

Assessing the influence of University Brand Image, environment and inter-personal interaction on students university choice: a case of Taraba State University.

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to determine the influence of brand Image, environment and interpersonal interaction on undergraduate students' enrollment into Taraba State University, Jalingo. The study was guided by four research objectives with their corresponding research questions. The research design used to carry out the study was case study design. The population of the study is three thousand eight hundred (3800) first year undergraduate students out of which three hundred and twenty-three (322) were randomly selected from different departments. A questionnaire tagged Student University Choice Criteria Questionnaire (SUCC) was developed and used for data collection. The reliability co-efficient of 0.98 was obtained using ordinal Alpha statistics. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools like frequency count and percentages as well as mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that tuition fees (3.39), reputation of university (3.35), recognition of certificate (3.35), academic quality (3.29), and geographical location of university (3.29) has the highest influence on students' university choice in the order of magnitude of mean. Findings also showed that female students give more consideration to the university environment when making the choice of university they wish to enroll in than male students. It was recommended that Taraba State University administrators should make the institution more attractive by imparting the environment and learning conditions of the university.

Keywords: University brand image, University Environment, Inter-personal interaction, Assessment, University choice

Introduction

The purpose of establishing a university, (is to see to the transmission of information through instructing, logical research, the investigation of provincial and national issues and the improvement of elective answers for recognized issues), as indicated by the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) shows that fundamental objectives of university education include: high level relevant manpower training, improvement of scholarly capacity of individual to comprehend and value their local and external environment and acquisition of skills that enhance self-reliance thereby increasing usefulness in the society.

The purpose of establishing Taraba State University in the North East zone is to help in instilling good attitudes that are fundamental for the socialization of people, subsequently prompting the modernization and in general change of the general public. Bali (2014) posits that advanced education furnish individuals with a chance to think about the basic social, monetary and profound issues confronting mankind. According to Amoor and Aliyu (2014) education generally enables and builds up the populace to obtain ability and information that would set them up for the world of work. Thus, this University was established in 2009 so that the indigenes and other citizens could have easy access to higher education that could lead primarily to the development of Taraba State.

Students are confronted with the choice to enroll in a university. Lgan, Ataman, Ugurlu and Yurdunkulu (2018) reveal that choosing a university is one of the most important milestones for most students, since it shapes student's future careers and also affect their enthusiasm and commitment to their study. Pitan and Adedeji (2014) affirm that students who are forced to make choices without considering their priorities may face difficulties in excelling in their study and careers. They will most likely be unable to get an attractive line of work after their university degree because of their failure to come out with passing mark. Igere (2017) reveals that students who choose their university of learning and programme

themselves, performed better academically. buttressing the fact that personal choice of university plays a significant role in the student's academic achievement.

However, the selection of the university to attend is a complex process involving many factors. Chaltfield, Lee and Robert (2013), & Oluyomi and Adedeji, (2014) indicate that students don't settle for an extraordinary choice in seclusion Parent, relatives, teachers and friends are important people influencing student's choice of universities. The influences of parent take the first place for several reasons, especially for financial support. The brand image of a university and environment also play a vital role in University selection. Lgan, et al., (2018) claim that during university choice process, students attach particular importance to the reputation of the university and its educational quality. Downes (2017) affirm that favourable brand image can possibly attract students, quality employees and generous gifts. Besides, there are other major factors influencing student's university choice. Kusmawati, Yanamandram and Perera, (2010), reveal five major factors which include cost, reputation, proximity, job prospects and parents. Financial cost of living and expenses incurred while studying is very important to students. The money-related help which is from guardians or family may restrain the selection of universities. Students make rational decision by considering their socio-economic factors. Odia and Ogiedu (2013) agree that career preparation was also an important factor influencing student's choice of universities. One of the significant purposes behind partaking in advanced education was the craving to gain a higher capability for a particular activity or profession. There is a solid acceptance among students that by going into higher institutions they will able to better themselves.

Furthermore, Farah, No-Amalina and Fazliana (2017) reveal that most students choose a university that has the best expertise in a chosen field, and also a university that is recognized by the accreditation bodies so as to secure a job after graduation. Hagel and Shaw (2008) in Agrey and Lampadan (2014) give a comparable arrangement of qualities which influence student's choice of universities. These include:

scholastic notoriety, course accessibility, area and educational cost just as ground conveniences. Drewes et al (2006) in Agrey and Lampadan (2014) also indicate that candidates with lower credit settle on huge unexpected decision in comparison to those with commendable grades as the students in the previous group would not seek for admission to renowned universities where there is minimal possibility of being admitted. Universities also attempt to inform and attract prospective students through various channels like television adverts, website, campus visit and brochures which can also influence the choice of students. Bahamn, Awang and Paddles (2011) additionally uncovered that distinctions exist between the decision standards of male and female students. Female students viewed university environment as a very important factor while male students place emphasis on reputation of the university.

In addition, Kabim (2013) reveals that many universities in Nigeria fry to attract more students into their institutions due to the increasing number of higher institutions in recent years. For example, in 1980, there were only sixteen universities in Nigeria. Between 1980 and 2017, the number of recognized universities had risen ten times, from sixteen to one hundred and fifty-two as detailed by Nigeria's National Universities Commission (NUC, 2019). In the last decades, the development of higher education capacity building was principally in the public sector, driven by the administration of state governments. because in the late 1990s, the Nigerian government had encouraged the establishment of private universities. As at January 2019, Nigeria's National Universities Commission (NUC) announced that Nigeria had one hundred and seventy universities. Forty-three are federal universities, forty-eight are owned by the state governments while seventy-nine are owned by private individuals and religious bodies.

Finally, factors that influence students' choice of university, should be a great concern to university management in Taraba State. The current financial allocation to the university by state government is consistently falling short of

the need of these institutions thereby constraining the institution's ability to expand her facilities and recruit competent hands to improve the quality of learning in the system. The higher the enrollment of students the better the internally generated revenue in this institution. Given the preference of most students for federal universities, failure to gain admission in such institutions makes state universities the next option. In order to generate adequate fund, there is need to attract prospective students by understanding the factors that influence their choice. It is against this background that this study determined the influence of brand image, environment and inter-personal interaction on the choice of Taraba State University (TSU).

Objectives of the study

The objective of the study the following:

1. Determining the influence of university brand image on students' choice of TSU
2. Investigating the influence of university environment on students' choice of TSU
3. Examining the influence of inter-personal interaction on students' choice of TSU
4. Comparing the choice factors of male and female students in TSU

Research Questions

1. What is influence of university brand image on students' choice of TSU?
2. What is the influence of university environment on students' choice of TSU?
3. What is the influence of inter-personal interaction on students' choice of TSU?
4. What are the differences in the decision variables of male and female students in TSU?

Methodology

Research design

This investigation utilized a case study research design. This design is appropriate because survey design gathers information from a relatively large number of people or items considered to be a representative fraction of the entire populace. Participants

Results

Research Question one

What is the influence of the university brand image on students' choice of TSU?

Table I. Percentage, Mean and standard deviation of university brand image Influence on Student's choice

Factor s of university	EHI	HI	MI	ELI	Mean	SD	br and image	
Reputation of Univel•sity	100(3 1)	70(20.7)	50(15.4)	50(15.4)	53(16.5)	3.35	1.26	
Stable academic calendar	80(24.8)	50(15.4)	47(14.6)	46(14.2)	100(31)	2.83	1.19	
Availability of scholarship	30(9.3)	50(15.4)	40(12.4)	80(24.8)	123(38.1)	2.33	1.10	
Job prospect after graduation	120(37.3)	50(15.4)	50(15.4)	53(16.5)	50(15.4)	3.42	1.23	
Recognition of certificate	100(31)	70(21.7)	50(15.4)	50(15.4)	53(16.5)	3.35	1.26	
Moral standard of university	30(9 3)	40(12.4)	50(15.4)	78(24.1)	128(38 8)	2.29	1 01	
Admi ssion requirement and policy	80(24.8)	50(15.4)	50(15.4)	90(27.9)	53(16.5)	3.04	1.21	
Cost of tuition fees	102(31.7)	70(21.7)	51(15.8)	50(15.4)	50(15.4)	3.39	1.28	
Good academic quality	100(3 1)	40(12.4)	80(24.7)	60(18.6)	43(13.3)	3.29	14	

The population of the study comprises all 100 level undergraduate students in TSU Jalingo, Nigeria for the 2018/2019 academic year. These students were considered because they were recently admitted into TSU. The total population of the study is three thousand eight hundred students (3,800). Three hundred and twenty-three (323) students were selected from all the eight faculties in the University using proportionate stratified sampling.

Data collection and analysis

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire constructed on five-point scale by the researcher titled "Students University Choice Criteria Questionnaire" (SUCC). The instrument comprises two sections A and B. Section A comprised essential bio-information of respondents which incorporates sex, department and faculty of the respondent. Section B consists of fourteen items on five point scale of extremely high important (EHI), highly important (HI), moderately important (MI), low important (LI) and extremely low important (ELI) this section was divided into three clusters. Cluster A comprises seven items that had to do with the university brand image, Cluster B comprises three items on university environment, while cluster C comprises four

items featuring inter-personal interaction. This instrument was validated by specialists from the Faculty of Education, TSU, Jalingo. To determine the reliability of the instrument, pilot testing was carried out in the Federal University, Widcari. The reliability co-efficient of 0.98 was established by using ordinal Alpha. In answering the four research questions that guided the study, simple percentage, mean and

standard deviation were employed.

Ground rule: A mean score of 3.0 and above is an expression of influence on university choice while a mean score of less than 3.0 indicates that there is low influence on university choice.

Table 1 indicates that six university brand image related factors influence students' choice of Taraba State University These factors are university reputation (mean=3.35) with 67.1% level of expression of influence, job prospect after graduation (mean 3.42) with 68.1% level of expression of influence, recognition of certificate (mean 3.35) with 68.1% level of expression of influence, admission requirement and policy (mean 3.04) with 55.6% level of influence, and academic quality (mean 3.29) with 68.1% level of expression of influence.

Factors of university environment	EHI	HI	MI	ELI	Mean	SD
Geographical location of Taraba State University	100(31)	40(12.4)	80(24.7)	60(18.6)	43(13.3)	3.29
Security within the university	30(9.3)	50(15.4)	40(12.4)	80(24.8)	123(38.1)	2.33
Security within the host community	30(9.3)	40(12.4)	50(15.4)	78(24.8)	128(38.8)	2.29

University academic calendar, scholarship program and moral standard of the university do not have a significant influence on students' choice of Taraba State University.

What is the influence of the university environment on students' choice of TSU?

Research question two

Ground rule: A mean score of 3.0 and above is an expression of influence on university choice while a mean score of less than 3.0 indicates that there is low influence on university choice. Table 2 revealed that geographical location of TSU is a major factor influencing students' decision to enroll at the university (mean 3.29) with 68.1% level of expression of influence. Security within the campus and host community does not influence students' university choice.

Table 2. Percentage, Mean and standard deviation of University Environment Influence on Student's choice

peers (mean—3.13) with 58.9% level of expression of influence, and other family members (mean—3.29) with 68.1% level of expression of influence.

Research Question three

What is the influence of inter-personal interaction on students' choice of TSU?

Research Question four

What are the differences in the decision variables of male and female students in TSU? Table 4. Decision variables of male and female students in TSU

Table 3. Percentage, Mean and Standard deviation of inter-personal interaction influence on Student's choice

Factors of interpersonal interaction	EHI	HI	MI	ELI	Mean	SD
Parents influence	90(27.9)	50(15.4)	50(15.4)	80(24.8)	53(16.5)	3.38
Teacher influence	80(24.8)	50(15.4)	50(15.4)	90(27.9)	53(16.5)	3.04
Peer influence	90(27.9)	40(12.4)	60(18.6)	90(27.9)	43(13.3)	3.13
Other family members	100(31)	40(12.4)	80(24.7)	60(18.6)	43(13.3)	3.29

Ground rule: A mean score of 3.0 and above is an expression of influence on the university choice while a mean score of less than 3.0 indicates that there is low influence on university choice.

Table 3 showed that inter-personal interaction has an influence on students' choice of TSU. Parents (mean 3.38) with 58.7% level of expression of influence, teachers (mean 3.04) with 55.6% level of expression of influence,

Items	Female		Male	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
University brand image	3.283	0.758	3.144	0.813
University Environment	3.177	0.864	2.997	0.861
Inter-personal interaction	3.076	0.721	3.102	0.795

Ground rule: A mean score of 3.0 and above is an expression of influence on university choice while a mean score of less than 3.0 indicates that there is low influence on university choice.

Result from Table 4 revealed that differences exist in the choice factors of female and male students in Taraba State, University in terms of university environment factors. For female students, university environment is very important to them while the male students do not consider the environment of the university. Both male and female students were influenced by the university's brand image and inter-personal interaction.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that there are factors that influence the choice of universities especially Taraba State University, Jalingo. for instance, University brand image which includes reputation of university, job prospects, recognition of certificate, admission requirements, tuition fees, academic quality plays a crucial role in the choice of the university. Kusmawati, Yanamandram and Perera (2010) also identified cost, reputation, proximity and job prospect as factors influencing student's choice. This indicates that the favourable brand image of the university helps in attracting students, quality staffing and generous donations from the society (Downes, 2017).

The findings also reveal that the university's environment, particularly, its geographical location plays an important role in the choice of the university. Kabim (2013), affirmed that location, physical infrastructure and academic quality are major factors influencing student's choice.

Inter-personal interactions were also found to play a role in the choice of Taraba State University. Parental influence in particular had the most effect. These findings are in line with Oluyomi and Adedeji (2014) whose findings reveal that parent, teachers and friends influence the choices of students in the selection of a university. Chartfield, Lee and Robert (2013) also confirmed that parents, relatives and friends play important role in the choice of university

especially parents who are responsible for financial support.

Findings also showed that female students give more consideration to the university environment when making a choice of university they wish to enroll in than male students. Farah No-Amalina and Fazliana (2017), Baharun, Awang and Paddles (2011) also support the view that differences exist between the university selection of male and female students. Females viewed the university environment and academic resources very important factors while male students place emphasis on the reputation of the university.

Conclusion

In view of the findings of the investigation, the following conclusions were made: Reputation of Taraba State University, Recognition of certificate, Admission Requirement, Tuition fees, Academic Quality, Job prospects, Geographical location of the university influence the decision of students in university enrollment. Female students are more conscious of the university environment in terms of geographical locations than male students.

Recommendations

The University Authority, lecturers and the State government would find very useful the recommendations below.

1. Taraba State University enrolment management team needs to plainly comprehend the components that influence student's decision and tailor enrolment endeavours and motivate students in choosing the university as their school of choice.
2. There is need to promote the University by showcasing the institution on media outlets, and social media handles.
3. There is need to make the institution more attractive so that quality students can choose the University as their first choice.
4. The state government should put in more effort by improving the environment and learning conditions of the University, in addition to increasing funding.

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