

CREATING BRAND VALUE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

Environmental changes, such as privatization, diversification, decentralization, internationalization and increased competition are common to most countries. These changes have an effect on how higher education institutions operate now a days as Branding of education is gaining momentum with increasing number of private institutions, change in people's attitude towards education and changing scope for the different courses being offered. Education is a service, thus it is an experiential and intangible in nature, so, branding in education has to be based on the "experience" and employability" aspect. Brand and academic quality of an institution of higher education are interrelated criteria to attract the right talent both as faculty members as well as the students, the gainers to the institution. This paper is an attempt to examine (a) branding of higher education institutions, (b) different factors of branding of higher education institutions, (c) the effect of branding on acquisition of right talent, (c) the impact of branding of higher education institutions.

Key words: branding, higher education, higher educational institutions, talent acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

Donald, Brand Strategist said about Branding that if one didn't build a Brand as quickly as possible, someone else may take the position that one want.

In the recent years, massive changes in policy, governance, structure and status of higher education have been taken place all over the world. Higher Education is also widely deemed and considered as a great national asset. In this research paper we aspire to measure the impact of Branding in Higher Educational Institutions. The branding has become the latest focus in tertiary education to attract international

students. The technological changes and shrinking global boundaries have increased the significance of marketing and branding education.

In today's higher education landscape, college and university leaders may well consider principles of brand management to assure their positions vis-à-vis their competitors. Although considerable differences between higher education and product brands exist, there are sufficient similarities to warrant a foray into issues of brand management. Higher education leaders may derive guidance to manage effectively what may be the most important intangible asset a college or university owns—its long-term image and bundle of core meaning. Paul Herr, associate professor of marketing at the University of Colorado, discusses issues related to brand management and presents strategies for developing and extending brands in higher education.

In today's complex and highly competitive marketplace, universities and colleges have turned to branding as a solution in dealing with today's global challenges. The Indian higher education sector is heterogeneous. Different types of higher education institutions co-exist, and these operate with very different motives and working contexts. All types of higher education institutions face serious problems of faculty shortage and in maintaining the quality of education. The growing importance of branding for the colleges and universities, and it is expected to become even more important and vital for their growth and/or survival.

Also, because universities can differentiate themselves through serving the needs of different segments with different offerings, they must understand how differences are perceived by different segments. However, they follow different strategies while responding to this problem. Moreover, the actions of one type of institution can have important impacts on others. These impacts can be either positive or negative. Hence in order to develop strategies for addressing the problem of faculty shortage, it is important for policy makers to take an overall systemic view of how the higher education sector.

Higher education is a part of national education system and responds to the demands and capabilities of secondary education along with the tertiary education and is closely related to and influenced by the labor market, which means that graduates have to sell their skills to employers. The national competitiveness requires an economy that can produce and sustain a broad range of skills and the leaders of higher education may derive guidance to manage effectively the most important intangible asset of a higher education institute – its positive image and bundle of core meanings as an intangible value connected with it. (Yelena Istileulova (n.d.))

WHAT IS A BRAND?

A brand is a mental expression or sign of quality. A product has a brand by which consumers can judge the quality before seeing the features of the product. The corporate value "brand equity" represents a strong emotional connection to position our brand with customers. Therefore, brand equity is about your reputation: the reputation of each higher education institution. Branding is a phenomenon that has

become increasingly common worldwide in higher education over the last few years. It entails defining the essence of what a university “is”, what it “stands for”, and what it is going to be known for. This requires precision and consistency in the formulations and internal commitment to the brand.

Brand equity is how your customers or prospects recognize you to be different and or better than the rest. This depends on their experience with the countries’ position, their universities company's products and services, and other intangible values like missions, slogans, behavior, etc.

A brand’s positioning sets out what and who the brand is, and what it offers (Rositer & Percy 1991). Traditionally, brand positioning involves focusing on points of difference (differentiation), and the unique benefits that set each brand apart from its competitors (Aaker 1996; Hart and Murphy 1998) to make the brand more desirable and relevant per se. The underlying logic is that such points of differentiation are what customers remember about a brand (Keller, Sternthal and Tybout 2002).

An effective brand position captures the distinctive mission, aspirations, and strengths of an institution and appeals to the motivations and interests of the marketplace. A positive perception of a tertiary brand is expected to have an impact on recruitment of students and academic staff, attracting resources and to create goodwill (Belanger, Mount & Wilson 2002).

Waeraas and Solbakk (2009) give the explanation that with increased competition at national and international level, the higher education institutes in all parts of the world have begun a search for unique definitions of their existence in order to differentiate themselves and to attract right type of talent to them.

Paul Herr (1996) explored that colleges and universities have begun to embrace the fundamentals principles of integrated marketing and branding including the sum total of all associations that are made with an organization or product, and the use of “Branding” that involves concerted efforts to influence desired brand associations; the process that moves an organization from the existing brand to the desired brand.

As studied by Sartain and Schumann (2006) in their research that every brand experience carries a defining moment that will determine how a customer reacts and every organization should be charged with creating a map of the experience customers will have with a given business and brand. So, they can by doing so, identify every opportunity for a customer to connect with one or more of the company’s employees. Without effective internal branding, there can be conflict in communicating organizational messages. (Sartain and Schumann, 2006)

Product quality and particular features (tangibles) that generate preference and purchase are the oldest and most common type of marketing communications used to build brand value. Recently a focus has been also on creating and maintaining differentiated sets of perceptions of the brand’s unique set of intangibles. Services branding has learned the value of intangibles like provider expertise from the example of successes in corporate brand building efforts which focus almost entirely on building brand reputation.

BRANDING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Education branding (especially universities and professional schools) is still largely at the simple stage of differentiating on the basis of self-defined sets of features and attributes. In some cases there is the happy historical accident of prestigious history that differentiates individual university “brands” on the basis of reputation familiar to most of society. Other schools must strive to establish their own basis for value. Most do this today by emphasizing quality of functional attributes that resemble those of many other schools: strong faculty, prestigious alumni, broad course range, numerous campus and housing amenities etc.

Assuming that brand tactics are aligned with the brand strategy and that brand strategy is aligned with the institution’s mission and values, there are five universal tactics that should be employed.

1. Seek to understand constituent needs. Surveys, focus groups, observations, a review of historical data, and the like are used to collect information for pattern matching of constituent behaviors and understandings that reflect their needs of the institution.
2. Identify market segments that are highly valued by the institution. Define the characteristics of each segment, including motivators and barriers to supporting the institution’s objectives.
3. Determine which brand attributes will remove or lessen identified barriers and exploit motivators. To illustrate, consider the market segment of out-of-state prospective students. Potential barriers may be distance from home or the perception that the school is a “suitcase campus.” Motivators might include the reputation of a high profile academic program, tuition reciprocity, or the desire to experience new places.
4. Use relevant brand attributes to effectively position the institution against would-be competitors. What are your institutional strengths and competitor weaknesses associated with the needs of a particular market segment? How can you capture this niche and defend it against all who seek to encroach upon your market space?
5. Differentiate the institution from competitors through relevant communications. While remaining true to the corporate brand message, spin the marketing message in a way that differentiates your institution from competitors and is relevant to the targeted segment. Describe how their unique needs will be met by your institution (often referred to as a value proposition). Convey to them how their value proposition is different from direct competitors.

Humphreys and Brown (2002) explained that by implication, organizations with strong traditions and deeply rooted values will be difficult to change, leaving top management a few degrees of freedom in terms of the potential for planned change. Attempts by managers to treat organizational identity as a holistic, overarching

phenomenon are likely to produce resistance and conflicts (Humphreys and Brown 2002).

The power of a brand in higher education institution is represented by all thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, and experiences that become linked to the brand in the minds of customers, and what consumers have learned, felt, seen, and heard about the brand over time.

NEED OF BRANDING OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

When referring to intangibles we are referring to the measurement of elements that are especially significant in HEIs, since a university's main inputs and outputs are basically intangibles (mostly knowledge and human resources). Because of the new demands for accountability in public institutions, universities and research centers are forced to be more transparent and to disseminate more information to stakeholders: students, public authorities funding universities, the labor market, and society as a whole. Many HEIs lack the budgets; the others suffer from frequent leadership changes, with one administration dropping the initiatives of its predecessors.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Statistical tool:

Questionnaire: The interviewer assisted questionnaire used here comprised four sections: Demographic questions, questions on promotional media, the questions on requirements from the institute they r applying and brand positioning statements.

Sampling: The targeted sample was colleges and university faculty members of Jodhpur city of Rajasthan state.

ANALYSIS

The data collected by structured questionnaire was treated with ANOVA test to analyze the variance between the branding of the institutions and its impact on faculty members during their selecting of a particular institution for their profession.

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Brand	Between Groups	29.488	3	9.829	7.141	.000
	Within Groups	191.337	139	1.377		
	Total	220.825	142			

The above ANOVA results show the significant difference on the faculty members of different institutions of Jodhpur city, while selecting the particular institution for their profession with significant level less than 0.05.

CONCLUSION

Thus, educational brand strategy should not limited to marketing and advertising campaigns. The challenge of building an educational brand is compounded by collegiate ranking methodologies, which make institutions' value propositions blatant, though not necessarily accurate. While academic quality matters a great deal when institutions try to build their public identity or brand, the definitions of quality are likely to vary with the local situation and be measured differently. What is constant, however, is the requirement that institutions declare themselves focused on quality standards and be willing to meet them. Thus, brand and talent acquisition are directly related to each other as seen by the statistical data analysis. The future potential do consider while selecting a higher education institute the brand that the institute created value at the globe. The higher education institutions must now emphasizes on creating value of its brand to acquire talented faculty and students at both national and international level, thus enhance the overall economy of nation.

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