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Chapter 9

Paving the Way for World Domination: Analysis of African Universities' Mission Statement

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There is a greater concern for educational excellence among the academic institutions across the globe. Most of these are striving hard to own a unique competitive position among the people and society at large. This transition has primarily affected the strategic intent of the educational institutions, such as universities and colleges around the world. Even the institutions in African subcontinent are not an exception to this change. This study addresses a gap in the literature on higher education marketing in terms of African universities and helps to ascertain their strategic intent reflected through the analysis of vision and mission statements. A sample of the top 36 universities in Africa was analysed to achieve this purpose by using the techniques of content analysis and thematic analysis. The findings highlight significant differences between the vision and mission statements of universities in Africa and also provide some future guidelines useful for their world domination. The study also provides vital managerial implications which the university administrators, managers and practitioners may follow while drafting or rethinking their vision and mission statements. Overall, the study contributes to the field of strategic marketing focused on higher education in Africa.

Keywords: Mission statement, vision statement. Content analysis, thematic analysis, University, Africa

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Introduction

Business organisations take responsibility for their strategic growth. They put actions in place and make an effort to accomplish them. To help along the strategic journey, they craft and present their vision and mission statements. These are affirmations that give indications to the staffs and stakeholders into what direction the organisation is going and how they want to go about it. Often big corporations are the ones who put much emphasis on these affirmations. They see it as a reminder of the promise they have made with themselves and other stakeholders. However, different organisation like non-profits and universities have also been adopting this idea of crafting and presenting their vision and mission statement. Much research has been carried out to analyse how the organisations are presenting themselves with these statements.

The concept of strategic marketing reveals that both vision and mission statement could be considered as the vital ascendant for the formulation of effective marketing strategies of the institutions in higher education. They help to understand the strategic intent of the universities, colleges and other academic partners. A well-framed vision and mission statement can help the universities or colleges to differentiate themselves in the market place and own a unique competitive position.

An organisation's mission statement defines what the organisation is today - its purpose or reason for existence (Babnik et al., 2014); while the vision statement defines what the organisation wants to be in the future -its ideal future goal (Kopaneva & Sias, 2015). Since there has been attention from scholars and practitioners about organisational mission and vision, interest in universities' vision and mission are growing, as this has been motivated by the need for universities to be different from others (Giusepponi & Tavoletti, 2018; Kosmützky & Krücken, 2015). Gilligan and Wilson (2009) have mentioned that the primary objective of the marketing strategy of an academic institution is to differentiate itself from the others in the similar domain or geographical area. Camelia and Marius (2013) proposed that the evaluation of the strategic intentions of the institutions in higher education mentioned in these statements and their plan of action could be considered as an important area for future research. They further deliberated that more studies could be conducted in the future to investigate how the mission statement of various universities differentiate with each other based on their type, location, motive, and academic orientation. This then increases the scope and relevance of the current study.

Despite the substantial interest in research on vision and mission statement in higher education, there is still a dearth of information about African universities (Mogaji et al., 2017). Though some have been existing for many years, there is no empirical insight yet into the visions and mission of these universities. While most studies have focused on Europe, there is still a gap in knowledge about the higher education institutions in Africa. This study aims to extend this knowledge and provide insight into how African universities are positioning themselves with their vision and mission statement. The study analysed the statements of top-ranking universities across Africa according to the Time Higher Education World Ranking, as an indication of their reputation and competition with other universities around the world. These top universities are positioned at the forefront to highlight the vision of African universities.

The study contributes to strategic marketing literature in the following three ways. Firstly, it provides qualitative insight into the vision and mission of African universities, extending knowledge about research on higher education in Africa. Secondly, it extends a theoretical

understanding of the content and structure of vision and mission statements, which will be relevant to researchers and practitioners. Thirdly, it offers practical implications for university managers and administrators who need to revisit their strategic intent for the successful marketing of higher education in Africa.

Literature Review

The formulation of a vision and mission statement is considered as an integral part of strategic management (David, 2001). The success of the strategic plans of the universities depends upon their vision and mission statement (Ozdem, 2011). There have been different views regarding the inception of vision and mission statements in higher education. As per Davies and Glaister (1997), the practice of using vision and mission statements in higher education started during the 1980s. Hladchenko (2013) mentioned that publishing mission statements became a norm among American universities in the 1930s, whereas it worked around 1990s in case of German, British and European Universities. Scott (2006) has argued that most of the universities in Africa, America, Australia and Asia have been adopting the teaching mission and primitive model from Europe, which includes the power to conduct examination, confer degrees, starting of academic sessions and offer appropriate curriculum. Slowly, the creation of a vision and mission statement has become normative in case of higher education and university management (Scott, 2006).

A vision statement depicts what an organisation aspires to become and how it wants to be seen in a more extended period (Behm & Bertold, 2011). Collins and Porras (1991) mentioned that the vision statement depicts the thinking of an organisation in terms of its core values and views about oneself. Besides, Cortés-Sánchez (2017) has mentioned that along with research, the vision statement of a university should also have a global focus. Abelman and Dalessandro (2008) in their study on public and private colleges have found that most of the vision statements were unable to align with the national vision.

Mission statement acts as an indicator of organisational purpose and orientation (Klemme et al., 1991, p.77; Bart & Hupfer, 2004). Campbell and Yeung (1991) have suggested that organisational mission should be framed after considering the four factors such as purpose, behaviour, values and strategy. It is considered as an essential component for the success of an educational institution or a university (Ganu, 2013). Morphew and Hartley (2006) highlighted a linkage between the mission statement and the status of the institution. Besides, Firmin and Gilson (2010) and Seeber et al. (2017) revealed a positive relationship of mission statement with the overall objectives and external stakeholders. There is also a positive relationship between the mission statement with the functions of the university (Velcoff & Ferrari, 2006). Ozdem (2011) has found that educating and producing a skilled workforce is a crucial feature of the mission statement. The universities' mission statements should be unique as most of these often resemble each other. Scott (2006) mentioned that the mission statement of the universities in the present times is generally considered as a combination of research, teaching, and public service. Behm and Bertold (2011) have opined that a university mission statement should be able to provide concise information about the university profile, its functions along with the objectives it wants to attain. Literature provides enough evidence about different studies conducted in the past to understand the impact of mission statement on the institutional image (Firmin & Gilson, 2010), environment (Kuenssberg, 2011) and the differences among public and private institutions (Efe & Ozer, 2015).

There have been several studies around the world focused on understanding the role of mission statements in higher education. Morphew and Hartley (2006) in their study on analysing the mission statements of public and private universities and colleges in the US have revealed that these institutions vary in the context of the explicit expression of their mission statements. The study proposed that the institutional control (i.e. public or private), belief of the institution (i.e. about diversity or liberal arts education), and valuation of service (i.e. by the institution or through nurturing of civic values among the students) have a significant influence on the formulation of a mission statement.

Davis et al. (2007) in their study on the mission statements of universities in the US have mentioned that the students belonging to institutions with higher thrust on ethical values in their mission statements proved to be stronger in displaying ethical behaviour than the students whose university did not include these values in their mission. Atkinson (2008), through a study in the United States, has revealed that a mission statement of the university appears to be the indicator of universal principles and arrangement among human resources. James and Huisman (2009), in a study on mission statements of higher educational institutions in Wales, have found that these statements do not match with the local policies and the needs of market.

Firmin and Gilson (2010) analysed the mission statements of CCCU member institutions in the US. They found that most of these statements were focused on the society, education, religion, life and academics, and we are highlighting the purpose of institutional existence. Kuenssberg (2011), in a study focused on Scottish universities, has highlighted that the majority of mission statements are alike and need differentiation. Kosmützky (2012), through a study on mission statements of universities in Germany, highlighted that these statements appear to be useful in building goodwill and implementing guidelines of statutory authorities. Ganu (2013) conducted a study on the institutional mission statements of the faith-based tertiary institutions in Ghana, Africa. The findings revealed that there is a critical role of employees in achieving the mission of educational institutions. Besides, it was found that most of the employees in these institutions and universities were not aware of their respective mission statements.

Hladchenko (2013) in a study on the mission statements of German universities revealed that apart from the key constituents such as quality assurance, university profile, marketing and motivation of university stakeholders, a mission statement should also have the social orientation and ease of expression. Kosmützky and Krücken (2015) through a study in Germany, have highlighted that mission statements help the universities to become competent and enable them to serve different segments of the society. Deus et al. (2016) in a study focused on the mission statements of Brazilian universities, revealed that there is a shortage of long-term orientation in the mission statements of most of the universities. Hladchenko (2016) conducted a study on the identity of universities in Ukraine. The findings revealed that both education and research are essential constituents of a university's mission statement equally supported by its environment. Seeber et al. (2017) in a study on the factors affecting the content of mission statement of universities in the UK have mentioned that a mission in higher education is framed based on the alignment of its external environment with its internal capabilities. The study highlighted that universities which are alike in terms of their operations have a similar type of mission statement. However, this similarity is lower among the universities which are located closer to each other.

Taking a holistic view, Efe and Ozer (2015), in their study of universities in Turkey, have revealed that the cultural, economic, historical and political environments have an essential influence on the formulation of both vision and mission statements. Cortés-Sánchez (2017) conducted a study on the mission and vision statements in Columbia based on universities from various regions around the world. The samples from African and South American universities in this study were relatively smaller in size than the Europeans, North Americans and Asians. The findings revealed that there is a need for self-awareness about mission and vision statements among the universities. Mission statements were primarily focused on the teaching, research, culture and students, and were generally longer than the vision statements. Besides, it was found that mission and vision statements of South American universities were lengthier than the universities from Asian and European regions.

Efe and Ozer (2015) have found that in comparison to the mission statement, there is a shortage of studies concerned with the vision statements of universities. Apart from this, Bartkus et al. (2005) revealed that there is also a scarcity of international studies in higher education focused on the mission statement of universities. The review of literature during the current study reflects that there is enough research evidence available in the form of studies involving mission statements of higher educational institutions in different parts of the world. However, in contrast to the mission statements, relatively lesser research has been conducted on vision statements in higher education. Besides, it has been revealed that there is a shortage of studies focused on analysing the role of mission statements, in the case of African universities. Thus, it becomes essential to address this gap and to know how these universities have placed themselves in terms of their vision and mission statements.

Methodology

Sample

This study was carried out to analyse the vision and mission statements of African universities. As it may be difficult and time-consuming to collect data from all the universities in Africa, the study focused more on the best universities in the continent. Data were secondarily searched and extracted from the top 30 ranked African universities on the 2019 Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE, 2018). This sample frame has been adopted by other studies that explored African universities (Farinloye & Mogaji, 2020). These are the best universities in the continent according to that league table. These rankings are widely known and generally accepted as the benchmarks for numerous comparisons of schools and universities. According to the ranking, 47 universities were ranked in the top 30, and some universities shared the ranking number. For example, number 6 was shared by 11 universities. These universities were across nine different countries, including Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and South Africa. Out of these, Egypt has the highest number with 19 universities, while Ghana, Kenya and Uganda have one each. The list of sampled Universities is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: List of sampled University – the Top 30 ranked African universities on the 2019 Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

S/N	Africa 2019 Rank	University	Country
1	1	University of Cape Town	South Africa
2	2	University of the Witwatersrand	South Africa
3	3	Stellenbosch University	South Africa
4	4	University of KwaZulu-Natal	South Africa
5	5	Makerere University	Uganda
6	=6	American University in Cairo	Egypt
7	=6	Benha University	Egypt
8	=6	Beni-Suef University	Egypt
9	=6	Covenant University	Nigeria
10	=6	University of Ibadan	Nigeria
11	=6	University of Johannesburg	South Africa
12	=6	Kafrelsheikh University	Egypt
13	=6	Mansoura University	Egypt
14	=6	University of Pretoria	South Africa
15	=6	Suez Canal University	Egypt
16	=6	University of the Western Cape	South Africa
17	=17	Alexandria University	Egypt
18	=17	University of Béjaïa	Algeria
19	=17	Cairo University	Egypt
20	=17	Fayoum University	Egypt
21	=17	Ferhat Abbas Sétif University 1	Algeria
22	=17	University of Ghana	Ghana
23	=17	University of Marrakech Cadi Ayyad	Morocco

24	=17	Mohammed V University of Rabat	Morocco
25	=17	University of Sfax	Tunisia
26	=17	Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University	Morocco
27	=17	Sohag University	Egypt
28	=17	Tanta University	Egypt
29	=17	Tshwane University of Technology	South Africa
30	=30	Ain Shams University	Egypt
31	=30	Al-Azhar University	Egypt
32	=30	Assiut University	Egypt
33	=30	Badji Mokhtar University – Annaba	Algeria
34	=30	University of Constantine 1	Algeria
35	=30	Helwan University	Egypt
36	=30	Menoufia University	Egypt
37	=30	Minia University	Egypt
38	=30	University of Monastir	Tunisia
39	=30	University of Nairobi	Kenya
40	=30	University of Nigeria Nsukka	Nigeria
41	=30	University of Sciences and Technology Houari Boumediene	Algeria
42	=30	University of South Africa	South Africa
43	=30	South Valley University	Egypt
44	=30	University of Tlemcen	Algeria
45	=30	University of Tunis El Manar	Tunisia
46	=30	Université Hassan II de Casablanca	Morocco
47	=30	Zagazig University	Egypt

Publicly available information about the universities' vision statement was collected using Google, university search engines, manual website searches (Lee et al., 2013), and the website of each university. It was anticipated that it would be easily located on the about us page or a drop-down menu. This was however not the case, as some universities had it hidden in subpages, while some did not have it and all effort to search for it proved futile. Ten universities from the initial 47 that was searched did not have it. Of the 37 that had it on their website, further search and translation (website was not in English) revealed it was not a mission statement, so one university was excluded from the final list. Thus, N = 36 became the final sample. Both vision and Mission Statements for the sample universities was collected in April 2019 and saved as individual files for analysis.

The Variables

While previous studies have adopted Pearce and David's (1987) eight mission statement components for their analysis, we considered to use an alternative component, as this was developed over three decades ago and may no longer be current nor a true reflection of an organisations' strategic direction. We, therefore, adopted the fundamental mission statement questions raised by Arias-Coello et al. (2018). This is very current and has primarily been used in the analysis of higher education mission statements.

This component expected that the universities' mission statement should address five key questions:

1. 'Who are we?' - refers to how universities identify themselves in their statement.
2. 'What do we do?' - Addresses the description of the activities that the university carries out in response to the needs of its surrounding environment. It also refers to the institution's essential missions: teaching, research and service to society.
3. 'How do we do it?' - Describes the universities' management models, philosophy and values guiding its actions.
4. 'For whom do we do it?' - Identifies internal and external clients and other interested parties.
5. 'How do we differentiate ourselves from other universities?' was answered by describing the university's meaningful differential features compared to the others.

While other studies have often combined the vision and mission statement in their analysis, this present study separated them. Holosko et al. (2015) noted that the distinction between vision statements and mission statements does not always look bright, and the two concepts are used as synonyms and partially overlapped in our collected sample. As there was no existing component for analysis of the vision statement, we developed a new set of components following on from Arias-Coello et al. (2018)'s. This component is however still open to empirical validation.

This developed component expected that the universities' vision statement should address four key questions:

1. 'What we want?' -Refers to what the university wants to achieve in the future.

2. 'When we want it?' - addresses the time frame the university has set to achieve their laid-out plans.
3. 'How we want it?' - describes the universities' responsibilities and action plan in achieving the plans.
4. 'Where we want it?' - identifies the context and domain, often geographically, where the universities anticipate achieving their laid-out plans.

Data Analysis

In order to achieve our research aims, we utilised two stages of analysis.

Content Analysis

Firstly, content analysis was employed to quantitatively examine the content of available information from the 36 African universities. Most of the studies on mission statements of Universities are mainly based on content analysis (Holosko et al., 2015; Kosmützky and Krücken, 2015). Content analysis requires coding systems that enable the researcher to observe the content of the communication and categorise them in order to observe trends and frequencies and to make comparison and deduce meaning (Mogaji, 2015). A coding sheet was developed and filled on Google Form available at Google (2019). One of the authors solely carried out a content analysis. The content analysis includes examining the number of words in each statement. This was counted through a word search process in Microsoft word. Due to the discrete nature of the information analysed, an interrater reliability statistic was not formally calculated (Holosko et al., 2015). However the co-authors independently checked the same frequency and word count process. Besides, these statements searched for the prevalence of their most frequently used terms according to the four questions developed for vision statements and five questions for mission statement (as developed by Arias-Coello et al., 2018). A coding of "yes" was allocated to all the statements for each vision and mission component that was judged as being present in the vision and mission statement, and coding of "No" was assigned, if not present. This was carried out for all the statements.

Thematic Analysis

Secondly, these statements were thematically analysed using the six phases of analysis established by Braun and Clarke (2006) to determine the presence of the components of the vision and mission in the universities' statement. The six phases start with reading the statements over and over again so that the authors became familiar with and immersed in the data to better understand the universities' statement. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) noted that 'immersion usually involves "repeated reading" of the data and actively reading the data – searching for meanings, patterns and so on.' Second, the statements (saved as PDF files) were imported into NVIVO, a qualitative analysis software tool (Farinloye et al., 2019). An individual coder was used, and all data were coded using NVIVO 12. This first cycle coding (Miles et al., 2014), identified several nodes relating to various ways in which universities are positioning themselves for the future (vision statement) and what they are doing presently to achieve their vision (mission statement). Third, there was a search for themes (child nodes) that related to the main themes (parent nodes), which are the four themes identified for vision statements and Arias-Coello, et al. (2018)'s five themes for mission statements. Fourth, the

themes (child nodes) were reviewed and refined as it became more evident that some of these themes were closely related and some were dormant (dormant themes were subsequently removed). Fifth, the refined child nodes were considered satisfactory and renamed. Lastly, the themes and sub-themes are presented in the following sections.

Result

Vision Statement Analysis

Though 36 Universities were in the sample, only 88.3% (n=30) had their vision statement, others did not have, and in some cases combined it with their mission statement. In the N = 30 vision statements the range (Ra) of words used was 8 - 72, and the mean (M) was 25.5, SD = 15.89.

What we want

This was the component with the highest frequency among the universities. 96.6% (n=29) of universities with a vision statement presented what they wanted to achieve. As universities present their vision, they highlight things that are important to them. Often this is based on their history and their strategic direction. From the analysis of the vision statement, key themes emerged to highlight what African universities want, as they craft their vision.

World-Class Universities

African Universities are aspiring to be world-class, at least as indicated in the vision they have set for themselves. University of Ghana, the only university from Ghana on the World Rankings, has the vision to become a “world-class research-intensive university”. Likewise, the only university from Kenya on the list, the University of Nairobi, has the vision to be a ‘world-class university committed to scholarly excellence’. The University of Ibadan, one of the three universities from Nigeria, has the vision to be a ‘world-class institution for academic excellence’. The University of the Witwatersrand aspires to be a ‘leading world-class research-intensive’ University.

International Universities

While some Universities aspire to become a world-class institution, some African universities have vision to become an international choice. This is different from just providing world-class research in Africa, but other stakeholders and partners outside Africa recognise them and will be willing to partner with them. The University of Johannesburg, for example, has the vision to become ‘an international university of choice,’ but still deeply rooted in Africa. University of Nigeria’s vision is to ‘become a globally reputed first-rate university’.

Leading Example

While the sampled universities are recognised as the best in Africa, they had the visions to be a leading example of universities for others in African and even around the world. Benha University aims to become a leading example of Egypt's universities. Helwan University seeks to be a leading educational and research institution. While Makerere University has the vision to become the ‘leading institution for academic excellence and innovations’ in Africa. Apart from the leading geographic examples, there is an aspiration for scientific leadership by South

Valley University, while Mansoura University aspires for leadership in the production of knowledge.

Pioneer

While the higher education landscape could be changing, some Universities set their eyes on being pioneers - as they lead others. University of KwaZulu-Natal seeks to be the 'premier university of African scholarship'. Sohag University aspires to be 'a pioneer in supporting sustainable development'. The Tshwane University of Technology seeks to be a pioneering enterprising and transformative brand of twenty-first-century university of technology scholarship. To pioneer and be distinctive from others, universities like Beni Suf University recognised the need to continuously develop their educational process through self-evaluation.

Religious Affiliations

African Universities are also presenting their religious affiliations in their visions. Al-Azhar University in Egypt has a vision incorporating their Islamic belief. They are looking forward to enhancing their leading role worldwide in presenting the right Islamic principles. Likewise, Covenant University, owned by Living Faith Church in Nigeria, wants to be a 'leading world-class Christian mission university'.

How we want it

Universities presented how they wanted to accomplish their vision. 26.6% (n=8) of universities with vision statements presents how they want to achieve this. Three key themes emerged from the thematic analysis indicating how African universities want to achieve their aims.

Firstly, through academic programmes and cutting-edge research. African universities want to be world-class universities with international recognition, and not surprisingly, they have put the focus on their research capabilities. American University in Cairo's vision is to become a leading university through 'outstanding academic programmes and cutting-edge research'. For its vision, Beni Suf University seeks to 'continuously develop the educational process through self-evaluation of its educational programmes'.

Secondly, African universities are mindful of their quality standards as they set their vision for global relevance. Fayoum University is looking forward to competing locally, regionally and internationally by continually improving their quality standard, while Helwan University is in 'according to the international quality standards', as they aspire to become a leading educational and research institution in technology and arts.

Thirdly, Sustainable and Community development is a crucial component of visions sets by African universities. Mansoura University plans to achieve its set objectives through 'sustainable development and effective community partnership'. Suez Canal University is looking forward to interacting with its community through 'pioneering research associated with its community'. For universities such as Tanta University and Zagazig University who seek to distinctive locally, regionally and internationally, they also recognised the need for community service and sustainable community development.

Where we want it

26.6% (n=8) of Universities with a vision statement contextualised the domain and location in which they have set their vision. This part of the statement is often geographical and not just

limited to the continent of Africa. Universities have the visions to compete locally, regionally and internationally. Tanta University seeks to be 'distinctive locally, regionally and internationally' while Beni Suef University aims to 'to take a distinguished place among the local, regional and international universities'. This highlights the broad vision of these universities, not just limiting themselves to the continent, but having a bigger vision to compete with internationally. While that may be too grand, some universities simply have a vision for global domination. For example, the University of Nigeria has the vision to become a globally reputed first-rate university. While having a vision on a global scale, there are universities with visions to dominate Africa. It appeared they recognised their base in Africa, and like to make their impact known. Makerere University in Uganda has the vision to be the 'leading institution for academic excellence and innovations in Africa'. While the University of Johannesburg in South has the vision to be an international university of choice, yet anchored in Africa and dynamically shaping the future. Some of the Egyptian universities have the vision to compete locally, regionally and internationally (Fayoum, Sohag, and Tanta). Some feel more aligned with the country and Middle East. Alexandria University in Egypt wants to 'take a leading position in its national, Arab, African, Mediterranean and global environments' while American University in Cairo has the vision to 'become the leading university in the Middle East, and Benha University aims to become a 'leading example for the Egypt's universities'.

When we want it

This component highlights a time frame for accomplishment. This part of the statement was least presented in these vision statements. 10% (n=3) highlighted how soon they wanted to achieve their objectives. It appeared most universities do not want to give a time frame for their vision, or perhaps the vision is a goal that cannot be achieved. Despite that some universities gave a definitive time frame for their vision, this is however expected to be reviewed after the set year. University of the Witwatersrand aspires to be firmly embedded among international top league universities by 2022. On the other hand, University of Ghana has the vision to be a world-class research-intensive university over the next decade.

Mission Statement Analysis

All the 36 Universities in the sample had a mission statement, which was analysed. In the N = 36 mission statements, the range (Ra) of words used was 8 - 267, and the mean (M) was 47.14, SD = 62.83.

What do we do?

This was the component with the highest frequency among the universities. 77.7% (n=28) of universities with a mission statement answered the 'what do we do' question, by addressing the description of essential missions: teaching, research, and service to society.

Teaching

This is an essential responsibility of universities, and this is much reflected in their mission. The universities highlight their commitment to quality teaching, providing high-quality academic programmes, stimulating environment for teaching and learning. American University in Cairo is committed to offering 'exceptional liberal arts and professional education in a cross-cultural environment', Assiut University is 'providing the education required for the

present and the future'. While Tshwane University of Technology is fostering a scholarship of teaching and learning.

Research

In addition to the stimulating environment for teaching, African universities are not hesitating to highlight their research capabilities. They declare their commitment to research activities, not just within Africa, but also on a global scale. The mission of the University of the Witwatersrand is to grow its global stature as a leading research-intensive university and a gateway to research engagement and intellectual achievement in Africa. Al-Azhar University is keen to develop its scientific research, American University in Cairo is committed to teaching and research of the highest calibre, while the University of South Africa is to produce excellent scholarship and research.

Service to society

African Universities recognise their role and contribution towards fostering active community engagement. This is reflected in their mission statement, an indication of their strategic objectives. Kafrelsheikh University has the mission to provide community services and applied research that will raise "the profile of the local community and contribute to building the knowledge economy". Alexandria University is emphasising on 'building of a modern human being and cultural rehabilitation of the society' while University of KwaZulu-Natal has a mission to be 'critically engaged with society'. Some universities were, however, more specific with their community involvement, such as Covenant University wants to create 'knowledge and restore the dignity of the black man'. Perhaps recognising their root in Nigeria, the most populous black nation in the world, they see an opportunity to make an impact. University of Nairobi also hopes to provide 'quality university education and training and to embody the aspirations of the Kenyan people'. University of the Witwatersrand aspires towards research engagement and intellectual achievement in Africa. Government law in countries like Tunisia and Morocco has also influenced the mission of their universities. University of Tunis El Manar in Tunisia noted that they are responding to the 'country's training needs, to produce and disseminate knowledge'.

Competitive Graduates

In addition to these three well recognised essential missions for universities, we recognised that African Universities are putting effort into improving their employability of the graduates. They are preparing their graduates for the competitive labour market. University of Ibadan is keen on producing 'graduates who are worthy in character and sound judgement'. As seen with Fayoum University, they recognised the need to 'prepare distinct graduates able to compete at labour market', Kafrelsheikh University has also has the mission to prepare distinguished graduates who are qualified to meet the needs of the labour market, while Sohag University noted that they are 'preparing graduates qualified scientifically, scientifically and professionally to compete in the labour market'.

How do we do it?

69.4% (n=25) of Universities highlighted their guiding principles and values as they present their mission. Key themes emerged from the analysis of the mission statement highlighting how universities hope to actualise their mission.

Programme

To achieve their missions, universities put effort into developing the programmes and making it relevant. Assiut University provides ‘education required for the present and the future’, and Covenant University believe they can restore the dignity of the black man via a ‘human development and total man concept-driven curriculum’. The continuous development of these programmes is also considered a strategic decision in African universities as Tanta University remains keen on continually developing their academic programmes in various specialisations while Tshwane University of Technology provides ‘relevant and competitive academic programmes with seamless articulation pathways’

Collaboration

Universities also seek to collaborate and innovate in order to meet their objectives. They envisage partnership with the local, regional and international community. University of the Witwatersrand builds on the principles of intellectual excellence, international competitiveness and local relevance. South Valley University supports ‘scientific research and effective partnership’, while the University of Nairobi is keen on the ‘creation, preservation, integration, transmission and utilisation of knowledge’. The university also recognises the creative ability of the workforce. The University of Johannesburg recognises the need for ‘innovation and the collaborative pursuit of knowledge’.

Enabling Environment

Building on the need for collaboration, innovation and creativity, universities are also providing enabling environment for teaching and research in order to achieve their mission. This includes training for faculty members while improving their educational and research capabilities that will eventually be reflected efficiently on both students and local and national levels, investing in state-of-the-art technology, and providing an environment conducive to the educational and research process. The University of Ibadan is keen on expanding the ‘frontiers of knowledge through provision of excellent conditions for learning and research’.

Human Resources

Universities need the right people with the right set of skills to actualise their mission. This is not just staff members to teach and carry out research, but also students. Stellenbosch University is attracting ‘outstanding students and employing talented staff’, while the University of Nigeria is attracting, educating, training qualified persons.

For whom do we do it?

Universities’ mission statements are expected to address ‘for whom do we do it’ question which identifies the stakeholders and other interested parties the universities will be working with 58.3% (n=21) of answered this in their statement. Four key stakeholders were identified from the analysis.

Students

These are prospective students looking forward to studying at the university and those who are already studying. Universities are keen on improving their learning experience so that they can produce better graduates. Tanta University’s mission includes meeting students’ needs for knowledge and skills.

Graduates

These are individuals going into the labour market with the Certificate of the Universities. Universities are making an effort to produce competent graduates, equipped with scientific knowledge and experience, qualified to meet the needs of the labour market, and capable of competing in the labour market. Beni Suef University is preparing 'qualified graduates', Fayoum University is preparing 'distinct graduates', Kafrelsheikh University is preparing 'distinguished graduates', while South Valley is preparing 'proficient graduates'.

Society

University recognises they have to make an impact on their society. For example, American University in Cairo is dedicated to making significant contributions to Egypt and the international community in diverse fields. While Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah highlights their commitment to the service of society, the economy, and the environment. Stellenbosch University and University of Ghana are keen on enriching and transforming local, continental and global communities. University of South Africa hopes to 'nurture a critical citizenry and ensure global sustainability'.

Partners

Working with stakeholders from different sectors of the national, regional and international community is also essential for University. Unlike contributions the community which can be considered a corporate social responsibility, there is a possibility for commercial ventures with different partners. University of Monastir is keen on establishing 'links of partnership and cooperation with similar organisms in the world, exchange of experts and expertise and to perform joint research related to the priorities of development'.

Who are we?

It is expected that universities should not hesitate to identify themselves in their mission. However, this was not the case with African universities. 27.7% (n=10) of sampled universities presented this identity. Thematic analysis revealed how universities identified themselves in their mission statement.

Research Activities

The analysis revealed that some University identified themselves as a research institution, perhaps taking pride in the research output and contributions. Ain Shams University described themselves as 'an educational, research and service institution', Alexandria University as a 'national, educational, research, and development institution', while Stellenbosch University considered itself a 'research-intensive university'.

Funding

Some universities identified themselves based on their funding, especially the government universities. Assiut University declared itself as a 'governmental university'.

Country

Universities also took pride in their country as they declare their mission statements. An example is Helwan University which is described as an 'Egyptian public university'. The University of Menoufia considered itself as 'one of the institutions of higher education in Egypt', while University of KwaZulu-Natal is projected as a 'truly South African University of Choice'.

Structure

Lastly, universities also made an effort to present their structures in their mission statement, perhaps highlight how they are different from other universities. American University in Cairo, founded in 1919 by Americans devoted to education and service in the Middle East, described itself as a 'premier English-language institution of higher learning', while the University of South Africa is a 'comprehensive, open distance learning institution'.

How do we differentiate ourselves?

This was a seldom presented component. 8.3% (n=3) identified a vital differential feature compared to the others. American University in Cairo took pride in their accreditation across two different countries as they considered that to separate them from other universities in Egypt. They noted that they are 'chartered and accredited in the United States and Egypt', The American University in Cairo is 'an independent, non-profit, equal-opportunity institution'.

Beyond the accreditation, other universities highlighted their partnership and collaboration in co-creating and developing world standard programmes. Beni Suef University noted that leading the competition through their 'distinct programmes of study, which are governed by local and international academic standards with developments in parallel science and knowledge of the world's best', while University of Tunis El Manar noted that they had established partnerships and cooperation with organizations around the world to establish co-degrees, co-supervise research'.

Discussion

The findings of the current study reveal that there is also lesser popularity of vision statements than the mission statements in the strategic planning of African universities. In the case of the vision statement, most of the universities in Africa are concerned about what they want to achieve for themselves. Findings of this study have shown that African universities display the following themes in their vision statements, i.e. desire to become world-class, a university of international choice, leading example for other universities, pioneers in a specific field or domain of expertise, and a university showing religious affiliations. However, they were lagging on the part of how and where they want to fulfil their vision. Only a few universities were able to display this correctly in their vision statement in the form of themes such as global recognition and research, quality standards, and continuous community development, and managed to mention about the location or geographical region in which they want to make their vision a reality. The time frame, i.e. when they want to achieve the desired goal, in the vision statement, appeared to be of lowest value to the African universities. Least number of universities managed to mention the time frame in which they want to fulfil their desired vision. Thus, the analysis of vision statement of African universities showed that these universities

aspire to be seen as world-class, a destination of choice, exemplary for others to follow, first movers in specific domains and universities displaying religious orientation. However, majority of them were putting lesser focus on the ways of operation, location and time-related aspects in their vision statements.

Taking into consideration the content of the mission statement among African universities, the findings revealed that most of them want to perform the three essential functions of a university such as teaching, research, and service to society. These African universities included different stakeholders in their mission statement which were identified as students, graduates, society and different partners. This aligns with previous findings from other analysis of universities mission statement around the world (Giusepponi & Tavoletti, 2018; Montesinos, et al., 2008). This study extends knowledge on the mission of universities, which means the transfer of knowledge to society (Kosmützky & Krücken, 2015). Our study reveals another function - producing competitive graduates is another essential function of African universities. This is considered a unique finding of this study.

Universities have vision and mission statements that differ enormously (Giusepponi & Tavoletti, 2018); this chapter recognises those differences as well in African universities. While some are thinking global domination through pronounced international aspirations, some universities are focusing on Africa. While some recognise their religious affiliation, others are recognising their government funding. Besides, a considerable number of African universities were able to display the guiding principles and values in the mission statements, which govern the mode of their operations and sets them apart from their competitors. The study also found that African universities are trying to differentiate themselves from other universities, highlighting unique organisational features and brand identities (Kosmützky & Krücken, 2015; Mogaji, 2019). These universities aspire for global domination through the programmes they offer, collaboration with renowned and international partners, supporting environment for staff and students, and human resources to get things done.

The study offers both theoretical and practical implications. Firstly, it contributes to knowledge of vision and mission statement research. The chapter presents four specific components of the 'ideal' vision statement and five specific components of the 'ideal' mission statement. Secondly, the study extends knowledge on marketing higher education in Africa and specifically how African Universities are strategically positioning themselves for world domination through their vision and mission statement. Thirdly, the study also recognises the fourth mission of Universities, which is to produce employable graduates. Even though the idea of fourth mission of a university is coming from an African perspective, it presents a research agenda to explore further, even as Mogaji & Yoon (2019) found that employability is becoming an essential marketing strategy of UK Universities.

There are managerial implications from this study which will be relevant for university managers, marketing communication team and other teams responsible for setting the strategic direction for universities. While there could be a limitation with number of words, it is essential to make sure the components of an ideal vision and mission statement are covered in their statement. The focus should not only be on what the university does, but also how they are different. Integration of these statements is also important, ensuring that it fits into the brand guidelines of the university (Mogaji, 2019) and all stakeholders are made aware of it. It is not good enough to have a statement and not made aware to all stakeholders.

The findings reflected that in similarity to the other parts of the world, universities in Africa have also given lesser emphasis on their vision statement in comparison to their mission. In the vision statement, most of them are primarily concerned with what they want to be viewed as in the times to come. However, for a stronger and well-drafted vision, they need to give more attention to the time frame, action plan, and geographical location within which they may strive to realise their intent. It is essential to mention here that well thought of vision acts as a starting point for the mission statement.

In developing these statements in marketing terminology context, the 'product', 'process' and 'people' aspect of the services marketing-mix is essential. Thus, the universities were concerned about the 'products' such as courses, research tasks and other community-building activities, 'processes' such as mental models, philosophy and actions, and 'People' such as internal and external human resources. It is advised that the universities need to first know about themselves and then only they will be able to create their unique image among the people resources by using appropriate promotional techniques (Farinloye & Mogaji, 2020; Farinloye et al., 2020). This further increases the importance of the 'promotion' component of the services marketing-mix in the case of African universities (Ndofirepi et al., 2020), especially as they make an effort to differentiate themselves in the competitive market.

While recognising that many diverse factors can affect organizational performance (Kemp & Dwyer, 2003), and especially as changes in leadership can warrant the need to change strategic plans, it is essential for university managers to ensure that their organisational practices do match the mission and vision statement of the university. Efforts towards the world domination - which could be measured through ranking, especially African league tables (Kiraka et al., 2020), student experience, research output and collaborations, are essential. It is not just about having the statements but making sure it serves the purpose of which they were formulated.

Conclusion

This study sought out to explore the vision and mission statement of African universities. It analysed statements from the best universities in Africa, in order to construct a more systematic and comprehensive exploration of mission statements, and attempt to contribute to the beginnings of an empirical literature on marketing higher education in Africa (Mogaji, et al., 2017); especially how universities are using their mission statements to reposition themselves in the competitive higher education market.

A mission statement broadly charts the future direction of an organisation (Kemp & Dwyer, 2003) and universities are not exempted. The chapter identifies four specific components of the 'ideal' vision statement and five specific components of the 'ideal' mission statement. The analysis suggests that African universities were not all having these components, they were predominantly answering the 'What do we do' question, addressing the description of essential missions: teaching, research and service to society. In addition to these three components of the mission statement, the study recognises that African Universities are taking responsibilities for developing employable graduates.

The study offers both theoretical and managerial implication. It extends knowledge about marketing higher education and understanding how universities are differentiating themselves through their vision and mission statements. The study also provides implication for university managers, marketing communication team, and other teams responsible for developing and

updating the strategic direction of the university. Integration of these statements is also essential. Stakeholders need to recognise what the university stands for.

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. The study focused only on 36 universities out of hundreds of universities on the African continent. These universities, however, are the best universities which are expected to be leading example. Future studies might want to examine how other universities in individual countries are providing information for prospective students. Besides, these statements were collected in 2019. There are possibilities that universities may have changed or updated the statement, making them different from the sample collected. Further research is needed to understand the impact of the mission and vision statement on staff, students and other stakeholders of the university, to understand to what extent they are aware of the mission statement, how it impacts their activities and how effective they consider it. In addition, as universities' leadership has been found to change branding strategies (Mogaji, 2018), longitudinal study of mission statements could improve our understanding of the effects of change on organizations (Kemp & Dwyer, 2003), perhaps to understand how universities have changed their strategic direction over the years under different leaderships.

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