Academic staff using University Website Profile Page for Academic Digital Branding: An African Perspective

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Abstract

The growing interest in the Internet and other digital technologies, transforming the practice of education has led to the emergence of novel uses of new media for engaging with stakeholders. This study explored the web profile academic staff in Nigerian Universities to understand how academic staff are using the platform to position their academic brand in this digital age. The ALARA model of information search was adopted, taking on a qualitative approach in understanding how information are presented and accessed on websites. The analysis revealed that academic staff are not taking ownership and responsibility for their pages, and they are making little effort to develop their academic brand in this digital age. This study contributes to knowledge of academic branding; with implications for University administrators working on creating a platform for academics branding. This study also contributes to the literature on the general guidelines on usability evaluations of websites to improve staff profile webpages.

INTRODUCTION

The growing interest in the Internet and other digital technologies, transforming the practice of education has led to the emergence of novel uses of new media for engaging with stakeholders (Ndofirepi, et al., 2020; Farinloye, et al., 2020). Higher Education Institutions are now to communicate their corporate and individual brand values as a means of improving their image with stakeholders (Nguyen, et al., 2019). Websites and social media have become a unique media for brands to communicate these values (Gökerik, et al., 2018). Prospective students, researchers, and partners often consider the website as a source of information (Mogaji, 2016b), more so it can be updated regularly, it is accessible to a global audience, and content can be well detailed and easily updated.

While Universities may own the websites, Academic staffs are entitled to a webpage on the websites to showcase their profile, highlight their achievements, publication records and experiences. Academic Staff are experiencing lateral pressure to engage in self-promotional practices, highlighting more reasons to be visible and showcase one's impact through quantifiable metrics (Gandini, 2016; Mogaji, 2019a). This aligns with the concept of personal branding, which is useful and influential in the processes of "going up" promotion and tenure (Johnson & Eulanda, 2017), it is becoming a crucial promotional device for the pursuit of self-realisation (Gandini, 2016). Having a personal brand distinguishes the staff and enhances their reputation. Personal branding recognises the conscious and unconscious decisions that are being made (Kalia, et al., 2017), which affect the reputation of the academic staff and the likelihood of engaging in any collaboration or partnership.

Personal branding is becoming an essential concept for academic staff, and they are using their webpage to build their reputation, raise awareness about research activities and engage in media activities. (Wayne & Mogaji, 2020). Despite the enormous possibilities of the Internet and websites around their world, there

appeared to be a limitation with African universities as they engage with the Internet. While analyzing webpages of the University in South Africa, Samkin & Schneider (2014) found that a few websites did not present academic profiles, or only minimal information such as name, job title and contact details were provided. Mogaji et al. (2020) also found that Universities in Africa are not providing enough information for their prospective students about the programs they intend to study, this further raised concerns about the amount of information the academic staff are willing to provide about themselves. It raises concerns about the visibility of the University and its academic staff. There are many researchers and prospective students who may want to study and collaborate with the academic staff, but if their academic brad is not visible enough, they could be losing the opportunities.

With this background, this chapter aims to explore academic branding of academic Staff in Africa, with a specific focus on Nigeria. The study aims to understand how academic Staff in Nigeria are branding themselves and positioning themselves through their University profile webpage. The study adopts the ALARA Model of Information Search on website (Mogaji, 2019c), a novel methodology, which brings together case study research, stakeholder roleplay and netnography to analyses content of academic profile webpages from Top Nigerian Universities. Although the study solely focused on Nigeria which has got the most significant educational system in Africa with 174 Universities (Olaleye, et al., 2020; Farinloye, et al., 2020), it is anticipated that this study will contribute to the ongoing research on understanding and marketing higher education in Africa, Academic branding and position. The study offers practical recommendations for improving University reputation through academic digital branding, which is relevant for University managers, Academic Staff, Information Technology and Marketing Team.

The next section of the chapter explores relevant literature on academic branding, digital branding and information search on the website. The methodology for the

study is subsequently presented, followed by the result and its discussion. To conclude, a summary, highlighting the study's contributions, limitations and ideas for future research, is discussed.

BACKGROUND

The concept of corporate and institutional branding has long spilt over to individuals (Schwöbel-Patel, 2019). There is the idea of a human brand, making an effort towards building their personal brand. Personal branding is described as an 'introspective process by which you define yourself professionally, and it can serve as your pathway to professional success' (Philbrick & Cleveland, 2015, p. 181). To build a personal brand, Philbrick & Cleveland (2015) suggests the need to build a digital footprint online, often this is on social media.

Digital and social media scholarship are now being included as criteria considered in the review of proposals for academic advancement (Cabrera, et al., 2017; Philbrick & Cleveland, 2015). Some universities worldwide have implemented digital university branding strategies to improve visibility in the digital space (Del-Pino-Espinoza & Lloret-Romero, 2019). Institutions are starting to recognize social media scholarship as significant. Academics are encouraged to create and maintain social media portfolios to document the impact and quality of their digital scholarship (Mogaji, 2019b; Cabrera, et al., 2017). Most of the content on social media is generated by the users (Gökerik, et al., 2018) and this allows information to be created and exchanged in multiple formats in either explicit groups or implicit communities (Cabrera, et al., 2017). However, there are concerns about the credibility of the information, as the individual may often curate their brand personality and appear different, promising what they can deliver (Wayne & Mogaji, 2020)

While most attention has focused on social media as a digital footprint, there is a gap in knowledge about the prospects of using academic webpage as a digital

platform to present an academic brand. Although Samkin & Schneider (2014) study has examined the online profiles of Australian, New Zealand and South African accounting faculty members, they focused on the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that compel an individual faculty member to undertake research and not the branding of the academic staff through the web profile. Also, Nicholas & Dobrowolski (2000) as called for the need to reassessing the information-seeking behaviour of people. There is an increasing need to get truthful and reliable information.

Profile on University websites has been considered an essential source of information for prospective students, research partners and funders (Wayne & Mogaji, 2020). The emergence of the Internet has enabled many end-users to search for information themselves as there is a practically immeasurable amount of information, with its own unique set of information characteristics (Knight & Spink, 2008; Xie, 2010). The Internet has also become an important marketing communication tool for recruiting university students, as prospective students check the websites to get quick information and insight into life at the universities (Mogaji, 2016b). The Internet offers geographically remote students a means to access the universities and information on their courses (Armstrong & Lumsden, 2000). The websites function as a unique platform to provide information to the broader community as well, transcending geographical barriers. As information is uploaded into cyberspace, it is not restricted by geographical constraints (Sife & Grace, 2013). Thus, university websites offer a convenient way for academic staff to position themselves and offer information about their brand to stakeholders across the world.

Academic staff in this context regards to lecturers and researcher that are employed by the University to teach, research and engage in other scholarly activities (Vasudeva & Mogaji, 2020). They are human brand with their sets of values, achievements and experiences. These academic staff do have a profile that highlights their education, research activities, teachings and other engagement

within the University. Often these profile information are presented in the form of a CV which may appeal more to a recruiter. These profiles are however presented on a webpage for public engagement and digital branding and positioning of the academic staff. This web page is one of many pages on the University's website.

The key features here are the brand owner which is the academic staff who owns a profile that is presented on a webpage which is within a website. This staff profile webpage is a media earned by the staff, by virtue of their employment but owned by the University. The University controls the content of these webpages but allows the academic staff to present themselves based on the stipulated guidelines and templates.

These templates are developed by the University's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Team and further managed by the Website Administrator. The Academic Staff are the custodian of information about their information, they should be updating their profile, but they must work with the Website Administrators to update their profile based on the template. This hierarchy allows credibility and reliability in the information that is publicly available on the webpage. Individual staff cannot make claims that are not substantiated.

Following this process of information provision is, therefore, the focus of this chapter. To understand how the provided template by the University is aiding the digital branding of the academic staff and likewise how the academic staff are using the platform to position their brand. The conceptual framework builds on the Marchionini (1995) effort to recognise the various interactions between the entities of the information custodian, environmental local of the information (the webpages) and the Information requisitors.

In this study, it is hypothesised that academic staff, by working with the Website Administrator and using the provided template, will make their profile available

on the University's website for prospective research students, partners and other external stakeholders. Importantly, the information will be relevant to these Information requisitors, and they will be prompted to act. The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1 below, recognising the role of the academic staff, as the information custodian in providing accessible and relevant information which meets the requisitor's expectation.
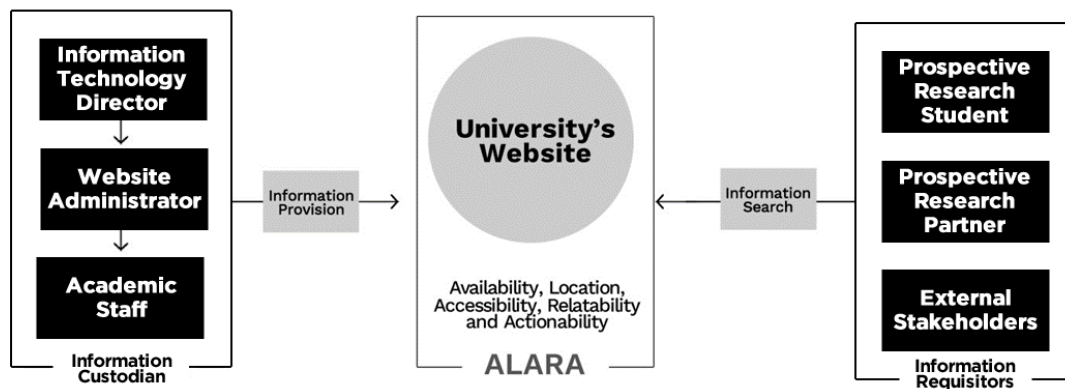

Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework for the study.

This conceptual framework put the responsibility for the information available on the part of the Information custodian, and this is further explored through the ALARA Model of Information Search on Website (Mogaji, 2019c). ALARA is an acronym that stands for Availability, Location, Accessibility, Relatability and Actionability (Figure 2). The model explores the website with a specific intention of understanding if the information is available, and if so, the location of the information. This availability is often indicated by the buttons, which may be situated on the home page as a form of importance or a drop-down menu or at the footer of the website. Once the location of the information is identified, the accessibility becomes essential as well. Perhaps the button links to a dead-end, has a broken link or the page has no content. Besides, the relatability of the information that has been accessed is essential. It questions how relevant it is if the

information is incorrect or inconclusive and importantly if the information is actionable, question the visitor's action or perhaps there is a prominent call–to–action (CTA).
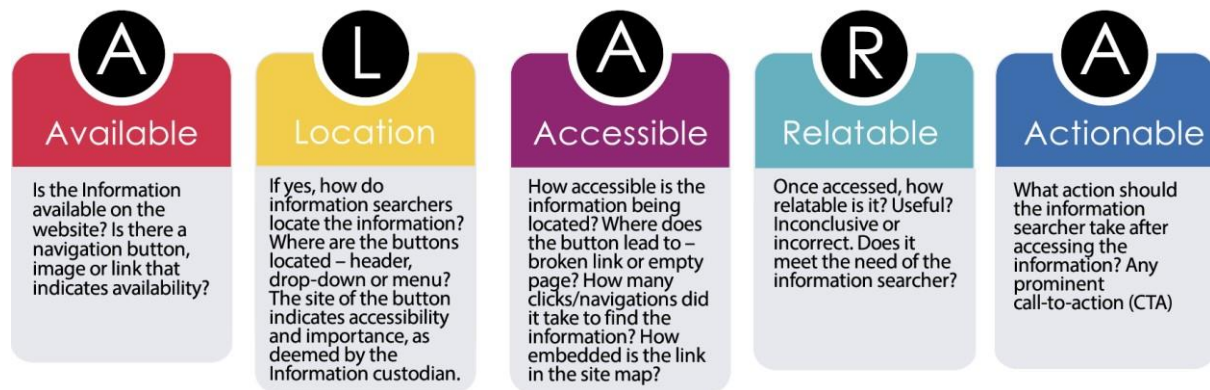

Figure 2. The ALARA Model of Information Search (Mogaji 2019c)

METHODOLOGY

This ALARA model is subsequently adopted in the methodological section of this study. This study builds on previous studies like Mogaji et al. (2020) which adopted this methodology to assess the quality of course information available on the websites of African Universities. The methodology takes up the role of an information searcher and incorporates the idea of netnography and user experience design (Mogaji, 2019c). The methodology highlights the provision of information for the prospective visitor to make an informed choice. It places the responsibility on the website owner, the Universities, in this case, to provide the needed information for prospective research students, researchers and partners in a user–friendly and engaging manner. This approach is considered suitable as the use of websites as a source of data, or a means of collecting data for research purposes is becoming increasingly prevalent and accepted (Samkin & Schneider, 2014). The methodology enhances understanding of digitally occurring interactions, experiences and phenomena of information search on websites.

Seven key stages are outlined in using this method. These stages are discussed in subsequent subsections.

Stage 1: The Role

The research adopts the role of a prospective PhD student looking for Supervisor for a doctorate in one of the best Universities in Nigeria. The student is willing to explore several University websites to find a suitable supervisor.

Stage 2: The Information

The student is interested in the research expertise, publication and availability of the Academic Staff. This present study adopts the 28 possible sections of academic profile as identified by Wayne & Mogaji (2020). The presence or absence of these sections on the Academic Staff's webpage will be assessed.

Table 1: The 28 Possible Sections on the University's Academic Staff Profile

	Main Section		Section
1	Personal Information	Name	This section of the webpage presents the official name of the academic staff. This section indicates how academic staff will want to be addressed. This section is essential for those who may often be addressed by the short form of their names but want the full official name on their University Profile.
2		Title	This section, though often part of the name, indicates the official title of the academic staff. PhD holders will mostly likely have Dr for those with no PhD, and it is essential to identify if they want to have a title before their name.

3		Position/Status	This section is the designated title of the staff. This section may not be related to the title. Lecturer in Advertising is the position while Dr is the title.
4		Photograph	This section is the profile image. It should be a professionally taken portrait photography, preferable coloured and organised by the University for consistency. In some cases, only the University can upload or update the profile picture of the staff profile.
5		Biography	The biography is often in the third person, describing the academic staff. It provides a summary of the research and teaching interest, achievements and contributions. It can also include the year the staff joined the University, previous Universities and past experiences.
6		Contact Details	This section provides the physical address of the academic staff on the University Campus. It should include the Room Number, if applicable, telephone number and email. This contact details can also include Office Hours.
7		Social Media Account	Social media is becoming an essential feature for academic staff branding. Universities now include links to the

			staff's social media profile. Specifically, the Universities are focusing on Twitter and LinkedIn. The section can also provide links to other associated websites such as Scopus profile, Google Scholars, ResearchGate and ORCID
8		Language	This section indicates if the academic staff can speak and write in another language. This section can allow staff to indicate if they can read, write, speak, understand spoken and peer review in another Language.
9		Awards and Recognition	This section is suitable for highlighting the achievements and recognition of the academic staff. This section may include research awards, teaching excellence award or best paper awards.
10	Educational Information	Education	A list of Universities that the academic staff has attended. This section could also be incorporated with the Degree and Qualifications section. University of University, PhD, 1974
11		Degree and Qualifications	This section is different from the Education section. It identified the degree and other qualifications by the academic staff. This section can also include a qualification from professional bodies (such as FHEA, CMBE or

			CMIN) in addition to University Degree.
12		Teaching	The section presents a list (and sometimes code and summary) of the modules and course the academic staff teaches. This information is relevant in showcasing the expertise of the staff, and it can present a shared interest for other researchers and Academic publishers with interest in those modules.
13	Research Information	Publication Records	This section provides a list of published output of the academic staff. It should start with the most recent publication. For those with a long list, it could be limited to years (list of publications since 2000) or to a number (The list of publications above shows 50 of 68 total publications in University Repository). This section can be populated through the University Repository or manually updated. Universities in the UK (like Huddersfield and Abertay) uses Pure, a service from Elsevier which provides fingerprint (of activities), network, external collaboration on country level similar and similar profiles. The publications should contain a link to the original piece of work either on the

			University repository or publishers' website.
14		Conference Presentations	This section is different from publication records as it indicates network and avenues for engagement and presentation of work. This information will be relevant for other staff and PhD students to know the kind of places to present their works.
15		PhD Supervision	This section of the webpage indicates if the academic staff is available to supervise prospective PhD students and the areas that are of interest. This section can also showcase the number of PhD that the academic staff has successfully supervised and completed. This section may not be relevant for Academic Staff who are not on the research pathway.
16		Research Interest	This section is closely linked to PhD supervision but highlights more of personal interest of the academic staff. This section highlights what the academic staff is presently working on and willing to explore further. This section could also be referred to as an area of expertise. The content of this section may evolve over years as interest may change due to exposure and growing or emerging research areas.

17		Research Project	This section indicates what the academic staff is presently working on and which may not necessarily be within the University. It could be a joint project and collaboration on a multi-disciplinary level. This section can also include research grants and other funded projects. This section can also include patented ideas/products which emerged from the research
18		Research group	Academic Staff members can be associated with a department or research centre. Besides, they may be associated with research groups, research projects and teaching groups.
19		Research Keywords	These relate closely to research interest, but instead, they are keywords that identify the research area of the academic staff. This could have been generated from the academic staff's research activities.
20		Research Statement	This section allows the academic staff to present a statement that elaborates their research activities. It is not just about a list of research areas but the story behind it, the motivations and experience so far on the research. This section can also describe the Research Vision of the staff.

21	Industry Information	Knowledge Exchange	The knowledge exchange is closely related to the Research Project. This section is, however, more relevant for academic staff on enterprises pathway. This section highlights their activities which involves developing a range of knowledge-based interactions between universities and the wider world, which result in benefits to the economy and society. The section can also include other enterprise interest and activities. Information about patented ideas/products which emerged from the knowledge exchange can also be included in this section.
22		Industry Experience	This section presents the academic staff's past experiences outside the University. This experience may be relevant to teaching, especially for those who might have gathered many years of experience in Industry before coming into academia. This experience can also indicate network which may be relevant for internship and guest lecturers coming to the class. This can also be described as a career overview.
23		Installation and performances	This section will mostly appeal to art colleges. It allows staff to showcase their exhibitions and filmography on their

			profile. This section is different from the research output.
24	Engagement	Membership and Affiliations	Membership of academy and professional bodies can be presented in this section. It can also highlight other forms of affiliations. The academic staff may also want to indicate their level of membership. Designatory letters can also be used in the Title section.
25		Responsibilities with the University	Academic staff do have various responsibilities within the University. This section can be used to highlight those responsibilities. It includes course leadership, program leadership, mentoring and supporting. This section can also include previous roles within the University.
26		External Engagement	This section is closely related to responsibilities within the University, but instead, it focuses on engagement outside the University. This section highlights external engagements such as Editor of a journal, Editor of Journal Special Issue, Editor of Book Chapters, Journal reviewers, involvement in the organisation of Conferences and external examination. In some Universities (Middlesex), this is described as engagement and impact.

| 27 | | Media Appearance | This section presents the academic staff's media appearance. The section could provide a link to the news coverage. It could also include an embedded video to the interview or a sound clip in the case of a radio interview. In some cases, a screenshot can also be used to illustrate the media appearances. In some instances, the media appearance is divided into Online, Broadcast (TV, Radio), Print (Newspaper, Magazine). |
| 28 | | Press expertise | This section allows academic staff to indicate if they are press-ready. This inclusion expects the staff to have received a form of training to comment on live matters. The University's Press Team will mostly be involved in this arrangement. This section is different from media appearance, which may include newspaper or online coverage of research. |

Stage 3: The Website.

The study is carried out to understand how Academic Staff are positioning their academic brand through their University Web page profile. As it may be difficult and time-consuming to collect data from all the Universities in Africa, the study focused on the best Universities in Nigeria using the approach that was adopted by Wayne et al. (2020). According to the UniRank 2019, there are 35 Nigerian Universities in the Top 200 (UniRank, 2019), these Universities have been

licensed and accredited by the appropriate higher education-related organisation in Nigeria. These universities are considered the best in Nigeria, according to the league table (Kiraka, et al., 2020), and with the indication that they can give an overview of how academic staff are developing their brand through their University websites. Table 2 presents the list of the 35 Universities from Nigeria, which are the sample for the study.

Table 2: List of Universities and sample for the study

	University
1	Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University
2	Adekunle Ajasin University
3	Afe Babalola University
4	Ahmadu Bello University
5	American University of Nigeria
6	Babcock University
7	Bayero University
8	Covenant University
9	Ekiti State University
10	Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta
11	Federal University of Technology, Akure
12	Federal University of Technology, Minna
13	Federal University of Technology, Owerri
14	Federal University, Oye-Ekiti
15	Kwara State University
16	Ladoke Akintola University of Technology
17	Lagos State University
18	Landmark University
19	Nasarawa State University
20	Nile University of Nigeria

21	Nnamdi Azikiwe University
22	Obafemi Awolowo University
23	Olabisi Onabanjo University
24	Rivers State University
25	Tai Solarin University of Education
26	University of Abuja
27	University of Benin
28	University of Ibadan
29	University of Ilorin
30	University of Jos
31	University of Lagos
32	University of Nigeria
33	University of Port Harcourt
34	University of Uyo
35	Usmanu Danfodio University

Stage 4: The Search.

This stage involves visiting the websites to extract the information. The 35 University websites were visited between 15th and 20th January 2020 from Google Chrome, a web browser developed by Google in South West England. The websites were searched to identify the presence of the 28 essential information highlighted in Step 2.

Stage 5: The Location.

The location of the essential information on the websites was noted in a Notepad by the researcher. Importantly, if the information was not available, the location becomes irrelevant. The location in this context recognises the location of the buttons leading to the staff profile. The drop-down and subpages were also identified. The visit starts from the landing page of the Universities to locate staff

profile, often through 'about-us/staff-team' or 'faculty/faculty-profiles'. If this does not yield result, as it was often difficult to identify the right path, a Google search with the name of university and staff profile – 'university of university staff profile' was done to provide a landing page for the staff which are ether grouped Alphabetically or according to Faculty/Department. The quality and quality of the information were also observed and recorded as part of extraction in Stage 6. The action on those pages was also recorded. This includes actionable links for the prospective PhD students to email the academic staff, access their publications or download their CV.

Stage 6: The Extraction

Following the methodology approach of Mogaji et al. (2020), both quantitative and qualitative information is collected during the location stage. The quantitative information requires the use of a coding sheet that codes the websites and the amount of information available. While there is the opportunity for using a paper coding sheet, a Google form was used for the data collection. The form collects information about the University and the presence or absence of the 28 elements in Table 1on the University's website. In addition to the form, a Visit Note (VN) is also prepared on each visit to the websites. These VNs are a qualitative insight into the information search process. While Mogaji (2019c) noted that the researcher could either write out these observations or type it out as word documents. The VNs for this study were typed out. The VNs includes a description of the path to access the information, the quantity and quality of information, accessibility issues. The VNs also contained screenshots from the website, which visually illustrates the observed points such as empty pages and irrelevant content. There were individual VNs prepared for each website. The Screenshots are prepared as a supplementary file to this chapter.

Stage 7: The Reporting

Stage 7 is the reporting stage which is presented in the subsequent section. A Summary of Methodology is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3. A Summary of Methodology Approach for The ALARA Model of Information Search (Mogaji, et al., 2020).

1	Role	The researcher takes up the role of the searcher who is willing to search for information on the website. This role influences the type of information that will be explored.
2	Information	Prepare a list of crucial information that will be searched. This information is compiled from the literature review, interview with real people seeking the information or preliminary visit to the sites.
3	Website	A list of sites to be searched, this list is often a limited and defined sample. This list will be used for the analysis. This list should be well defined to offer a holistic overview of the available information.
4	Search	Searching the information collected in Stage 2. Researcher to take note of the time the websites were visited, web browser used, the geographical location and the device used for the search.
5	Location	Navigating the website, looking for the information (Stage 2) on the site (Stage 3) and taking notes of ALARA. The location gives an indication of hierarchy and how important the Information custodian has deemed it.
6	Extraction	Coding sheet for collecting quantitative information, exported into SPSS for analysis. A Visit Note (VN) prepared for each website. VNs are qualitative insights into the information search process. The VNs can be exported to NVIVO for thematic analysis.
7	Reporting	Reporting the result of the analysis. This stage presents the quantity (if the information is available) and quality (if the information is actionable) of the information using the ALARA model.

Source: Mogaji, et al., 2020

In this section, the findings of the study are detailed. The findings of this study are presented thematically in line with the ALARA model of information search. It is anticipated that the information about the staff will be made available on the websites, this ensures that the Universities recognizes the need and they have made the information available. The location explores how prospective information requisitor can locate the information on getting to the website, and this focuses explicitly on the site path and the link to access the information. The accessibility ensures that on getting to the location, there is information for the requisitor to engage with. In accessing the information, the requestor explores the quality of the information to determine if it is relevant enough for a visit; lastly, the actionable section explores possible actions for the visitor upon engagement with

the information, this could be downloading a document or clicking a link to access more information.

Available

Nigerian Universities recognizes the need to assist their academic staff in positioning their academic brand in this digital age. The effort towards this, however, remains questionable. The Universities have created staff profile pages to showcase the research publications and expertise of their staff. So, the information is available, but it is at various level of details.

In some cases, the profiles are just provided as a list (http://agr.fuoye.edu.ng/index.php/2012-11-17-14-17-19 accessed 13/02/2020), or provided in full details (https://www.aun.edu.ng/index.php/academics/faculty/sas) accessed 13/02/2020. Of all the sampled University, 16.6% (n=6) provided a standard level of information. The availability of the information is the basic need, but it is essential that the available information is easily located and relevant for the information requisitor.

Location

Typically, the staff profile should have been presented under the faculty menu, but this is not always the case. In some cases, the staff profile appeared to be a stand-alone page which is not linked to the staff section on a faculty page. For example, in Ekiti State University, the staff web page is https://www.eksu.edu.ng/index.php/lastname-firstname/, at Federal University Oye it is http://fuoye.edu.ng/en/profile-view/userprofile/ lastname_firstname. Meanwhile, the American University of Nigeria had a better and more structured link in https://www.aun.edu.ng/index.php/academics/faculty/sas/lastname-

firstname. This structure makes it easier for prospective research student and partners to find the staff. For this study, Google search was carried out to identify staff profile or staff directory at these Universities, and a prospective research student may not be willing to go through the google search. It would be expected for the University to make its staff profile easily located by following the basic link and site path.

Accessible

On finally locating the information through the site path, this information were not readily accessible. In other instances, the names of the staff were just presented in lists with no further link to another page for detailed information. In these cases, the Universities is not enhancing the digital brand of their academic staff as their achievements are only limited to one line on the University profile. Broken links was also another problem with regards to the accessibility of the information about the staff. Also, as identified by Mogaji et al. (2020) in the analysis of African Universities websites, there were empty pages with no information about the staff. Even though they have a navigation button that leads to the page (passing the Stage Two of location), the pages have not been populated with information. There is evidence of this from Babcock University and the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology where they had created a staff profile page (with a name and space for photograph) but no information. This will be disappointing for prospective research students or partner who is seeking the information.

Relatable

Relatable in the context of staff profile refers to the quality and quantity of information that is made available on the webpage. This is important for the information requisitor who will want to know more about the lecture, the research capabilities and expertise to supervise a prospective student. Overall, the

University profiles were not relatable as they do not contain enough relevant information. This is apart from Universities like American University of Nigeria, Covenant University. Ekiti State University, Federal University of Technology, Akure and Landmark University. These Universities provide profiles that contain images of the staff, short biography, education and publication records.

Special mention to the American University of Nigeria with regards to the quality of their staff's photography, it appeared they had organised a photography session to assist the academic staff in building and presenting a credible academic brand. This aligns with the suggestion of Wayne & Mogaji (2020) with regards to organising photography session for staff to ensure consistency across the University. In worse cases, some Universities do not have a profile picture for their Head of Departments and Dean of Faculty, and there was no information in the allocated spaces and section.

For some staff with an academic profile, there was evidence that they have not been updated. On Federal University Oye's website, there is a section that shows when last the website was updated, and there are staff who have not updated their website in three years. This could suggest many things – Firstly, maybe the staff is no longer working with the University if so, the profile should have been removed. Secondly, if the staff has not taken an interest in curating and positioning their academic brand for the past three years and thirdly, maybe the University is not monitoring these web pages to understand how the staff are making use of it. All these scenarios present challenges for the University and Staff in managing their academic brand in this digital age.

Actionable

Results of the analysis indicate limited actionable points on these websites. These points of action were anticipated following on recommendations of Wayne & Mogaji (2020). Firstly, for profiles that contain a list of publications, there was no

link to access the publications. In other cases, the link was broken and not accessible. Secondly, the contact details were often presented in personal email addresses and mobile telephone number, which does not make it appear professional. It is anticipated that University staff will have their official email, with the university domain name and a landline phone number to position their digital academic brand. Thirdly, there were links to download CV. It is anticipated that prospective information requisitor can access this document to have an understanding of the research expertise of the staff.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Universities allow their staff to use the websites a channel for creating and curating their academic brand in this digital age. This media is beyond social media as there is limited control from the academic staff with regards to the content. The ensures trust in the and credibility of the content. While the analysis of the UK University profile indicates that Universities are putting effort in place to ensure that their staff gets the visibility they need through the University website (Wayne & Mogaji, 2020), there are different experiences in Nigeria.

Analysis of the website appears that the staff are not recognizing themselves as a brand. They are not taking ownership and responsibility for their pages, and they are making little effort to develop their academic brand in this digital age. There are pages with no photograph or content. Academic staff need to ensure that their brands are well presented to the outside world. They need to ensure that they have a profile page on the University's website; the understanding of their brand value should make them recognize the need to have a place on the Internet. For those who already have a profile, it is essential to ensure that it is up to date. Philbrick & Cleveland (2015) further reiterated that creating a digital footprint is not enough but also investing time in maintaining the online presence. The staff needs to ensure that their photograph is included, current list of publications, the current level of education and other relevant information are included on the

webpage. Likewise, in a case where the University is not organizing a photo session, the academic staff should ensure that they use professional photographs on their profile. Staff needs to check this site often to ensure that it is accessible to those outside the University and the correct information has been included.

Just as the Academic Staff needs to recognize the need for their brand, the University needs to recognize the importance of these academic profiles in boosting their brand reputations. The success and public display of the academic brand can enhance the perception of the University's brand (Mogaji & Yoon, 2019). Therefore, the broken link, insufficient information or inaccessible staff profile page should be duly addressed. Any collaborators around the world may be interested in a research partnership, and if these profiles are not readily available and accessible, the University may be losing vital collaborations and partnership

Universities need to create a platform for their academic staff to brand themselves. While there are Universities like the American University of Nigeria, which has adopted a professional look in presenting their staff, there is room for improvement across the country. Staff profile should not only be a list, and each staff should have a profile that presents information about their brand, personality and achievement. Universities should have a guideline on who needs to have a profile, their format, and how these are created and maintained. The Human Resources Team may have to work with the Information Technology Team, to ensure that every new academic staff are allocated a webpage on the University's website.

University needs to make sure that the web profiles are easily accessible. This primarily focuses on the links and site path of the webpages. The web pages should be linked to the Faculty and then the profile as a subpage. This highlights web usability and critical design challenges which affect users' impressions, experiences and performances (Mogaji, 2016a; Pant, 2015). This usability ensures that prospective information requisitor can follow the usual link to the Faculty to

identify various staff within the faulty and can search each profile to identify a potential supervisor or partner. It may be suggested that lack of Internet in Africa is a challenge for maintaining this online profile, revealing a mostly hidden class bias in that only privileged academics and students have access to the Internet (Schwöbel-Patel, 2019), this, however, may not be true in this case. The Universities had access to create the webpage, and therefore surely, they can update it. Lack of Internet should not be an excuse in a case where updating a webpage is required.

While the platform has been provided, it is essential always to maintain it. To ensure that the information is correct, the links are working, and pages are accessible from outside the University. It is not just about having a profile but to make sure it works. University may have to organize a photo session for the staff so that there will be no excuse for profiles with no photographs. Besides, there should be a consistent layout across the faculties. There were instances whereby there are different templates for different faculties, this should be avoided, and effort should be made towards a consistent template of profile across the Universities.

The profile should be audited regularly. This audit is to ensure that staff who have not updated their profile in about two years can be reached out to. This update could just be a change in the photographs, conferences attended or new publications. In a case where a recent list of publication is identified, there should be an explanation of how "recent" was defined (Samkin & Schneider, 2014). If the academic staff has not published a new paper in two years, then 'recent publication' should not be used. Personal brands are not static, and they evolve with career changes and trends in the field (Philbrick & Cleveland, 2015). Therefore, there is a responsibility on the part of the academic staff to develop the brand. Likewise, Profiles of Staff that has left the University should be removed. Broken links and incomplete pages should also be acted upon. This could involve engaging with the staff to ensure they work and improve their online brand.

Universities may want to consider the privacy of their staff. Perhaps there is some information that the staff may not want to share (Wayne & Mogaji, 2020). On the websites, there were the date of birth, personal phone numbers and email. This information should be avoided on the public profile, which is accessible. The university email address and physical address on the campus should be the necessary contact details. In some cases, the contact form could be used instead of an email address. Some people chose to do this to reduce spam emails.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future studies should endeavour to understand academic staff's perception of their profile page as a brand-building platform, and perhaps if the embedded meaning of the University brands can be transferred to the academic staff brand (McCracken, 1989) through their profile on the website. Also, future research can explore the challenges and concerns around having and maintaining a University profile, perhaps the fact that the staff does not own it and that it can be deleted after leaving the University might be the reason why some will prefer to invest the effort into their social media and website. The study can also be extended into other countries in Africa to understand how their academic staffs are positioning themselves through their website.

CONCLUSION

The role of academic scholars is changing with the rapid emergence of technology in this digital age. They are becoming a brand which should be curated and well-positioned. This study adopted the ALARA Model of Information Search to explore how African academic staff are positioning their academic brands on their University profile. Evidence suggests that while Universities are making an effort to provide a platform, academic staff are not willing to take ownership, engage and build their brand by updating their profile. There were broken links, empty

profile and irrelevant information. It is not just about having a webpage but ensuring that it contains the current, relevant and relatable information.

The study offers both theoretical and practical implications. Firstly, it contributes to knowledge of academic branding; it moves beyond social media and websites owned by the staff to another media which is earned by staff but owned by the University. These findings are relevant for University administrators working on creating a platform for academics branding. Secondly, it added to the study of digital branding, recognizing the role of websites in higher education (Mogaji, 2016b; Saichaie & Morphew, 2014; Ortagus & Tanner, 2019), Universities need their website to market their programs, present their faculties and facilities. Thirdly, it contributed towards the deployment of the ALARA Model and the novel methodology. Lastly, this study also contributes to the literature on the general guidelines on usability evaluations of websites, perspectives on usability, user-centred design principles and usability evaluations in order to improve staff profile webpages (Guay, et al., 2019; Pant, 2015; Rogers & Preston, 2009).

There are managerial implications from this study which will be relevant for University Managers, Academic and Non-academic/professional services staff. Academic staff who owns the webpages should take ownership, update it with relevant information. Likewise, to Information Communication Technology (ICT) and the Marketing Team, they are responsible for developing and maintaining the website. Because many sections need to fit in into one page to present the staff, the interface design, audit and monitoring are essential.

Although the study was carefully designed and conducted, providing valuable information and insight, this study has limitations which warrant attention and future research. These limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the result. This study only focuses on Nigerian Universities, and therefore findings may not be generalized. Besides, websites were accessed at a time in January 2020. Changes could have been made to these websites before

the publication of this chapter. Notwithstanding, an insight into the content of the Nigerian academic staff profile has been unveiled.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Academic Staff: University staff employed in a University to teach, do research and conduct community engagement.

Academic Profile Webpage: A webpage on a University website which presents a biography, publications records and achievements of the academic staff.

ALARA: A model that explores the Availability, Location, Accessibility, Relatability and Actionability of information.

Branding: The promotion of a particular product or company utilizing advertising and distinctive design.

Profile: A short article describing a person or organization.

University: A high-level educational institution in which students study for degrees and academic research is done.

Website: A set of related web pages located under a single domain name.