CORPORATE BRAND IDENTITY AND SERVICE QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: Corporate brand identity brings businesses within the marketplace into the limelight by making the organisations appealing to investors, stimulating the distinctiveness of the services and products from other competitors, and ensuring continuous relevance in the corporate world. As a result, many organisations strive for a distinct and identifiable identity. This study investigates the effects of corporate brand identity on service quality in selected higher educational institutions. It explores the possible effects of online marketing on service quality and determines the influence of corporate visual identity on brand performance. A federal and a private university in Nigeria have been selected for this study and 356 copies of questionnaire are administered randomly to members of faculty and staff of these universities. 334 copies of the questionnaire are valid at 93.82% response rate, and these are used for the analysis. The findings indicate that the top management of organisations should ensure the adoption of corporate brand identity management for resilience in their performance.

Introduction

Corporate brand identity holds a prominent place in the business environment and it has continued to enjoy wide acceptance there. The term has its foundations in branding which is common to products or services. However in extant kinds of literature, corporate brand identity has been affiliated with corporate organisations, and is determined by the structure, process, scope, and management style of the organisations (Balmer and Gray, 2003). Corporate brand identity, which helps in creating and maintaining standards within the system, is the best way an organisation can communicate to the world and make known its distinctness (Kaplan, 2017). In the same way, higher education (HE) institutions, through brand identity, need to be distinguished from other competitors by informing their customers of their quality service (Dean, Arroyo-Gamez, Punjaisri and Pich, 2016). Importantly, HE offers exclusive services that are of variety, fragile and not

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**2019
Vol.20 No.2**

POLISH JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES
Adebayo O.P., Kehinde O.J., Ogunnaike O.O., Olaoye O.P.,
Adesanya O.D.

measurable, and their customers demand service quality (Mourad, Ennew and Kortam, 2011). Owing to the decline in the educational sector, especially higher educational institutions, in Nigeria presently, the quality of service in HE depends on the performance of employees, the brand, and services which the institutions have to offer to their customers. Therefore, HE institutions have realised that the better the quality of services offered, the higher their chances of having a competitive edge over their competitors. Due to increased internet accessibility of youths, who are their customers, most prominent HE institutions (HEIs) across the world reach out to the audience by marketing their services and communicating about their brand online. They do this through corporate virtual identity. Corporate virtual identity (CVI) is the window through which the world can see the organisation. It creates an imprint of the company's memories in the mind of its customers in form of pictures, signs, emblem, name and slogan, representing what the organisation stands for, the purposes to which it exists, and its distinctness from others (Bosch, Jong and Elving, 2005). If CVI drives an achievement towards a means, and not a means to the end, then is CVI able to significantly influence performance in the organisation? The question then is if HEs' online marketing is sufficient to have positive influence on their service quality. Therefore, the focus of this study is on understanding the impact of an organisation's corporate brand identity on service quality as well as communicating the brand to its customers. Specifically, this study seeks to examine if advertising/online marketing has positive effects on service quality; and to determine the influence of corporate visual identity on brand performance.

Literature review

The indispensability of corporate brand identity management in organisations cannot be overemphasised. Branding has become pivotal to any organisation that considers identity as its topmost priority in achieving organisational performance. Brands hold the destiny of successful companies, Khan (2009) saw companies presently coming to the actualisation of capitalising on brand as an asset that helps organisations profitably achieve their long-term growth objectives within a short time. In building up brands, the organisation not only creates a place for itself to occupy in the mind of the consumers, but also meets up with and goes beyond the expectations of the consumers, and as such, guarantees them of the brand's quality (Kotler and Keller, 2016; Essamri, McKechnie, Winklhofer, 2019). It is imperative for the top executives at the management level to build a strong and resilience brand which is unique and highly valuable to both the organisation and the customers. However, more importantly, there should be more focus on the customer (Balmer, 2012).

For the HEI, the point of focus for the management of the institution should be on building brands that are relational. This starts by making the students have the institution as their dream place to be, by virtue of being attracted to the brand, then goes on through the period of their stay as students, and much more, long after the

students have graduated into the employment market (Dennis, Papagiannidis, Alamanos and Bourlakis, 2016).

Brands, Corporate Brand and Corporate Brand Identity

Brands are all-pervading, and have been part of humanity since the early centuries (Moore and Reid, 2008). The entirety of humans' cultural, spiritual, social and even emotional lives are intertwined with branding. Maurya and Mishra (2012) observed that the word, "brand" has its roots in Old Norse word, "brandr", which means "to burn". In the past, it was common practice for farmers and cowboys to sear their cattle with hot iron to identify and differentiate their cattle from others. The resultant scar appeared in the form of a sign, graphical illustration or symbol. Adir, Adîr and Pascu (2012) expatiated on how companies eventually adopted this practice in the creation of unique monograms that helped to establish an interaction between them and the society. The American Marketing Association (2012) defined brand as an identity which can be in the name, slogan, emblem, or their culture that is well recognised and that distinguishes a product or service from others within the industry. Adegbuyi, Ajagbe, Kehinde, Adegbuyi and Akande (2015) expatiate further that brands are memoirs that the consumers have about the organisation. Therefore, a brand makes products/services to stand out among others. However, Alizadeh, Moshabaki, Hoseini, and Naiej (2014) had a different perspective in their definition of brand, by extending it beyond a product or service which a brand has been most associated with, and adding that it could also be a place or person which is 'identifiable' in such a way that consumer or user can see relevance or unique value that matches their expectations.

Just at the turn of the new century, industrialisation played a major role in the transformation of most companies, as they found a more refined and formal way to branding. Just as branding became more professional and started involving consultants, at the inception of the 90s, the concept, "corporate brand", came into prominence, as experts in the field began using it (Khan, 2009). According to Shahri (2011), a corporate brand is the technicality of an identity coupled with a sign or symbol that is known by a design, which can also be characterised by the combined usage of certain features. Organisations believe that these features will capture the mind of intended target and thereby distinguish them (the organisations) and, thus, enlarge their market share in the already saturated market.

Balmer (2012), however, defined corporate brand as a unique identification that pertains to a single personality or multiple personalities. He further illustrated how companies are entwined with the various parties that play active roles that form a corporate brand "covenant". Moreover, he noted that corporate brand is not just all about the attractiveness of the image but the concise representation of the organisation in the mind of the targeted audience.

Over the years, several views on corporate identity had been projected in marketing, organisation behaviour and even psychology (Melewer and Cornelius, 2008). In fact, there are disparities in the definition of corporate identity as many researchers tend to shy away from giving precise definitions to the concept (Bidin,

Muhaimi and Bolong, 2014). However, while earlier writers were confined to definitions relating corporate identity to symbols, logos and signs, recent writers tend to have a wider approach to the concept, which they posit entails every other aspect of an organisation that projects and communicates the right image to the public through effective communication behaviour. For instance, Balmer (2012) explains that corporate identity is as all about how every organisation is uniquely defined by its in-built characteristics which make up its identity. Munyoro and Magada (2016) likewise note that corporate brand identity is the totality of employees and the management's perceptions, feelings and thoughts about their organisation. These perspectives are based on the principles and set values that they place on the organisation.

Higher Education Institutions

Generally, HEIs are the various post-secondary institutions where education or higher knowledge can be acquired. Institutions such as, polytechnics, colleges of education, universities, and research/academic institutes can fit in this category. In the context of this study, HEI represents the university. The university system is tripartite, as it involves teaching (impacting knowledge), research (seeking new frontiers) and community development (giving back to the host or immediate communities). Therefore, Çelik, Oktay, Özen, Karaaslan and Yarbaşı (2018) opined that higher education institutions are to work towards building a more robust curriculum that will enrich their graduates' skills and capabilities, as well as prepare them for the workplace and increase their employability. Higher education institutions can build up their brands' corporate identities by maintaining the loyalty of their stakeholders (Valitov, 2014). Erdoğmuş and Ergun (2016) note that students are the major stakeholders, and so, it is the responsibility of the university to device a technical approach to initiate, create, and sustain a lifelong bond with the students, thereby, ensuring that the university's brand remains in their cognition.

Corporate Visual Identity and Brand Performance

Annette, Boshe, Menno and Elving (2005) stated that corporate visual identity comprises the name, symbol, topography, colour and slogan that an organisation employs in communicating to its stakeholders via physical objects such as branded corporate clothing, company buildings, vehicles. The image that projects the business is centred round its corporate visual identity system (Melewar and Saunders, 1998; Abratt and Kleyn, 2012). Visual identity plays a prominent role by showcasing the intrinsic value of the brand or the organisation while communicating and reinforcing the brand's value (Coleman, 2011). It is a way an organisation expresses itself during a period of transitioning of identity, such as name changing or adaptation to the more innovative corporate image (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006). An organisation's major purpose for corporate visual identity is to identify and recognise the roles of its stakeholders and to situate the organisation's advantage over its competitors, in order to command a larger market share (Bartholmé, Roland and Melewar, 2014). Jabbar (2014) adds that among its

several functions, corporate visual identity acts as a symbol for an organisation, making the organisation conspicuous to all as it expresses the organisation's structure and also enhances its identity. Corporate visual identity is fundamental in the process of projecting an organisation's corporate identity (Melewar and Bartholmé, 2011b).

An organisation's identity is tailored towards enhancing brand performance. Khyzer, Ahmed, Shafi and Shaheen (2011) established that brand performance is based on how an organisation's product performs in the market, the brand's financial strength and its returns on dividends to shareholders. In addition, organisational performance is the setting of organisational objectives and achieving them by the proper use of resources (Maduenyi, Oke, Fadeyi and Ajagbe, 2015). Jain, Apple and Ellis (2015) opined that there is always an intended outcome which an organisation sets to accomplish; this is measured as organisational performance. To outdo competition, performance cannot be over-emphasised, as it is significantly required for delivery of set objectives (Singh, Chetty and Karodia, 2016).

Advertising/Online Marketing and Service Quality

There is the need for organisations to constantly give clear and comprehensive information about the activities within the organisation, and what it has to offer that will give a better value over competitors, this is done through advertisement. It is the ability to persuade the targeted audience to one's side and to earn their brand loyalty (Aka, Okorie and Kehinde, 2015). Kotler and Armstrong (2016) suggested that organisations incorporate and harmonise their marketing channels to bring a standard, unambiguous, appealing and convincing message in respect of company and the products. Kotler and Keller (2016) also noted that brand contacts received by a customer are relevant and should be consistent over time. Advertising through various channels is the most effective instrument to showcase one's brand across the market consistently. This is done by special slash/discount in prices, companies having a face to face contact interaction with customers at special events, trade fairs, seasonal sales, buzz marketing, product marketing and niche marketing which will resonate with the consumers (Mongkol, 2014). However, due to advancements in technology, approaches to business have changed over time from the conventional way of advertising by word of mouth, beyond the print media, and to the online platform to capture more audience (Kehinde, 2011). Moreover, Ogbuji, Onuoha and Owhorchukwu (2016) asserted marketing service performance as the standard measure of certain market strategy in terms of profitability, sales growth, customer loyalty, market shares, among others. The essence of advertising/online marketing is to promote the awareness of the product/service to the target market and also to captivate their interest (Mubushar, Haider, and Iftikhar, 2013).

There is no definite definition for service quality, as it is subject to perception. In other words, it is subject to each customer's perception of the quality of service expected, and this varies from customer to customer. But there is a standard measure to gauge service quality, and this is based on tangibility (pleasure derived

from the physical environment of the business environment), reliability (the organisation's ability to precisely keep to its word), responsiveness (the ability to be sensitive and quick in response to customers' needs or in unique cases, being able to rightly predict customers' needs), assurance (giving the customers no issues to be concerned about and, in turn, earning their loyalty), empathy (treating the customers individually based on their peculiarities) (Al-Ababneh, Masadeh, Al-Shakhsheer and Habiballah, 2018). Nevertheless, quality can be pronounced if customers are able to get their desires met beyond average measure in the measurement gauge, and, in some cases, beyond their expectations. Summarily, organisations need service quality for continuous relevance in the business environment (Esmaeilpour and Hoseini, 2017).

Methodology

The survey research method was adopted for this study, with copies of structured questionnaires distributed among the respondents from two selected higher institutions. The population of the study was 3234 and was based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) research sample size table. 356 copies of questionnaire were administered randomly to members of faculty and staff in a federal university and a private university in South-West Nigeria. Of the 356 questionnaires administered, 334 copies were retrieved and considered valid, representing 93.82% response rate; these were used for analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPPSS version 23) was used to analyse the data collected, using appropriate test statistics based on the nature of each of the hypotheses.

Hypothesis One

i**.** Advertising/online marketing does not have a positive effect on service quality

Regression Decision Rule

The sig.value is less than 0.05 at 95% confidence level and at 0.01 at 99% confidence level, it is significant to accept the alternate hypothesis while the null hypothesis will be rejected and at reversal if the other way round.

Table 1a Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.591[a]	.349	.347	.621

a. Predator: (constant), Advertising/Online Marketing

From Table 1a: The relationship between advertising/online marketing and service quality is at r=0.591, R square = 0.349. This means that 34.9% level of variance of adverting/online marketing (dependent variable) can be predicted in service quality which is the independent variable.

POLISH JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES
Adebayo O.P., Kehinde O.J., Ogunnaike O.O., Olaoye O.P., Adesanya O.D.

**2019
Vol.20 No.2**

Table 1b ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	68.651	1	68.651	178.102	.000[b]
	Residual	127.972	332	.385		
	Total	196.623	333			
a. Dependent Variable: Service Quality						
b. Predictors: (Constant) Advertising/On-line Marketing						

The F-value is calculated by dividing the mean square regression (68.651) by the mean square residual (0.385) to get F-value at 178.102. This indicates that it is statistically significant (Sig =.000), therefore, the null hypothesis will not be accepted. On the other hand, the alternate hypothesis will be accepted because advertising/online marketing is a significant predictor of service quality at F (1,333) = 178.102.

Table 1c Coefficients

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.668	.099		6.763	.000
	Advertising/ Online Marketing	.642	.048	.591	13.345	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Service Quality

The table revealed the contributions of advertising/online marketing to service quality and their level of significance. (β =.642; t=13.345; p<0.001).
Decision: Since the significance level is less than 0.01, then, we accept the rule of rejecting the null hypothesis and accept the alternate. It can, therefore, be concluded that advertising/online marketing determines service quality.
Hypothesis Two
ii. Corporate visual identity does not have positive effect on brand performance.

**Table 1d
Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.441[a]	.195	.192	.684
a. Predictors: (Constant), corporate visual identity				

From Table 1d: The relationship between corporate visual identity and brand performance is at r=0 .441, R square = 0.195. This means that 19.5% level of variance of corporate visual identity (dependent variable) can be predicted in brand performance which is the independent variable.

Table 1e ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	37.610	1	37.610	80.379	.000[b]
	Residual	155.343	332	.468		
	Total	192.953	333			

a. Dependent Variable: brand performance.
b. Predictors: (Constant), corporate visual identity

The F-value is the Mean Square Regression (37.610) divided by the Mean Square Residual (0.468), yielding F=80.379.

Decision: This indicates that it is statistically significant (Sig =.000), therefore, the null hypothesis will not be accepted. Thus, corporate visual identity is a significant predictor of brand performance at $F_{(1,333)} = 80.379$. Hence, the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Table 1f Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.047	.105		9.977	.000
	CVI	.480	.053	.441	8.965	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Performance

Table 1f: revealed the contributions of corporate visual identity to brand performance and their level of significance (β =.480; t=8.965; p<0.01,).

Decision: Since the significance level is less than 0.01, then, we accept the rule of rejecting the null hypothesis and accept the alternate. It can, therefore, be concluded that corporate visual identity determines brand performance.

Results and Analysis

The findings of this study are presented below in line with the objectives of the study:

 (i) To examine if brand advertising/online marketing has positive effects on service quality

The findings of the study are based on statistical data analyses and hypotheses testing. The descriptive analysis of data reveals that a direct positive relationship exists between advertising/online marketing and service quality. In other words, the

POLISH JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES
Adebayo O.P., Kehinde O.J., Ogunnaike O.O., Olaoye O.P.,
Adesanya O.D.

2019
Vol.20 No.2

alternate hypothesis which states that there is a direct positive relationship between advertising/online marketing and service quality is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. It was observed from the empirical analysis that both variables, advertising/online marketing and service quality had a good level of significance with each other. The variable is at a significance level which is less than 0.05; then, we accept the rule of rejecting the null hypothesis and accept the alternate. In examining service quality in tourism industries, Melo, Hernández-Maestro and Muñoz-Gallego (2017) found out the positive correlation between online advertising and service quality as reflected in the comments of the consumers, and this determines the strong link towards customers' retention and the organisational performance. Ashill, Shao and Carruthers' (2009) also reveal some interesting findings regarding the relationship; however, they examined this from the perspective of internet banking service quality, given that the performance of the service quality is a function of the quality of interactions between customers and service providers. Following the proposal of George and Kumar (2014), the efficient use of online banking service systems to relay information to their customers attributes to various dimensions of service quality that give reliability and secured service. Therefore, positive relationships exist between the variables. Furthermore, the empirical analysis revealed that respondents strongly generally agreed to have a higher level of educational services as well-branded than the quality of the service offered being proportional to the organisation's brand identity.

(ii) To determine the influence of brand corporate visual identity on brand performance

The findings of this research reveal that corporate visual identity has influence on brand performance. The alternate hypothesis which states that corporate visual identity has positive effects on brand performance is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected based on statistical analyses. The descriptive analysis of data also shows that from the percentage distribution of responses, most respondents agree and strongly agree with the statements presented which relate to organisations' corporate visual identity towards building a reputable brand and perceived social image for the organisation. Corporate visual identity is measured by brand experience, corporate visual logo, and corporate identity. Foroudi, Dinnie, Kitchen, Melewar and Foroudi's (2016) study conducted on the antecedence of planned brand identity in higher education concluded that organisations commit a lot of resources to developing a favourable brand logo or image to aptly reflect the brand's identity, create a positive image, thereby, creating a positive relationship between brand image and performance. Earlier, the findings of Foroudi, Melewar and Gupta (2014) suggested that the more favourable the brand visual identity, the more it elicits right attitudes from the consumers, hence aiding performance. Jabbar (2014) also noted how in the telecom industry, various corporate visual elements contribute greatly on the performances of brands to differentiate them from other competitors.

In the present study, brand performance was measured by the perceived social image of the organisation towards building a reputable brand. Empirical analysis revealed that respondents expressed a higher level of satisfaction with the organisation through corporate visual identity which is used in building a reputable brand and perceived social image of the organisation. Therefore, corporate visual identity has positive influence on brand performance.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research work was to have a deeper insight about the concept of corporate brand identity by understudying the effects that its full utilisation and management has on the service quality of an organisation. Corporate brand identity is, without controversy, an indispensable asset if any organisation is able to build and manage it well, as it will definitely give the organisation an edge over its competitors. From the findings, the relevance of this construct was confirmed, given its ability to increase the overall performance of the organisation, which in turn, influences the employees' satisfaction, service quality, brand performance, employees' commitment and retention in the organisation. These findings have implications for both scholars and management of higher education institutions. From a theoretical perspective, the present study enriches corporate brand identity research by addressing some of the limitations regarding service quality and other brand identity studies on corporate visual identity and brand performance. In examining the consumers' (students) perspectives, this study adopted an empirical perspective, which complements reviewed extant literature. To this end, the findings are especially relevant since before now, the roles of the consumers in service quality have been largely ignored, despite their contributory roles and their importance in the creation and communication of the organisation's corporate brand identity management.

University top management executives should ensure the adoption of corporate brand identity management into their system. Basically, this will advantageously showcase the institution over competitors in the business environment. Instances of elements to be showcased may include cutting edge research, teaching and social services.
There should be appropriate use of advertising/online marketing, which is to target the online audience with clear, consistent and coordinated messages. Reaching one's audience via various communication channels and strategies is essential to building brand identity. It should, however, be noted that brand communication is a cross-functional obligation of all the departments in the institution. Therefore, there should be a major investment towards building and communicating the brand to ensure a corporate brand identity.
The right/applicable use and the awareness of corporate visual identity elements to the stakeholders such as the symbols, logo, font, and premises help to speak more about the institution and promotes recognition. Corporate visual identity plays the

prominent role in enhancing brand recognition and in due course, improve brand awareness to improve on the customer-based brand equity and overall brand performance.

In the course of carrying out this study, several limitations that suggest directions for further research were encountered. Firstly, this study was conducted in the context of the higher educational sector which has its peculiarities which are not shared by organisations in other sectors. Therefore, the result is limited to this context and cannot be a generalised concept over corporate brand identity management. Further research should, therefore, cover a larger scope than the present scope of study which only covers South-West Nigeria, by considering the applicability of its findings to other economic sectors and geographical regions of the country.

Furthermore, future research can build upon the present study's findings by examining the perceived behavioural attitude of consumers, as regards the identification of brands in the higher educational context, and the extent of brand identification to determine brand attachment and loyalty. An additional stream of further research could include examining how corporate brand identities are differently managed across universities and their effects on the introduction of other variables of interest, such as the organisation's culture.

On a final note, the current study is a step further towards a more robust knowledge and understanding of the significant role of corporate brand identity management on service quality and its effects on brand performance. It is believed that the findings presented in this research will serve as a guide during universities' management decisions.

Acknowledgement

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TOŻSAMOŚĆ MARKI KORPORACYJNEJ I JAKOŚĆ USŁUG W ZARZĄDZANIU SZKOLNICTWEM WYŻSZYM

Streszczenie: Tożsamość marki korporacyjnej stawia firmy na rynku w centrum uwagi, czyniąc organizacje atrakcyjnymi dla inwestorów, stymulując wyróżniające się usługi i produkty od innych konkurentów oraz zapewniając ciągłe znaczenie w świecie korporacyjnym. W rezultacie wiele organizacji dąży do wyraźnej i możliwej do zidentyfikowania tożsamości. Niniejsze badanie bada wpływ tożsamości marki korporacyjnej na jakość usług w wybranych szkołach wyższych. Bada możliwy wpływ marketingu internetowego na jakość usług i określa wpływ tożsamości wizualnej firmy na wyniki marki. Do tego badania wybrano federalny i prywatny uniwersytet w Nigerii, a 356 kopii kwestionariusza jest losowo podawanych członkom wykładowców i pracownikom tych uniwersytetów. 334 egzemplarze kwestionariusza są ważne przy wskaźniku odpowiedzi 93,82% i są one wykorzystywane do analizy. Ustalenia wskazują, że najwyższe kierownictwo organizacji powinno zapewnić przyjęcie zarządzania tożsamością marki korporacyjnej w celu zapewnienia odporności ich wyników

Słowa kluczowe: tożsamość marki firmy, jakość usług; Reklama online, wirtualna tożsamość korporacyjna, wyższa instytucja edukacyjna.

高等教育管理中的企业品牌识别和服务质量

摘要:企业品牌标识通过使组织吸引投资者,激发其他竞争对手的服务和产品的独特性并确保在企业界的持续关联性,使市场中的企业成为众人瞩目的焦点。结果,许多组织都在努力争取独特且可识别的身份。本研究调查了选定的高等教育机构中企业品牌标识对服务质量的影响。它探讨了在线营销对服务质量的可能影响,并确定了企业视觉识别对品牌绩效的影响。已选择尼日利亚的一所联邦大学和一所私立大学进行这项研究,并且向这些大学的教职员工随机分配了356份问卷。

334份问卷有效率为93.82%,用于分析。调查结果表明,组织的最高管理层应确保采用公司品牌身份管理,以增强其绩效。

关键字:企业品牌标识,服务质量;在线广告,企业虚拟身份,高等教育机构