



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

## Credibility, Ethics and Sustainable Marketing in Higher Education Institutions

**Dr. Joshua Suleiman**

Director, Department of Marketing and Communication  
Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria

### **Abstract:**

*Consumers are getting increasingly sophisticated as a result of the dizzying change occasioned by incessant advancement in technology. Similarly, consumers' needs have become cosmopolitan. Higher education institutions offering similar products or programs are feverishly competing for students' attention by using different marketing strategies such as manipulated data, deception, communication skill or oratory and attractive bulletin. Literature indicates that some of these strategies are unsustainable because they cannot ensure regular student enrollment in the long run. Moreover, credibility and sound ethical behavior are less adopted as marketing strategies for wooing students for admissions. This study examined how the application of a marketing strategy that is predicated on credibility and ethics could enhance higher education institutions' student enrollment. The study was based on review of extant literature in marketing, sustainable marketing, credibility and ethics. It found that credibility – true and trustworthiness of marketing information and sound ethical practices of integrity, rightness and fairness in higher education institutions marketing are sustainable strategies that can ensure constant attraction of prospective students. The study concluded that higher education institutions' marketing must place emphasis on credibility and ethical behavior. The study concluded that marketers of higher education institutions in Nigeria must base their marketing on credibility and be grounded in sound ethical practices to ensure constant favorable flow of students into their institutions.*

**Keywords:** Credibility, ethics, marketing, sustainability, strategies

### **1. Introduction**

Across the world both the education and other service sectors of the economy are going through a period of almost revolutionary change in which established ways of doing business continue to face serious challenge (Singh, 2016). Although many new and long-established ventures fail, or are being merged out of existence, a few succeed. Nevertheless, others are making spectacular progress by continually rethinking the way they do business, looking for innovative ways to serve customers better and ensuring consistent demand of company's products and services while retaining their loyalty to the company or organization. Repeated demand of a company's products contributes to its sustainability. Thus, marketing strategies would have to focus on practices that would drive patronage and customer loyalty to the organization. Same applies to higher education institutions' products – academic programs, curriculum, and quality of students. Universities will have to compete vigorously for the enrolment of qualified local and international students (Stevens, *et al.*, 2008), and find ways to improve the choice rate of prospective university entrants and enrolment level of students (Lockwood & Hadad, 2007). Success in this regard depends on what strategies universities evolve to respond to this competition (Nguyen, Yu, Melewar, Hemsley-Brown, 2015).

Higher education institution's marketing needs to retool its strategy to align with credibility and high ethical practices if it must continually record high subscription from prospective students at each enrollment year. This is important because it is the student that determines the sustainability of the higher education institution, especially due to the fact that student population is tied to revenue generation which equally has become an important part of university budgets (Council for Aid to Education, 1997; Pozdena, 1997).

Whereas higher education institutions in Nigeria use social media, print and electronic advertising, gifting of souvenirs and payment flexibility of tuition as strategies to attract students, these have not significantly contributed to local and international student enrolment, particularly in private universities. For public universities in Nigeria, whose low fees have been their major driver for student enrolment over the past few decades, state and federal funding of educational institutions have dwindled into a thing of ridicule, while learning facilities remain appalling. Moreover, many higher education institutions are now relying on the oratory or communication skill of marketing executives, manipulation of information and deception to present an attractive picture of their institutions to prospective students. This measure may be incapable of effecting long-term sustainability on the institutions as prospective students could shun such institutions if found to have engaged in unethical practices that lack integrity, fairness and rightness. Thus, there is a need

for a sustainable marketing strategy that could guarantee sustainable student enrollment and continued existence of higher education institutions nationally.

In addition, the image of sustainable marketing has become a niche concern (Javier & Villarino, 2015). Therefore, aside possessing necessary business skill such as communication, marketing practice ought to be guided by the value of credibility. Credibility is pivotal to establishing a long-term sustainable marketing in the business value chain. Credibility results in repeated product purchase and high organizational performance because it enhances the reputation of the organization (Mitchell et al., 2010). This repeated purchase of products sustains the existence of the business and the marketing strategy itself. Ohania (1990) explains that credibility is about honesty or trust and truthfulness. It is thus important for higher education institutions to be consistent with truth, which implies always keeping their promises to students (Golder & Tellis, 1993). Marketing strategy must be built on trust and honesty. Marketing claims must be honest and trustworthy. Claims made by higher education institutions' marketers about their programs, curriculum, quality and facilities should be based on proven data that are verifiable. Like a company, higher education institutions without credibility stand the risk of eventually collapsing because they could lose their major stakeholders such as students, creditors and even their operating licenses. But, the collapse of any higher education institution can be avoided if it operates on sound business and moral principles that place the students at the centre of its marketing strategy.

Murphy and Lacznik (1981) and Chonko and Hunt (1985) posited that in firms' business activities, the function most often accused of unethical practices is the marketing function. They argued that strong ethics such as rightness, integrity and fairness helps to sustain consumers' patronage for a product, service, or organization, and that lack of trust, data manipulation, dishonesty and corruption are ethical issues associated with marketers. They averred that ethics is a parameter which influences the effectiveness of marketing actions. The aim of this study therefore, is to examine how credibility and ethics might serve as drivers for sustainable marketing of higher education institution, especially of private universities. Nwachukwu and Okoli (2015) and Amponsa and Onuoha (2013) reported that a major task for private university is to improve enrolment especially as public universities have always had an upper hand in student enrolment than private universities (Oloyede (2018). This study adopts a theoretical approach by reviewing relevant literature in marketing, credibility, ethics and sustainability. This study is based on the normative theory of Deontology and Ethics of virtue (moral worth and ethics of duty) by Immanuel Kant. Immanuel Kant's theory of ethics of moral worth and duty to an extent draws relevance from Biblical principle of moral behavior of doing unto others as you would want them do unto you (Mathew 7:12). Deontology is concerned not so much with the consequences of action but whether the underlying principles of a decision are right. According to this view ethically good decisions are made by adhering to key ethical principles such as honesty, truthfulness, respecting the rights of others, and justice.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Marketing and Understanding Consumer Needs

Different people have defined marketing in various ways. The American Marketing Association (2007) defines marketing as the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. This definition emphasizes value. Value in marketing refers to the benefit the customer receives from consuming a product compared to the cost of the product. Marketing can therefore be defined as satisfying customer requirements at a profit by offering value. Such a profit could be purely financial or of social importance. Without a profit an organization loses its reason for existence, in the same way an education institution loses its relevance and reason for its founding. The relevance and existence of any organization or education institution is sustained by satisfying customer (student) requirements. Understanding exactly what customers want helps to add value to service or product for consumers.

The above view explains why Regis McKenna sees 'marketing as everything,' suggesting that everything you do – not just your products, pricing, promotion, and distribution, but credibility and ethical implications of the claims made on product and organization affect how consumers perceive the organization, and determine the future success or failure of the organization. Product quality has reached an unprecedented level to the extent that it can make it easy for companies to use factual information about product quality to differentiate themselves and market their products (Fanderl, 2005). Similarly, the Chartered Institute of Marketing in the U.K. (CIM, 2012) states that marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably. From the above views, the concept of marketing consists of three components. McGee and Spiro, (1988) see these components in terms of: i) marketing as customer orientated – which aims to satisfy customers' needs and wants; ii) marketing as an organization wide, coordinated activity- which aims to deliver customer satisfaction and; iii) marketing as profit orientated rather than motivated by sales volume. The idea of profit does not have to be financial but may represent a social outcome. In the same way, what could enhance an educational institution's success is, knowing what prospective students need and working toward offering it to them so as to yield social profit – high reputation that translates into higher student enrolment.

### 2.2. Marketing and Student Recruitment

From the forgoing, success in student recruitment depends on how universities respond to the growing competition among universities (Nguyen, Yu, Melewar, Hemsley-Brown, 2015). Suleiman (2019a & 2019b) examined the factors that predicted student enrollment in Nigerian universities and found that effective communication, good facility, high quality of faculty and staff played significant roles. Bulley (2014) investigated the existence of strategic marketing planning for private tertiary institutions and revealed that long term and short-term marketing plans drove institutions' recruitment activities. Similarly, Bamfa (2013) conducted a study on the role of marketing communications in the enrolment of

students in private universities in Ghana, and reported that private universities that effectively and efficiently managed their admissions campaigns were able to position themselves well to gain sustainable competitive advantage.

In the same vein, Chawla (2013) reported that adopting the 7 Ps of service marketing mix in the education service sector significantly influenced students' choice of university. In addition, Odio's (2014) study on factors that influence students' enrolment in social studies education reported that employment opportunities, gender and environment factors contributed to students' enrolment in those programs. Fosu (2014) found that availability of specific courses and internet facility were important indicators of students' choice of university. Haur's (2009) study on the factors that influence students' intention to continue their study at higher educational institutions found that credible information about tuition fee cost; content and structure of degree were significant factors that predicted student's intention to study at an institution. Messah (2011) found that perceived credibility of newspapers and brochures was most effectively used as marketing strategy to woo prospective students.

In the same vein, Sarwar's (2012) research indicated that the program structure and accreditation were the most potent elements that influenced students' selection of higher institution. The study by Sia (2013) showed that prospective students considered location and campus visit as important criteria in their college choice. Whereas all the above were reported as important factors for improving student recruitment, many private universities still record low recruitment of student during admissions year. This reason accounts for this study. There is little research on how credibility and ethics as marketing strategies could facilitate high student recruitment which could lead to sustainable marketing in higher education institutions in Nigeria. More so, the factors identified by previous studies as contributing to student enrollment were based on what student wanted in a university before applying to study in that university. Often, many of the factors that propelled them to apply to the university are not what they found on getting to the university. This raises the issue of credibility and ethics. Such disparity between what is communicated and what the student found could contribute to poor student retention and high student attrition.

Sustainability marketing aims at boosting the demand for an organization's product or service (Belz and Peattie, 2012), and offers opportunities for differentiation in the marketplace. It has a marketing value if it is based on credibility and ethical practices, and puts the customer at the centre of the experience. Sustainability marketing requires the strategic disclosure of truthful information about a product or company (Lyon and Maxwell, 2011), as well as conveying genuine and accurate data that can influence the consumers to make the right decision. This aims to attract student. Attracting students is crucial for the survival and continued existence of higher education institutions hence the need for them to develop sustainable marketing strategy that would enable them meet this objective. Such marketing strategy should be based on communicating a consistent credible (honest, true and trustworthy) brand story anchored on qualities and caliber of faculty, teaching methods, assessment, clarity of course objectives, relevance of curriculum to future needs, class size, and adaptation of learning to the needs of the society (Suleiman, 2019), and to be anchored on sound ethical practices of integrity, rightness and fairness in conformity with professional code of conduct. The brand story could also include credible information about corporate academic collaboration, institutional partnership, students' educational experience, scholarship, teaching and learning facilities such as libraries, modern scientific equipment for laboratories; hostels for students; uninterrupted power and water supplies, and promotion of alumni serving in key positions of authority on local and international levels (Okebukola, 2010). All the above indices may be regarded as institutional efficiency, high standards, excellence, value for money, fitness for purpose and/or customer focused (Okogbaa, 2016). Excellence often refers to credible and proven record of accredited degree programs; scholarship- institution's publication in peer-reviewed journals; learning- unimpeded graduation rates and post-graduation employment in top organizations with good pay; and teaching- which typically presumes that if accreditation, research publications, graduation rates, and post-graduation employment are all good, then it is a proof that teaching is good. In many universities this is not always the case (Luminis, 2013), yet they manipulate information to project a positive image of the institution as a teaching and research-based institution.

Meanwhile, many organizations and higher education institutions' marketers often engage in communicating information that is not credible about their institutions, and get involved in unethical practices in order to increase sales volume and level of admissions. If marketers' strategy is based on communicated messages that are truthful, trustworthy and honest about their academic programs, faculty and facilities, and the marketing practice is perceived as right and fair, and based on integrity, consumers' confidence in the institution would be high and consequently results in positive bottom line for such institutions. That is, the strategy to woo students should consist of credibility and ethical practice. This suggests that actions only have moral worth when they have universal approbation and executed for the sake of duty (Kant, 1804).

### 2.3. Credibility

Credibility is defined as a multi-dimensional variable attributed by the consumer to different objects (spokesperson, salesperson, advertisement message, company, and medium). Credibility impacts the effectiveness of a message (Roger Seiler, Gunther Kucza, 2017). The issue of credibility in business is fundamental to the success of the business. This is because investments in business must be made with reference to the returns that can be expected in terms of improved revenues and stronger customer loyalty. This loyalty is predicated on the trust that consumers have in a company and product. Credibility of product implies that consumers get the value that marketers claim a product offers. This in turn builds consumer's trust in the company and its products.

Credibility is strongly linked to information. It has impact on the consumer's attitudes, intentions and behaviour (Ranchodd and Marandi, 2006). It is generally used to describe the positive influence of the communicated message on the receiver or transmitter (Ohanian, 1991). Ohania (1990) measured credibility in terms of trustworthiness, expertise and

attractiveness. Trust refers to the extent to which the audience perceives communication as valid. Trust is associated with honesty and sincerity of the communicated information about an organization and also about its marketers. It is the extent to which the consumer of information, for instance, about a higher education institution, believes the communicated information to be true and trustworthy (Shimp, 2000). Expertise as a dimension of credibility indicates the perception of the communicator of information by the consumer as possessing the required knowledge on the subject. Thus, it is the perception of the higher education institution's marketer by prospective students as qualified to talk about the institution with fidelity, and about the education industry in which the institution operates, with knowledge backed by proven data about its programmes and facilities, research and student experience. This leads to attractiveness, another element of credibility. If a marketing strategy is trustworthy, if it is believed by consumers to be anchored on facts and figures, not made up data; if the marketers are perceived as exhibiting expertise, the consumers will find the organization or institution attractive. Both the marketer and the marketer's strategy are perceived by consumers as representing the organization or institution. Whereas attractiveness in marketing is often explained with regard to the packing of product or the communicator of information, attractiveness in itself could be deceptive if it is not intentionally supported by proven and truthful data available in the public domain about claims made by the marketer. As the cliché goes 'seeing is believing.'

According to Sanchez (2021) tuition freezes claims by higher education institution, which they adopt as a marketing strategy to improve student enrolment are misleading because the actual costs of college can actually increase for some students who may rely on financial aid to attend. Yet information is hidden and rarely made available by marketers to prospective students. Historically, freezing tuition offers marginal relief to low-income families while giving the greatest benefits to full-paying families from more affluent backgrounds, according to analysis by The Hechinger Report (2021), which has been monitoring college prices across different sectors of higher education. The concern here is whether truly tuition freezes or decreases actually offer low-income earners' students more benefits and opportunity to pay less than students from high income earners. It may also explain why Sanchez (2021) says the actual costs of college can actually increase for some students who may rely on financial aid to attend. It is therefore important for marketers of higher education institutions to disclose to the public necessary and all-important information about its services for the right decision making by consumers.

Eisend (2006) and Corina (2006) found that credibility of websites which are organizations marketing windows to the world was low. A research by Fournaise Group in London reported that while 73% of CEOs believe that marketers lack business credibility, 80% said they do not trust marketers at all (Patel, 2021). This indicates that marketers are not trustworthy as they employ deceptive strategies to make sales. It implies that falsification of marketing information is premised on the intention to deceive the consumers. This lack of trust in the marketing strategy portends negative impact on business growth as well as student recruitment. Consumers are likely to shun a company and its products if their marketing activities are found to be deceitful. Same may be true for higher education institutions.

The 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer revealed the largest-ever drop in trust amongst four cornerstone global institutions: business, government, NGOs and the media. In the 28 countries surveyed, trust in all four institutions combined fell below 50%. CEOs suffered the biggest dip in credibility, falling to only 37% globally. These numbers are worrying, and for business particularly, this radical drop in trust needs to be addressed if companies are going to continue to operate successfully and sustainably (Miller-Dawkins, 2017). For example, Theranos' founder Elizabeth Holmes faced federal charges of defrauding patients and investors with claims of revolutionary blood-testing technology for any health condition including cancer. Theranos was accused of widespread accuracy and reliability problems. She was accused of skewing the medical decisions of patients and putting them at risk. All were aimed to win patients' patronage.

According to the American Marketing Association, marketing strategy needs to consistently think first about the consumer rather than what it wants to say. For educational institutions, marketing strategy must put the students at the centre of its marketing policy by communicating honest and trustworthy information about the institution in terms of clarity of course objectives, relevance of curricula to future needs, class size and adaptation to the needs of the society. Suleiman (2019) stated that the information students received from marketers about their university before applying to the university in terms of facilities, behavior of faculty and staff and course content was different from what they found about the university on admission into the institution. Many of the students claimed if they knew much about their university as they now know, they would not have applied to the institution. The students' opinion is important because it could lead to student attrition, which has become a great challenge confronting educational administrators (Toryila, Tseah, & Adai, 2019; Peter, Ayedun, Iroham, Oloke, & Amusan 2017).

This implies that higher education institutions' marketing must respect the truth and should not knowingly, disseminate false or misleading information. It is the responsibility of a marketer to take proper care and check all information before disseminating same. Trust is crucial for student enrolment and survival of the higher education institutions as well as business organizations in general. Trust binds organizations (universities) to their customers (students) and to the communities where they operate. Customers are more likely to buy products from a company they trust. Companies interested in lasting for the long haul understand that maintaining trust translates to stronger brand reputation, a more reliable social license to operate, and an ability to attract and retain talent and capital. A 10-year analysis by Fortune.com also showed that public trust in a company and profitability are strongly positively correlated. Not offering consistent credibility comes with significant, long-term costs that outweigh the short-term gains.

A recent study published in the Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis suggests that more than 50% of companies won't survive to age 16, with the highest corporate mortality occurring in the fourth year. The Boston Consulting Group's 2015 report, *Die another Day: What leaders Can Do About the Shrinking Life Expectancy of Corporations*, involving 35,000 companies publicly listed in the US since 1950, claims that today almost one-tenth of all public companies



fail each year. This is four times higher since 1965. The 'five-year exit risk' for public companies traded in the US now stands at 32%, compared with a five per cent risk 50 years ago. In Nigeria, perception of societal trust level is very low (Prentis & Igoni, 2016), thus the call for Nigerian government and business leaders to institute an ethics policy that will help establish government leader's ethical integrity and improve citizens' trust and confidence in their government. Whereas it is appropriate to focus attention on government leaders, it is equally important to address the role of marketers and institution's executives who are the main drivers of businesses to consumers. Credibility is an important factor of business success because 80% of businesses in Nigeria exit business activities in less than 5 years due to poor credibility in marketing (SMEDAN, 2015).

#### 2.4. Ethics

From the perspective of both marketers and consumers, ethics is an important and growing consideration within marketing. Marketing ethics questions whether particular marketing activities can be considered morally right or wrong. By engaging with the market, organizations are exposed to situations and decisions that raise ethical issues. Often the correct ethical decision is not always apparent. According to Etuk (2009) ethics and morality are aspects of axiology concerned with what is good, what is beautiful and what is desired or preferred human conduct. Ethics is thus concerned with contemporary norms or standard of conduct that govern the relationship among human beings and their institution. A breach of etiquette can also be unethical if it is done intentionally against another person. As a code of conduct, it is like an inner eye that enables people to see the rightness or wrongness of their actions (Guy, 1990). It deals with the character and conduct and morals of human beings; with good or bad, right or wrong behavior; evaluates conduct against some absolute criteria and puts negative or positive values on it (Hanekom, 1984). Ethical behavior is therefore acting in a way that is morally justified.

The above view follows from (Lysons, 1999) which states that one of the essentials of a profession is maintaining integrity by adhering to a code of conduct, and supported by its members (ICAN, 2014). Also, that professional ethics describes the moral principles and values that govern behavior in the context of a particular profession, which all members must abide by. This code of conduct, simply put, is ethics. Acting ethically is therefore a process of conforming to acceptable work and professional standards of conduct, doing what is right, good and fair. Ethical principles are established to improve how services are rendered to consumers.

Promotion of integrity, rightness, trust, fairness and open services are important principles for ethics (Louisiana State University, 2016). These principles are crucial to business success, especially in protecting the reputation of the business and its organization. Higher education institutions that acknowledge their ethical responsibilities need to demonstrate their genuine commitment to these principles. Practicing integrity, rightness and fairness explains that higher education institutions' marketers shall not intentionally disseminate false and misleading information, whether written, spoken or implied, nor conceal any relevant fact. Marketers have a duty to maintain integrity and rightness in advertising, sales promotion and all other aspects of marketing. This elicits trust from the public.

The principles of ethics also cover fairness and honest dealing with clients, customers or consumers, and showing respect and concern for the business community. For higher education institutions, ethical behavior is expected to take the view that the interest of their shareholders and students are the most important concern both in the short and long terms, but that in the long and short runs, the organizations will benefit by recognizing their obligations to, and showing concerns for, the interest of their stakeholder groups. This suggests that higher education institutions need to consider the implications of ethics for their strategic planning and business objectives. Ethical behavior therefore, is not simply about compliance with the law, because it is possible to act within the law and still behave in an unethical way. In any form of business, including education, ethics is generally associated with acting in compliance with accepted international code of behavior with regard to showing integrity, rightness, honesty and fairness in business dealing.

Fairness also implies showing concern for the students who are customers and consumers. Acting with fairness and showing displaying honesty to consumers could reduce risk, as there are several possible consequences for unethical behavior. There is the risk of an institution being 'found out' if it conducts its business in an illegal way or found to breach the regulations. Higher education institutions need to realize that in a competitive business environment, the student-customer loyalty is important and depends on the public's perception of the institution's fairness, trust and honesty in its business behavior. Acting ethically therefore, contributes to establishing a reputation for an institution. Reputation is built through ethical behavior (ICAN, 2014), such as trust and fair business dealing. Lack of fairness injures the business, reputation or interest of others. Companies with positive reputation for trust and fairness may find it easier to win and keep loyal customers. In the same way, higher education institutions with positive reputation for trust and fairness may find it easier to win and keep students, who may also return for further studies. A negative reputation due to lack of trust and fairness could lead to loss of students for an academic institution, customers and collapse of as a business as was the case with Enron, an American energy, commodities and services company in 2007.

In Nigeria, the National Institute of Marketing of Nigeria (NIMN) was established by Act 25 of 2003, and recognizes the Institute as the sole body for the regulation and control of the marketing profession in the country. In addition to determining the standard of knowledge and skills required to be recognized as a marketing professional, the Act empowers the Council to make rules and regulations for guidance of professional practice and conduct by marketing professionals. The Institute also commits to promoting the highest standards of professional conduct, ethical norms and values for all its members. In line with this mandate, the NIMN produced a code of conduct or ethical norms to guide the practice of marketing by practitioners. The NIMN Code of Professional Marketing Practice draws extensively from the guidelines of the America Marketing Association (AMA), Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), Nigeria

Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Marketing Institute of Ireland (MII). Some of the specific provisions of the NIMN code are:

- Foster trust in the marketing system. This means striving for good faith and fair dealing so as to contribute toward the efficacy of the exchange process as well as avoiding deception in product design, pricing, communication, and delivery of distribution.
- A member shall not by any unfair or unprofessional practice injure the business, reputation or interest of any other member of the Institute.
- Members shall, at all times, act honestly in their professional dealings with customers and clients (actual and potential), employers and employees.
- A member shall respect the truth and shall not, knowingly or recklessly, disseminate any false or misleading information, either on his own behalf or on behalf of anyone else. It is the responsibility of a member to take proper care and check all information before disseminating same.
- 5. Members shall not intentionally disseminate false and misleading information, whether written, spoken or implied nor conceal any relevant fact. They have a duty to maintain truth, accuracy and good taste in advertising, sales promotion and all other aspects of marketing.
- A member shall not engage in any practice nor be seen to conduct him or herself in any manner detrimental to the reputation of the Institute or the reputation and interest of the marketing profession.
- The code stresses the need for integrity, trust, honesty, truth, and fairness by marketers in all marketing practices. This code correlates with Tucker's ( ) five-question model for ethical decision making in business. This ensures that the expected good outcome of marketing such as sales or customer loyalty is realized in an ethical way. The five questions that must be asked according to Tucker before making an ethical business decision are: Is it profitable? Is it fair? Is it right? Is it sustainable? Is it legal? What that suggests is that, is the option adopted or chosen fair from general perspective?

### 2.5. Sustainable Marketing

The credibility of product information and verification of claims about the product are key elements of marketing sustainability. Practitioners introduce sustainability into strategic language of firms mainly because it has been a decision of strategic reputation-building or a source of positioning strategy. Sustainability is also the key driver of innovation (Andries & Stephan, 2019) that yields a return. Thus, sustainability marketing may be regarded as a strategy that aims to satisfy consumers' needs and create a favorable position for the business to thrive in the marketplace. Sustainable marketing in this regard could help to build brands (IPR, 2021) and also contribute to brand acceptability. Like human beings sustainable marketing is a barometer of authenticity. Though it has been argued that sustainability marketing plays a role in promoting ethical product, (Baumgartner & Ebner, 2010; Chow & Chen, 2012), it needs be mentioned also that it is ethics that actually ensures marketing sustainability and consequently, the survival and relevance of the product and the product's company. Sustainable marketing is concerned with economic success (Barry, 2012; Elkington, 1998). This economic success is about organizations creating unique marketing strategies that lead to increased profitability due to their unique competitive advantage (Chabowski; Mena & Gonzalez-Padron 2011).

In its essence, sustainability marketing may be viewed as building and strengthening long-lasting relations with consumers by producing customer solutions, promoting true and honest information and behaving ethically with all sense of fairness and honesty (Belz & Peattie, 2009) while pursuing the goal of delivering sustainable value that meets the needs of consumers (Charter; Peattie; Ottman & Polonsky, 2002). It focuses on building a huge consumer base (Lannuzi 2011), thus creating sustainable consumption demand (Wood 2014). In the area of education, it aims at increasing student recruitment for an institution through constant high demand for its academic programs. This consumption demand is achieved through student satisfaction with the service the institution provides in line with promise made to them prior to admitting them. Once students are satisfied, they return to the institution for further training as the need arises, or they communicate their positive experience to others, thereby building high traffic to sustain the institution.

### 2.6. Credibility and Sustainable Marketing in Higher Education

Responsiveness to the challenges of improving university enrollment entails adaptive credibility behavior by institutions to meet the increasingly diverse student body, and to develop retention strategies that lead to the completion of studies (El-Khawas, 2001) for universities in Nigeria generally, more so that current enrollment ratio for higher education is too low for many private universities (Suleiman, 2019; William Santa, Teresa A. Hartnett and Erich Strassner, 2003). Moreover, Adeyemi (2001) found that the drop-out and repetition rate of students was high for a number of categories of students in some universities. This poses a challenge for administrators of such universities which might have prided themselves on possessing teaching and learning facilities for the building and training of first class students. Responsiveness in terms of tertiary teaching and learning is founded on curricula and pedagogy, i.e., content and method. Marketing in higher education institutions, based on communicating honest, truthful and trustworthy information about the institution's productive pedagogy and sound curricula tailored to meeting the students' needs is beneficial for institutions, (Clark 2001), and has the potential to drive student enrollment because of its ripple effects. It also has the potential to reduce the high drop-out rate (Santa, Teresa A. Hartnett and Erich Strassner, 2003) of students who might have felt short-changed by their institution through false and deceptive information as well as dishonesty of recruitment executives. A higher institution whose marketing strategy is anchored on truthful, trustworthy, proven and factual records of sound curricula and effective pedagogy which contribute to sound mental, social and physical training of student could attract high student enrollment. This marketing strategy has high capacity for enrolment sustainability.

Whereas public and private employers consider the quality of graduates from some institutions in Nigeria to be poor such universities still use good communication skill to woo prospective students even when their academic standards are low. A study of the labor market for graduates found that employers believe some universities' graduates are poorly trained and unproductive on the job, severely poor in oral and written communication, and in applied technical skills (Dabalen, Oni and Adekola, 2000). Higher education marketing that brags about its graduates as top class and internationally competitive, must support such claims with true, honest, and trustworthy data that are publicly verifiable. This would assist to drive student traffic to such schools.

If higher education institutions entrepreneurs embrace the ancient moral concept of marketing based on truth, honesty and verifiable facts, the growth and reputation of such institutions are guaranteed (Miles-Govin, 2000, quoted by Berger, 2001).

A recent survey by Fournaise Group, London and reported by Patel (2021) highlights that senior executives do not believe that current marketing function demonstrates objective commercial thinking. Seventy-three per cent of the CEOs state that marketers lack business credibility and the ability to generate sufficient growth. The survey also reports that 80% of the CEOs do not trust marketers at all. Higher education institution's marketing that is based on communicating true and trustworthy information earns disproportionate attention. Higher education institutions' marketing practice based on truth and honesty lead to virtuosity and admiration from students and the community as a whole (Chan and Mak, 2014). However, like a company, when a higher education institution fails students' trust, it could be a precursor to low student enrollment and difficulty in paying staff salaries. Engendering trust in an educational institution involves exhibiting sincerity and honesty in marketing and in dealings with students because, according to Kant, actions have moral worth when performed for the sake of duty. This has long term positive implications for the institution's business. Universities are engaging in branding along academic programmes (Iqbal, Rasli, Hassan 2012), prestige, and reputation (Ilies & Fărcaș, 2014) to gain trust and loyalty in spite of the fact that Suleiman's, (2019) findings indicated that what students found on getting to the campus was contrary to what the students were told while applying to the universities.

## 2.7. Ethics and Sustainable Marketing in Higher Education

Those working in higher education institutions now face a unique convergence of pressures that is creating a heightened threat to the integrity of the higher education enterprise worldwide (Chapman and Lidner, 2016). This calls attention to the need for ethical practice in higher education institutions. Ethics is important in marketing because marketing staff are the representatives of their institutions in its dealing with students. Moreover, a sound ethical code of marketer-student relationship is essential to the creation of long term relationship and the establishment of customer goodwill. Marketers appear to be more exposed to the temptation to act unethically because they want to meet their target and because they set unreasonable target. Marketers tend to fail to distinguish between acting ethically or conveniently, and opportunity to act professionally and truthfully in the long best interest of their institutions. This failure to distinguish between the two predisposes them to act without integrity and with dishonesty by communicating unverifiable claims about their universities' facilities, academic program, and curriculum content, tuition regime, student, faculty and staff quality. Since students are the ultimate deciders of the success of an academic institution, behaving with integrity implies that the interest of the students must at all times be guarded by marketers by communicating to them truthful and factual information about the service and programmes that the institution offers and facilities available (Iqbal, Rasli, Hassan 2012; Ilies & Fărcaș, 2014). It also suggests fairness, by ensuring that neither the student nor the institution suffers any damage or disadvantage.

Fairness and integrity are important for student enrollment and the growth of the higher education institution because they provide enduring frameworks for lasting business relations between students, marketers and the institution. Newman et al., (2014) identified that integrity-based mechanism supports the association of business growth. This implies that an integrity-based marketing strategy by higher education institutions would promote enrollment growth. Graeme et al. (2008) emphasized a number of frameworks that the individuals could employ to help ensure that marketing decisions are ethical. This ethical behavior aligns with Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) theory of Ethics of Duty, which stresses that the moral point of view is best expressed by the discernment and carrying out of one's moral duty. The moral duty of the marketer is to market with integrity the available approved programs, programme content, facilities, quality of faculty and graduates and quality of service offered by the institution to prospective students. The action of marketers must not only be based on moral duty to be faithful to their employers by diligently performing their duties, but also to prospective students. This contributes to an institution's reputation, which is the degree of trust or distrust in the institution (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001). This reputation is ability to meet prospective students' expectations on a given claim, and could play an important role in improving student enrollment.

Agbonifoh, et al (2007) pointed out different areas including promotions policies in which there are perceived inadequacies in relation to ethical issues in marketing. This refers to misleading and dishonest advertising because benefits of some products and services in adverts are exaggerated, unverifiable, and farther than the actual. It is for this reason that Thompson and Strickland (2001) argued that corporate ethics should include virtues as (i) Honesty: being truthful in all endeavors, that is, to be honest and forthright with consumers (students), communities, suppliers and shareholders (ii), Integrity: Saying what is meant, delivering what is promised and standing for what is right; (iii), Respect: This refers to treating others with dignity and fairness (iv), Trust, that is, building confidence through open and candid communication (v), Performance: Striving for continuous improvement in one's performance. Doing things in the best, most complete, efficient and most timely way possible in a way that contributes to the growth of the business, (vi), Innovation: This has to do with embracing creativity and consistently pursuing new opportunities that can facilitate the long term existence and relevance of a product or company to consumers, (vii), Customer Focus: Being committed to



meeting the needs of customers and constantly focus on customer satisfaction; anticipating and meeting customer needs, responding quickly to changing conditions and fulfilling customers' expectations better than competitors. All these elements help to boost student enrolment performance of universities. According to Thompson and Strickland (2001), they assist in product performance and sustainability of organization. Higher education institutions marketers must demonstrate the quality of fairness to prospective enrollees. Fairness is an attribute of morality and could facilitate achieving an institution's enrollment objective, as well as sustaining the long-term existence of the institution.

Fairness also relates to morality. To be moral means that higher education institutions' marketers must consciously act according to the rules previously calculated by 'reason' to be right or just and the incentive for observing those rules to be respected. Immanuel Kant states that these rules or guides should be observed and respected. The rules are therefore categorical imperatives. These rules are universal principles that are seen to apply to everyone, everywhere and at all times. This stipulates that there is no exception to the principle, for instance, that lying and dishonesty are immoral. Moral acts are necessary to further the permissible ends of others, including prospective students to whom the marketers owe a duty of fairness and trust.

In other words, to be moral one must consciously act according to rules previously calculated by reason to be right or just (Wood, 1970). These rules are some sort of laws which combine with some sort of felt constraint or incentive act on our choices, whether from external coercion by others or from our own powers of reason. Thinking we are duty bound is simply respecting, as such, certain laws pertaining to us. This point was equally emphasized by Johnson and Cureton (2016). The choice of higher education institutions marketers must be dictated by business and professional ethics which derive from high moral standing of integrity, fairness and honesty.

## 2.8. Credibility, Ethics and Sustainable Marketing in Higher Education Institutions

One of the most significant trends representing both a threat and an opportunity is the increasingly competitive nature of service markets. This is forcing businesses to retool their marketing strategies to make them sustainable and achieve long term bottom-line. Established ways of doing business are no longer adequate. Around the world, innovative newcomers offering new standards of service are succeeding in markets where established competitors have failed to please today's demanding consumers. In particular, students now expect higher standards of practices based on credibility and ethical behavior. Meeting this need creates value for students, and contributes to sustaining the constant inflow of students and continued survival of the education institution. Attracting and winning students at all cost through deception, false claims about the institution's status and quality is an act of desperation (Villarino & Font, 2015). Students and parents, as well as regulatory bodies are likely to turn against, and make an educational institution unsustainable, if found to be involved in deception through dishonesty and falsification of service quality or academic programme information, as was the case with Enron.

Credibility involves having the student's best interests at heart, and being willing always to communicate true and trustworthy information about the strength and weakness of the service and programs offered to students by an education institution. An institution has to market itself on what it offers because it has a moral duty to do so. Credibility marketing has a wider implication for the mid-term and long term-term sustainability of the marketing strategy as well as the institution in general. Credibility would result in high reputation and loyalty to a higher education institution. It would also increase the population of prospective students in an institution. A marketing strategy that is based on credibility is sustainable because prospective students and parents would have trust in the institution and make them loyal to it.

Equally, integrity of higher education institution marketer and marketing strategy would continually attract prospective students. Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out (Proverbs 10:9). A marketing strategy based on false claims and deceit would lead to the collapse of the business (Proverbs 21:28), but, a business founded on trustworthiness will be established forever (Isaiah 54:14). The business will expand and prosper. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left. And your descendants will possess nations. And will resettle the desolate cities. (Isaiah 54:3).

Higher education institutions can take significant steps to attract and increase their student enrollment by acting with honesty and sincerity in order to build trust. Beyond the fundamentals of consistently providing quality service, an academic institution must ensure it behaves ethically with fairness by respecting the rights of students to know the truth about the quality and status of the institution's programmes and facilities. Marketers and higher education institution's leaders need to be pro-actively transparent and honest about what they do, how they do it and how they contribute to society. Transparency, integrity and honesty of information allow education institutions' partners such as students, parents, civil society and regulators to more easily check claims of responsibility (Miller-Dawkins, 2017).

Since ethics has positive effects on company's growth of performance (Amine, Chakor, & Alaoui (2012), adopting positive ethics of integrity, fairness and honesty could help higher education institutions to develop, preserve and sustain their reputation, thus indirectly positively influencing their overall student enrollment performance in both short and long terms. Berrone et al. (2007) found that companies with strong ethical identity can obtain a greater degree of stakeholders' satisfaction, which in turn affects positively the financial performance of companies. Without students the institution would not exist. Observance of ethics breeds increase productivity and security of higher education institution's perpetual existence (Tom & Biobele, 2015). This is why Kant's ethics of duty explains that people are bound by morals and duty to operate by the ethics or laws or rules specified by their organization, in line with those of their regulators to keep it going so as to realize its short and long term objectives.

Doing things right calls for maintaining a steadfast commitment to moral principles, which is the very condition under which anything else is worth pursuing, nonetheless student enrollment. Marketers of higher education institutions therefore, have a moral worth and duty to act rightly at all times by showing commitment to communicating true



information about their facilities. Unethical practices such as marketing unaccredited programmes as certified programmes, and poor facilities as state-of-the-art facilities, for instance, just to boost admissions figures would neither be sustainable in the long run nor sustain the continued existence of the university if students, parents and regulators found out that these claims were based on manipulation of facts and deception. This is why, the impact of the marketing strategy and the communicated message about the institution is crucial in the decisions the marketers make. The fairness of the marketing strategy must always consider its impact on the institution's stakeholders. The idea of fairness and acting with morality at all-time correspond with the relationship behavior – Do unto others as you would want the do unto you". This point is relevant to sustainable marketing strategies in the modern age.

Corporate ethics could contribute to higher education institution's performance by promoting trust between it and students, suppliers and vendors, since according to Hosmer (1994) a corporate's code of ethics would lead to attainment of institutional legitimacy for its external stakeholders, eventually assisting the survival of the institution in the future through consumers patronage. This aligns with the view of Long and Driscoll (2008) that indicate that corporate ethics improves a firm's reputation, thus leading to increased firm performance and sustainability.

In order to sustain and maintain corporate reputation and the existence of an educational institution, higher education institution marketers must focus on always communicating true and honest information about their institutions, and behaving ethically by emphasizing integrity, rightness, and fairness of institutional information and behaviour. This accounts for why Abbinandam (2011) asserted that marketers' ethical practice should center on: reliability- consistency of performance and dependability. It means that the higher education institution must honor its promise to students and perform its service right the first time. Responsiveness- concerning the willingness or readiness of employees to provide the promised service. It involves calling the student and asking if he is getting value for his fees, and if not, giving prompt attention to that need. Competence- meaning possessing the required skills and knowledge to perform the service. It includes knowledge and skill of the contact personnel, knowledge and skill of operational support personnel such as student recruitment officers and marketers. All these are indicators of credibility and ethics which higher education institutions must exhibit to be sustainable and facilitate the promotion and reputation of the higher education institution in Nigeria.

### 3. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study examined how the application of marketing strategy based on credibility and ethics in terms of true, trustworthy, air, right and integrity behavior could enhance higher education institutions' student enrollment. It found that trustworthiness and honesty of marketers as well as information would contribute to the re and invariably boosts its student recruitment. The study also found that ethical marketing practices of integrity, fairness and rightness of decisions in the long run would sustain the continued relevance and existence of the institution. The study concluded that higher education institutions' marketing must place emphasis on credibility of information about the higher education institution to prospective students, and ground their marketers in sound ethical practices of integrity, fairness and honesty of decisions to ensure constant favorable admission of students.

The study is of significance to marketers and institutions in terms of understanding customers' expectations, as well as expanding the frontiers of academic research in institutional marketing. It recommended that administrators of higher education institutions in Nigeria must evolve policies that will compel their student recruitment officers and program marketers to behave ethically as well as communicate credible and publicly verifiable information about their institutions. When organizations do the right thing and share the same values with their stakeholders, they will benefit from brand enhancement and reputation.

### 4. References

- i. Abbinandan, K. J., & Ashok, J. (2011). *Marketing information, products and services*. New Delhi: McGraw-Hill publishers.
- ii. Agbonifor, B. A., Ogwo E. O., Nnolim, D. A. & Nkammabe, A. D. (2007). *Marketing in Nigeria, concepts, principles and decisions*. Aba: Afritowers Ltd.
- iii. Amine, M. E. A., Chakor, A., & Alaoui, A. M. (2012). Ethics, relationship marketing and corporate performance: Theoretical analysis through the mediating variables, *International Business Research*, 5(8), 68-82.
- iv. Andries, P., & Stephan, U. (2019). Environmental Innovation and Firm Performance: How firm size and motives matter. *Journal of Sustainability*, 11, 35-85.
- v. Barnes, N. G. (2010). *The 2010 Inc. 500 Update: Most blog, friend and Tweet but some industries still shun social media*. Dartmouth, USA: University of Massachusetts, Center for Marketing Research.
- vi. Baumgartner, R.J.; Ebner, D. (2010). Corporate sustainability strategies: Sustainability profiles and maturity levels. *Sustain. Dev.* 2010, 18, 76–89.
- vii. Belz, F.-M.; Peattie, K. (2009). *Sustainability marketing: A global Perspective*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.
- viii. Chancellor, D. (2015). Four companies that failed spectacularly, and the lessons of their demise. Available: <https://www.managers.org.uk/knowledge-and-insights/case-study/four-companies-that-failed-spectacularly-and-the-lessons-of-their-premature-demise/>. Accessed November 11, 2021.
- ix. Charter, M., Peattie, K., Ottman, J., & Polonsky, M.J. (2002). *Marketing and sustainability*. Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society in association with the Centre for Sustainable Design, (BRASS). Cardiff, UK: Cardiff University.
- x. Chawla, M. (2013). Customers' (Students') perception about 7Ps of higher education marketing mix. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(2), 106-112.

- xi. Chabowski, B.R., Mena, J. A., & Gonzalez-Padron, T.L. (2011). The structure of sustainability research in marketing, 1958–2008: A basis for future research opportunities. *Journal of Academic Marketing Science*, 39, 55–70.
- xii. Chonko, L. B., & Hunt, S. D. (1985). Ethics and marketing management: An empirical examination. *Journal of Business Research*, 13, 339–59. Available: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0148-2963\(85\)90006-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0148-2963(85)90006-2). Accessed: December 1, 2021.
- xiii. Chow, W.S.; Chen, Y. (2012). Corporate sustainable development: Testing a new scale based on the mainland Chinese context. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 105, 519–533.
- xiv. Clark, Burton. (2001). The entrepreneurial university: new foundations for collegiality, autonomy and achievement. *Higher Education Management*, 13(2), 9–24.
- xv. Dabalén, A., Bankole, O., & Olatunde, A. (2001). Labor market prospects for university graduates in Nigeria, *Higher Education Policy* 14, 141–159.
- xvi. Egboro, F., & Ehikwe, A. E. (2016). Ethical marketing practice: A foundational and fundamental virtue for corporate reputation/financial performance, *British Journal of Marketing Studies*, 4(3), 12–24.
- xvii. Eisend, M (2006). Source credibility dimensions in marketing communication – A generalized solution, *Journal of Empirical Generalisations in Marketing Science*, 10(2), 1–33.
- xviii. El-Khawass, Elaine. (2001). Today's universities: responsive, resilient, or rigid? *Higher Education Policy*, 14, 241–248.
- xix. Elliott, J. (2012). *An Introduction to sustainable development*. 4th edition. Available: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cop-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1047018&query=Elliott+>. Accessed: December 2, 2020.
- xx. Emery, B. (2012). *Sustainable marketing*. London: Pearson Education.
- xxi. Elkington, J. (1998). *Cannibals with Forks: The triple bottom line of the 21st century business*. Gabriola Island BC, Canada: New Societies Publishers.
- xxii. Emily, K., Graham, G., & Bia, A. (2021). Having urged everyone off the sidelines, it's time we heed our own advice, Available: <https://instituteforpr.org/having-urged-everyone-off-the-sidelines-its-time-we-heed-our-own-advice/>. Accessed: October 13, 2021.
- xxiii. Etuk, E. J. (2009). *The Nigerian business environment (2nd edition)*. Calabar: University of Calabar Press.
- xxiv. Guy, M. E. (1990). *Ethical decision making in everyday work situations*. New York: Quorum Books.
- xxv. Fosu, F. F., & Poku, K. (2014). Exploring the factors that influence students' choice of Higher Education in Ghana, *European Journal of Business and Management*, 6(28), 209–220.
- xxvi. Graeme, D., Ensor J., & Ashford, R. (2008). *Strategic marketing, planning and control*. U.S.A: Elsevier Publishers Ltd.
- xxvii. Hanekom, J. A. (1984). *Technological ethics, social ethic*, NG: Kerkboekhandel.
- xxviii. Haur, L. S. (2009). *Higher education marketing concerns: Factors influencing Malaysian students' intention to study at higher education institutions*. Thesis submitted to University of Malaya, Malaysia.
- xxix. Hofferberth, M. (2017). And of course our major contribution remains to run a decent business. Making sense of Shell's sense-making in Nigeria during the 1990s. *Business and Politics*, 19(1), 135–165. Available: doi:10.1017/bap.2016.8
- xxx. Hosmer, L. T. (1994). Strategic planning as if ethics mattered. *Strategic Management Journal*, 15, 17–34.
- xxxi. Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, (2014). *Management, governance and ethics*. Berkshire United Kingdom: Emile Woolf International.
- xxxii. Ilies, V. & Fărcaș, P. (2014). Communication preliminary analysis of building an authentic department in an academic institution. Mixed methodological approach on the department of communication, public relations and advertising of the faculty of political, administrative and communication (FSPAC), Babes-Bolyai University. *The International Scientific Conference Communication, Context and Interdisciplinarity*, 434–441 Available: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281491936\\_](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281491936_). Accessed Aug 30 2021.
- xxxiii. Iqbal, M. J., Rasli, A. B. M., & Hassan, I. (2012). University branding: A myth or a reality. *Journal Education Society*, 6, 1.
- xxxiiii. Johnson, R. & Cureton, A. (2016). Kant's moral philosophy. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/#GooWilMorWorDut>
- xxxv. King James Bible: Source: <https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Credibility>.
- xxxvi. Lannuzi, A. (2011). Greener products: The making and marketing of sustainable brands. Available: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/copebooks/detail.action?docID=826951&query=Greener+Product>. Accessed: March 3, 2020.
- xxxvii. Long, B. S., & Driscoll, C. (2008). Codes of ethics and the pursuit of organizational legitimacy: Theoretical and empirical contributions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 77: 173–189.
- xxxviii. Louisiana State University, (2016). Principles for good governance and ethical practice. Available: <https://www.independentsector.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/principles2principlesfor ethics>.
- xxxix. Luminis, (2013). Academic excellence is the biggest lie of higher education, Education Training Blog Available: <https://luminisindia.com/education-training-blog/149-academic-excellence-is-the-biggest-lie-of-higher-education> Accessed September 10, 2021.
- xl. Lyon, T. P & Maxwell, J. W. (2011) Greenwash: corporate environmental disclosure under threat of audit. *Journal of Economics & Management Strategy*, 20, 3–41.

- xl. Lysons, K. (1999). Purchasing, England: Pearson Education Ltd.
- xli. McCroskey, J. C., & Teven, J. J. (1999). Goodwill: A reexamination of the construct and its measurement. *Communication Monographs*, 66, 90-103.
- xlii. Messah, O.B., & Immaculate, M.N. (2011). Effect of selected marketing communication tools on student enrolment in private universities in Kenya. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 3(3), 172-205.
- xliii. Miller-Dawkins, M. (2017). The business of trust: How companies can build credibility. Available: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/stories/the-business-of-trust-how-companies-can-build-credibility/>
- xliv. Mitchell, R. W., Wooliscroft, B & Higham, J. (2010). Sustainable market orientation: a new approach to managing marketing strategy. *Journal of Macromarketing*, 30, 160-170.
- xlv. Monica, K. (2019) Corruption in universities: Paths to integrity in the higher education subsector. UA Anti-corruption resource centre. Available: <https://www.u4.no/publications/corruption-in-universities-paths-to-integrity-in-the-higher-education-subsector.pdf>. Accessed September 10, 2021.
- xlvi. Murphy, E. P., & Laczniak, G. R. (1981). Marketing ethics: A review with implications for managers, educators and researchers. In American Marketing Association (Ed.). *Review of Marketing*, 251-66. Chicago.
- xlvii. Neil, P. (2021). CEO don't trust marketing. Available: [neilpatel.com/blog/ceos](http://neilpatel.com/blog/ceos).
- xlviii. Newman, A., Kiazad, K., Miao, Q., & Cooper, B. (2014). Examining the cognitive and affective trust-based mechanisms underlying the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational citizenship: A case of the headleading the heart? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 123(1), 113-123. Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1803-2>.
- xlix. Nguyen, N., & LeBlanc, G. (2001). Image and reputation of higher education institutions in students' retention decisions. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 15(6), 303 – 311.
  - i. Nidumolu, R., Prahalad, C.K., & Rangaswami, M.R. (2009). Why sustainability is now the key driver of innovation. *Harvard Business Review*, 87, 56-64.
  - ii. Nkamnebe, A.D. (2011). Sustainability marketing in the emerging markets: Imperatives, challenges, and agenda setting. *International Journal of Emerging Market*, 6, 217-232.
  - iii. Odia, A.A. (2014). A Study of factors influencing students' enrolment in social studies education at the post-secondary school level in Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Management Sciences & Education*, 3(2), 116-124.
  - iiii. O'Driscoll, A. (2004). What is meant by contemporary in contemporary marketing theory? A relationship marketing perspective. *Irish Academy of Management Conference*, Trinity College, Dublin.
  - lv. Ohanian, R., (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorser's perceived expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness, *Journal of Advertising*, 19
  - lv. Okebukola, P. A, (2010) Five years of higher education in Nigeria: Trends in quality assurance. Available: [www.unilorin.edu.ng](http://www.unilorin.edu.ng).
  - lvi. Okogbaa, V. (2016) Quality in higher education: The need for feedback from students. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(32), 139-143.
  - lvii. Peter, N., Ayedun, C., Iroham, C., Oloke, O., & Amusan, L. (2017). Factors influencing attrition of estate management students in Nigeria: A conceptual framework. *Proceedings of ICERI2017 Conference 16th-18th November*, Seville, Spain.
  - lviii. Prentis, E. L. & Igoni, S.E. (2016). Leadership: A case study on the importance of ethics and trust. *Journal of Business*, 01(02), 17-30. Available: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316026689\\_Leadership\\_A\\_Case\\_Study\\_on\\_the\\_Importance\\_of\\_Ethics\\_and\\_Trust](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316026689_Leadership_A_Case_Study_on_the_Importance_of_Ethics_and_Trust). Accessed: Aug 18 2021.
  - lix. Ranchodd, A. & Marandi, E. (2006), Strategic marketing in practice, Butterworth: Heinemann,
  - lx. Roger Seiler, Gunther Kucza (2017). Source credibility model, source attractiveness model, and match-up hypothesis – An integrated model. *Journal of International Scientific Publications*, 11, 1-15.
  - lxi. Sainita, W., Hartnett, T. A. & Strassner, E. (2003). Higher education in Nigeria: A status report, *Higher Education Policy*, 16, 259-281
  - lxii. Sarwar, A., Haque, A., & Yasmin, F. (2012). Measuring students' perception towards university selection: An empirical investigation on Malaysian post graduate students. *International Journal of Research in Commerce, Economics & Management*, 2(9), 13-20.
  - lxiii. Sia, J.K.M. (2013). University choice: Implications for marketing and positioning. *Scientific & Academic Publishing*, 3(1), 7-14.
  - lxiv. Sensen, Oliver, (2011). Kant on duties toward others from respect (TL 37-44). In Andreas Trampota, Oliver Sensen and Jens Timmermann (eds.), *Kant's Tugendlehre: A Commentary*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 343-364.
  - lxv. SMEDAN & NBS (2015). Survey report on micro, small, and medium enterprises in Nigeria. Available: <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng>
  - lxvi. Stagno, M. C. Z. (2012.). Higher Education Marketing: A study on the impact of social media on study selection and university choice. 2(1), 41-58. Available: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235333340\\_Higher\\_Education\\_Marketing\\_A\\_Study\\_on\\_the\\_Impact\\_of\\_Social\\_Media\\_on\\_Study\\_Selection\\_and\\_University\\_Choice](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235333340_Higher_Education_Marketing_A_Study_on_the_Impact_of_Social_Media_on_Study_Selection_and_University_Choice). Accessed Aug 30, 2021.
  - lxvii. The Open University (2020). Marketing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/money-business/marketing-the-21st-century/content-section-3.4>
  - lxviii. Toryila, S. B.; Tseah, A. T., & Adai, E. (2019). Perceived impact of student attrition on administration of secondary schools in Benue State. *BSUJEM*, 1(1), 1-11.

- lxix. Van Dam, Y.K., & Apeldoorn, P.A.K. (1996). Sustainable marketing. *Journal of Macro-marketing*, 16, 46.
- lxx. Villarino, J., & Font, X. (2015). Sustainability marketing myopia. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 21(4) Available: DOI: 10.1177/1356766715589428.
- lxxi. Wood, A. (1970) Kant's moral religion, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- lxxii. Wood, J. (2014). The role of legal compliance in sustainable supply chains, operation, and marketing. Available: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/copebooks/detail.action?docID=1736342&query=Laszlo+and+Sroufe+2014>. Accessed: June.12, 2020.
- lxxiii. Yamamoto, G.T. (2006). University evaluation selection: a Turkish case. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 20(7), 559 – 569.