

Research Article

## A Study of the Strength of Private Universities in Rwanda Towards their Sustainable Growth Evidence from Selected Private Universities in Kigali City

Butera Edison<sup>1</sup> and Gatoya Habimana Samuel<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Butera Edison and Mr. Gatoya Habimana Samuel; Adventist University of Central Africa, P.O. Box: 2461 Kigali Rwanda; Email: buteraedison@gmail.com

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**Abstract:** The study intends to assess the Strength of Selected Private Universities in Rwanda towards their Sustainable Growth Using evidence from Selected Private Universities in Kigali City. The choice of this topic was inspired by the constant affirmation by various government officials in Rwanda through their speeches that generally, higher learning institutions do not perform well due to the inability of lecturers' participation in research and other professional growth activities since they are too busy looking for money through part-timing in various universities. This in turn has negatively affected the graduates from these institutions since they are not able to effectively perform their assigned duties in the job market. In year 2018 some universities and university programs were discredited by Rwanda Ministry of Education and requested to stop their operations in Rwanda. In a year 2020, the University of Kibungo (UNIK) formerly known as the Institute of agriculture, technology and education of Kibungo (INATEK), has been permanently shut down over administrative challenges that have compromised the quality of education offered at the school. On July 5, 2020 Ministry of Education closed permanently two more institutions of higher learning over quality issues. The latest colleges to be shut are Indangaburezi College of Education (ICE) and the Christian University of Rwanda. Thus, the researchers want to assess the effect The Strength of Selected private Universities in Rwanda Towards their Sustainable Growth. Case study is Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA) and University of Lay Adventist of Kigali (UNILAK). It is assumed that there is no significant effect between each indicator of Strength in Selected Rwandan Private Universities on their Sustainable Growth. The Strength was assessed through the perception of Lecturers in terms of: Management, Marketing, Finance and Services/Operations process. By using convenient sampling technics, researcher randomly selected 17 lecturers from Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA) and 15 lecturers from University of Lay Adventist of Kigali (UNILAK) and a total of 32 regular lecturers from AUCA and UNILAK answered the questionnaire. The researchers used survey questionnaire. For data analysis, Mean, standard deviation and multiple regressions was also computed; analyzed and interpreted. The researcher gave different recommendations that will strengthen not only the individual outcomes of academic staff but also individual outcomes in private universities.

**Keywords:** University Strength, University Sustainable Growth.

### Problem and Literature Review

Kayiranga Mecky Merchiere (August 17, 2017) said that high education council (HEC) had permanently shut down some Universities and university programs operating in Rwanda after an academic audit that was conducted and found that some universities and university programs operating in Rwanda did not fulfill all requirements for accreditation. This

permanent shut down brought a negative impact to parents, students, staff and faculty of the affected institutions. Universities that were permanently shut down in Rwanda included: International University, Singhad Technical Education Society (STES), Mahatma Ghandi University-Rwanda and Nile Source polytechnic of applied arts. Some programs of University of Technology and Arts of Byumba (UTAB), Open University of Tanzania, University of Gitwe, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Institut Catholique de Kabgayi (ICK) and Institut d'Enseignement Supérieur de Ruhengeri (INES-Ruhengeri) were temporarily suspended.

Byishimo Bertrand (June 30, 2020) confirms that the University of Kibungo (UNIK) formerly known as the Institute of agriculture, technology and education of Kibungo (INATEK), had been permanently shut down over administrative challenges that compromised the quality of education offered at the institution. Ashimwe Edwin (July 6, 2020) says that the Ministry of Education on Sunday, July 5, 2020 announced the permanent closure of two more institutions of higher learning over quality issues. The latest colleges to be shut are Indangaburezi College of Education (ICE) and the Christian University of Rwanda. These universities had provisional licenses but failed to fulfill the requirements for them to be accredited.

Umurerwa Emma-Marie (May 6, 2018) stated that the problem of quality education in all levels of education in Rwanda especially in higher learning institutions has been noticed by many as being at the brink of death. She declared that results of exams of job seekers showed a strong weakness of current university graduates. This was affirmed when 2000 nursing graduates who were tested by nursing council and 927 failed the exam. This was collaborated with the 180 graduates in law who were tested by lawyers' council but only 80 candidates passed the exam to become legal practitioners. She also emphasized that Dr. Emmanuel Muvunyi the Director of Higher Education Council (HEC) noted that despite all efforts to uplift the quality of higher education in Rwanda, institutions are not implementing the curriculum as expected.

Research is one of the requirements for every academic staff to keep them up-to-date with the current trend in academia. However, David Eugène Marshall (2018) says that this is not done since academic staffs complain about insufficient financial assistance from universities to conduct research while university administrators also criticize the academic staff for being non-starters. It has also been noted that many academic staff seem to be overlarded because they have contracts to part time in more than one university.

It is therefore against this background that the researchers assessed the "Strength of Private Universities in Rwanda Towards their Sustainable Growth. Evidence from Selected Private Universities in Kigali City"

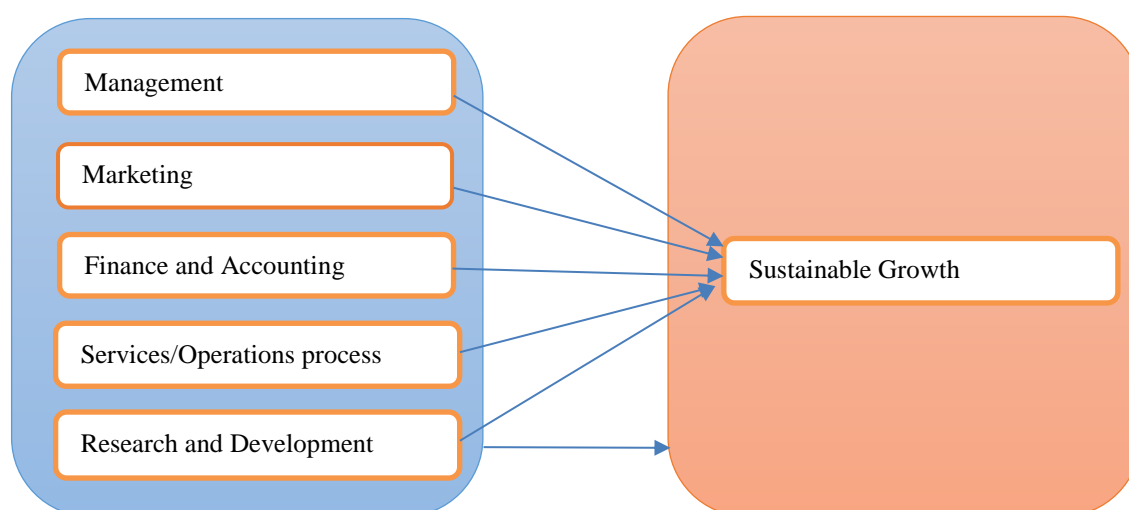
### **Objectives of the study**

The general objective of this study was to assess the "Effect of Personnel individual Mechanisms in Private universities towards their individual Outcomes. Evidence from Selected Universities in Kigali City". Specifically the study sought to find out:

1. The level of perceptions of respondents on the strength of private universities in terms of: Management, Marketing, Finance, Services/Operations process and research & Development.
2. The level of perceptions of respondents on Sustainable Growth

3. The level of effect between each indicator of Strength in private universities and Sustainable Growth.
4. The level of effect between Strength in private universities and Sustainable Growth.

### Conceptual Framework



### Scope of the Study

The study assessed the “Strength of private Universities in Rwanda Towards their Sustainable Growth. Evidence from Selected Private Universities in Kigali City”, which included Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA) and University of Lay Adventist of Kigali (UNILAK). Their strength was indicated by Management, Marketing, Finance and Accounting, Services/Operations process and Research and Development. The study used survey questionnaire and interviews. The Population of the study was composed of all academic staff of from the selected universities.

### Material and Research Methodology

The study assessed the Strength of Selected Private Universities in Rwanda towards their Sustainable Growth. Selected Evidences were Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA) and University of Lay Adventist of Kigali (UNILAK). The study was conducted quantitatively and qualitatively. It used survey questionnaire. The population of the study was composed by all academic staff of AUCA and UNILAK. Through convenient sampling techniques, researchers sampled 18 academic staff of AUCA and 15 academic staff of UNILAK as respondents of the questionnaire. Strength of private universities which was the independent variable was assessed in terms of: Management, Marketing, Finance, Services/Operations process and research and Development. Dependent variable was the Sustainable Growth of private Universities. Evidence from Selected Universities of Kigali City. The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale. The researchers solicited the opinion of various academic staff from the Adventist University of Central Africa. With their expertise and experiences, they gave various objective advices on the contents and judgment for the suitability and relevance of the instrument for the study.

**Strength of Private Universities:** This variable was measured by using a questionnaire of four-point Likert scale and asked participants to rate according to the level of agreement or disagreement (4= Agree; 3= Tend to agree; 2= Tend to disagree and 1= disagree). The questionnaire consisted of 33 questions which provided scores for Management, Marketing,

Finance and Accounting, Services/Operations process and Research and Development. Reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha which is a measure of internal consistency that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. The finding of Cronbach's alpha coefficients are .902, .820, .808, .911 and .914, respectively. This means that the questionnaire is reliable since all the coefficients are greater than 0.60.

**Sustainable Growth:** This variable was measured by using a four-point Likert scale and asked participants to rate according to the level of agreement or disagreement (4= Agree ; 3= Tend to agree; 2= Tend to disagree and 1= disagree). The questionnaire consisted of 5 questions that provided scores for Sustainable Growth. Reliability estimates based on the Alpha coefficient was .851. Therefore the questionnaire based in these questions is reliable. Data was gathered by the researchers in July, 2019. Data collected was processed through the computation of mean, standard deviation (SD), coefficient of variation (CV). Results were then analyzed and interpreted. The hypotheses were tested using the correlation coefficient and multiple linear regression. An item that had a statistical mean value of perception of respondents between 1 and 1.99 was considered as weak, an item that had statistical mean value of perception of respondents between 2.00 and 2.999 was considered as moderate and an item that had a statistical mean value of perception of respondents between 3.00 and 4 was considered as strongly agreeable as perceived by the respondents. An item that had standard deviation (SD) of perception of respondents less than 0.5 indicated the homogeneity of perception of respondents around its mean while an item that had standard deviation (SD) of perception of respondents greater than 0.5 indicated the heterogeneity of perception of respondents around its mean. An item that had a coefficient of variation (CV) of perception of respondents less than 20% indicated the homogeneity of perception of respondents around its mean while an item that had coefficient of variation (CV) of perception of respondents greater than 20% indicated the heterogeneity of perception of respondents around its mean.

## Results and Discussions

**Table 1. Management in Private Universities**

Questions Asked	Mean	SD	CV
Does the university use strategic-management concepts	3.13	0.87	0.28
Are company objectives and goals measurable and well communicated?	3.09	0.82	0.26
Do administrators at all hierarchical levels plan effectively?	3.16	0.72	0.23
Do administrators delegate authority well?	3.09	0.78	0.25
Is the university's structure appropriate?	3.34	0.79	0.24
Are job descriptions and job specifications clear?	2.97	0.86	0.29
Is academic staff morale high?	2.72	0.92	0.34
Is the rate of employee turnover low?	2.91	0.96	0.33
Are organizational remunerations mechanisms effective?	2.53	0.76	0.3
My job provides the things that I value	3.25	0.76	0.23
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.02</b>	<b>0.82</b>	
Source: Primary Data, 2019			

Table 1 shows that having a university that uses strategic-management concepts, having company objectives and goals that are measurable and well communicated, having administrators at all hierarchical levels that plan effectively, having administrators who

delegate authority well, having an appropriate university's structure and having a job that provides the things that academic staff value are all strongly perceived by lecturers ( $3 \leq \text{Mean} \leq 4$ ) but their standard deviations and coefficient of variations confirm the heterogeneity of perceptions of respondents around each mean ( $SD > 0.5$  and  $CV > 20\%$ ).

According to interview some academic staff do not fully appreciate the way private universities are managed. Some Private Universities have no strategic plans. Others have strategic plans but do not use them. Abraham Lincoln mentioned by David R. Fred (2009) declares: "if we know where we are and something about how we got there, we might see where we are trending and if the outcomes which lie naturally in our course are unacceptable, to make timely change.

Joel Ross and Michael Kami stated by David R. Fred (2009) confirms that without a strategy an organization is like a ship without a rudder, going around in circles. It's like a tramp, it has no place to go. Having clear job descriptions and job specifications, having high academic staff morale, having a low rate of employee turnover and having effective organizational remunerations mechanisms were all moderately perceived with academic staff that were assessed ( $2 \leq \text{Mean} \leq 3$ ). But their standard deviations and coefficient of variations confirm the heterogeneity of perceptions of respondents around each mean ( $SD > 0.5$  and  $CV > 20\%$ ). Interview and observation revealed also low academic staff morale. If they had else where to go and work, majority would have already gone. Private Universities have a high experienced academic staff turnover.

**Table 2. Marketing in Private Universities**

Questions Asked	Mean	SD	CV
Is the University positioned well among competitors?	3.41	0.71	0.21
Has the university's market share been increasing?	3.13	0.83	0.27
Are quality education and customer service good?	3.28	0.73	0.22
Are the university's services priced appropriately?	3.22	0.75	0.23
Does the university have an effective promotion, advertising, and publicity strategy?	3.03	0.74	0.24
Are marketing, planning, and budgeting effective?	2.91	0.69	0.24
Do the university's marketing administrators have adequate experience and training?	2.78	0.66	0.24
<b>Overall</b>	<b>21.75</b>	<b>5.11</b>	
Source: Primary Data, 2019			

Table 2 shows that having a university that is positioned well among competitors, having a university's market share which keeps increasing, having quality education and good customer service, having a university's services that are priced appropriately and having effective university promotion, advertising, and publicity strategy are all perceived strongly ( $3 \leq \text{Mean} \leq 4$ ). But with heterogeneity of perceptions around means ( $SD > 0.5$  and  $CV > 20\%$ ). Interview revealed also the great competitions among private universities with public Universities and among themselves and there is a constant decrease of the number students among private universities.

Rural private universities suffer too much from this decrease of students, some programs in some rural universities have already closed their doors. Private universities have marketing departments. But interview revealed that marketing plan and budgeting are not well done due



to marketing workers who are not trained enough. That is why having marketing, planning, and effective budgeting, having university's marketing administrators who have adequate experience and training were all perceived moderately ( $2 \leq \text{Mean} \leq 3$ ).

**Table 3. Finance/Accounting in Private Universities**

Questions Asked	Mean	SD	CV
Does the university raise well needed short-term and long term capital through School fees?	3.13	0.79	0.25
Does the university pay its short term obligations on time?	3.03	0.9	0.3
Are budgeting control and procedures effective?	3.13	0.75	0.24
Does the university have good relations with its stakeholders?	3.44	0.62	0.18
Are the university's financial administrators experienced and well trained?	3.44	0.62	0.18
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.23</b>	<b>3.68</b>	
Source: Primary Data, 2019			

Table 3 shows that having university that raise well needed short-term and long term capital through School fees, paying short term obligations on time, having effective budgeting control and procedures, having good relations with its stakeholders, and having university's financial administrators who experienced and well trained are all perceived strongly ( $3 \leq \text{Mean} \leq 4$ ). But Standard deviation and coefficient of variation confirms heterogeneity of perception around means. Except having good relations with stakeholders, and having university's financial administrators who experienced and well trained which have CV which is less than 20% Means that though, finance/accounting in Private Universities shows generally the strength, this strength is not perceived by all.

**Table 4. Service/Operation Process in Private Universities**

Questions Asked	Mean	SD	CV
Are supplies of university materials reliable and reasonable?	3.16	0.72	0.23
Are facilities, equipment, machinery, and offices in good condition?	3.28	0.68	0.21
Are academic staff-control policies and procedures effective?	3.19	0.69	0.22
Are quality-control policies and procedures effective?	3.09	0.69	0.22
Are facilities, resources, and markets strategically located?	3.25	0.76	0.23
Does the university have technological competencies?	3.44	0.62	0.18
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.23</b>	<b>0.69</b>	
Source: Primary Data, 2019			

Table 4 shows that having reliable and reasonable supplies of university materials, having facilities, equipment, machinery, and offices in good condition, having effective academic staff-control policies and procedures, having effective quality-control policies and procedures, having facilities, resources, and markets that are located strategically and having

a competent university technology are all perceived strongly ( $3 \leq \text{Mean} \leq 4$ ). But Standard deviation and coefficient of variation confirms heterogeneity of perception around means.

Means though Service/Operation Process in private universities shows generally the strength, this strength is not perceived by all.

**Table 5. Research and Development (R&D) in Private Universities**

Questions Asked	Mean	SD	CV
Does the university have adequate R&D facilities?	2.78	0.94	0.34
Are the university's R&D personnel well qualified?	3.03	0.82	0.27
Are R&D resources allocated effectively?	2.59	0.95	0.36
Are management Information Systems adequate?	3.09	0.86	0.28
Is communication between R&D and other university units effective?	2.81	0.97	0.34
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>0.91</b>	
Source: Primary Data, 2019			

Table 5 shows that having adequate R&D facilities, having effective allocation of R&D resources and having good communication between R&D and other university units effective are all moderately perceived by respondents ( $2 \leq \text{Mean} \leq 3$ ).

But this moderate perception is not for every respondents since their standard deviations and coefficient of variations confirm the heterogeneity of perceptions of respondents around each mean ( $SD > 05$  and  $CV > 20\%$ ).

**Table 6. Sustainable Growth**

Questions Asked	Mean	SD	CV
The number of students keeps increasing	2.94	0.88	0.3
Is the number of the relevant educational facilities keeps increasing?	3.22	0.75	0.23
Curriculum of the study keeps being improved	3.34	0.75	0.22
Recommendations of High Education Council are well communicated and implemented	3.44	0.67	0.19
The University has a positive financial profitability trend.	2.53	0.92	0.36
Administrators of this University implement well their plan	2.94	0.91	0.31
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.07</b>	<b>0.81</b>	
Source: Primary Data, 2019			

In order to determine which Strength of Private Universities had a statistically significant relationship to Sustainable Growth, we used a simultaneous multiple regression model for this study.

This method is typically used to explore and maximize prediction (Pedhazur, 1997). Normal probability plots of residuals and multicollinearity were constructed to test assumptions.

**Table 7. Coefficients and Multicollinearity, Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF): Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-.982	1.796	-	-.546	.589		
Management	-.048	.078	-.078	-.614	.544	.338	2.959
Marketing	.368	.171	.352	2.147	.041	.201	4.969
Finance/ Accounting	.119	.168	.090	.709	.485	.339	2.946
Service/ Operation	.306	.162	.286	1.884	.071	.235	4.255
R&D	.347	.106	.366	3.283	.003	.437	2.291
a. Dependent Variable: Sustainability Growth							

Table 7 displays the checks for multicollinearity of the predictive variables. The tolerance levels and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The tolerance levels should be not below to 0.1 and the VIF scores should be not greater than 10. Therefore the assumptions are fulfilled. About the assumption of normality, table 8 shows that the residuals follow a normal distribution:

**Table 8. Tests of Normality**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Unstandardized Residual	0.089	32	.200*	0.975	32	0.632
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.						
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

**H<sub>0</sub>:** The residuals follows Normal Distribution

**H<sub>a</sub>:** The residuals does not follow Normal Distribution

**Decision:** Do not reject null hypothesis because Sig. > .05, therefore the residuals follows Normal Distribution.

## Results

Correlations illustrating significant relationships between each indicator of Strength in Selected Rwandan Private Universities on their Sustainable Growth are reported in Table 3.

**Table 9. Individual-Level Correlations between Strength and Sustainable Growth**

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Management	30.19	6.03					
2. Marketing	21.75	3.56	.781**				
3. Finance/Accounting	16.16	2.80	.656**	.789**			
4. Service/Operation	19.41	3.47	.768**	.845**	.751**		
5. R & D	14.31	3.91	.661**	.701**	.662**	.700**	
6. Sustainable Growth	18.41	3.71	.717**	.860**	.774**	.847**	.821**
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							



Regression analyses, illustrating the unique effects of each individual level of strength as well as the combined effect of the set of dimensions, are reported in Table 9. Results of the regression analyses show that approximately 85.9% of the variance in Sustainable Growth is explained by the each set of strength measures. The predictive variables of Research and Development, Management, Finance and Accounting, Services/Operations process and Marketing are displayed in this model.

The R Square in a multiple regression represents explained variance that can be contributed to all the predictors in a progression. The R Squared gives explanatory power. In Table 10 the Model Summary shows the R Squared of .859 (.859 x 100 = 85.9; 14.1 + 85.9 = 100%) or 85.9 of the variance in the dependent variable (Sustainable Growth), was accounted for by the predictive variables in the model ( $F = 31.702$ ;  $df = 5, 26$ ;  $Sig. = .000$  or  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 10. Model Summary and ANOVA**

Model Summary					ANOVA Regression			
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	df1	df2	Sig.
1	.927 <sup>a</sup>	.859	.832	1.52253	31.702	5	26	.000 <sup>b</sup>
a. Predictors: (Constant), Research Develop, Management, Finance Accounting, Service/ Operation, Marketing. b. Dependent Variable: Sustainability Growth								

Table 10 shows that adjusted R Square is 83.2%. This indicates Strength in private Universities in Rwanda contribute 83.2% to Sustainable Growth, while 16.8% comes from other variables that are not included in the model. The F-Test is 31.702 and is significant at 0.000 therefore it means that the strength of universities have positive and significant effect on sustainability growth in AUCA and UNILAK. Therefore based on the results of table 10, there is a significant effect between strength of universities and sustainability and growth.

**Table 11. Regression Analyses between Strength and Sustainable Growth**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
(Constant)	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Management	-.982	1.796		-.546	.589
Marketing	-.048	.078	-.078	-.614	.544
Finance/Accounting	.368	.171	.352	2.147	.041
Service/Operation	.119	.168	.090	.709	.485
R & D	.306	.162	.286	1.884	.071
	.347	.106	.366	3.283	.003
b. Predictors: (Constant), R&D, Management, Finance/Accounting, Service/Operation, Marketing. <b>Model Statistics:</b> Total R squared = .859; Adjusted R squared = .832; $F(5,26) = 31.702$ , $Sig. = .000$ <sup>b</sup>					

The purpose of the study was to discover the strength of private universities in Rwanda towards their sustainability and evidence of growth of selected private universities in the city of Kigali. Using the Enter method of simultaneous multiple regression the following predictive variables were examined: Management, Marketing, Finance and Accounting, Services/Operations process and Research and Development.

As displayed in Table 5, the beta weight and statistical significance were analyzed and examined. Based on the results of the beta weights only two of the five predictive variables was shown to be significant at the .05 level (Research and development: Beta = .366,  $t = 3.283$ , Sig. = .003). The relative impact indicates that for every unit increase in research and development there is a beta weight of .366 increase in Sustainable Growth.

The second variable that most influence is Marketing (Beta = .352,  $t = 2.147$ , Sig. = .041); also at 10% of level the variable Services/Operations process influence significant (Beta = .286,  $t = 1.884$ , Sig. = .071). The other variables based on beta weights did not show a significant impact on Sustainable Growth.

### Recommendation

All items assessed were viewed by respondents with different perception around their means which indicated that though an item may be appreciated or performing well, there is a need to improve it because it is not fully appreciated or performed as expected. However, special attention should be taken into consideration for the following:

- ✓ Every university should have enough research and development facilities. Research and development resources should be well distributed and all universities in collaboration with Rwanda High Education Council should establish an effective channels of communication on Research and Development among themselves.
- ✓ Every universities should make sure that all academic staff have high morale with effective remunerations mechanisms which may increase the value of their jobs and reduce employee turnover.
- ✓ Every university should make sure that marketing, planning, and budgeting processes are carried out both efficiently and effectively
- ✓ University marketing administrators should be well trained and maintained in order to gain more from their experiences
- ✓ Researchers recommend to other researchers to undertake the same study but with different case studies in Rwanda and a great number of respondents.

### Conflicts of interest

There is no conflict of interest of any kind.

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