A Content Analysis of Online Brand Elements of Universities in Ghana

Rhodalene Amartey

Ghana Institute of Journalism, Ghana. P. O. Box 667, Accra

Abstract
This study explores online brand elements of universities in Ghana. The study involves 65 universities and university colleges with functional websites which have been accredited by the Ghana National Accreditation Board. Using Rowley (2009)'s online brand elements framework, a content analysis was conducted on the websites of all 65 universities to identify their online brand elements. The results show that the universities have logo, graphics, text and copy, current and news, shapes, layout and combination of images and relationship features as elements of their online branding.
Keywords: Online branding, Universities in Ghana, branding, content analysis
DOI: 10.7176/RHSS/9-2-02

1.0 Introduction

The past three decades have seen a phenomenal growth of business into world markets. This can be attributed to the fact that information technology is considered an enabler that provides the catalyst for organisations to interpret their global operations. A key component of information technology is the internet which is increasingly becoming a shopping tool for consumers. For instance, as far back as 2007, the Internet World Stats Report indicated that the growth rate of internet usage in a developing country like Ghana was nearly 2000% between 2000 and 2007. Indeed, as far back as 2001, it was estimated that internet users globally run into billions. The internet therefore provides the opportunity for organisations to market themselves and their products online (OECD Report, 2001).

Keller (2008) argued that in recent times, there has been a paradigm shift in the area of competition and this together with innovations in computing and telecommunications have broken the traditional barriers to competition in the business world. It stands to reason therefore that firms that operate both brick-and-mortar and online formats are more likely to have a competitive edge compared to firms that offer offline alternatives. These dramatic changes in business operations and execution of complex online delivery systems are now considered as strategic necessities (Simmons, 2007).

McAchister-Spooner (2010) posited that universities and colleges can develop and maintain relationships with their respective stakeholders through dialogue. According to Tucciarone (2007) universities, especially from developing economies can do this by using their online platforms to attract potential students as well as providing opportunity for the dissemination of information to exiting students. The rationale is that students evaluate institutions based on information available on college or university websites. As a result of the intense competition, any educational or institution website's online branding becomes a key factor (Kiang Ng, 2003). A university website is now a necessary tool for offering improved education in terms of quality teaching, interaction and convenience to its primary stakeholders

According to Keller (2008) a brand can be defined as "a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of items intended to identify the goods or serves of one seller and to differentiate them from those of the competition". The emphasis of this definition is on differentiation of the product. It can therefore be inferred that the creation of a new name, symbol or logo represents the creation of a brand. Online branding (also referred to as e-branding, internet branding, digital branding, or i-branding) on the other hand is defined as "how online channels are used to support brands, which in essence are the sum of the characteristics of a product, service or organisation as perceived and experienced by a user, customer or other stakeholders"

(Chaffey, 2008). Simply put, an online brand is "a brand that has an online presence" (Rowley, 2004) (repetitive).

Simmons (2007) researched into how the internet can be developed as a branding tool. He identified four thematic areas in the mainstream branding literature including: understanding of customers, content, marketing communications and interaction. These thematic areas have been referred to as the "Four Pillars of i-branding" and meant to bring a more systematic perspective to the understanding and application of online branding. Dr Silva and Alwi (2007) identified factors such as security, customer care, ease of use and personalisation as influencing corporate brand image of organisation. Trust has also been identified by many researchers as influencing online branding (Horppu, Kuivalainen, Tarkianien & Ellonen, 2008). Despite the myriad of factors identified as affecting online branding, the underlying thread in creating a successful brand online is the dialogic or interactive nature of the website (Waters and Tindall, 2010). From the brand management perspective, a website is a strategic resource for positioning in cyberspace, differentiation from competitors and the

achievements of an online brand presence that complements their brand image in brick and mortar formats. Client choices can always be simplified by the potential of excellent online branding.

Online brands are strategic assets that have the capacity to improve the reach of a university in a virtual environment and positively affect business operations. In addition to the internet being viewed as an alternative delivery channel, it is also perceived as a rich source of information that universities can use in communicating to their clients i.e. students. Therefore, providing a platform for online brand presence is the basic function of the internet. Educational institutions must therefore strive hard to use the interactive sources of the internet to boost their service delivery. This interactive process provides an opportunity for organizations to collect information from their stakeholders who which helps in refining and establishing new ways of developing their brands based on customers' feedback (Lewis et al, 1994).

In England, the past few years has been a time of fast-paced change in higher education. The growth of the internet has enabled UK institutions to make information on their courses available to a global audience. This growth and the need for more flexible provision, opening higher education up to a wider group of people means that many universities and colleges can now offer their degrees through distance learning. All these changes call for online branding. Furthermore, in a developing country like Ghana, the tertiary education sector has undergone massive changes in the last two decades due to liberation of the sector. This has culminated in increased competition as new players enter the industry. Traditionally, the state has used legislation to keep out private participation in tertiary education. With the repeal of the law and subsequent liberation of the sector, individuals and religious organisations have established their own universities and colleges in Ghana.

According to the National Accreditation Board (NAB) (www.nab.gov.gh) as at May 2015, there were 73 accredited universities and university colleges in Ghana made up of 10 public universities and 63 private universities and university colleges. The battle for the hearts and minds of high school graduates is therefore very high as they begin their college search. In Ghana, aside newspaper advertisements, potential students use university websites as an important source of information on prospective tertiary institutions. University websites are also used to create relationships among current students and wider stakeholders. Building the universities corporate image through online branding is therefore a strategic necessity. According to Abrahamson (2000), evidence exists to show that potential students rank college websites as second only to campus visits in their search for universities and colleges. However, studies on how universities brand themselves online is very scanty.

It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate how universities are portraying themselves online. This study seeks to analyse the online brand elements of universities in Ghana as communicated on their websites.

2.0 Literature Review
2.1 The Concept of Branding
The word "brand" is derived from the old norge word "brandr" which means "to burn" (Keller, 2008). This was how or the means by which owners of livestock marked their animals to differentiate and identify them. According to the America Marketing Association (AMA) a "brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination for them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition". However, some practicing managers refer to a brand as more than an item; a brand actually creates a certain amount of awareness, reputation and prominence in the market place (Kotler and Keller, 2010). Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2009) supported this view and emphasized the importance of differentiation in branding. Branding therefore is about differentiation. In other words, irrespective of the name, term, sign or logo employed by an organization, branding is only achieved if these elements create an identity and differentiate the organization from competing ones. Tan and Rash (2011) summed it up in a succinct manner by indicating that brand elements are only relevant in their ability to differentiate the organization in a positive manner.

Keller (2008) further contributes to the debate by positing that a brand is more than a product because it can have dimensions that differentiates it from other products. These differences may be rational and tangible or more symbolic, emotional and intangible. There is a plethora of benefits that accrue to customers attributable to brands. They provide a short hand device or means of simplification for their product decisions (Rowley, 2009); serve as symbolic devices (Kotler and Keller, 2010); reflect different values or traits of personalities (Timacheff & Rand 2001); define who people are and help them communicate their identity (Rowley, 2004).

Flowing from this discussion, brands are considered as more than products (Rowley, 2009). Kotler and Keller (2010) define a product as "anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a need or a want". A brand however is more than a product because it boasts of dimensions that serve as points of differentiation from products that have the aim of satisfying the same needs. These differences, according to Tan and Rasiah (2011) can be rational or emotional. Thus, a branded product may be a physical good like Milo beverage, Nike canvas, a service offered by Accra Institute of Technology or

Barclays Bank, a person like Mawena Trebah or Ellen Hagan, an organization like Midland Savings and Loans or Red Cross, a place such as the city of Rome or the country of Ghana or an idea. Branding, therefore, means "endowing products and services with the power of a brand" (Kotler & Keller 2010, p. 136). Thus, companies try to distinguish their products or services from those of other companies. It can therefore be inferred that a brand is the total of all functional and emotional assets that differentiate a product from the competition and distinguishes it in the mind of the audience.

Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou (2011) posit that to understand a brand, it must be experienced. Marketing scholars have stressed the importance of the emotive aspects of brand experience and biased assessments of the brand, emphasizing the relevance of brand image (Da Silva & Syed Alwi, 2008; Kwon & Lennon, 2009), personality (Okazaki, 2006), or brand equity (Christodoulides et al. 2006). Understanding the whole process of brand development therefore brings out the success evidently (Timacheff & Rand, 2001). Certain characteristics are identified with a successful brand including brand identity (Rowley, 2009), brand credibility (Wang & Poh, 2009), brand equity (Keller, 2008), brand experience (Tan & Rasiah, 2011) and brand personality (Thomas & Veloutsou, 2011).

2.2 The Concept of Online Branding

The concept "online branding" has received little scholarly attention in the extant literature because it is still a novelty (Rowley 2009, Murphy & Scharl, 2007). Many researchers have opined that technological revolution has not changed the principles of branding much. It is therefore prudent to integrate online branding with offline branding by using other channels. (Clen, 2001; Clauster, 2001). This assertion is however highly debatable because, traits of the internet can be visibly seen infiltrating many concepts including branding. Perhaps the argument should be extended to how far the internet has affected branding. Online branding has been defined as "how online channels are used to support branding". (Chaffey 2008). To Rowley (2009, 2004), online brand simply defined is "a brand that has an online presence". She suggested that the online brand elements can be used to create a strong brand presence but what is vital is the brand promise must be honored to create customer delight which results in brand experiences and culminates ultimately in customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Moving the argument, a step further, Tzokas and Saren (2004) postulated that the web can serve as the right arena which supports the establishments and maintenance of loyalty and retention of customers. Culbertson and Bridon (2006) confirmed that loyalty marketing strategies are crucial elements required to build strong brands. According to them, there is a difference between offline branding environment and online branding environment (Rowley, 2009, Alwi and Da Silva, 2007) and therefore a better understanding by organizations in order to improve their brand value online is very necessary. From Rowley's (2009) perspective, the success of online branding is dependent on the organization clearly outlining their objectives online before developing their online branding strategy. A balance should be achieved between the existing brands and the new online brands. (Rowley 2004). However, the brands should not be less relevant because the rapid increase and ready availability of information would force customers to look out for the best value irrespective of the brand. Other scholars like Rowley (2004) and Ward & Lee (2000) believe that information overload makes the brand more important. Da Silva and Alwi (2007) examined online brand attributes and online corporate brand images within the retail sector. Using the bookstores as the research context, the study investigated the relationship between brand attributes and corporate brand image of an online e-tailer as well as the critical corporate brand drivers of online corporate brand image. The study adapted the brand triangle framework proposed by de Chernatony and Christoulides and performances exploratory factor analysis and a structural equation (SEM) in a quantitative (EPA) methodological approach to test the hypothesis. The study found that brand attributes including ease of use, personalization, customer care and online security are very critical in the determination of corporate brand image of the online e-tailer. Da Silva and Alwi's study is however limited to a number of online bookstore retailers in the United Kingdom, a developed country, raising the issue of the generalizability of the findings and its applicability in other sectors like the educational sector especially within a developing country context.

In a similar study, Cristodoulides et al (2010) sought to conceptualize and measure the equity of online brands in the online retail/service sector (ORS). Although the researchers held the view that brand equity is a significant source of competitive advantage online, they believed that past conceptualizations and measures ignored the unique attributes of the internet that make users co-creators of brand value. The study recognized the novelty of computer mediated platforms and therefore complemented secondary data with two exploratory qualitative studies in the methodological approach that aided in the understanding of ORS brand equity. The study identified five correlated but distinct dimensions of ORS brand equity, namely, emotional connections, online experience, responsive service nature, trust and fulfillment. The qualitative nature of this study makes it difficult for generalizability of the findings.

The marketing literature variously referred to online branding as internet branding, i-branding or digital branding (Simmons, 2007; Merisavo & Ranlas, 2004; Murphy, Rafa & Mizeiski, 2003). Chaffey (2008) defines online branding as online channels which are used to support brands which in essence are the sum of

characteristics of a product, service or organization as perceived and experienced by a user, customer or other stakeholders. Rowley (2004) defined online brand as a brand that has online presence. In the eyes of several researchers such as Chen (2001), De Chermatony (2002) and Rubeinstein (2002), they opined that the internet revolution has had little effect on organizations. Therefore, there is the need to integrate online branding with branding through other channels. Based on this, Rowley came up with these online brand elements in her conceptual paper; which in her opinion can enhance organizational transactions. The online brand elements are:

Logo: The logo is described as the shorthand for all that the brand stands for. It is expected to be displayed on the home page, and any other place on the site where it adds value. Thus, the study is to establish whether universities have displayed logos on their websites

Graphics: Graphics involves pictures, logos, and other images. Pictures present the content, nature of the service and visually represent values. One key challenge is that animation of images can provide a sense of movement and dynamism but too much can be frustrating and confusing. Graphics on the universities' websites would therefore be examined.

Text and copy: Text and copy describe the tone of voice, and explains if a message is intelligent, comprehensible and relevant. Text defines the brand's personality and reinforces brand values consistently. Text represents the universities' websites talking to the customer.

Currency and news: Currency helps to communicate a live and dynamic website. Currency is especially relevant to the universities' websites that promote themselves as delivering the latest information or news, as well as those sites that enjoy regular visit.

Shapes: Shapes are usually used in many ways on websites, which include shapes of   pictures or graphics, shapes of buttons and shapes of menu options displays.

Layout and combination of images: The overall layout of a web page can serve as a metaphor.

Relationship features: Relationship features refers to the features and functions of the website that take users beyond the home page and its initial impact. The website experience helps build the brand experience.

These web elements as described by Rowley in her theory above represent the online brand dispositions that must be present to establish a strong online presence of an organization. Many researchers posit that online value creation in an online context is more relevant in recent times than focusing on an offline context. Even though online branding is still developing and functions in a totally different environment, there is the need for firms to understand how it enhances the value of their brands. (Alwi & Da Silva, 2007: de Chernatony & Christodoulidies, 2004; Hoffman & Novak, 1996). Vargo and Lusch (2004) posit from a historical perspective that modern marketing relies heavily on goods and manufacturing based model of economic exchange referred to as "Goods – Dominant" (G-D) logic which says that organization manufacture goods which are sold to customers through transactions. Subsequently, Vargo and

Lusch (2004) developed the "service dominant' (S-D model), another model which customer and service is more is oriented. Merz, He and Vargo (2009) took the debate a step further by grouping the branding literature into various eras where the 1900s – 1930s is considered the initial brand era and called the Individual Goods – Focus Brand era. The second era falls between 1930s -1990s and it is referred to as the Value Focus Brand Era. The third era covers 1990s – 2000s and it is known as the Relationship Focus Brand Era. Finally, is the Stakeholder – Focus Brand Era which is from 2005 till now. Based on the categorization, Merz et al (2009) opined that many scholars have stopped viewing the brand as an identifier but rather as a dynamic social process.

It has also been established that the new brand value creation is relational in nature. This new brand logic must be sought to create value either online or offline. (Czervinski et al, 2010). Brand value is very vital and can lead to the success of firms that transact business online.

Using the internet has significant implications for brand building and management (de Chernatony & Christodoulides, 2004). It is assured that users would be active in site discussions if the sites have value and the content on the websites make the sites more valuable and capture the attention of users. All the dialogue and relational features of this new brand logic facilitate and enhance the creation of online brand.

Online branding should be dialogic enough to engage the users and customers (Okoe et al., 2015). Previous literature has shown that the dialogic potential of online communication influences building relationships with the publics (Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Park & Reber, 2008; Bortree & Seltzer, 2009).

Online brands can therefore be considered as strategic assets with the capability of improving the reach and coverage of a university in a virtual environment thereby affecting student behaviour in a positive way. Hence, organisations must develop appealing online branding websites (online branding) in order to increase ability to influence consumer behaviour (Lin, 2013).

From the marketing perspective, the study area of this research focuses on online branding which falls under brand management. A brand refers to a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of items intended to identify the goods or services of one seller as well as differentiate those products from competitors' own (Rowley, 2009; Kotler & Keller, 2008). Deriving its source from branding, online branding therefore is "a brand that has an online presence" (Rowley, 2004; 2009). This study therefore investigates whether the various

universities have a strong brand presence online.

3.0 Methodology

This study used content analysis to explore the online brand elements of universities in Ghana.

Content analysis is a method for "summarizing any form of content by counting various aspects of the content" (www.audiencedialogue.net/kya16a.html). Cole (1988) defined content analysis as a method of analyzing written, verbal or visual communication messages. Content analysis is a research method which uses a systematic and objective ways to describe and quantifying phenomena (Downe-Wamboldt 1992, Sandelowski 1995). According to Elo and

Kynga¨s (2007), content analysis allows researchers to test theoretical issues to improve undestanding of the data. Content analysis helps to separate words into concise content-related categories. When attributes are classified into the same categories, words, phrases and the like share the same meaning (Cavanagh 1997).

The analysis involved a total of 65 accredited universities with functional websites. The universities and the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of their websites are captured in Table 1 (see Appendix A)

The online brand element scale was borrowed from Rowley (2009). The items are captured in table 2.

Table 2: Online brand elements

Code	Online brand elements and measures
	LOGO
BLO1	The university's logo has been prominently displayed on their home page
BLO2	Aside the home page I have noticed the university's logo at other places on their website
	GRAPHICS
BG1	The university has several pictures on its website
BG2	Aside the pictures the university has other images on its website
BG3	The university has its logo at several areas on the website
	TEXT AND COPY
BT1	My university uses words on its home page
BT2	There is a type face on the university's website
BT3	My university consciously welcomes and invites users to its websites
	CURRENCY AND NEWS
BC1	My university updates its website regularly
BC2	Information provided on the website is very current
	COLOR
BCO1	The university has several colors on the website
BCO2	The colors on the website are well combined
BCO3	Please what colors are available on the website
	SHAPES
BS1	My university has several shapes of logo on the website
BS1	Aside logos, there are other shapes on the bank website
	LAYOUT AND COMBINATION OF MESSAGE
BL1	The overall layout of the website communicates a university setting to me
	RELATIONSHIP FEATURES
BR1	The university has e-mail facility on its website
BR2	The university has an online chat room facility
BR3	Anytime I visit the site, the university has new information on the website
BR4	The university always has special offers on its website
BR5	The university reports on its social corporate responsibility activities on its website
BR6	The website loads very fast i.e. less than 4 seconds
BR7	Navigating the website is very fast i.e. less than 4 seconds
BR8	The university gives me feedback on any request I make on the website in less than 1⁄2 a day
BR9	The university website has too much information

Prior to the analysis, the researcher visited the websites of all the 65 Universities and extracted the contents of the homepage, webpages, images and documents available. The scale in table 2 was used to analyze the data collected. All the items/ measures available on the websites were marked and summed up. Percentages for each of the dimensions was calculated.

4.0 Analysis and Presentation of Results

This section analyses and presents the findings. The total number of measures for each of the dimensions of online brand elements were presented by using frequencies and percentages

4.1 Online Brand Elements

Logo (2)

Response	Frequency	Percent
1 / 2	1	1.5
2/2	64	98.5
Total	65	100.0

Table 1

Results from the table 1 indicates that 64 of the universities have a logo displayed on the homepage and elsewhere on its website representing 98.5% whilst 1 representing 1.5% had it only displayed on its webpage. This is an indication that all the websites had their logos well represented on their websites. A logo is the central, identifiable visual element that helps customers discover, share and remember a company's brand. Usually it is in the form of an icon (mark or symbol), logotype, or combination of the two.

Layout and Combination of message (1)

Response	Frequency	Percent
1/1	65	100.0

Table 2

The table 2 shows that all 65 websites visited had a layout and combination of message present representing 100% of the results attained.

Graphics (3)

Response	Frequency	Percent
2/3	7	10.8
3/3	58	89.2
Total	65	100.0

Table 3

The table 3 shows the results collected from the various websites assessed indicated that presence of graphics. 58 of the universities had 3/3 responses, representing 89.2% indicated graphics present on their websites whilst 7 had 2/3 responses representing 10.8%.

Text and Copy (3) Response	Frequency	Percent
None	1	1.5
1/3	1	1.5
2/3	16	24.6
3/3	47	72.3
Total	65	100.0

Table 4

Results attained from the assessment of texts and copy from the university websites yielded results as presented in the table. 47 representing 72.3% had exactly 3/3 of the items present, 16 representing 24.6% also had 2/3 of the items present, l representing 1.5% had 1/3 had none respectively. This feature makes use of words and typeface to welcome and invite visitors to the site. These responses suggest that some university websites do not create room for dialogue with their users.

Currency and News (2)

Response	Frequency	Percent
None	13	20.0
1/2	10	15.4
2/2	42	64.6
Total	65	100.0

Table 5

The table 5 presents response on currency and news based on the question items administered. 42 had 2/2 representing 64.6%. This shows that they are current and have their news page frequently updated, 13 had none representing 20.0% which indicates that though the websites are active they do not have a news feature or not frequently updated, whilst 10 also had 1/2 representing 15.4%. This feature portrays how websites update and upgrade their sites in order to stay current. The rationale is to present visitors with the opportunity to lay hold of

useful and important information to keep them abreast with current happenings and occurrences.

Color (3)

Response	Frequency	Percent
1/3	1	1.5
2/3	7	10.8
3/3	57	87.7
Total	65	100.0

Table 6

The responses in relation to color on the websites assessed as shown in the table indicate that majority 57 had 3/3 representing 87.7%, 7 had 2/3 representing 10.8% whilst only 1 had 1/3 also representing 1.5% of entire pages assessed. Color is an important element in every Web page development. A poor choice of color may ruin the whole Web page's design. The text color must contrast well with the background color. One is not to put light-colored text on a light background or put dark-colored text on a dark background. Otherwise, the users would not be able to read the text. Colour is usually for aesthetic purposes. A good blend and combination of colour attracts and retains users to websites. Colours on the various websites were beautifully combined giving the websites a visual appeal and making the texts readable and noticeable. Outlook of the websites were professional and polished; good quality photograph which added to the visual appeal. Overall, the universities portrayed tangibles strongly on their websites and therefore seemed quite competitive in that area.

Shapes (2)

Response	Frequency	Percent
½	2	3.1
2/2	63	96.9
Total	65	100.0

Table 7

The table 7 on shapes shows that 63 of the websites yielded 2/2 representing 96.9% from the questions assessed whilst 2 had 1/2 representing 3.1%. Shapes are a basic element of design. They are made up of closed contours and three-dimensional objects placed in the design.

Shapes are used to convey meaning and organize information. Shapes can be 2-dimensional or 3-dimensional. Shapes give the websites interactive looks and also define how the websites should like. They also depict the presence of logos and other types of shapes sited elsewhere on the websites to attract users. Evidently all the universities had shapes of logos boldly displayed on their homepages.

Relationship Features (9)

Response	Frequency	Percent
None	1	1.5
4/9	5	7.7
5/9	21	32.3
6/9	22	33.8
7/9	13	20.0
8/9	3	4.6
Total	65	100.0

Table 8

The table shows that 22 of the websites representing 33.8% had 6/9 of the questions assessed on relationship features, 21 had 5/9 representing 32.3%, 13 had 7/9 representing 20.0%, 5 had 4/9 representing 7.7%, 3 had 8/9 representing 4.6% whilst only had none represent 1.5%. Relationship features gives room to user interactivity with the university website and how frequent they are being responded to. In other terms, how best users are being accommodated by websites. To facilitate interaction between universities and their stakeholders, relationship features are considered as one of the important online brand elements. This gives website users the opportunity to engage in a two- way communication with organisations. Findings from the content analysis is a clear signal to universities to step up their game and update their websites regularly in order to be competitive in terms of ranking, enrolment of students and enhancement of image in the eyes and minds of the users

5.0 Discussions

The objective of the study was to conduct a content analysis of online brand elements of universities in Ghana. The online brand elements that were analysed included logo, graphics, text and copy, currency and news, color, shapes, Layout and combination of images and relationship features. The results indicate that the universities use the online brand elements on their websites. It was evident that the Universities are utilizing their websites to brand themselves strongly and effectively. The study confirms that technology has changed and will continue to

change the way corporations or universities use branding and brand communication. Parallel to Clauster, (2001) the study shows that the universities integrate online branding with offline branding (Clen, 2001; Clauster, 2001). It was established that all the universities have logos. The logos are displayed on their homepages and all their press releases. The universities gave the meanings of the logos. They explained what each component of the logo represents. Additionally, the findings of the study show that the universities use graphics in their online branding. The news on their websites were accompanied with photos and images. These visuals add meanings and engage the visitors of the website. Text and copy, news and currency were also present on the websites. The universities use their websites to disseminate information to students and other stakeholders. Although, some of the universities did not update their news on frequent basis, there was evidence that the universities are providing relevant news to the students and other stakeholders. For example, some of the Universities had uploaded lecture timetable and examination table time table on their websites. Also, they had news about their success stories on their websites. Again, it was clear that some of the universities were consistent in terms of the font style and the shape of the images displayed on the website. This indicates some of the universities are consistent in their brand communication. According to Tzokas and Saren (2004) websites serve or have the capabilities to establish and maintain customer loyalty and retention. This study ascertained that many of the universities' websites have relationship features. As Okoe et al. (2015) postulated online branding should be dialogic enough to engage the users and customers. The relationship features of the website help visitors to navigate the websites. There are links which take users to other pages of the websites. This in a way helps to improve the website experience and contributes to brand experience.

In conclusion the universities employed Rowley (2009) elements of online branding in communicating their brand on their websites.

References

Cole F.L. (1988) Content analysis: process and application. Clinical Nurse Specialist 2(1), 53–57

Cavanagh S. (1997) Content analysis: concepts, methods and applications. Nurse Researcher 4, 5–16

Downe-Wamboldt B. (1992) Content analysis: method, applications and issues. Health Care for Women International 13, 313– 321.

Sandelowski M. (1995) Qualitative analysis: what it is and how to begin? Research in Nursing & Health 18, 371–375.

Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of advanced nursing*, *62*(1), 107-115.

APPENDIX A

University Names and Website Links
1. Accra Institute of Technology - www.ait.edu.gh
2. Advance Business College - www.advancebusinesscollege.com
3. African University College of Communications - www.aucc.edu.gh
4. Akim State College – www.asuc.edu.gh
5. All Nations University College - www.anuc.edu.gh
6. Almond University - www.almond.edu.gh
7. Anglican University College of Technology - www.angutech.edu.gh
8. Ashesi University - www.ashesi.edu.gh
9. Baldwin University - www.baldwin.edu.gh
10. Blue Crest University - www.bluecrest.edu.gh
11. Catholic Institute of Business and Technology - www.cibtghana.net
12. Catholic University College of Ghana - www.cug.edu.gh
13. Central University - www.central.edu.gh
14. China Europe International Business School, Ghana - www.ceibs.edu
15. Christ Apostolic University College - www.cauc.edu.gh
16. Christian Service University College - www.csuc.edu.gh
17. International Community College - www.icc.edu.gh
18. Data Link Institute - www.datalink.edu.gh
19. Dominion University College - www.duc.edu.gh
20. Ensign University College - www.ensign.edu.gh
21. Entrepreneurship Training Institute - www.eti.com.gh
22. Evangelical Presbyterian University College - www.epuc.edu.gh
23. Fountain Head Christian University College - www.fcuc.edu.gh
24. Garden City University College - www.gcuc.edu.gh
25. Ghana Baptist University College - www.gbuc.edu.gh

26. Ghana Christian University College - www.ghanacu.org
27. Ghana Institute of Journalism - www.gij.edu.gh
28. Ghana Technology University College - www.gtuc.edu.gh
29. Good News Theological College & Seminary - www.gntes.org
30. Heritage Christian College - www.hcu.edu.gh
31. Institute of Development and Technology Management - www.idtmdev.org
32. Islamic University Ghana - www.iug.edu.gh
33. Jayee University College - www.juc.edu.gh
34. Joyce Ababio College of Creative Design - www.jaccd.edu.gh
35. Kaaf University College - www.kaafuniversitycollege.edu.gh
36. Kessben University College - www.kc.edu.gh
37. Kings University College - www.kuc.edu.gh
38. Knustford University - www.knustford.edu.gh
39. Lancaster University - www.lancaster.edu.gh
40. Maranatha University College - www.muc.edu.org
41. Marshalls University College - www.marshalls.edu.gh
42. Methodist University College Ghana - www.mucg.edu.gh
43. Millar Institute - www.millarinstitute.com
44. Mount Crest University - www.mountcrestuniversity.edu.gh
45. Nobel International Business School - www.nibs.edu.gh
46. Pan African University College - www.pacuc.edu.gh
47. Pentecost University College - www.pentvars.edu.gh
48. Presbyterian University College - www.presbyuniversity.edu.gh
49. Radford University College - www.radforduc.edu.gh
50. Regent University College - www.regent.edu.gh
51. Spiritan University College - www.spiritanuc.edu.gh
52. St. Nicholas Seminary
53. St. Margaret University College - www.smuc.edu.gh
54. Takoradi Technical University - www.ttu.edu.gh
55. University College of Management Studies - www.ucoms.edu.gh
56. Webster University - www.webster.edu/gh
57. West End University College, Ghana - www.weuc.edu.gh
58. Wisconsin International University College, Ghana - www.wiuc-ghana.edu.gh
59. Yeshua Institute of Technology - www.yeshuaghana.net
60. Zenith College, Ghana www.zenithcollegeghana.org
61. Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre - www.kaiptc.org
62. Akrofi-Christaller Institute - www.acighana.org
63. NarhBita College - www.narhbita.com.gh
64. Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration - www.gimpa.edu.gh
65. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology - www.knust.edu.gh
66. University of Education, Winneba - www.uew.edu.gh
67. University of Development Studies - www.uds.edu.gh
68. University of Cape Coast - www.ucc.edu.gh
69. University of Energy and Natural Resources - www.uenr.edu.gh
70. University of Ghana - www.ug.edu.gh
71. University of Health and Allied Sciences - www.uhas.edu.gh 72. University of Mines and Technology - www.umat.edu.gh
73. University of Professional Studies Accra - www.upsa.edu.gh

PROFILE OF MRS RHODALENE AMARTEY

Mrs. Rhodalene Amartey is a seasoned lecturer and a researcher with an insatiable desire for knowledge and ready to impart to others. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and a Masters' degree in Business Administration (Marketing Option) respectively from the University of Ghana. She also holds a professional marketing qualification from the Chartered Institute of Marketing, UK. Currently, she is a final year Doctoral student (PhD) in Business Administration at the Accra Institute of Technology, a private university affiliated with the Open University in Malaysia