong (2009) that farmers of livestock rearing in ancient times, resorted to the use of steaming hot iron to burn their initials on livestocks as a way of tracing their animals and to also aid their customers to distinguish the healthier cattle providers from the inferior ones.

Ultimately, the relevance and concept of branding became popularized through basically the labels placed on products and services that aided customers in differentiating the product/service of one supplier from those of others. Aaker (1991) defined a brand as a distinguishing name and or symbol such as logo, trademark, or package, design intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical. Recently, de Chernatony (2009) defined a brand as 'a cluster of values that enables a promise to be made about a unique and welcoming experience'. Branding is about finding the sweet spot between what the institution is and what their audience wants (Servier & Sickler, 2004).

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Branding thus, is a means to distinguish one product from another and these differences may be functional, rational, or tangible- related to product/service performance of the brand. Brands are pivotal sources for generating and sustaining a competitive advantage, which not only helps in minimizing quality gaps but also is a source of strong and favourable differentiation (Aaker, 1996). The ultimate goal of any brand is to communicate credibility, legitimacy, and visibility to key stakeholders (Aaker, 2007).

2.2.1 Branding in the Service Industry

Traditionally, branding has been focused on tangible products, but in recent years the focus has expanded to also include branding of services (de Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Krishnan & Hartline, 2001). By branding a service, the customer can better understand the invisible product and what he or she is actually buying (Berry, 2000).

The rapid growth of the service sector has led to increased competition, hence, the relative importance of branding as a great tool for gaining competitive advantage. It could be argued that branding of services is even more important than branding of product since the customer has no tangible attributes when assessing the brand (de Chernatony & McDonald, 1998). The ability of branding to bestow on a service organization an individual personality or image may be the only truly unique means of differentiating a firm's offering from its competitors.

Although the literature regarding brands and branding has grown considerably in recent years, very few studies have focused on brands and branding services (Moorthi, 2002; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana 2007). The lack of services branding literature may be partly due to the familiarity of relating brand names and goods, whereas with the connection between brand names and services is less intuitive and familiar. The shortage

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of services-based branding research coupled with service practitioner's acknowledgement of the relevance of branding to their success, would seem to indicate the need to explore this topical area more fully.

2.2.2 Benefits of Branding/Brand

Keller (2008) advocates that consumers benefit from brands in a number of noteworthy respects, namely:

- ➢ Brands identify the source of the product
- ➢ Brands represent an assignment of responsibility to the producer
- ➢ Brands reduce risk
- ➢ Brands reduce search costs
- ➢ Brands contain a promise or bond with the maker of the product
- ➢ Brands are a signal of quality

Strong brands have many advantages in the market place such as higher market share (Smith & Basu 2002), better quality perceptions (Rao & Monroe, 1989), the ability to charge price premiums (Park & Srinivasan, 1994) and a more positive consumer attitude (Chattopadhyay & Basu, 1990).

Aaker (1996) points out that a strong brand is thought to add saliency to products and services, to impart perceptions of quality and value, and thereby to cultivate market share and customer loyalty. Strong brands play an essential role in marketing strategy and are increasingly being seen as valuable assets and sources of differentiation and competitive advantage for physical goods as well as for services.

Bennet & Ali-Choudhury (2009) argue that branding facilitates in students' decisions in selecting of educational institution, particularly, by the promise of outcomes. Branding is

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also recognized as an effective tool to enhance student loyalty. As de Chernatony (2009) states, 'one of the initial roles of a brand is to attract attention and stand out from competitors'. Branding is one of the most important tools for creating competitive advantage for HE institutions.

2.3 Higher Education Branding   : Global Overview and Definitions.

Many of the world's aspirations for education are reflected clearly in a series of United Nations (UN) declarations, programs of action, and binding covenants. Education improves the productivity and economic well-being of individuals, and it promotes technological and institutional innovation and the economic performance of societies.

In a globalized world, education at all levels is more important than ever. HE if of sufficiently high quality can give countries the local knowledge resources and leadership skills needed to gain greater advantage in international trade negotiations; adopt and adapt new technologies; design education systems that meet the needs of a changing world; manage the negative effects of globalization such as environmental damage and the spread of infectious disease and find ways to ensure that the fruits of global integration contribute to social goals such as poverty reduction. HE offers a country economic advantages in a globalized world, as the economy places a premium on the skills and knowledge gained in tertiary and advanced vocational education.

Postgraduate Higher Education trains highly skilled workers and contributes to the research base and capacity for innovation that determine competitiveness in a knowledge-based global economy (OECD, 2009). Since globally, HE institutions face a plethora of issues and challenges in the current era of HE endeavours, institutions are being urged to "provide high quality education, to exist as well-reputed Universities, to achieve

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enrolment success, improve competitive positioning, provide contemporary and well-designed academic programs and maintain financial strength" (Cetin, 2003). This direction has compelled institutions of HE to function more like a business and market their offerings by utilizing sound branding strategies (Hancock & McCormick, 1996).

Ultimately, if the economic gaps between developed and developing worlds are to be diminished, strengthening systems of tertiary schooling must become a priority. Education providers need to manage not only academic factors but also the brand positioning of their institution in order to reduce student attrition (Angulo-Ruiz & Pergelova,2013). Consequently, HE institutions spend significant amount of resources on their brand campaigns to establish a strong image and reputation to attract students (George, 2000).

A University's brand is defined by Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009) as a manifestation of the institution's features that distinguish it from others, reflects its capacity to satisfy students' needs, engender trust in its ability to deliver a certain type and level of higher education, and help potential recruits to make useful enrolment decisions. In today's complex and highly competitive marketplace, HE institutions are turning to branding as a solution in dealing with global challenges. Sevier (2001) considers HE branding in terms of brand image and brand loyalty. In this respect, brand image describes the desire of students, donors, and others to use brands as signs of status and success. He cites the example of students placing stickers on their cars to advertise the fact that they are proud to be associated with their institution.

There is a general consensus among scholars that branding is as important for educational institutions as it is for commercial businesses. The goal of brand building in educational institutions is to create awareness in the minds of target audiences and focus on the intersection of the institution's core values and the expectations of target audience. Strong

HE institution brands are often regarded as a guarantee of quality (Balmer & Gray, 2003). In particular, HE branding may be used to send a strong signal to potential students about the credibility of the institution of interest (Thomson, 2002).

Higher Education Institutions are moving toward a model of corporation and are marketing themselves very aggressively (Brookes, 2003; Geiger, 2004; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana 2007; Naude & Ivy, 1999; Ruch, 2001). A growing body of work focuses on increased managerialism in HEIs (Constanti & Gibbs, 2004, Meyer; 2002) and HE in administrators increasingly recognise the need for brand management (Chapleo, 2007; Lowrie, 2007). Branding in He helps students and their parents to identify the particular services offered and encourages them to purchase (Harvey, 1996).

As HE become more marketised and have become increasingly promotionalised, brand building gains importance and names become increasingly significant (Finder, 2005; Morphew, 2001; Toma, Dubrow & Hartley, 2005). A strong brand is attractive to current students and increases retention rates (Cobb,2001; Nguyen & LeBlanc,2001; Sevier,2002). HE is a service industry and it is therefore important that much attention is paid to the intangibility and inseparability aspects ascribed to services.

Brands can be seen as tools to help one create the self one desires (Holt, 2002) and University brands help schools to communicate their institutional identity (Wareaas & Solbakk,2009), create awareness, establish a positive image, and counter any negative perceptions (Hemsley-Brown & Goonowardana, 2007).

Building a strong HE brand requires careful planning and a great deal of long term investment. At the heart of a great brand is a great service backed by creatively designed and executed marketing strategies. Judson et al. (2006) and Bennett and Ali-Choudhury

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(2009) argue that one of the central goals of HE branding is to be distinct and unique in an increasingly crowded educational market place. Kirp (2004) also asserts that institutional brand is synonymous with its reputation; which is regarded as prize asset by most prestigious HE institutions.

2.3.1 HE Branding in Developed Countries

HE institutions in developed economies increasingly enhance their student recruitment plans by strengthening their marketing and branding mechanisms consistently. This is achieved through consistently building on distinctive capabilities that are unique, difficult to replicate, superior to competition and sustainable over time (Barney, 1991 & Day, 1994).

Research in the field of HE branding in developed countries have been extensively made. For example, in the USA, UK and Australia, there is significant study on HE branding which has resulted in a considerable flow of international students to HE institutions within these countries to receive education. These nations are said to be primary exporters of HE (Guruz, 2012) and are keener to implement strategic branding and marketing activities to attract international students (Pinar et al., 2011).

Several authors (Naude & Ivy, 1999; Melawar & Akel, 2005; Chapleo, 2007) suggested that branding is particularly important for the new Universities in the UK context in terms of enhancing market awareness among potential students and their parents and career advisors, attracting high-caliber faculty and administrators, differentiating themselves from rival new Universities and gaining market share. In a study by Mazzarol et al., (2003), the authors discussed the development of attractive branding strategies that have led to an increasing flow of international students undertaking fee-paying programmes in

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different developed countries such as UK, Australia, Canada, USA and New Zealand. The work of Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) and Russell (2005) indicates the presence of some influential factors on the decision process of students in selecting a study destination. This research confirmed that the quality of programmes, institutional image and reputation are decisive selling points in influencing international students' brand selection regarding their institution of study.

In UK HE, there appears to be increased recognition by both managers and academics of the significance of brands as sources of sustained competitive advantage. This has resulted in many UK and other developed countries HE institutions investing considerable sums in the development and management of their brands.

Furthermore, university administrators have launched large advertising campaigns in order to brand their institutions (Temple, 2011). In a recent example from the USA, the University of Connecticut, a major public research University, was rebranded as UConn and had the global company like Nike redesign its logotype. These and many other studies prove the application and implementation of HE branding by many Universities of developed countries.

2.3.2 HE Branding in Developing Countries

Developing Nations often exist at the margins and on the periphery of progress (Britz et al., 2006) and this is true even for the HE institutions. Universities in less developed countries face severe resource shortages, brain drain, depleted teaching and learning environments, underperforming economies and labour markets for graduates.

These HE problems suggests that very little is currently known about the growth of HE branding in less developed world. Only a few works that focused on marketing and

branding in HE has been undertaken. These included work by Ivy (2001) in South Africa; Maringe and Foskett (2002), Maringe (2004) in Zimbabwe and Mok (2002) in Thailand. It is clear that there is little work that has been published from the less developed world in comparison to the more developed world.

Irrespective of the aforementioned problems, HE in developing countries is one of the most important services offered in such economies; hence institutions in less developing countries are increasing their investments in building and managing a unique brand image (Palacio et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2003). There is still a paucity of literature regarding HE branding (Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana 2007; Toma et al., 2005, Williams & Omar, 2009) in developing countries.

However, not until recently Williams et al, (2009) conducted a study that focused on issues of branding and rebranding of Universities in Ghana. Based on conceptual analysis on the notion of branding, it explored issues around the renaming of HE institution in Ghana and argues that this process of rebranding has significant lessons in an era where Africa HE seeks some form of branding in the increasing changing education contexts.

In developing countries like South Africa, the need for more scientific approaches towards the branding of HE is enhanced by a number of realities, such as a demand for quality, increasing competition between institution and increasing diversity in the types of institutions. Additionally, in Ghana, Williams et al (2012) conducted a study on HE institution branding regarding the renaming of KNUST and another by Seini (2012) that examined which Ghanaian institutions were perceived to have "successful" brands, and the factors associated with those institutions and students perceptions of those brands.

2.4 Conceptual Models

Conceptual model are models that are made up of the composition of concepts, which are used to help people know, understand or simulate a subject under discussion. Two models to this study are briefly enumerated below.

2.4.1 Consumer Decision-Making process model

Conceptually, there are many models of consumer choice which seek to model purchasing behaviour and the consumer decision-making process. Such models suggest that consumers make decisions after moving through a number of stages, and that the process applies to all consumer decisions, including educational choices (Myers, 1996).

The consumer decision-process is the stages a buyer passes through in making choices about which services to patronize. More generally, decision making is the cognitive process of selecting a course of action from multiple alternatives. It is also described as the actions a person goes through in purchasing and using products or services including the mental and social processes that precede and follow these actions.

Students increasingly have easy access to a vast number of services/HE institutions to choose from. As a result, they often engage in an extreme and extensive search of the set of available alternatives to make a service purchase decision (Cubillo, Sanchez & Cervino, 2006; Chen & Zimitat, 2006). Behind the visible act of making a service purchase lies a decision process that must be investigated.

The five (5) stages that consumers/students pass through in deciding which HE institution to select as proposed by Cubillo et al. 2006 are explained as follows.

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I. Problem Recognition: Perceiving a Need

Problem recognition is the first step of consumer purchase-decision process that occurs because consumer has a desire or a need for a service (Kardes et al, 2011). Perceiving a difference between a person's ideal and actual situations is big enough to trigger a decision.

Eg The need to undertake or pursue a postgraduate degree to better ones life.

II.   Information Search: Seeking Value

Once a need or problem is recognized, the consumer begins to seek for relevant information. There are two types of information sources; internal and external information sources. Internal source involves the student's memory about the product/service, and external source includes word of mouth, social media (Kardes et al, 2011).

The information search stage clarifies the options open to the consumer and may involve scanning one's memory to recall previous experiences with brands/services, through alumni, friends, family or through marketing dominated sources such as advertising, websites and institutions representatives.

III.   Alternative Evaluation: Assessing Value

In this stage students consider which alternative would be best to fulfil their need (Blythe, 2008).

The alternative evaluation aids in the decision-process by; suggesting criteria to use for the service purchase , yielding brand names that might meet the criteria and developing the consumer value (attributes such as prestige, excellence, perception of the service).

IV.   Purchase Decision: Buying Value

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Once consumers/students have found the relevant alternatives and evaluated them, they make their choice among the alternatives. Three outcomes or possibilities are presented at this stage of the decision-making process: These include which HE institution to enrol into, when to enrol and the decision not to enrol. The institution that appeals to them is chosen. The choice can be influenced by the gathered information from various sources; therefore the internet is an effective tool at this stage (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010).

V. Post Purchase Behaviour

Consumers/students start to compare their perceptions of the service with their expectations (Kardes et al, 2011). After enrolling into the selected or preferred HE institution, the student compares it with expectations and will either be satisfied or dissatisfied.

Satisfaction or dissatisfaction affects students' value perceptions and communication about the brand. Many HE institutions work hard to produce positive post purchase communication among students and contribute to long-term relationship and loyalty building between the students and the HE institution in question.

The three main influences on the decision making-process established by Cubillo et al. (2006) includes Personal reasons (lifestyle, advice, opinions), Institutional image (Quality faculty, prestige, international recognition, facilities/environment) and Programme evaluation (programmes recognition, programme suitability, programme specialization, costs and finance).

I. Personal reasons

It is expedient to note that students usually choose an institution of study that has a correlation with their lifestyle, attitude and background (Bourke, 2000). Research shows that status and prestige are important personal reasons that influence students in their purchase decisions making process with regards to selecting an institution for their postgraduate studies.

II.   Institutional image

The facilities within a University make a contribution to a student's decision to study in that particular institution (Price, Matzdorf, Smith & Agahi, 2003).

They further argued that the importance of facilities in students' decision-making show that the availability of computers, areas of quite study and quality of the library services prove to be three of the most important influences for the decision of selecting a particular institution for Higher studies.

III.   Programme Evaluation

Programme evaluation reflects the decision to select a particular service or HE institution by students (Cubillo et al, 2006).

Evaluation of programmes before selecting a HE institution for further studies does not only offer guidance and direction but also focus the students in his or her career path.

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The decision making process model

Programme Evaluation

Programme recognition

Programme suitability

Programme specialization

Costs & Finance

Personal Reasons

Lifestyle

Opinions

Personality

Advice

Problem Recognition

Information Search

Evaluation of Alternatives

Selection and Purchase

Post Purchase

Institutional Image

Quality Faculty

Prestige

International Recognition

Facilities/environment
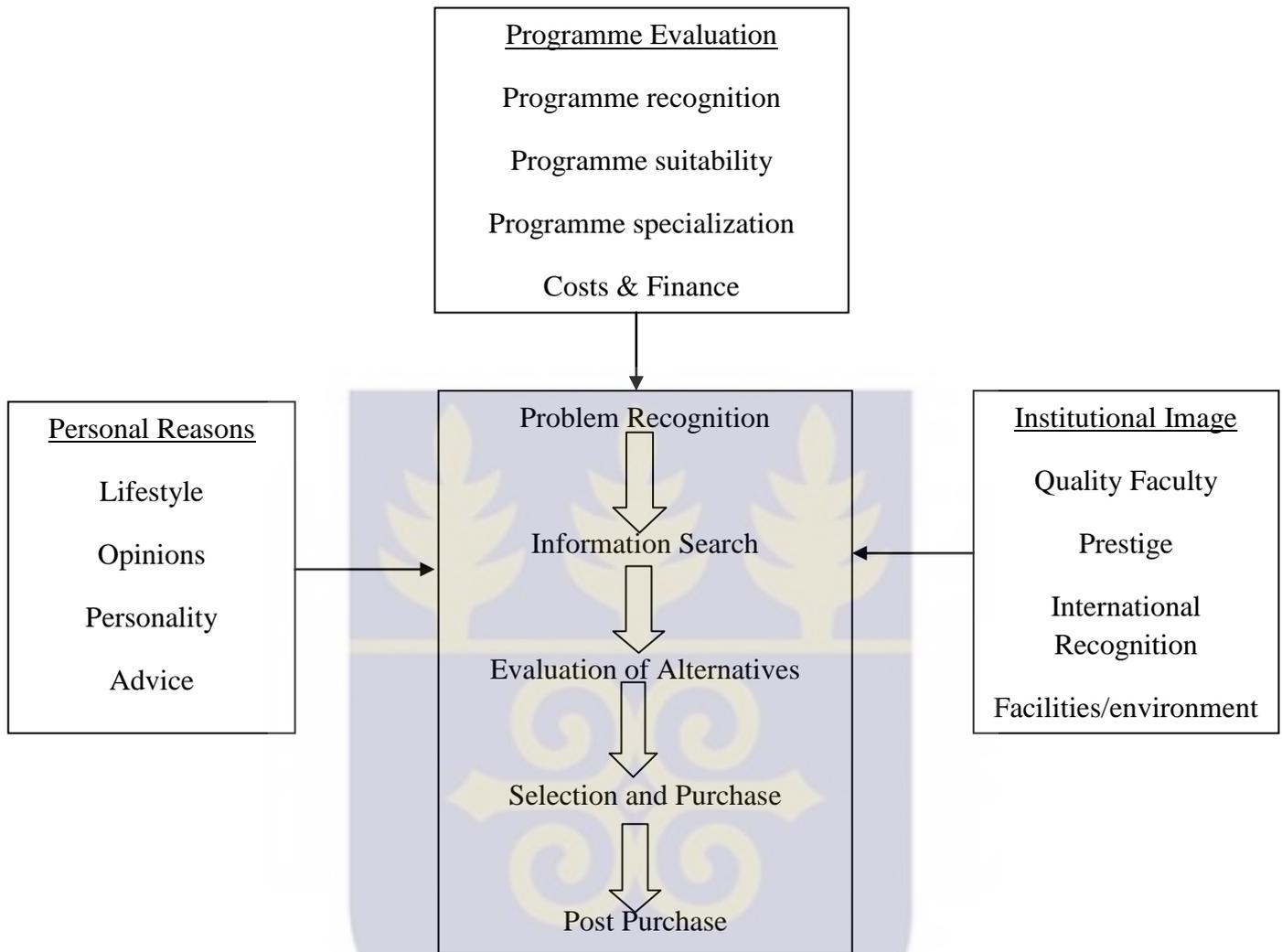
Figure 1 Students Decision-Making Process Model (Cubillo et al. 2006).

It is important to note that in the process of the student going through the decision making stages, a lot of mental processes also goes on at the same time, thus the need to briefly talk about the psychological processes of the student through Keller (1993) Customer based brand equity model since the two are intertwined.

2.4.2 Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model

Keller (1993) looks at brand equity from the consumer psychology perspective and introduces the concept of Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE). He defines brand equity

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as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to marketing of the brand. His framework includes two key dimensions; brand awareness (recall and recognition) and brand image (all possible associations for the brand) and classifies the method of measuring CBBE into direct and indirect approaches. Much of academic research on CBBE uses this indirect approach. His indirect approach to measure CBBE identifies the sources of brand equity in the minds of the consumers that drive consumer behaviour and action outcomes. It involves measuring of constructs like awareness, associations, perceptions and brand evaluations (Christodoulides & de Chernatony, 2009). Keller (2009) argues that in order to gain customer-based brand equity, the consumer must be aware of, and be familiar with the offering and hold brand associations that are strong, favourable and unique in comparison with other brands.

Esch et al (2006) also asserts that CBBE occurs when the consumer is aware and familiar with the brand and holds positive associations about the brand in memory.

Keller (2002) customer based brand equity model is set in the realm of brand-added value and depicts the six dimensions of brand equity. The basic premise of the CBBE model is that the power of a brand lies in what consumers have learned, felt, seen and heard about the brand as a result of their experiences.

The dimensions as proposed by Keller (2002) are explained below;

I. Brand Salience

Salience refers to how familiar consumers are with the brand and whether the brand is actively considered, easily recognizable and 'top-of-mind brand' when consumers find themselves in a purchase/consumption situation.

II.   Brand Performance and brand Imagery

Boosting overall brand equity requires an active focus on both brand performance and brand imagery. Raising brand performance starts by delivering a service that dovetails with consumer needs, followed by attempts to surpass the triggered consumer expectations.

Brand performance is about what exactly the service does or can do in terms of functionality. Brand image refers to what people think about the brand in terms of values and meaning.

III.   Brand Judgements and brand feelings

Brand judgements denote the opinion that consumers have of a brand and how they evaluate the brand. Their opinion is formed rationally based on three criteria: quality, reliability and superiority.

Brand feelings are emotional reactions by consumers to brands and their marketing efforts. These feelings are based on a number of factors: warmth, security, social-acceptance and self-respect.

IV.   Brand Resonance

Brand resonance is the ultimate relationship between a brand and a consumer. The closeness between a brand and a consumer can be measured using four factors: loyalty, emotional bond, being a member of a brand communication (association) example alumni group and also through active brand involvement example been a part of board of directors for the institution.

Keller (2002) further argued that resonance comes about when the consumer has a high level of awareness of and familiarity with tthe brand and holds some strong favourable and unique brand associations in memory.

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2.5. Brand Selection

The new generation of students, increasingly regard themselves as customers, and have become more selective and interactive in their education choices and how they participate in the education process (Petruzzellis et al., 2006). Hence, Universities everywhere are increasingly exposed to consumer selection as the student becomes better informed, more mobile and able to make judgements about a range of potential preferred suppliers at home and abroad. Such judgements relate to a broad range of 'added value' expectations as well as the value of the academic portfolio.

Recent studies indicate that institutional selection is rational and pragmatic, multi-factorial and a highly complex process, which can be influenced by cost, information, access, academic quality, life and school experience (Moogan & Baron, 2003). Evidence also suggests that the role of branding is important to the selection decision, if only to provide justification for selections made (Foskett et al., 2003).

In the process of understanding consumer brand selection, various studies have emerged (Ross & Harradine, 2004; Radder & Huang, 2008; Shabbir et al., 2009; Tang et al., 2011). Results from these studies portrayed that multiple factors have under pinned brand selection by consumers. Some scholars have found brand awareness as a main determinant of brand selection (Keller, 2001; Srinivasen et al., 2010; Huang & Sarigollu, 2012),others also attribute it to price/cost (Erdem et al.,2006; Chattopadhyay et al., 2009; Ching et al., 2009) while others found brand image (Erdem & Swait,2004; Freling & Forbes,2005; Baek et al.,2010) or accessibility (Lin & Chang, 2003; Kim,2008) as the major determinants of brand selection, and impact of family and friends were also found to influence consumer selection of brands (Evanschtzky et., 2008; Wang & Yang, 2008).

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Scholars like Walker (2008) assets that consumers adopt products as consensus expressions of their identities and the brands they select are often a symbolic expression of their personalities and lifestyles.

2.5.1 Model Variables of Brand Selection

There is unequivocal evidence that researching into factors that underpin students' selection of a particular HE institution is crucial to formulating marketing strategies to serve them. A search through the literature indicates that multiple factors influence postgraduates' brand selection of a HE institution for their postgraduate study. The next section discusses some of the major factors that influence postgraduate students' selection of a HE institution and an adapted framework developed thereafter.

2.5.1.1 Brand Image

Brand image is concerned with the associations (such as excellence, quality etc) that students makes with the brand/ institution. A brand association is anything linked in meaning to the brand (Aaker 1991) and collectively, these brand associations define the brand image (de Chernatony, 2001; Keller, 1993). Brand associations may include a variety of attributes like perceived quality, brand name and service attributes (Mourad et al.,2010).

As competition increases for students, HE institutions need to create and maintain a distinct image in the marketplace (Keever, 1998). Students feedback in terms of measuring business school image has currently become an essential line of enquiry (Segev, Raveh & Farjoun, 1999).

Kotler and Fox (1995) suggested that the public forms images of HE institutions based on limited information, and these images affect their brand selection of that institution. The institution's perceived excellence and service quality serves as guide to the selection and attendance decision of the students.

In a global market where functionally similar products and services are available from a wide range of suppliers, the 'brand image' has become an important differentiation tool, as it offers promise of value and quality to consumers (Kartono & Rao, 2008). Strong brand image help students through the proliferation of choices available in service categories of HE institutions. Palacio et al (2002) asserts that a student's positive image of a university provides him or her satisfaction with that university.

Additionally, Parameswaran and Glowacka (1995) in their study of university image concluded that HE institutions need to maintain or develop a distinct image to create an advantage in an increasingly competitive market. It is this image that impacts students' willingness to be enrolled in that institution or to undertake other research and developmental activities. The image portrayed by the institution plays a critical role in the attitudes of its students towards it (Yavas & Shemwell, 1996).

2.5.1.2 Brand Reputation

Reputation according to Van Vught (2005), can be described as the image of quality, influence, trustworthiness that the institution has in the eyes of others whereas, Aaker and Keller (1990) defined reputation as the perception of quality associated with the name of the service or product. Reputation is also seen as a social construction that is defined as the generalized level of esteem for an organization held by a stakeholder (Dalton & Croft, 2003; Deephouse & Carter, 2005; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990).

HE institutions are under greater pressure to build and maintain a good reputation for customer/student service and invest in creating a more student friendly environment (Chapleo, 2007). Any HE institution with a large stock of reputation actually gains a competitive advantage against rivals, because reputation enables it to charge a high premium.

Reputation is also identified by scholars as an intangible resource that enables potential competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Dierickx & Cool, 1989). Reputation has equally been recognized as a key determinant affecting students brand selection of any HE institution (Berger & Wallingford, 1996; Sevier, 1994) since individuals form positive views only for the brand they perceive credible. HE institutions must thus consistently strive to have a positive reputation (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995). As stated by Sung and Yang (2008), prospective students are more inclined to select a university when they trust that institution. Increased trust invariably influences the development of positive experiences and evaluations, which consequently increase quality perception and positive word of mouth about the institution and ultimately a positive reputation.

2.5.1.3 Brand Awareness

Aaker (1996) defined brand awareness as the "strength of a brand's presence in the consumers' mind". Percy and Rossiter (1992) deliberated the brand awareness as "a buyer's ability to identify a brand within a category in sufficient detail to make a purchase decision". Hence, brand awareness is the ability of a consumer/ student to recognize or recall that a particular HE brand is a member of a certain service category (Aaker, 1991). After recognizing the brand through brand knowledge, the student considers whether to patronize that particular category. Conversely, brand recall happens prior to purchase and

students have to remember the brand name in sufficient detail when the brand is not present (Percy & Rossiter, 1992).

Several researchers (Jiang, 2004) have found brand awareness to be an important element that plays a vital role in one's selection of a particular brand. Additionally, authors like Lin and Chang (2003) established in their study that brand awareness has the most powerful influence on consumer's purchase decisions. Consumer behavior theorists (Wilson, 2000; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009) argued that brands with some level of awareness are far more likely to be considered as against those with little or no levels of awareness (Mowen & Minor, 2001).

Brand awareness seem to be of particular interest in students' selection of a HE institution. This is reflected by students' ability to identify the brand under different conditions. It also represents the favorable, strong and unique associations the brand has in students "memory". A strong brand awareness is created by increasing the familiarity of the brand through repeated and consistent exposure with the relevant cues enabling the student to recall the brand effectively.

Awareness is also determined by the promotional activities that are conducted by the HE institution through the use of brand name, logo, letterhead and paperwork to increase brand awareness as part of attracting potential students for enrolment. The names and logos of admired brands evoke trust and initial favorable compliance by the student. Additionally, the positive word of mouth communication behavior of alumni, friends and family is studied to be one key variable that creates awareness of any HE institution, and this leads to subsequent brand selection of that institution since it is perceived to have service quality (Bruce & Edgington, 2008).

If internal and external branding and marketing programmes are effectively implemented during the service encounter, students have a satisfactory experience and positive brand awareness is created.

2.5.1.4 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is defined as a deeply held commitment to patronize a preferred service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior (Oliver, 1997). Helgesen and Nesset (2007) posit that student loyalty relates to the period when a student is enrolled at the institution as well as post completion, and, thereafter, choosing to do further study at the same institution. Chaudhuri (1997) also proposed that brand loyalty is the preference of a student for a single brand, or preference to patronize a particular brand name in a service category regularly. Loyalty is also defined as a behavioral intention to maintain an ongoing relationship with a service provider (Sirdeshmukh, 2000). It is also related to appreciation and commitment (Henning-Thurau, Gwinner & Gremier, 2002). Students who receive excellent tuition from their desired HE brand become committed and remain long-term loyal alumni to the institution (Boshoff & Du Plessis, 2009). Word of mouth (WOM) and intent to continue academic study in the future constitute students loyalty to the HE institution.

Student's loyalty to a brand is one of the most important components of a strong brand (Hess & Story, 2005). It is this loyalty that causes students even after patronizing the HE service, to transfer their positive experiences and encourage others to study at that same university.

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2.5.1.5 Ranking/ Leadership

Ranking appears to have a particular potent effect on brand-selection of a HE institution for postgraduate programs (Saunder & Espeland, 2009; Sauder & Fine, 2008). The institution considered as the leader or highly ranked in position usually has a strong impact on students applying to selective universities.

A university's ranking position provides evidence of its academic quality, and a degree obtained from a top or highly ranked university is more valuable in the work market, aiding students in finding jobs after graduation (Morrish & Lee, 2011). Besides, since students want to secure employment and be respected by employers once they graduate, they therefore consider University ranking as an important element and this reflects in their brand selection of their HE institution (Guruz, 2008).

Ranking also assist students in assessing other important attributes such as the image and reputation, the recognition of the institution qualification and the quality of expertise (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

There are many organizations that rank business schools, however, White et al., (2009) proposed that an accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) is highly regarded among academicians and it also positively impacts students' selection decisions.

2.5.1.6 Quality Faculty/Lecturers

Quality in education is heavily linked with the quality of teachers and their quality of teaching (Zaki, 2006). Quality research work of postgraduate students depends on the lecturers' guidance and competence. The quality or not of the teaching methods, materials

development and content knowledge influence whether or not students would want to enroll in that HE institution.

Perceived quality of faculty was pointed by Rowley and Dawes (2000) as an overall judgment and a major variable by students in their brand selection of a HE institution. Students perceive faculty to be effective and of good quality when they are helpful, caring, understanding, enthusiastic and entertaining (Davison & Price, 2009; Delucchi, 2000). Park et al., (2005) found out that faculty commitment and quality is the most effective method to improve organizational success. The availability of detailed lecture notes, the commitment and willingness of lecturers towards individual students' academic progress greatly influence students in their brand selection of that HE institution.

2.5.1.7 Reliable Environment and Facilities

It is widely recognized that the availability and reliability of physical facilities, give an indication of efficiency and quality of that educational institution (Wilkinson & Yussof, 2005). Institutions that pay attention in improving the quality of physical facilities such as well stocked library, computer lab with internet/wireless connections stand a greater chance of been selected by students when they are considering an institution for higher learning.

Physical facilities also relate to the institution's environment; example eatery place, recreational center and sports center and news/tv rooms and how comfortable and conducive they are for the students to learn and develop. Emotional environment consisting of supportive, warm and friendly interactions between faculty and students provides a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Since students are considered the primary stakeholders of any HE institution, they need a good learning environment with reliable facilities so that they can experience and enjoy the best possible learning atmosphere during their entire postgraduate study lives.

2.6 Conceptual Framework for the study
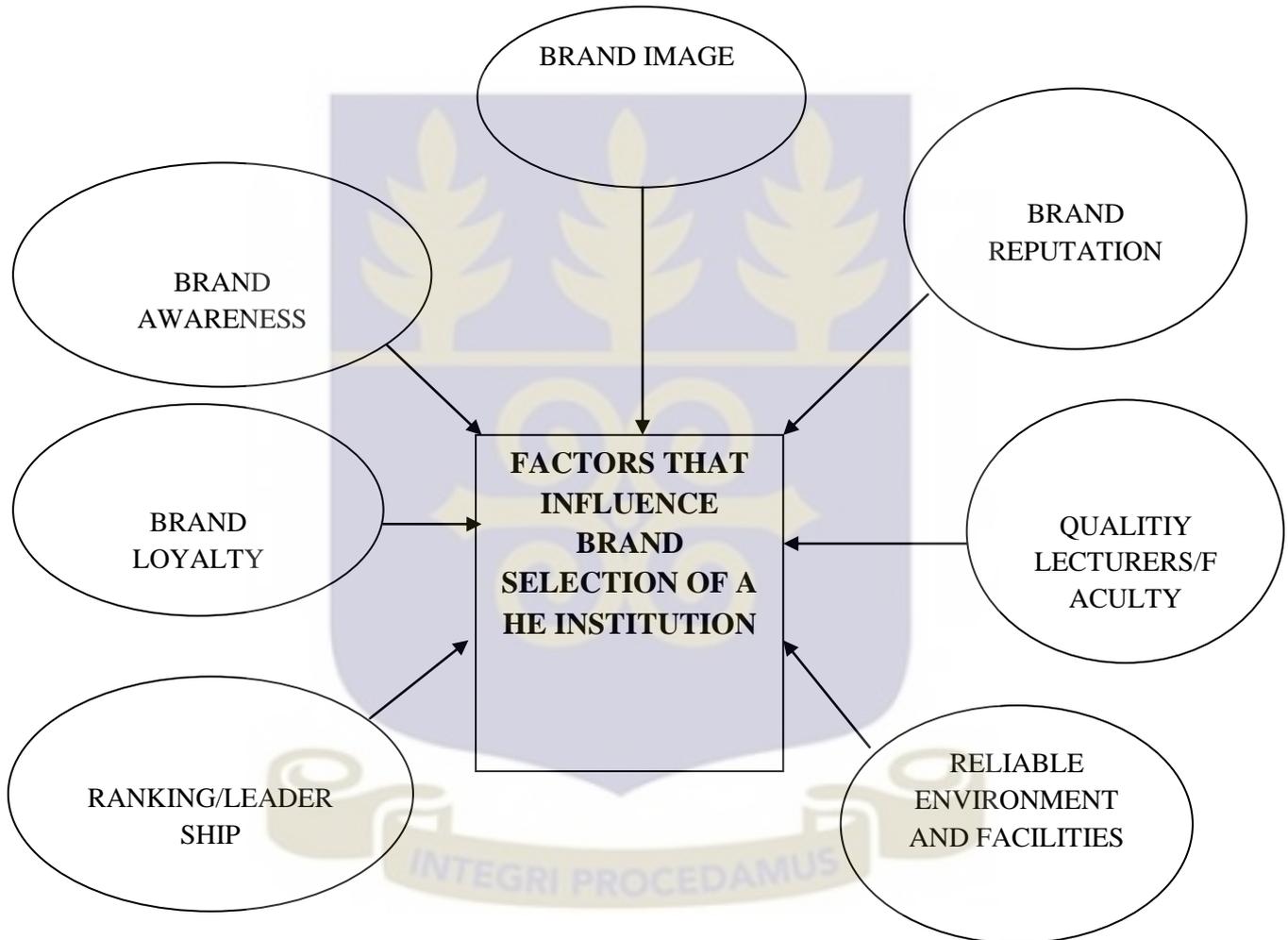
Figure 2: Adapted Framework for model variables of brand selection of HE.

 (Mourad et al.,2010; Chapleo,2007; Schiffman & Kanuk,2009; Hess & Story,2005; Mazzarol & Soutar,2002; Rowley & Dawes, 2000; Wilkinson & Yussof, 2005).

The framework above illustrates the researcher's understanding after review of literature on some variables that influence students in their brand selection of a higher education

institution for their study. The brand selection also encompasses the decision-making process indicated in Figure 1.

2.7 Summary

This chapter discussed past research and literature on services, branding, HE branding, decision-making process and customer based brand equity models, brand selection and model variables of brand selection with regard to HE services and an adapted framework to support the study.

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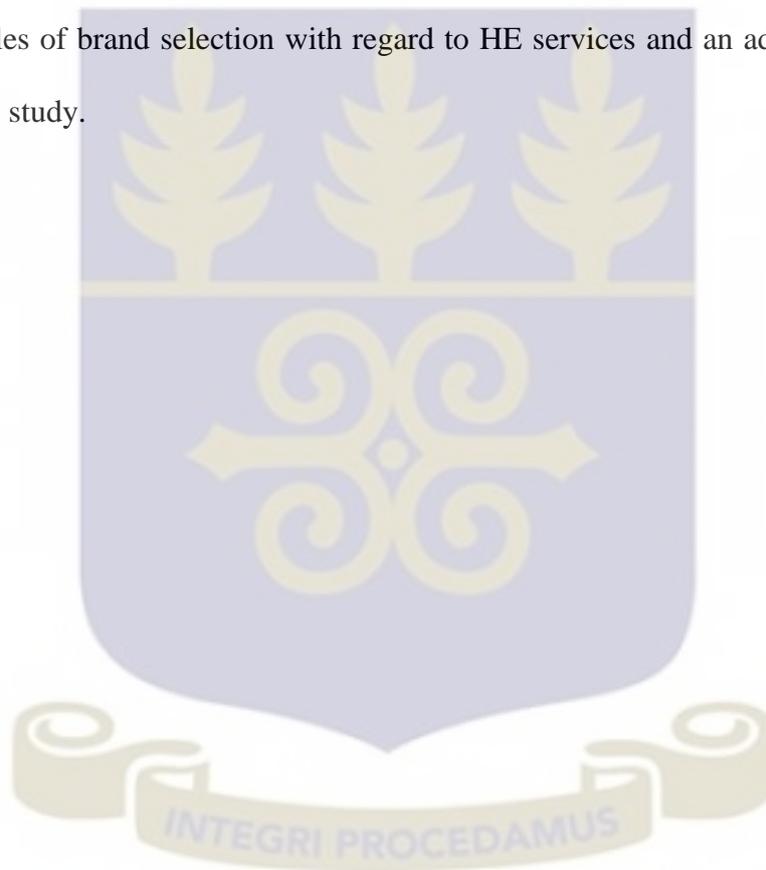
CHAPTER THREE

CONTEXT OF STUDY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses Ghana's Premier Business School, also known as University of Ghana Business School, as the context of the study. The history, mission, vision statement, departments, management, administration, affiliations and students as consumers will be presented here.

3.1 Ghana's Premier Business School-Brief Introduction

The University of Ghana Business School (UGBS), is the premier business school in the sub-region and it was established in 1960. It serves as a premier institution of business training in the West African sub-region and is focused on developing world-class human resources and capabilities to meet national developmental needs and global challenges, through quality teaching, learning, research and knowledge dissemination. The premier business school in the sub-region offers undergraduate, postgraduate and executive education programmes.

3.2 History, Mission and Vision Statement

History

According to the University of Ghana website, in January 1960, the University of Ghana Business School (UGBS) was established as the college of Administration by Executive Instrument-(E.I.127) at Achimota, Accra.

It started business on the 22nd of January,1960, on the old Western compound of Achimota with the old Department of Commerce of the Kumasi College of Technology, established in 1952,(now KNUST) as its nucleus.

The school was renamed School of Administration (SOA) and University of Ghana Business School (UGBS) in 1962 and 2004 respectively. This change in name was to reflect the progress made by the institution, thus, moving from units to departments.

Mission

The mission of the UGBS is the development of quality Human Resource capacity through the provision of world-class management education, skills training and development, applied research, consultancy and other extension services to meet the needs of its domestic and international customers (students, government, private and public-sector operators in commerce and industry and non-governmental organizations) using knowledgeable, competent and experienced faculty and state-of-the art technology.

Vision Statement

The School will strive to maintain its enviable reputation and position as the leading business school in Ghana, founded on customer-oriented, innovative, world-class programmes, cutting-edge infrastructure, facilities and services, and highly motivated, knowledgeable, competent and experienced Faculty and administrative/support staff.

3.2.1 Departments

Before the School was departmentalized in 2004, there were only four (4) units namely;

1. Accounting Unit

2. Management Unit

3. Public Administration Unit

4. Health Services Administration Unit

The School's name was re-launched in 2004 with these six (6) departments in place;

1. Department of Accounting

2. Department of Finance

3. Department of Marketing and Customer Management

4. Department of Operations and Management Information Systems (OMIS)

5. Department of Public Administration and Health Services Management (PAHSM)

6. Department of Human Resource Management

3.2.2 The UGBS Advantage

UGBS's business degree programmes focus on developing students that aspire to be business leaders. Students are trained at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and in addition after completing several semesters of course work, have to also complete a research report during their final year.

This enables them to acquire critical analytical skills, which is invaluable to further research in higher levels of education or career enhancement.

With regards to academic standing and pragmatic business acumen, UGBS prides itself in producing high-achieving and successful experts in every sphere of management endeavour. The school has over the past few years experienced an increase in the number of foreign students for their degree programmes.

UGBS has international affiliations across the globe and this offers their students the opportunity to travel oversees to participate in conferences and workshops.

This is the UGBS advantage!

3.3 Management of UGBS

The governing body of UGBS is mainly comprised of;

  I.   The Dean

 II.   Heads of all the six(6) departments

III.   School Administrator

3.4 UGBS Administrative Staff

All administrative activities of the institution are undertaken in the following units;

3.4.1 Office of the School of Administration

- School Administrator

- Principal Administrative Assistant

- Administrative Assistant

3.4.2 Registry

- Chief Administrative Assistant

- Senior Administrative Assistant

3.4.3 Library

- Assistant Librarian

- Chief Library Assistant

- Principal Library Assistant

- Administrative Assistant

3.4.4 ICT

- Senior ICT Assistant

3.4.5 Academic Administration

- Assistant Registrar

- Program Manager-EMBA

- Principal Administrative Assistant

- Senior Administrative Assistant

3.4.6 General Administration

- Principal Administrative Assistant(Facilities Officer)

- Dean's Secretary

3.4.7 Bursary

- Accountant

- Chief Accounting Assistant

- Principal Stores superintendent

3.4.8 Endowment Fund Secretariat

- Chief Administrative Assistant

- Administrative Assistant

3.5 International Affiliations of UGBS

UGBS is a member of reputable International networks of business schools such as;

3.5.1 Global Network for Advanced Management

Sourced from its website, Global Network for Advanced Management (GNAM) fosters

substantive ties among the world's leading business schools from both economically

strong countries and those on the horizon of economic development. Each network member benefits from the perspective and intellectual contributions of every other and can use the network in creative ways.

Mission

The Global Network for Advanced Management creates an organizational structure that can thrive in this developing environment. It connects each member school with diverse regions, countries, cultures and economies in different phases of development.

The network facilitates interaction, but leaves the development of an agenda to the participating schools.

3.5.2 Association of African Business School

The Association of African Business School (AABS) was formally established in October, 2005 and was registered as a Non-Profit organization in September, 2007.

AABS supports graduate business schools through capacity building, collaboration and quality improvement programmes for deans/directors and faculty from African Business Schools.

Mission

To enable business schools in Africa to contribute towards economic growth and development in the continent by promoting excellence and responsibility in business and management education through capacity building, collaboration and quality improvement.

3.5.3 The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)

The AACSB is a global, non-profit membership organization of educational institutions, businesses and other entities devoted to the advancement of management education.

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Established in 1916, it provides its members with a variety of products and services to assist them with the continuous improvement of their business programs and schools.

Mission

AACSB internationally advances quality management education worldwide through accreditation, thought leadership and value- added services.

3.6 Students as Main Consumers/Customers of HE

Forde (2010) defines a 'customer/consumer' as a person, company or entity which buys goods and services provided by another person, company or other entity. Additionally, consumers are individuals or group who purchase goods and services to satisfy their personal consumption needs (Kotler, 2000). The 'personal consumer' (as distinguished from the organizational consumer) buys goods or services for final use (Batra & Kazmi, 2009).

In a sense, students have become "customers" because education is now seen as a "quasi-commercial service industry" (Brookes, 2003) while the University is considered a knowledge-creating company (Delgado et al.2012).It should also be noted that, in HE, "students have always been expected to play an active role in the educational process" (Little & Williams 2010).

A university is a social place that contributes to the socialization of people, as well as to the development of their personalities (Daxner, 2010) so students must be regarded as the active consumer of the academic service. Dil and Soo (2005) suggest that students are the key stakeholders in HE and their opinion is important in the quality of HE and the reputation and images of such institutions.

Any service industry must therefore identify the requirements of the potential customer and devised its product and service according to the needs of the customer (Harvey & Busher, 1996). Same is true for the education sector as well; as it is also a service industry with student clientele (Harvey & Busher, 1996; Mazzarol, 1998). Universities must therefore develop a clear understanding about what potential student is looking for (Cubillo, Sanchez & Cervino, 2006).

Hence, according to Liebenberg and Barnes (2004), the HE sector is increasingly forced to conduct its business in a manner similar to its private sector counterpart and in order to survive and retain its market share; it pays more attention to the customer. Besides, students are becoming more selective to find the best option in return for their money (Singh et al. 2011).

Liebenberg and Barnes (2004), for instance, mentioned that if public higher education institutions are unable to render the required service that the customer (Student/learner) seeks, more learners may choose to study in private institutions and that there is a concentrated focus on branding and marketing of universities to reach potential customers. According to Kara and Deshields (2004), educational institutions that recognize the importance of consumer-oriented principles would have a better chance of satisfying the needs of their students more effectively.

3.6.1 Postgraduate Students in UGBS

The Postgraduate study programme in UGBS commenced in the year 1989. Currently the annual intake stands at five hundred and six (506) with admission requirement of three years work experience after first degree and a first degree requirement of First class to Second class lower.

The various postgraduate programmes offered include Master of Philosophy (Mphil), Master of Business Administration (MBA), Executive Masters In Business Administration (EMBA), Phd and Master of Science (Msc). Some of the masters' programmes like EMBA, MSC and MBA are also run in a flexible mode (evenings, weekends and sandwich) to enable students pursue graduate studies while working.

3.7 Summary

UGBS as the context of this study is Ghana's premier business school and has developed world-class human resource to various institutional, managerial and industrial sectors in the sub-region. UGBS has qualified and experienced faculty who are committed to carrying out research that is relevant for policy. The School offers various undergraduate, masters and Phd programmes in its six academic departments. It also has collaborations with leading Business schools in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa in the areas of student/faculty exchanges, academic programme, case studies and research development.
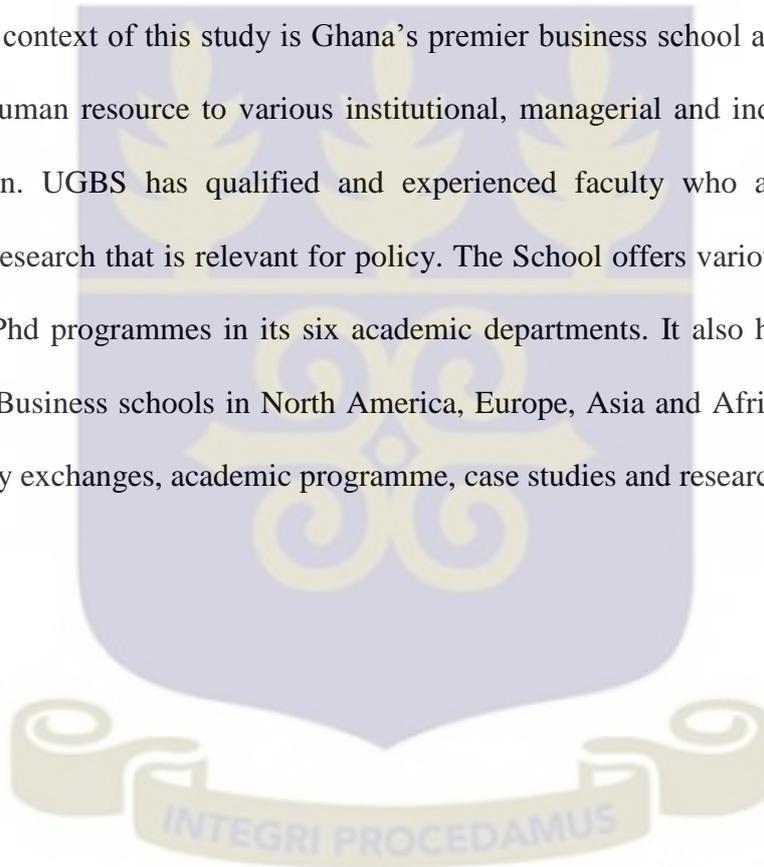
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

After reviewing literature, discussing the main theoretical foundations/framework and context of the study, this chapter seeks to discuss the research methodology employed for this study. The data collection and data analysis process will be explained in this chapter which will highlight the research approach, method and strategies used for data collection, the sampling technique employed and the procedure for data collection. Finally the data analysis method employed for this study will be presented.

4.1 Research Approach, Method and Strategy

4.1.1 Research Approaches

Research approaches are plans and procedures that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Literature on research methodology has chronicled two main approaches to research, which are; quantitative and qualitative research approaches (Cooper & Schindler, 2000; Cassel & Symon, 1997; Bryman & Bell, 2007).

In recent time, however, another methodological approach has emerged in the world of research, namely, the mixed method approach, which is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative techniques (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009).

According to Teddle and Tashakkori (2009) quantitative methods is defined as the techniques associated with the gathering, analysis, interpretation and presentation of numerical methods.

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A qualitative method is often associated with the collection and analysis of either written or spoken text and usually does not involve the quantification of phenomena (Cassell & Symon, 1997). This method adopts several approaches which include in-depth interview, participant observation, case studies, films, photographs and video tapes which make data richer for accurate interpretations (Cooper & Schindler, 2000).

Fryer(1991) stated that "qualitative are characteristically concerned in their research with attempting to accurately describe, decode and interpret the precise meanings to persons or phenomena occurring in their normal social context and are typically pre-occupied with complexity, authenticity, contextualization, shared subjectivity of research and the researched and minimization of illusion".

Qualitative approach is chosen for the purpose of this study.

4.1.2 Research Methods

Research methods refer to the processes used to collect information and data for the purpose of making study decisions.

4.1.3 Research Strategy

"Research Strategy is the road map for undertaking a systemic research of a phenomenon of interest" (Saunders et al., 2009 citing Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Research strategy is thus the nuts and bolts of the research application, describing the rationale for the research and the experiments that may be required to accomplish aims and objectives of the study. Research strategy is a general plan of how to answer the research questions that have been set (Saunders et al., 2009).

Saunders et al. (2009) identify seven research strategies. These are experiment, survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography and archival research. Each strategy can be used for exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research (Yin, 2003).

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4.1.4 Case Study Design

For the purpose of this study, case study approach was adopted. The case study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings (Einsenhardt, 1989).

Robson (1993) defined a case study as the development of detailed intensive knowledge about a single case, or of a small number of related cases. A case study strategy is preferred in this study because there is a focus on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 1994). Yin (1994) observes that case studies can be exploratory, explanatory or descriptive.

A case study could be a single case study involving the study of an organisation or a multiple case study strategy which involves multiple cases on individuals or organisation with respect to the phenomenon (Yin, 2003).

With respect to this study, a single case study strategy was adopted to find how the phenomenon under study applied to twenty (20) postgraduate students in UGBS who were purposely selected for the study.

4.2 Sampling Selection and Technique

4.2.1 Target Population

All the postgraduate students currently enrolled within UGBS form the population of this study. According to Cooper and Schindler (2000) four compelling reasons for sampling out of a population include low cost, greater accuracy of results, greater speed of data collection and availability of population elements.

In all, twenty (20) postgraduate students were selected using purposive sampling and were interviewed for this study. According to Malhorta (2007) qualitative research requires small sample sizes since it is intended to gain understanding of the underlying issues of the

phenomena understudy. Hence the twenty students selected is an appropriate number with regards to the phenomena understudy.

The postgraduate students were chosen because it is deemed that they are matured and experienced in their thinking and analysis of issues, therefore their views and approaches would be influential to the study.

Again, they are all successfully enrolled as students in UGBS, thus, they can give the needed insight that pertains to this study.

4.2.2 The Sampling Technique

Probability and non-probability techniques are the sampling techniques used in research. Probability sampling is based on the concepts of random selection; a controlled procedure that ensures that each population element is given a known non-zero chance of selection (Cooper & Schindler, 2000). Probability sampling is primarily used in quantitative oriented studies and traditionally has several techniques such as random sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling and multiple sampling (Teddle & Tashhakori, 2009).

Non-Probability sampling is however arbitrary and subjective and it is used in qualitative oriented studies. Therefore each member does not have a non-zero chance of being included. Examples include quota, convenience, snowball and purposive sampling; which is the technique adopted for this study (Cooper & Schinlder , 2000; Bryman & Bell, 2007).

4.2.3 Purposive Sampling

This Non-Probability sampling technique adopted for the study involves the researcher collecting the sample to conform to certain criterion needed for the research.

The characteristics of Purposive sampling identified by Teddle and Tashhakori includes:

I. Purposive sampling are usually small (about 30 or less) usually depending on the type of qualitative research and the research questions.

II. The sample is often selected based on the expert judgement of researcher and informants.

III. It addresses specific purpose that is directly related to the research question.

IV. The procedure focuses on the "depth" of the knowledge that can be generated by individual cases.

Based on the above characteristics, the researcher used them as criteria in selecting the twenty (20) postgraduate students who were deemed informed, knowledgeable and experienced in helping to obtain the needed answers to meet the research objectives.

4.3 Data Collection Method

Both Primary and Secondary data were collected to gather information for this study. Primary data for qualitative research include interviews, focus groups and observations. The researcher adopted the use of interviews to gather first-hand information from twenty (20) postgraduate students. This number comprised of ten females and ten 10 males. Since the postgraduate programmes in UGBS consist of this major five (Mphil, MBA, MSC, EMBA, and PHD), four(4) students were purposely selected from each of these programmes for the data collection.

An interviewer questionnaire was developed by the researcher with respect to the research questions and objectives.

Secondary data is made up of information that has previously been collected and is available to the researcher and relevant for the research. Such data was available from books, journals, websites, unpublished/published research thesis, reports and internet search engines.

Data from these sources provided additional insight into the research area and aided in a greater understanding to the primary data collected.

4.3.1 Interview

According to Cooper and Schindler (2000) personal interview is a two-way conversation initiated by an interviewer to obtain information from a respondent. It is the most widely used qualitative method in research because it is a highly flexible method, that can be used almost anywhere, and it is a method of producing data of great depth (King, 1994). Data was collected through a personal one-on-one in-depth interview with the aid of an interview guide. Blaxter et al (2001) sees interview as a narrative method of collecting data and believes that interview provides a more in-depth insight into the area of study. Interview is a qualitative technique that allows a limited number of informants with rich information and also constitutes a learning process for the researcher.

4.3.2 Development of Interview Guide

In designing the interview guide, the relevant theoretical construction in brand selection of HE were identified and incorporated into the open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are used to obtain deep, meaningful and thoughtful answers. Thus, the interview guide served the exploratory purpose of the study.

The interview guide was organized into two (2) main sections based on the themes for the study. The first section investigates the factors that influence postgraduate students in their decision to select the UGBS brand for their postgraduate studies. Thus, the opinions of selecting UGBS brand by postgraduate students were sought.

The second section focused on the decision making process that postgraduate students go through during their brand selection of UGBS.

4.3.3 Pilot Study

A pilot study with five (5) postgraduate students was conducted by the researcher to ensure that the interview guide was reliable and suitable for the study. The pilot study was also conducted to determine the clarity of the interview sample, and to discover any issues related to errors, wording and misunderstanding of questions.

Cooper and Schindler (2000) noted that, a pilot study is conducted to detect weakness in design and instrument and thus helps to provide proxy data for selection of non-probability sample. The small number of five (5) was selected in agreement with Nueman (2006) who explained that a pilot study is best conducted on a small set respondents similar to those in a final test.

The 5 postgraduate students used for this test were helpful in pointing out the weaknesses and loop-holes in the interview guide such as the need to prevent double-barrelled questions.

Considerably the pilot study helped to ensure the academic, social and ethical relevance of the interview guide.

4.3.4 Conducting the In-Depth Interview

Yin (2003) argued that interview is the most important source when it comes to obtaining information within a case study. Through interview guide, an interview was conducted to obtain the primary data. An in-depth interview method also provided a depiction of the participants' true feelings on the factors that influenced their studying at Ghana's Premier Business School.

An introductory letter which had details of the researcher's identity and the purpose of the study was presented to all respondents of the study. The interview questions were based on

the literature and research questions and were conducted in the month of March, 2015. The interviews were undertaken in the various lecture rooms and hostels of the interviewees.

The interview which took approximately ten (10) minutes each to conduct was purposive, conversational and loosely structured as recommended by Rubin & Rubin (2005). Data was collected in serene environment void of destructions and in a face to face manner diplomatically to give room for freedom of expression.

The interviews were all audio recorded as recommended by Gillham (2000) and Cooper & Schindler (2000). This served as documentary evidence to the researcher. A journal was also kept alongside the interview to help track themes and patterns that emerged during the procedure. It was conducted on twenty (20) postgraduate students enrolled in Business School for the 2014/15 academic year.

All information gathered was recorded, transcribed and grouped under relevant themes to augment data analysis.

4.4 Data Analysis of the Study

The first stage of the data analysis was to organise and prepare the primary data which was both oral (recorded) and written.

All the notes collected on the field were typed, sorted out and arranged into different types with respect to the research problem.

The data was then transcribed. Heritage (1984) states that transcribing and recording interviews allows more thorough information on what people have said, corrects the human limitations of forgetfulness, allows for data to be reused and opens up data for public scrutiny. After transcribing, all information gathered was thoroughly read and relevant issues generated to suit the research problem.

Coding of the data is then undertaken. Coding means assigning numbers and relevant symbols to responses so that they can be categorized or classified. Coding is also said to be the process of organizing qualitative materials into "chunks" before bringing meaning to them (Cooper & Schindler; 2000, Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Through coding, the researcher was able to categorise the information into themes for data analysis.

4.4.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in rich detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis is simple to use especially for researchers who are unfamiliar with more complex types of qualitative analysis. It allows for flexibility in the researcher's choice of theoretical framework.

Braun and Clarke's Six (6) Phases of Conducting Thematic Analysis.

1. Becoming familiar with the data

2. Generating initial codes

3. Searching for themes

4. Reviewing themes

5. Defining and naming themes

6. Producing the report

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4.4.2   Ethical Considerations

One very important factor to consider is the issue of ethics in research (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). In undertaking this study, the researcher deemed it very important to adhere to ethical principles and considerations.

Firstly, the principle of voluntary participation was adhered to. The approval of participants was sought for the study. Additionally, participants were made aware of the purpose and objectives of the study.

The privacy of respondents views was ensured to facilitate in more openness and accuracy of responses received during the interview. Again, interviews were conducted at appropriate times that would not conflict with students' daily routine. Most of the interviews were done during the evenings and in-between lecture periods. Respondents' privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were protected and guaranteed.

4.4.3 Limitations of the Study

 First of all, the research was limited with respect to time and resources needed to complete an Mphil thesis. Again, the result may not be a representation of all students in UGBS. This is due to the fact that the selected sample for the study was restricted to only the postgraduate students in UGBS.

Additionally, since the research was highly qualitative and used interviews to solicit data from the postgraduate students, the probability that the researcher asked respondents questions related to responses from previous respondents or even transcribed data with her own judgement is high.

Respondents may have also on the other hand provided the researcher with information that she/he feels the researcher wants.

4.5 Summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology adopted for this study which was the qualitative approach. This was to ensure that, enough in-depth data for the study was obtained. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data using a purposive sampling technique. The in-depth nature of the face-to-face interview used for data collection enabled the researcher to gain a higher response rate through approaching the graduate students on a personal level. A pilot study was first carried out before the in-depth interview, so as to ensure the semi-structured interview guide was easy to understand, as well as ensuring an accurate and adequate analysis. In all twenty (20) postgraduate students of UGBS were interviewed. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The data was analysed by transcribing, coding and categorising major issues derived from the data.
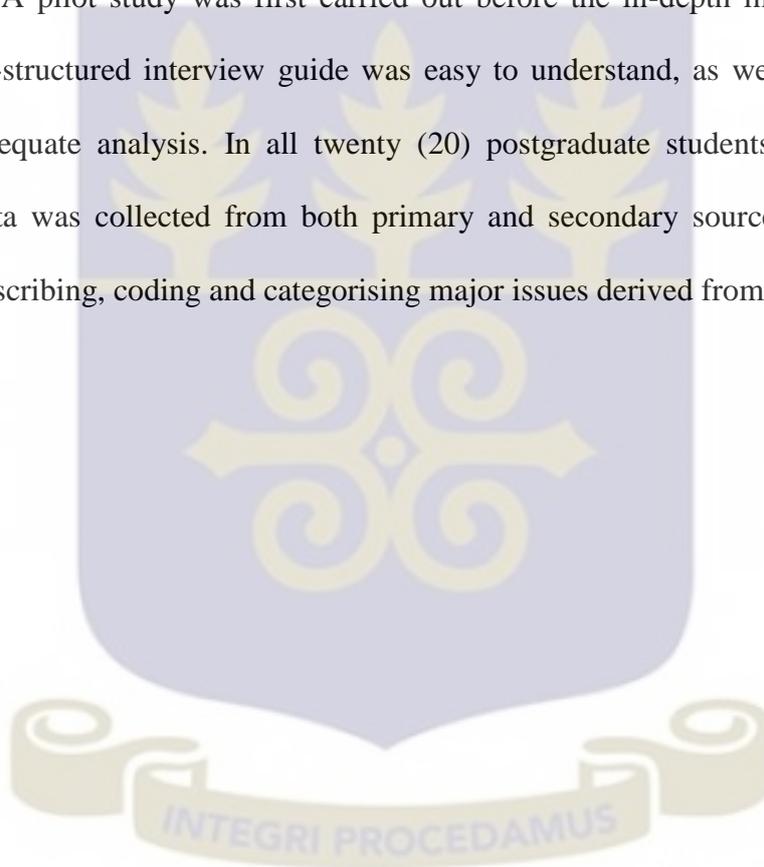
CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the study undertaken. The responses of the twenty (20) postgraduate students who were interviewed and all other data obtained through participant observations are analysed, discussed and presented with respect to the research purpose and objectives.

5.1 Personal Information and Demographics

The study captured data on the gender and postgraduate programme of the students as a means of providing insight about the demographic feature of the postgraduate students.

Total Number Interviewed	
10 Females	50%
10 Males	50%

Postgraduate Programmes Studying	
MPHIL	20%
MBA	20%
MSC	20%
EMBA	20%
PHD	20%

Out of the twenty students interviewed, 50% were males and the other 50% were females. Four students were selected from each programme of study, thus Mphil representing 20%, Mba another 20%, Msc also 20%, Emba also representing 20% and Phd also representing 20%.

5.2 Key Factors of Students' Brand Selection of Ghana's Premier Business School.

Good Image and Reputation	Excellence, respected name, Competent graduates, highly recognized certificate.
Knowledge about UGBS	Referrals, Word of Mouth, Alumni, Associations, Media, Internet, relatives, friends, work colleagues.
Tuition cost	Relatively cheaper fees and materials.
Emotional bond and Attachment	Strong alumni base, massive recommendations, students defending of school, consistent repurchase of service, display of UGBS souvenirs.
Premiership of UGBS	Top ranked, consistency, leadership, oldest business school.
Expert and Knowledgeable faculty	Quality and expertise of faculty, well-researched and committed lecturers.
Conducive environment and Availability of educational facilities	Modern Business school building, availability of library, ICT center, conducive atmosphere, availability of research materials online.
Proximity and Convenience	Distance and closeness of school to workplace and home, time to beat traffic, avoidance of lateness to lectures, combining studies with work and the weekend options available
Course content and Career prospects	Innovativeness in courses offered, volume of courses offered, career path chosen, unique courses, project work easy to get job after graduating.

Table 1: Key Factors of Students' Brand Selection of Ghana's Premier Business School.

5.3 Objective One: Factors that Influence Postgraduate Students' Brand Selection of UGBS.

Data collected from these students regarding the factors that influenced their selection of UGBS for their Postgraduate studies revealed interesting results.

5.3.1 Good Image and Reputation

In addressing the brand image of UGBS as being a major brand selection factor, important numbers of the respondents showed UGBS picture as an image of a true postgraduate institution. They termed it as an institution that delivers knowledge and guides students towards success here in life and life hereafter.

A respondent asserted to this by saying,

"The image I have about UGBS is that they have well qualified lecturers who can channel or transform students to become better people in future and this made me choose it."

Additionally another said,

"The brand has prestige, it is also of high value and you get the level of satisfaction compared to other Universities".

Many of the respondents also found UGBS as a specialized institution to serve the corporate and academic world. They treated it as the University that is committed to uphold the norms of business and adhere to do everything accordingly.

Some interesting comments to this include,

"The good image UGBS has built overtime and their method of tuition to students is one of the best methods you can get".

Additionally one puts it,

"UGBS has a good image and culture of excellence such that when you enrol here, you become a part of that excellence".

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In viewing the reputation of UGBS as a selection factor, one respondent said that she had known only few names of HE institutions in West Africa before she came to Ghana and that UGBS was the highly respected one. She heard the name because it is reputed in her country; Nigeria as one of the best in terms of the business field. She said,

"I think in Business education in West Africa I see UGBS, UGBS has built a brand of repute and set higher standards for itself".

5.3.2 Knowledge about UGBS

Most of the respondents seemed to have a very clear idea about UGBS. 99% of the respondents had knowledge about it prior to selecting it for their postgraduate program and had the needed information that helped them to differentiate UGBS from others. The result is similar to the outcome of the study of Chapleo (2010). According to the study, it is quite unlikely to find an individual in a HE institution who knows little about the brand before selecting it.

In terms of respondents' knowledge about the UGBS brand and the fact that this influenced them in selecting it, the study finds many interesting expressions. Some typical answers included,

"UGBS is known all over, I felt that UGBS doesn't need to advertise, I heard them all over the news, and its alumni also contribute their success to the fact that they were from UGBS".

"My sister was in University of Ghana, then through her I got to know that there was a great business school, so I applied".

"Teachers in my High School advised me after my studies to choose UGBS and also word of mouth from previous students who have couched a niche for themselves in the business

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industry made me aware of UGBS and thus it became topmost of my evoke set when I wanted to select a HE institution for my studies".

"I got to know of UGBS through friends who were students here for their undergraduate studies".

"I heard of UGBS through the media since my secondary school days and the name is also selling itself in the market".

5.3.3 Tuition Cost

Financial considerations such as tuition fee and other cost involved in the postgraduate program influences a student's decision to enroll in a particular Higher education institution or not (Wang & Xiao, 2009). It is asserted that tuition fees is perceived to deter many potential students, particularly individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds from pursuing further studies (Coelli, 2005; Neill, 2009). Findings of this study revealed amazing truth on the influence that tuition cost had on the postgraduate students' selection of UGBS. As some indicated below;

"I was supposed to be in Reading University in the UK but I chose UGBS because of cost".

"Comparatively UGBS compared to other postgraduate schools in abroad, cost is relatively cheaper, I gained admission to read HR in one of the Universities in UK, but the cost was so high but with UGBS its cheaper besides that the fact that I needed to makes extra costs in writing certain internationally required exams like TOEFL and GMAT, put me off thus making UGBS my ultimate choice".

Nowlis and Simonson (2000) empirically provide evidence that cost affects students' choice of a HE brand. Cadogan and Foster (2000) also argued that cost is probably the most important consideration for the average student.

Whatever the country, financial barriers are one of the main perceived factors that influences students decision to select and pursue a postgraduate course in any HE institution (Heller, 1997; Neill, 2009). The perceived affordability of a master's degree in UGBS compared to other USA or UK business schools is a major factor that influenced the students in selecting UGBS. As a respondent puts it,

"UGBS is a place that is good for both the poor and the rich, the average Ghanaian can be enrolled here since the tuition fees is quite moderate and flexible to pay".

5.3.4 Emotional Bond and Attachment

Students' emotional bond and attachment to a brand is similar to the emotional bond a consumer experiences with close circle of friends and/ or family (Aggarwal, 2004). Morriss et al. (2002) found that emotional response to a brand is a strong predictor of purchase intentions. As loyalty to the institution depends largely on a sense of belonging, it is one of the critical factors that influenced most of the students in selecting of UGBS especially those who had their first degree there.

Many pointed to the fact that both alumni and current students were considered significant advertisers and senders of word-of-mouth in their interactions and thus significant for the build up of brand loyalty. This is in line with Ressler and Abratt (2009), who stated that, "a graduate in essence becomes loyal product of the university upon graduation".

Indeed current students' emotional bond and attachment to the UGBS brand even after completion builds up a pool of strong bonds and association with the school and this causes them to consider it for any future research or postgraduate study.

The general feelings and attachment that Close to 80% of the students interviewed had towards UGBS influenced them in their selection of it for their postgraduate studies. Some emotional bond responses given included;

"I did my undergraduate here, so naturally this was my first option to look at when I wanted to do my postgraduate study."

"I feel great and proud to be a part of UGBS".

"I will always identify myself with UGBS because it's a great institution".

"I feel privileged to be a part of this institution".

"Íts great studying in UGBS and I feel very proud that I belong to such an institution".

"I am honoured to be in UGBS".

"I hold UGBS in high esteem; it has always been my dream school".

Another also in expressing attachment to the school said,

"If somebody says something bad about UGBS, I will definitely defend it".

5.3.5 Premiership of UGBS

Most of the respondents emphasized the influence that UGBS position as a premier Business school in Ghana had on them during their selection of a HE institution.

Some responses are given below;

"ÜGBS is the oldest business school around and it is also the best in the country".

"I selected UGBS because of the level of the school in terms of ranking of Universities that offer business in Ghana; I felt within myself that UGBS is the best".

"I selected UGBS because it has existed for a very long time and has served as a traditional business school, so they have the experience and remain the top and leader in business education in Ghana".

"When it comes to business education in Ghana, apart from UGBS, the other competitors try their best, but when you have UGBS on your CV, it speaks volumes of positivity about you, UGBS also makes a lot of statement and it sells out there, that was why I chose it over the others".

"I chose UGBS basically because of the way it has gone far in terms of its credentials and the track record of producing very quality products for the job market; UGBS is a known leader in terms of producing quality products for the industry as well as academia".

"I chose UGBS because the certificate is accepted worldwide".

"I think when you talk about business education in West Africa, I see UGBS, it has built a strong brand and set higher standards for itself, that's why I am here".

5.3.6 Expert and Knowledgeable Faculty

The students emphasized the significance of faculty/lecturers pedagogical skills and the quality and substance of their knowledge on them during their decision to select the HE institution.

In a similar vein, Conrad and Conrad (2000) mentioned teaching expertise in the faculty as a major factor in students' selection of HE institution. The students also appreciated the innovativeness as well as consistency in the standard of lecturing. The competence, expertise and knowledgeability of the faculty was mentioned as a great influencing factor by most of the students.

As one student noted,

"I chose UGBS because of the faculty, they know what they are doing, they are able to teach well, and they have the knowledge to impart into students".

Other respondents also said,

"The way the lecturers are dedicated and exceptional to their students prompted me to choose UGBS".

"Well, I chose UGBS because of the quality and strong faculty compared to others because at least I have had the chance of been in two other institutions before finally enrolling here".

"The seasoned lecturers differentiate them from the rest, that's why I chose it".

"There are a lot of qualified faculty in UGBS that handle students well".

"UGBS has highly learned and rich lecturers with the knowledge stock to give to students".

"Having had my first degree in a different institution, I would put UGBS lecturers on a top pedestal since they are making more impact compared to my previous lecturers".

"I have worked with a few of the products UGBS has produced for the industry and I could see the distinctive difference between them and students from other institutions, all attributed to the lecturers".

"The faculty in UGBS is abreast with a lot of important facts and information; this made me want to be taught by them".

5.3.7 Conducive Environment and Availability of Educational Facilities

The students highlighted the significance of the UGBS environment and architectural design as a contributory factor in their brand selection. Responses included:

"The new UGBS graduate block and the kind of environment it offers is so beautiful and appealing to the eyes that you would love to learn there, this pushed me to select it".

"The architectural design of the UGBS new edifice made me choose it, because it is modern and has the needed environment to make graduate learning less stressful".

UGBS's research and educational facilities available to students contributed significantly to why the students chose to study there. To this some respondents said;

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"I am aware of SAKAI student service; a website developed by the institution to help students do plagiarism text on their thesis work, this makes research easy to do".

"I chose UGBS because they have good learning facilities and they also organize workshops and colloquium for their students to understand research better"

"The exchange programs UGBS organize for students to Yale and Harvard Universities is something that makes learning interesting and this gives exposure to participants".

5.3.8 Proximity and Convenience

The proximity to attend lectures in terms of distance from home and work place as well as the convenience of having to pursue the master program in the evening and weekends especially for the weekend and executive MBA is a great influencing factor for many to choose UGBS. Some respondents puts it;

"I chose UGBS mainly because of proximity, I stay on the mountains (Aburi) so its easier for me to come and go everyday".

"At first I thought UGBS did not have flexible times for workers who want to school and pursue a degree program, but when I realized that they have systems and programs that can make you school and work at the same time, I chose to do my EMBA here, I like that convenience".

"I live around Legon, which is within the environs of the University, so distance wasn't going to be a problem for me, that is why I chose UGBS".

"Convenience is the first reason why I chose UGBS, in the sense that I had my first degree here, I knew a lot of the lecturers and administrators, so I wouldn't have to struggle to socialize and to know where the library and other facilities are located, I simply did not want to have problems with the logistics and networking with lecturers and students should I enrol in a new postgraduate institution".

5.3.9 Course Content and Career Prospects

Some also associated their area of specialization, the innovativeness in the course content offered in UGBS in terms of some of the postgraduate programmes such as weekend and executive MBA and the duration of the program as a factor that influenced them to select it. To this some said,

"The kind of course I wanted to read affected my choice, I wanted to read Phd in public administration and it is only UGBS that offers such specialization".

"I think first and foremost the reason I chose UGBS was due to the fact that the school has that creativity in terms of the kind of courses they roll out, irrespective of your background, there is something you can pursue".

"The structure of the course is well communicated".

"Considering the courses offered, if I am to compare UGBS with GIMPA, I will say that UGBS is doing more/better in terms of the volume of courses they offer, that's why I chose to be here instead of GIMPA".

"I continue been a student here because there are fewer options to do EMBA in Ghana".

"I was just interested in doing Human Resource management since I am coming from a psychology background and I also felt that I could link it to doing HR in business school, that's why I chose it".

"The convenience of having to do my masters on weekends influenced me to choose UGBS".

"The course content is wonderful and I learnt so much from the program I chose during my undergraduate level and was compelled to continue in that same program here for my postgraduate".

"I chose UGBS because of innovation in their courses offered, basically Business school doesn't focus on only one course, overtime, they have come out with new programs, a student anywhere in the world can get a particular program to enrol in".

The students also emphasized the fact that qualifications/degrees from the top and premier UGBS gives them good career prospects and jobs upon graduation. As Conrad and Conrad (2000) state, the ability to obtain a good position after graduation is an important factor in the University's selection.

A respondent found UGBS as a place where upon completion, she could further her career advancement in business. This she puts it as,

Firstly , I would say that I chose UGBS because it is in the area of my career prospects, secondly, overtime, UGBS has got the experience in mentoring students to come out successfully in business, which I believe will help me advance in that regard".

Additionally two other respondents puts it,

"UGBS is a school where you will get to meet other equally bright students and will be able to interact, network and build a good career path for yourself in future, that's why I chose here".

"I would say that UGBS is the best school to train managers for industry and any corporate institution in Ghana and Africa, so I chose to be here in order to better my career path".

5.4 Objective Two: The Postgraduate Students decision- making process that they go through during their Brand Selection of UGBS.

All twenty (20) respondents interviewed attested to the fact that they went through a decision making process in one way or the other before settling down on UGBS as their preferred

choice for their postgraduate study. The five stages of decision making they went through are outlined below;

5.4.1 Problem or Need Recognition

All respondents pointed to the fact that the need to advance themselves by obtaining additional degree was the initial catalyst and problem recognised for them to want to be in UGBS. Comments from the students interviewed included:

"After obtaining my first degree five (5) years ago, I felt the need to do my second degree in order to upgrade myself".(Student 5)

"I wanted to remain in Academia and become a lecturer, and the best option was to do an Mphil course, so right after my National service in UGBS, I made up my mind to continue a postgraduate research program in the Marketing department of UGBS".(Student 10)

"I had started work after my first degree and needed a promotion, so this need pushed me to want to pursue my postgraduate program". (Student 8)

"I wanted to advance my career path in finance and risk management, so I decided to pick a program in UGBS". (Student 6)

5.4.2 Information Search

After recognising the need to pursue a postgraduate degree, the next action for them to do was to search for information at both internal and external sources. Research by Gray et al (2003) identify a mix of media vehicles that Universities use to market and enhance their institutional image to potential students example websites and printed media.

"After I made up my mind to pursue a second degree, I went online to search for business institutions in Ghana and UK, then I opted for UGBS out of the lot".(Student 1)

"Through media advertisements in newspapers, television and radio, I got exposed to UGBS graduate school and the programs that they have".(Student 3)

"I knew UGBS had a website, so I went online to search and know more about them before deciding to apply".(Student 14)

"Firstly I talked to a friend who was in UGBS and is now a teaching assistant there, that I wanted a school that will give me the best tuition, he advised me that even though it is difficult to get into UGBS, if I should get it, it will help and prepare me well for the job market; upon that advise, I applied and thank God I gained admission".(student 7)

"I was a student for my first degree in psychology at University of Ghana, so internally, I realised that to pursue a second degree, any of the schools, colleges or departments within the University will be my topmost preference".

5.4.3 Evaluation of Alternatives

When explored in more detail through the interview, the students mentioned the various options they had and how those options were evaluated.

"Fortunately when I searched for a HE institution for my postgraduate degree, I had UGBS, GIMPA and KNUST as my options; but with the help of a lecturer friend of mine in GIMPA, we evaluated all three options and he suggested I choose UGBS".(Student 2)

"As an international student from Nigeria, I wanted to experience the education of other countries in Africa, so I searched online for a number of institutions that offer project management and Business Administration, I was attracted to UGBS because in terms of

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proximity, Nigeria is closer to Ghana, and also its tuition cost component was relatively cheaper for me to afford, so I chose UGBS out of the countless African Universities I saw".(Student 4)

"I did my undergraduate here, so I knew a lot about UGBS graduate program; also even before my first degree back in Senior high school, myself and my classmates knew from our teachers that when it comes to business education, its either UGBS or nothing, consequently it has always been on the top of my mind". (Student 20)

5.4.4 Selection and Purchase

80% of the interviewees listened to positive word of mouth from relatives, friends, alumni and colleagues about UGBS and were influenced in that regard to select it as against other alternatives.

"My father suggested I choose UGBS although I had wanted to be in GIMPA, since he lectures at UG and knows much about the business school and its lecturers".(Student 18)

"Some colleagues and bosses that I have worked with before, encouraged me to pursue my EMBA in UGBS when I made know my intention to them that I was searching and seeking for an institution where I could do weekend and night schooling whilst I concentrate on working during the day". (Student 15)

5.4.5 Post Purchase

With regards to the students post purchase decision after selecting and patronizing or partaking of the UGBS students services, some interesting findings were discovered.

"Before I came into UGBS, I heard that it was an autonomous institution and operates differently from University of Ghana; my perception is still the same". (Student 17)

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"I knew UGBS was the best out of the lot; my perception even after coming here is still the same". (Student 14)

"Before I came to UGBS, I thought, the interaction between students and lecturers was going to be very good but that is not the case and also looking at my undergraduate and postgraduate courses, so much hasn't changed in terms of the content, I haven't seen so much new additions; in short the teaching method has not met my expectations".(Student 13)

"I used to see coming to UGBS as a distant dream so I am glad that I am finally here, whatever view I had about this place, the deviation hasn't been much because I still see this place as a centre of excellence".(Student 11)

"When I gained admission into UGBS, I got more than I expected, I will everyday recommend it to friends".(Student 16)

"The kind of perception I had about UGBS like quality lecturers and facilities before coming here, I have experienced them, so my perception hasn't changed".(Student 12)

"I knew UGBS was very great in terms of the quality of products that they produce, they are known all over, they are still on course, my current view reflects my previous view".(student 19)

"I had this perception that UGBS takes only the best students, that perception remains the same".(Student 9)

"I had a very high expectation of the school before coming but upon enrolling here, my expectation in terms of service delivery hasn't been met, for instance, there are a lot of problems with the system, getting your grades to reflect online, handling assignments, online registration and chasing supervisors to check the progress of your thesis work". (Student 18)

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5.5 Summary

The above data analysis and discussion of findings showed the factors that influenced the twenty (20) postgraduate students interviewed, in selecting UGBS for their masters program and outlined the various stages of decision making that they went through during their brand selection.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This has been a study exploring brand selection of UGBS from its postgraduate students' perspective. It also looked at the decision making process that the students normally go through during their brand selection of UGBS. This final chapter summarises the study and related findings with the developed post-framework and concludes with implications and recommendations for future research.

6.1 Summary

This study specifically researched on the factors that influence postgraduate students to select UGBS for their postgraduate studies and the decision process that they go through during their brand selection. An In-Depth one-on-one interview in that regard was conducted purposively on twenty (20) of the students and the findings addressed the research objectives and questions.

6.1.1 Research Question One: Brand Selection Factors

This study revealed that there are some major factors that influenced the students to select the UGBS brand for their postgraduate programmes. The findings established that with respect to UGBS, the factors that influenced its students to select it included; good image/reputation, knowledge about UGBS, tuition cost, emotional bond/attachment, premiership of UGBS, expert / knowledgeable faculty, conducive environment/ availability of educational facilities, proximity/ convenience and the course content/ career prospects.

These factors have been developed into a post-research model as shown below.

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6.1.1.1 Post research model/framework

|	
*Good image and Reputation	
*Knowledge about UGBS	
Tuition Cost	Factors that influence Brand Selection of UGBS (Decision Process is embedded inside)
*Emotional bond and Attachment to UGBS	
*Premiership of UGBS	
*Expert and Knowledgeable faculty	
*Conducive environment and Availability of educational facilities	
Proximity and Convenience	
Course content and Career prospects	

Figure 3: Source: Author's framework developed on factors that influence postgraduate students brand selection of UGBS for their postgraduate study.

Significantly, the findings identified nine (9) influencing factors, however, comparing it with the post-research factors, all factors were confirmed with three new factors added up in the Ghanaian HE context.

Note (*) : These were the factors drawn from the literature review, all others are newly-discovered from this research.

6.1.2 Research Question Two: Decision-Making Process

The second research question was, what decision making process do postgraduate students go through during their brand selection of the UGBS brand.

The findings showed that students identify a need to pursue a postgraduate degree just so they can satisfy their individual aspirations or to meet certain job requirements. Upon which they source for information as to the institutions that will meet their need, it was realized that students perceive online networks, websites and media advertisements as an information source as well as their internal source of information from word of mouth communication and their own cognitive thinking with respect to the brands that they have in their evoke set, when they want to make a purchasing decision and to find out more about the institutions that they wish to be enrolled in.

This is followed by evaluation of alternatives or options obtained from the various stages at the information search stage. The option that appeals to them most is chosen, this stage is usually influenced by positive word of mouth and referrals from friends, family, alumni and colleagues.

Finally after patronizing the services of the HE institution that was selected, which is UGBS in this study, the students made a post purchase decision by expressing their perception about UGBS before been enrolled and after finally getting enrolled there. The findings came out

that majority of the students' perception about UGBS remained the same whilst a few expressed the fact that their perception about UGBS after been enrolled had slightly changed. To conclude, the research indicated that word-of-mouth not only has a significant effect on the students' behaviour, but it also plays an important role in their decision-making process to select UGBS for their postgraduate studies.

6.2 Conclusions

6.2.1 Brand Selection Factors

This research firmly concludes that in selecting HE in developing countries, specifically Ghana, students consider significantly similar and more factors from those identified in developed countries when selecting a HE institution for their postgraduate studies as indicated in the post-framework.

6.2.2 Decision Making Process

Conclusively, the consumer decision-making process is relevant in the students' brand selection of UGBS, however, at the postgraduate level, where most had had their first degree in the same institution, selection is based mostly on "repeat purchase"(ie alma mata allegiance) rather than on rationality. Thus, not all the postgraduate students extensively went through the entire decision making process during their brand selection although they attested to the fact that the process applied to them in one way or the other.

6.3 Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

6.3.1 Managerial Implications

The findings of the study unravelled some major factors that influenced students in selecting UGBS for their studies. The implication therefore is that management and administrators of UGBS who are bent on maintaining the institution's premiership, excellence and good image,

need to do just one thing, that is, to develop more consistent and pragmatic marketing strategies that will always put them above the increasing competition that other business institutions both home and abroad are presenting to them now and in the near future.

Additionally, practitioners need to critically examine the expectations held by prospective and enrolled students to see if expectations are been met in the service delivery process.

The findings also made known the fact that indeed the students did not make a decision to enrol in UGBS in a vacuum but instead, they went through a decision process or stages before finally settling on UGBS. The implication being that, management especially marketing managers of UGBS must monitor and track these stages very well by effectively utilizing their online media (website), alumni and word of mouth channels so as to prudently establish their brand and image in the evoke set of their potential students, such that when they are in the process of making a decision to enrol in any HE institution, UGBS automatically becomes the brand they would immediately choose over others.

6.3.2 Theoretical Implication

The results from this study can be useful by adding up to the theory and literature that already exist in HE branding and students brand selection and perception of a HE brand. The research outcomes could thus be used by academics in HE and consumer behaviour research areas.

6.3.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Further studies could also expand the sample size to the undergraduate students of UGBS in order to gain information on both the graduate and postgraduate students experiences, selection and perception of the UGBS brand.

Additionally, another detailed research into brand selection of UGBS by specific students from different countries would also give another knowledge base on their international postgraduate and undergraduate students' population and would form valuable information for future research in the areas of international marketing and HE in Ghana. A replication of this study in other faculties in University of Ghana can be an avenue for future research.

Lastly, the recommendation of this study is that in order to get a broader insight into the influences of postgraduate students HE selection, future research can be conducted on students across a wide range of Universities especially emerging business institutions in Ghana and other developing countries.
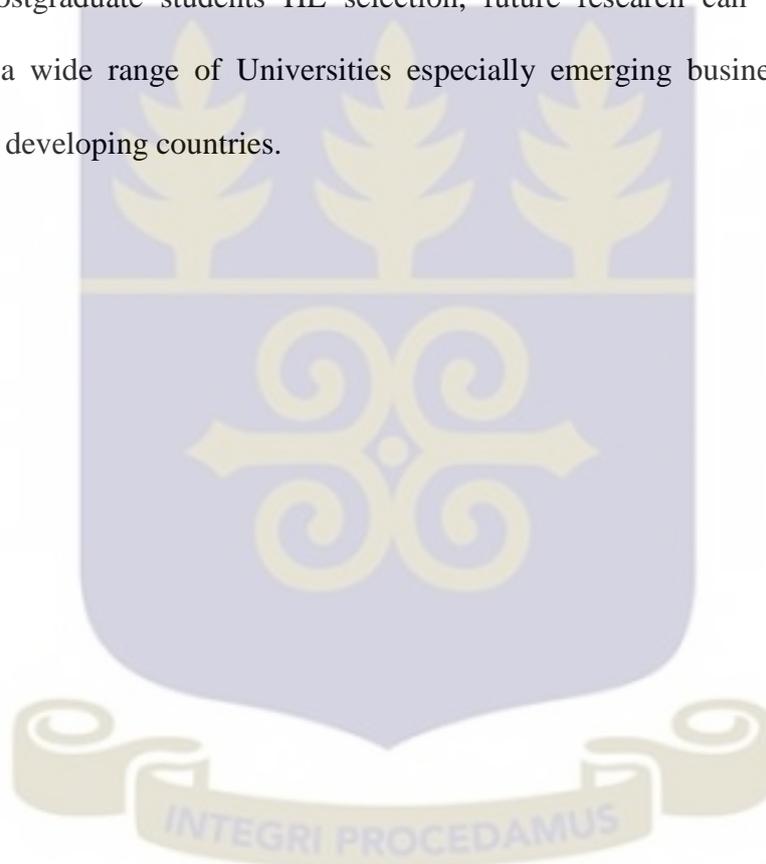
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APPENDIX (INTERVIEW GUIDE)

TOPIC : **BRAND SELECTION OF GHANA'S PREMIER BUSINESS SCHOOL:**

POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS PERSPECTIVE.

Postgraduate Study Programme

- MPHIL

- MBA

- EMBA

- MSC

- PHD

Total number of interviewees is twenty (20), Four (4) from each area of postgraduate study.

SECTION A:

1. What factors influenced you to select UGBS for your postgraduate studies?

2. When you think of the UGBS brand, what are the attributes that come to mind?

3. What image do you have of UGBS?

4. As a student of UGBS , how do you feel been a part of this institution?

5. What do you use to differentiate UGBS brand from its competitors?

   SECTION B:

6. How did you hear of UGBS?

7. What decision making process did you go through before selecting UGBS?

8. What was your view of UGBS before been enrolled, what would you say is your current view?

9. Overall, how satisfied are you with the UGBS brand? THANK YOU!