

EFFECT OF INTERNAL BRANDING STRATEGIES ON POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' CHOICE OF UNIVERSITIES IN NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Internal Branding strategies can be used strategically by educational institutions. Universities' are required to take aggressive stance in defining a unique position to attract students. This study therefore examined the effect of Internal branding strategies and postgraduate students' choice of Universities in Nakuru County, Kenya. The results indicate effective organization culture is key in positioning the organization to prospective clients in this case prospective post graduate students. Universities culture of ensuring that they hire professional employees who are committed to universities, shared vision, have focus on institution set goals and values has enhanced postgraduate students choice for universities through different internal branding strategies in this case: Leadership styles, Organization culture and Employees. The study

adopted explanatory design in which opinions from post graduate students choices were sought. The target population was 3,742 consisting of all postgraduate students in universities in Nakuru county, Kenya. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to allocate the sample size 212 post graduate students in various universities. A structured questionnaire was used to gather primary data from students. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics particularly χ^2 , correlation and regression were used to test the relationship between variables under study whereas research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significant levels. Internal branding strategies employed by universities have a significant influence on postgraduate students choice of universities, as evidenced by the statistically significant positive relationship as shown in the overall regression model ($\beta = 0.453$, $p < 0.05$).

Keywords: Internal Branding strategies, Post Graduate Students' choice

INTRODUCTION

Internal Branding Strategies

Several studies have examined internal branding strategies as practiced by companies. For example a Research study on internal branding with an online survey examined how organizations view and implement internal branding practices. These Canadian marketers presented it as 'Internal Branding Best Practices Study. This was identified as one of the top most issue. (Canadian Marketing Association, 2007). According to the research findings Internal branding is a relatively new approach practiced by the companies of leading Canadian brands thus giving that its application is relatively inconsistent across participating organizations. This presents significant opportunity to the Canadian service industry with the ability to be more attentive to branding and customer promise development which facilitates consistent delivery. The study employed quantitative and qualitative research techniques. The qualitative research consisted of eleven in-depth phone interviews with executives that are responsible for internal branding within their organizations while quantitative research portion of this study was managed through a CMA 2005 Internet survey of 475 respondents across industries. These marketers described Internal branding within the survey as "promoting the company brand values amongst employees. It is the set of strategic processes that align and empower employees to deliver the appropriate customer experience in a consistent fashion. These processes include, but are not limited to, internal communications, training support, leadership practices, reward & recognition programs, recruitment practices and sustainability factors.

Narissara (2010) in a study entitled “An investigation into the effects of internal branding on employee brand support in Thai universities” states that in the context of higher education institutions, employees play a crucial role in the internal branding process. Findings indicate ambiguities surrounding internal branding in higher education. The study recommends a value for higher education management and public policy makers in order to encourage academic staff to support their university’s brand. Tosti and Stotz, 2001; Mitchell, 2002; Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2004; Hankinson, 2004; Aurand et al., 2005; Mosley, 2007 further asserts that Internal branding is about aligning employee behaviour with brand values where employees should have the same perceptions of the values embedded in the brand (de Chenatony, 2002) Internal branding strategies in this study focused on; leadership style, employees and culture which were also reviewed.

Leadership Styles

Leadership practices and Employees in an organization is seen in a study conducted by Jandaghi, Bahamin & Abaei, (2015) on the effects of brand leadership styles on employees - based brand citizenship behavior Leadership Practices states that internal branding is a new strategy to assure that employees act in accordance with brand commitment. He justifies this by saying that in service organizations, employees are able to influence over customers’ purchase decisions and conceptions, they play a critical role in organizational success. Enhancing employee – based brand citizenship behavior by managers can create a competitive advantage for organization.

According to Ulrich and Smallwood (2007), stronger brand leaders will be shaped if the behavior of organization’s representatives is based on stakeholders’ principles and demands. Concerning organizational behavior, leadership is seen as an important behaviour affecting the behavior of organizational members especially employees. Morhart *et al* (2009) suggested that brand leadership style can be divided into two parts: Brand-specific Transactional Leadership (BTSL): which is an approach of a leader to motivate its employees as the agents of company’s band and emphasizes on employees’ mindset and brand-specific Transformational Leadership (BTFL) where a leader to motivate its employees as the agents of company’s band and emphasizes on employees’ personal values and beliefs. Similar to traditional leadership, both brand leadership styles impact on organizational performance.

According to Morhart, Herzog, and Tomczak (2009), in their study on Brand-Specific Leadership: Turning Employees into Brand Champions where they examined the mechanisms by which brand-specific transactional and transformational leadership influence employees’ brand-building behavior, the results show that brand-specific transactional leadership moderates

the influence of brand-specific transformational leadership in a nonlinear, inverse U-shaped way, so that a medium level of transactional leadership maximizes the positive effects of transformational leadership. In the other study the researcher addresses whether managers can learn brand-specific transformational leadership. The research surveyed 269 customer-contact employees show that brand-specific transactional leaders influence followers through a process of compliance, leading to an increase in turnover intentions and a decrease in in-role and extra-role brand-building behaviors. In contrast, brand-specific transformational leaders influence followers through a process of internalization, leading to a decrease in turnover intentions and an increase in in-role and extra-role brand-building behaviors. In turn, both processes are mediated by employees' perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness with regard to their work roles as brand representatives. Moreover, in their field experiment shows that brand-specific transformational leadership can indeed be learned through management training. Management development programs; senior team personal site visits; Employee rating of leaders through regular performance reviews (Canadian Marketing Association, 2007).

According to Hackman and Wageman (2007) they suggested that different leaders can behave in their own unique manner and still achieve effective leadership results. Mulford (2006) research conducted between 1996 and 2005, Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) confirm three of their four sets of transformational leadership practices of helping people, setting directions and redesigning the organisation. In addition, they conclude that evidence about transformational leadership effects on organizational effectiveness, student outcomes and student engagement in school which are all positive (although with decreasing amounts of supporting evidence as one moves through the three areas) creating the conditions, opportunities and experiences for collaboration and mutual learning”.

Employees

Employer branding integrates the previously separate policies and procedures of marketing and human resources to create a new unique blend within the organization. Within the context of internal branding processes, employer branding regards current and potential employees as branding targets (Edwards, 2009). Sartain and Schumann (2006) define a employer brand as how a business builds and packages its identity, from its origins and values, what it promises to deliver to emotionally connect employees so that they in turn deliver what the business promises to customers. It has been shown that the advantages to a strong employer brand are that it will not only attract new employees but also generate satisfaction, affinity, and loyalty for current employees (Davies, 2008).

A consistent voice must be established through internal communications that can help create and maintain the employee commitment, shared vision, loyalty, and satisfaction (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). This requires a unified effort within the organization. Literature suggests that an important element of an employer brand is establishing employee commitment. In relation to the discussion on developing employee emotional connections it is shown that the emotional capital of an organization is increased by more committed employees (Thomson *et al*, 1999). Through their study of the retail banking industry in UK, Pasolomou and Vrontis (2006) propose four elements to enhance the effectiveness of internal branding. Recognizing the central role of employees in building and differentiating their corporate brand, the first element is about viewing employees as internal customers and hence reinforcing practices that enable internal customer satisfaction, motivation and retention. In order to enable the internal customer element, the authors propose training and development programmes as the second element to create knowledge and understanding among staff of how their attitudes and behaviour towards customers form an integral part of the overall service offering and hence shape employee behaviors to develop a strong service mentality that will pervade the entire organization. The third element internal standards urge organizations to set high standards of on-brand performance and equip employees in order to enable them to meet and exceed these standards of performance. The fourth and final element rewards emphasizes on the need to establish rewards systems rewards system which instill confidence and elicits that extra energy that individuals voluntarily invest towards the success of the organization's brand.

Employee behaviour has been identified as of paramount importance and strongly influential in shaping consumer perceptions of their most and least preferred service brands. Therefore it can be reasonably argued that the same attention to branding should be directed internally to employees as is currently directed externally to potential customers since it is at the intersection of service providers and customers that brand meaning is realized (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Elliot & Percy, 2007; Judson, Aurand, Gorchels, & Gordon, 2009).

Organization Culture

Organizational culture should only relate to the "deeper" less visible level, although it does use visible evidence to understand and describe different cultures. The visible aspects encompass behaviour patterns, the physical and social environment and the written and spoken language used by the group (Schein's 1990). Kotter & Heskett (1992) explained that culture evolves as a result of the turnover of group members, changes in the company's market environment and general changes in society. According to Low and Mohr (2000) organization culture is an

important combination of character, behavior and a self-identification of human being, these characteristics help an individual to create his or her own buying behavior, and however, isolating culture as a variable that can be studied and readily implanted is very difficult, taking into consideration that the buying behaviors of human beings consist of three phases which are the individual, societal and situational. Low and Mohr (2000) further state that culture affects all these phases but the extent of the effect depends on the individual person and the circumstance. Culture consists of beliefs, values and customs that serve to direct consumer behavior differently amongst the members of a particular group or society. Values and beliefs are guides to behavior in such that they form and affect attitude on how to behave on certain situations, on the other hand customs are modes of behavior that constitute an acceptable way to behavior in a particular culture.

Wilkins and Ouchi (1983) quoted a number of examples of organizations claiming to experience great distress because the culture could not be changed or because its members would not change fast enough. Hatch and Schultz (2000) depend on a successful and balanced interplay between corporate image, corporate culture and corporate vision. In brand related narratives, the question of identity is reflected at different levels. Culture has recently been conceptualized as a factor in shaping a company's image in the marketplace. Corporate image is an overall perception of the company held by different segments of the public (Villanova, Zinkhan & Hyman, 1990). Universities' represents the erosion of the traditional role that is based on scholarship and education to a role many worry is based on the broad acceptance of business ideologies and which reduces the role of higher education to not much more than an economic function. Criticisms argued there are consequences to the broad adoption of business ideologies and accountability measures as it unfairly leads to a devaluation and erosion of liberal arts programming as these subjects rely more heavily on intangible skills which are much more difficult to quantify (Anderson, 2008; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Dill, 2012).

In a study conducted by Watson (2001) he greatly stated that if the culture is not hospitable to learning then student achievement can suffer. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2004) described organizational climate as the total environmental quality within an organization and believe that the recent attention to the effectiveness of public schools and their cultures has shed more interest on the importance of climate. The relationship between culture and climate was supported by Schein (1985, 1996) when he stated that norms, values, rituals and climate are all manifestations of culture.

Mortimore (2001) further warns that firms should concentrate on establishing more knowledge about the complex interactions between culture and schooling. In a study by Lakomski (2001) he claims that it is necessary to change an organization's culture in order to

bring about organizational change and concluded that there is a causal relationship between the role of the leader and organizational learning. Pringle (2014) revealed how institutions and faculty members within them respond to these forces is also directly influenced by contextual factors like heritage and geographic location, and these contextual factors lead to specific perceptions with respect to how they assess and choose to respond to branding practices at universities and the authenticity of specific brand elements.

General Research Objective

To examine the effect of internal branding strategies on postgraduate students' choice of Universities Nakuru County, Kenya.

Specific Research Objectives

In achieving the main objective, the study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To examine the effect of leadership styles on post graduate students' choice of universities.
- ii. To examine the effect of employees on post graduate students' choice of universities.
- iii. To assess effect of organization culture on post graduate students' choice of universities.

Research Hypotheses

H_{O1}: There is no significant effect of leadership styles on post graduate students' choice of universities.

H_{O2}: There is no significant effect of employees on post graduate students' choice of universities

H_{O3}: There is no significant effect of organization culture on post graduate students' choice of universities

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed explanatory research design. According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008), research design is the way the research is organized, how evidence will be gathered, where the evidence will be found and how the evidence will be interpreted.

Study Area

Nakuru County is located in the former Rift Valley Province of Kenya, about 90km from Nairobi. Nakuru is an agriculturally-rich county blessed with various tourist attractions such as craters and lakes. It is made up of 11 constituencies. Nakuru borders seven counties; Laikipia to the

northeast, Kericho to the west, Narok to the south-west, Kajiado to the south, Baringo to the north, Nyandarua to the east and Bomet to the west. It covers an area of 7496.5 square kilometers. Nakuru County is home to 1, 603, 325 people (male – 50.2% and female – 49.8%), according to the 2009 National Census. It is a cosmopolitan county, with its population originating from all the major tribes of Kenya. Universities and other institutions of higher learning in the county include Egerton University, Mt Kenya University Campus, Kabarak University, Kenya Methodist, Kenyatta University, Jomo-Kenyatta University of Science and Technology, University of Nairobi Extra Mural, St. Pauls University and Moi University. The study will only concentrate on the universities in Nakuru County.

Target Population

This study focused on all post graduate students admitted in the university both in the public and private sector in Nakuru County, Kenya. The target population of the study included all students irrespective of the courses chosen. University's post graduate students are always tasked with the responsibility of choosing courses offered by universities in relation to marketability and career path progression and as such formed the best target population for this study.

Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was used to select the universities in Nakuru County. The method was for sampling the respondents (post graduate students) who were expected to provide information on universities' choice. The purpose of sampling was to secure a representative group (Mugenda, 2008). Burns & Grove (2003), refer to sampling as a process of selecting a group of people, events or behavior with which to conduct a study. The sample for the study was designed to produce a representation of the university post graduate students both in public universities and private universities in Nakuru County, Kenya. To arrive at a sample size, the study adopted a formula by Nassiuma (2000) for estimating a sample size, n , from a known population size, N and a coefficient of variation (C.V) which range between 21% and 30% (i.e. $21% < e < 30%$) and error between 5% and 1 % ($1% < e < 5%$).

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)e^2}$$

Where

n = optimum sample size;

N = population size;

C = coefficient of variation and e is error margin.

Substituting these values in the equation, estimated sample size (n) was:

$$n = 3,732 * 0.3^2 / \{0.3^2 + (3,732 - 1)0.02^2\}$$

$$n = 212$$

Research Instruments

The study used structured questionnaires that were distributed to all the continuing university students randomly irrespective of the courses they are undertaking involved in the sample. Primary data was collected through semi structured self-administered questionnaires. Secondary data was gathered from existing credible and recognized source.

Data Analysis Approach

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Statistics
Internal Branding Strategies has no significant effect on students choice of post graduate programs in Nakuru County.	Internal Branding Strategies	Student choice of post graduate programmes	Percentage, Frequencies, Chi-Square, ANOVA, Pearson's Correlations

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Cross tabulation results

The cross tabulation method was used in examining the percentage of respondents across various demographics (i.e. gender and age).

Table 1: Students age * Students Gender Cross tabulation

		Respondents' Gender		Total	
		male	Female		
age of the respondents	Count	29	6	35	
	20-25 years	% within age of the respondents	82.9%	17.1%	100.0%
	Count	44	15	59	
	26-35 years	% within age of the respondents	74.6%	25.4%	100.0%
	Count	13	41	54	
	36-45 years	% within age of the respondents	24.1%	75.9%	100.0%

		Count	8	13	21
	above 46 years	% within age of the respondents	38.1%	61.9%	100.0%
		Count	94	75	169
Total		% within age of the respondents	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%

Table 2: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	43.491 ^a	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	45.655	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	30.706	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	169		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.32.

Table 1, shows that there are few female students undertaking post graduate programs (44.4%) compared to the male counterparts (55.6%). Table 2, shows that the results were significant ($\chi^2=43.491$, $p<0.05$). This indicates that students age contributes significantly in post graduate students' choice of university, female gender between the ages of 36 years and above are more influenced by branding strategies in making choice of universities to undertake post graduate programs compared their male counterparts who are more influenced between the ages of 20-35 years.

Reliability Test

Pilot study is thus conducted to detect weakness in design and instrumentation and to provide accurate data for selection of a sample (Young, 2009). Pretesting helped to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the survey concerning question format, wording and order. From the pilot test results, the questionnaire yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.739 (Table 3).

Table 3: Pilot study results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Internal Branding Strategies	0.739	21

Factor Analysis on Internal Branding Strategies

Exploratory factor analysis for items in internal branding strategies scale was conducted. Principal component analysis extraction method with varimax rotation method was used; and validity was assessed by examining the factor loadings to see if the items in the scale loaded highly on the construct. Table 4 presents the results of the analysis for the number of items that had significant loading on each component factor after varimax rotation.

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix for Measures of Internal Branding Strategies

Internal Branding Strategies Items	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a. The university leadership makes decision students enthusiastic about the university			.815				
b. The university's leadership encourages students to express their ideas and opinions			.818				
c. The university's leadership inspires students loyalty					-.698		
d. The university's leadership gives personal attention to students					.879		
e. Leadership practiced expresses appreciation to students when they perform							.882
f. Most students in this university have input into the decisions affecting them		.920					
g. The university recruits their own graduates		.672					
h. Cooperation and collaboration across different departments, functions or school is actively encouraged							-.620

i.	There is high level of agreement about the way students do things in this university	.775	
j.	University is very responsive and adapts to changes easily		.892
k.	University ensures Students are well informed about policy changes (for example CUE regulations)	.828	
l.	University has a long-term purpose and direction		.726
m.	There is a shared vision of what the university would be like in the future		.866
n.	Institution holistically nurtures students	.714	
o.	The university teaching staff have the required qualifications	.623	
p.	Employees have self initiation activities that are beneficial to students	.744	
q.	Employees provide feedback on inquiries timely		
r.	Employees have collective focus on institution set goals, objectives and values	.646	
s.	Employees have enough knowledge to deliver assigned responsibilities	.732	
t.	Employees positively communicate about the university		.697

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

The results on Table 4 show that that the factor loadings of internal branding strategies items range from 0.620 to 0.920. The loadings that met the cut-off of 0.4 were retained for analysis. A maximum of seven factors were obtained, because the seven factors had Eigen values which

are greater than one and their extraction sums of squared loadings are greater than 1. Factor 1 had the highest extraction sums of squared loadings of 4.419, which represents 22.097 percent of variation. Factor 7 had the lowest extraction sums of squared loadings of 1.308 representing 6.538 percent of variance. The extraction sums of squared loadings of other factors were between the range of 4.419 and 0.000. The contributing power of these other factors to the explanation of the variance in the variables was significantly considered. The factors account for 81.144 percent of the variance in the construct (Appendix 1).

Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity means that there is linear relationship between explanatory variables which may cause the regression model biased (Gujarati, 2003). VIF is a statistic calculated for each variable in the model to test Multicollinearity. Theoretically, a VIF greater than 5 may suggest that the concerned variable is multi-collinear with others in the model and may need to be excluded from the model (Gujarati, 2003). Hence, as presented on Table 5, the VIF results indicate there was no collinearity in the explanatory variables. Moreover a tolerance of greater than 0.2 indicates nonexistence of multicollinearity. Tolerance and VIF results indicate there was no collinearity in the explanatory variables.

Table 5: Multicollinearity Test

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Internal branding strategy	.501	1.997

a. Dependent Variable: students' choice of post graduate programs

Internal Branding Strategies

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with internal branding strategies statements in influencing choice of post graduate programs. The measurable indicators were ranked on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5).

The responses were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Chi-square values for measured indicators were also determined with respective probability values (p-value). Table 6 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 6: Descriptive Analysis for Internal Branding Strategies

Measurable indicators	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Chi-square (χ^2)	P-value
Leadership							
a) The makes students enthusiastic about the university	6 (3.6 %)	6 (3.6%)	34 (20.1%)	75 (44.4%)	48 (28.4%)	304.138	0.0000
b) The university's leadership encourages students to express their ideas and opinions	6 (3.6%)	12 (7.1%)	70 (41.4%)	75 (44.4%)	6 (3.6%)	276.652	0.0000
c) The university's leadership inspires students loyalty	12 (7.1%)	18 (10.7%)	6 (3.6%)	97 (57.4%)	36 (21.3%)	358.915	0.0000
d) The university's leadership gives personal attention to students	-	27 (16.0%)	67 (39.6%)	51 (30.2%)	24 (14.2%)	290.143	0.0000
e) Leadership practiced expresses appreciation to students when they perform	6 (3.6%)	6 (3.6%)	16 (9.5%)	81 (47.9%)	60 (35.5%)	329.694	0.0000
Organization Culture							
a) Most students in this university have input into decisions affecting them	6 (3.6%)	27 (16.0%)	51 (30.2%)	67 (39.6%)	18 (10.7%)	419.290	0.0000
b) The university recruits their own graduates	66 (39.0 %)	39 (21.3%)	40 (23.7%)	9 (5.3%)	18 (10.7%)	344.982	0.0000
c) Cooperation and collaboration across different departments, functions or school is actively encouraged	21 (12.4%)	28 (16.6%)	27 (16.0%)	66 (39.1%)	27 (16.0%)	374.339	0.0000

d) There is high level of agreement about the way students do things in this university	57 (33.7%)	52 (30.8%)	24 (14.2%)	18 (10.7%)	18 (10.7%)	276.578	0.0000
e) University is very responsive and adopts to changes easily	6 (3.6%)	49 (29.0%)	81 (47.9%)	18 (10.7%)	15 (8.9%)	436.266	0.0000
f) University ensures students are well informed about policy changes (for example CUE regulations)	30 (17.8%)	27 (16.0%)	46 (27.2%)	54 (32.0%)	12 (7.1%)	251.080	0.0000
g) University has a longterm purpose and direction	12 (7.1%)	27 (16.0%)	82 (48.5%)	42 (24.9%)	6 (3.6%)	446.880	0.0000
h) There is a shared vision of what the university would be like in the future	6 (3.6%)	-	45 (26.6%)	61 (36.1%)	57 (33.7%)	215.362	0.0000
i) Institution holistically nurtures students	6 (3.6%)	12 (7.1%)	63 (47.3%)	52 (20.8%)	36 (21.3%)	355.050	0.0000

Employees

a) The university teaching staff have the required qualifications	-	18 (10.7%)	42 (24.9%)	73 (43.2%)	36 (21.3%)	277.612	0.0000
b) Employees have self-initiation activities that are beneficial to students	6 (3.6%)	9 (5.3%)	43 (25.4%)	69 (40.8%)	42 (24.9%)	338.876	0.0000

c) Employees provide feedback on inquiries timely	6 (3.6%)	24 (14.2%)	66 (39.1%)	55 (32.5%)	18 (10.7%)	311.245	0.0000
d) Employees have collective focus on institution set goals, objectives and values	24 (14.2%)	12 (7.1%)	27 (16.0%)	64 (37.9%)	42 (24.9%)	358.955	0.0000
e) Employees have enough knowledge to deliver assigned responsibilities	18 (10.7%)	22 (13.0%)	45 (26.6%)	54 (32.0%)	30 (17.8%)	369.817	0.0000
f) Employees positively communicate about the university	6 (3.6%)	16 (9.5%)	78 (46.2%)	18 (10.7%)	51 (30.2%)	348.239	0.0000

Leadership as an internal branding strategy

Universities' leadership makes students enthusiastic about the university ($\chi^2=304.138$, $p<0.05$), with the leadership encouraging students to express their ideas and opinions agreed by 44.4% with a 41.4% of respondents holding a neutral opinion ($\chi^2=276.652$, $p<0.05$). The leadership also inspires students loyalty ($\chi^2=358.915$, $p<0.05$), gives personal attention to students ($\chi^2=290.143$, $p<0.05$). Leadership practiced in universities expresses appreciation to students when they perform ($\chi^2=329.694$, $p<0.05$).

The study findings agree with those of Özer and Tnaztepe (2014) who in their article "Effect of Strategic Leadership Styles on Firm Performance" in SMEs in Turkey noted that transformational leadership style is relationship-oriented and are significantly related to firm performance. The study further agree with those of Ulrich and Smallwood, (2007) who states that stronger brand leaders will be shaped if the behavior of organization's representatives is based on stakeholders' principles and demands. They further suggest that concerning organizational behavior, leadership is seen as an important behaviour affecting the behavior of organizational members especially employees.

The study findings also concur with those of Kim (2004) who in his article "Leadership Style and National Culture on Restaurant Employees' Affective Commitment" who noted that is of the view that the kind of leadership style exhibited by managers to a large extent influences

organizational valued outcomes such as low employee turnover, reduced absenteeism, customer satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness. He further asserts that transformational leadership style improves employee dedication, social behavior, role clarity, and satisfaction (Gill & Mathur, 2007).

The study findings further concurs with those of Mulford (2006), Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) who confirms that transformational leadership practices of helping people, setting directions and redesigning the organization brings about organizational effectiveness, student outcomes and student engagement in school.

Organization Culture as an Internal Branding Strategy

According to majority of respondents (50.3%), most students in this university have input into the decisions affecting them ($\chi^2=419.290$, $p<0.05$). 60.3% disagreed that universities' recruits their own graduates ($\chi^2=344.982$, $p<0.05$), cooperation and collaboration across different departments, functions or school is actively encouraged ($\chi^2=374.339$, $p<0.05$). There is no high level of agreement about the way students do things in this university as agreed by majority of respondents (64.5%) ($\chi^2=376.578$, $p<0.05$). Many respondents were neutral on whether universities are very responsive and adapts to changes easily ($\chi^2=436.266$, $p<0.05$), universities ensures students are well informed about policy changes such as those outlined Commission of University Education ($\chi^2=351.080$, $p<0.05$). Respondents held neutral opinion on whether universities have long-term purposes and direction ($\chi^2=446.880$, $p<0.05$). There is also a shared vision of what the universities would be like in the future ($\chi^2=215.362$, $p<0.05$) while most respondents were neutral on whether learning institution holistically nurtures students ($\chi^2=355.050$, $p<0.05$).

These findings corroborate that one of Mintrom (2014) who in his article titled "Creating cultures of excellence: Strategies and outcomes" reports on a multi-year effort to create cultures of excellence among cohorts of graduate students. He suggests that explicitly promoting a culture of excellence among course participants can have a positive and sustained impact on their individual practices. This is mainly in areas like excellence, learning and teaching, teamwork, pedagogy, educational effectiveness, scholarship of teaching and learning, professional development.

Employees as Internal Branding Strategies

Universities' teaching staff have the required qualifications ($\chi^2=277.602$, $p<0.05$). Employees have self-initiation activities that are beneficial to students ($\chi^2=338.876$, $p<0.05$). Most respondents (39.1%) were neutral on whether employees provide feedback on inquiries timely

($\chi^2=311.245$, $p<0.05$). Universities employees have collective focus on institution set goals, objectives and values ($\chi^2=358.955$, $p<0.05$) with enough knowledge to deliver assigned responsibilities ($\chi^2=369.817$, $p<0.05$). However, most respondents (46.2%) held neutral opinion on whether the employees positively communicate about the university ($\chi^2=348.239$, $p<0.05$).

The study findings agree with those of Jandaghi, Bahamin, and Abaei, (2015) who in their article titled “effects of brand leadership styles on employees - based brand citizenship behavior Leadership Practices” states that in service organizations, employees are able to influence over customers purchase decisions and conceptions. They further assert that employees play a critical role in organizational success. Enhancing employee – based brand citizenship behavior by managers can create a competitive advantage for organization.

Chi-square Test for Goodness of Fit Analysis

This section presents the findings of the chi-square test for goodness of fit for study’s variables.

Table 7: Chi-square test for goodness of fit

	Internal Branding Strategy
Chi-Square	26.000 ^a
Df	14
Asymp. Sig.	.026

We reject this null hypothesis of equal proportions at the 5% significance level (95% confidence) if the p-value of the test for that question is less than or equal to 0.05. The chi-square probability values shown are less than the conventional probability value of 0.05 ($\chi^2=26.000$, $p<0.05$)

Test of Research Hypotheses

This section presents analysis and results of the tests of hypotheses using inferential statistics. Individual and joint effects of explanatory variables on the dependent variable were tested.

Normality test for effects of internal Branding Strategies on post graduate program Students’ choice

Appendix 3 shows the normality test of internal branding strategies employed by universities. The test indicates that the dependent variable was normally distributed and that the probability of outliers was minimal. Thus these findings imply that the responses lay close normality line and the data is thus ideal for linear regression analysis.

Linear Regression between Internal Branding Strategies and Students Choice

Here, individual effect of internal branding strategies on students' choice of post graduate program was tested and results presented. As shown Appendix 4 the scatter plots shows that the variables assumed a linear relationship between internal branding strategies and students choice. Looking at the scatter plot, there is a positive linear relationship between internal branding strategies and students choice. The ordinary least square (OLS) method of estimation was employed in establishing the nature of relationship between the predictor and the dependent variable. Ordinary least square (OLS) permitted derivation of a regression line of best fit while ensuring that errors are kept at minimum.

Regression analysis was carried in order to determine whether internal branding strategies employed by universities significantly influences choice of post graduate programs among students. Regression results on Table 8 shows an R squared (R^2) of 0.310 which indicates 31 percent of the variation in post graduate programs students' choice is explained by internal branding strategies employed by universities. The F-statistics of the regression result $F=75.177$ and its $p<0.05$ indicates that the model is nicely fitted suggesting that the model fits the data significantly.

Table 8: Model Summary for effects of Internal Branding Strategies on Students Choice

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.557 ^a	.310	.306	.46819	.310	75.177	1	167	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), internal branding strategy

b. Dependent Variable: students choice of post graduate programs

Results in table 9 shows the regression line fits the actual data since the mean square of the residuals is very small compared to mean square of the regression. The F-statistics of the regression result is $F=75.177$ while the reported p -value=0.0000 which is less than 0.05 conventional probability value. The model applied can thus significantly predict the change of students choice of post graduate programs among university students, which shows a significant relationship between internal branding strategies employed by universities and choice of post graduate programs among students.

Table 9: ANOVA for effects of Internal Branding Strategies on Students Choice

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	16.479	1	16.479	75.177	.000 ^b
	Residual	36.607	167	.219		
	Total	53.086	168			

Dependent Variable: students choice of post graduate programs

Predictors: (Constant), internal branding strategy

Internal Branding Strategies beta coefficients are presented in Table 10. The unstandardized beta coefficients give a measure of influence of the independent variable to the model and indicate how much the dependent variable is held constant. The results indicate that there exist a statistically significant positive relationship between internal branding strategies employed by universities and choice of post graduate program among students ($\beta = 0.680$, $p < 0.05$). Numerically, the 0.680 beta coefficient of internal branding strategies variable implies that for every one additional internal branding strategy the universities employ, uptake of their post graduate programs among students increases by 0.680. The results indicate absence of multicollinearity as evidenced by variance Inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance results. A tolerance greater than 0.2 indicates non existence of multicollinearity while variance Inflation factor greater than 5 indicates presence of collinearity.

Table 10: Coefficients for effects of internal Branding Strategies on post graduate program Students' choice

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
	(Constant)	1.075	.274				3.921
1 Internal branding strategy	.680	.078	.557	8.670	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: students choice of post graduate programs

The regression equation that was obtained was; $SCP GP = 1.075 + 0.680 IBS + \epsilon$

SUMMARY

The study's first objective of the study was to examine the effect of internal branding strategies on universities' students choice of post graduate programs. Majority of the respondents agreed

that universities' management team makes students enthusiastic about the university and encourages students to express their ideas and opinions. University management also inspires students loyalty and also gives personal attention to students. Leadership practiced in universities expresses also appreciates students when they perform.

In addition the respondents indicated that most students in universities have input into the decisions affecting them. Universities' does not recruits their own graduates while cooperation and collaboration across different universities' departments, functions or school is actively encouraged. There is no high level of agreement about the way students do things universities, many respondents were neutral on whether universities are very responsive and adapts to changes easily. Universities' management also ensures students are well informed about policy changes such as those outlined Commission of University Education. There was neutrality on whether universities have long-term purposes and direction. There is a shared vision of what the many universities would be like in the future but it was not really clear on whether universities institution holistically nurtures students.

The research findings also revealed that universities' teaching staff has the required qualifications. The employees pays attention to students' needs and ensures those needs are addressed. Employees also have self-initiation activities that are beneficial to students. Most respondents were neutral on whether employees provide feedback on inquiries timely. Moreover, universities employees have collective focus on institution set goals, objectives and values with enough knowledge to deliver assigned responsibilities. However it was not clear on whether the employees positively communicate about the universities. Internal branding strategies employed by universities have a significant influence on student's choice of post graduate programs. This was evidenced by the statistically significant positive relationship as shown in the overall regression model. The correlation between the effect of internal branding strategies and students choice of post graduate programs was found to be moderate, positive statistically significant.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that effect of internal branding strategies have a significant effect on students choice of post graduate programs. There exists a positive significant relationship between effect of internal branding strategies and students choice of post graduate programs. Effective leadership practiced by universities management team has enhanced universities efficiency, it can be concluded that the mode of leadership practiced in universities has been a key driver in attracting students into pursuing post graduate programs. It can also be concluded that organization culture is a key aspect in ensuring universities attract students who intend to

undertake post graduate programs. As the results indicate, effective organization culture is key in positioning the organization to prospective clients in this case prospective post graduate students. Thus is vital for universities to ensure that the existing organisation's culture is all people inclusive culture that enhances various stakeholders' participation. However, it can also be concluded that most universities does not have a culture where they recruit their own students. It can be concluded that universities culture of ensuring that they hire professional employees who are committed to universities, shared vision, have focus on institution set goals and values has enhanced students choice for post graduate programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the results respondents it was not clear as to whether universities leadership team encourage students to express their ideas and opinions. The universities policy board of management should ensure that universities staff serving at different levels carry their duties and responsibilities by ensuring students opinions, grievances are taken into account. This will ensure that the relationship between students and the staff is cordial thus enhancing universities' reputation among prospective and continuing post graduate students. Universities ought to create an organization culture where top performing students in academic and extra curriculum affairs are hired and retained by their own universities this will create a culture of competition among students thus positioning and enhancing universities image. Universities management team should also ensure that universities are responsive and adapts to changes easily with long-term purposes and direction. There is also great need to ensure that post graduate students are nurtured holistically in a bid to make students graduating from respective universities more competitive and resilient and knowledgeable with holistic employability skills. Most respondents were neutral on whether employees provide feedback on inquiries and whether employees positively communicate about the university. Thus the university leadership should ensure an organization culture is created where employees are obliged to provide feedback on inquiries by students, employees motivation will also enhance employees positive communication about the university.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study employed a case study approach of Nakuru County; it is recommended that this study be carried on a broader scale in Kenya. Yin (2003) asserts that a single case study is weaker than a multiple case study as the research findings cannot be applied in any other situations. In determining key measurable indicators under each study's variable qualitative research was used.

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APPENDICES

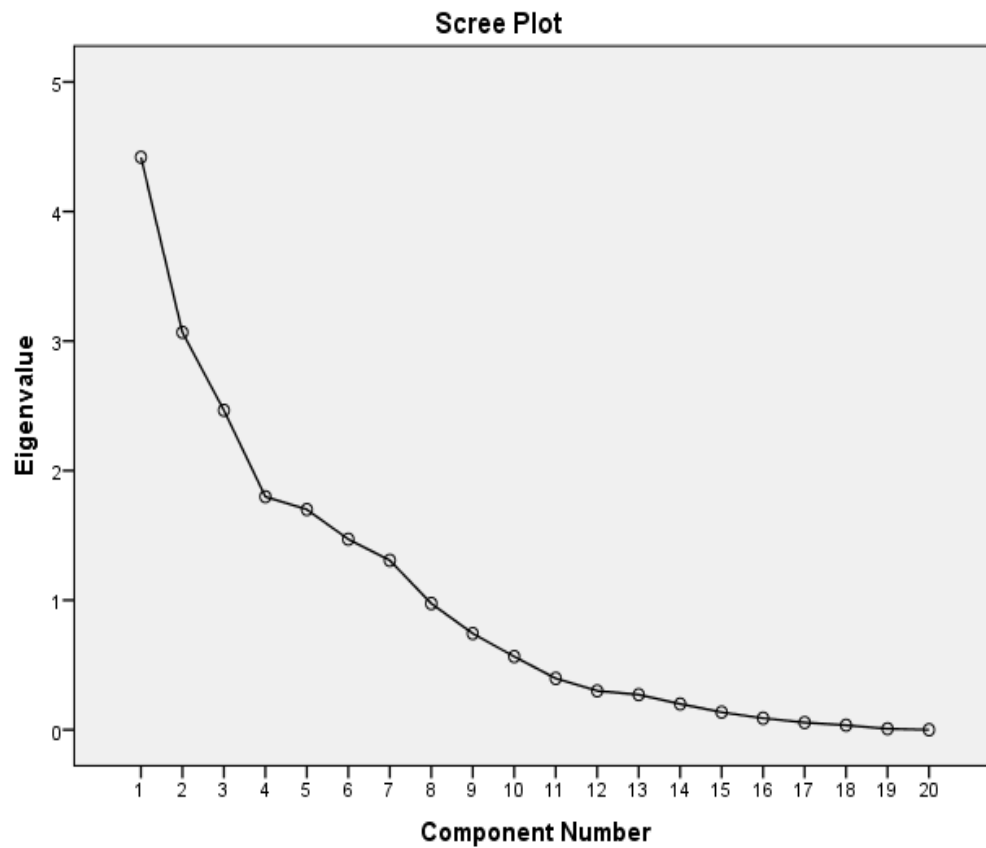
Appendix 1: Total Variance Explained for Internal Branding Strategies

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.419	22.097	22.097	4.419	22.097	22.097	3.724	18.620	18.620
2	3.067	15.336	37.433	3.067	15.336	37.433	2.989	14.946	33.566
3	2.465	12.327	49.760	2.465	12.327	49.760	2.286	11.429	44.994
4	1.799	8.995	58.755	1.799	8.995	58.755	1.910	9.551	54.545
5	1.700	8.500	67.255	1.700	8.500	67.255	1.840	9.202	63.748
6	1.470	7.351	74.606	1.470	7.351	74.606	1.790	8.949	72.696
7	1.308	6.538	81.144	1.308	6.538	81.144	1.689	8.447	81.144
8	.974	4.871	86.014						
9	.743	3.714	89.729						
10	.565	2.825	92.554						

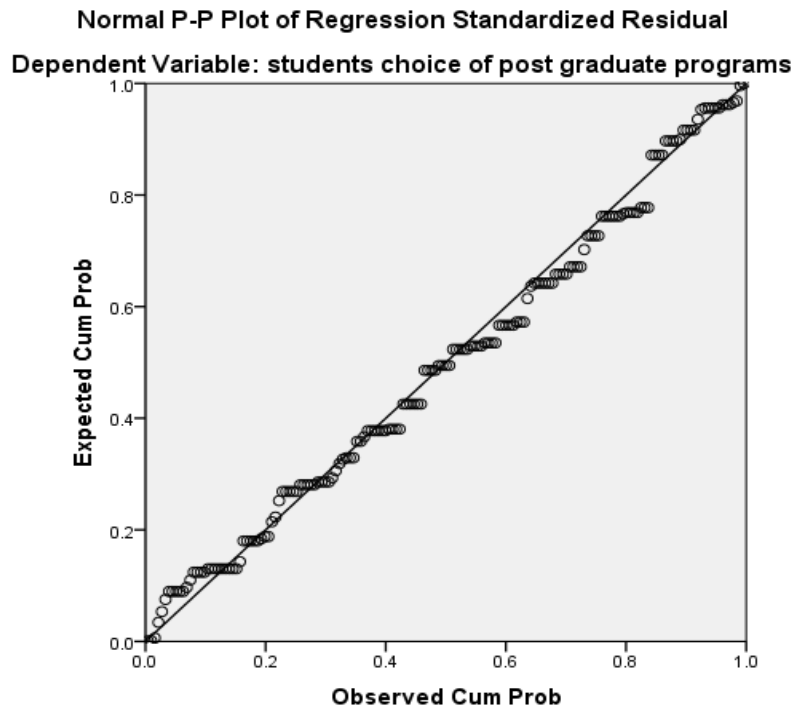
11	.396	1.982	94.536						
12	.300	1.501	96.037						
13	.271	1.353	97.390						
14	.199	.995	98.385						
15	.135	.677	99.062						
16	.089	.445	99.507						
17	.056	.280	99.787						
18	.035	.174	99.961						
19	.008	.039	99.999						
20	.000	.001	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Appendix 2: Screen Plot for Internal Branding Strategies



Appendix 3: Normality test for effects of internal Branding Strategies on post graduate program Students' choice



Appendix 4: Scatter Plots for Internal Branding Strategies and Students Choice

