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A study on the Factors influencing the Branding Strategies of Higher Education Institutions with specific reference to Engineering Institutions affiliated to Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University, Nagpur

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Abstract

An educational brand consists of intangible factors like the quality of the education it imparts, its Professor, culture and resources available to the students. The other important factors are campus size, quality of the graduating batch and their track record in getting jobs. Institutions in India spend millions annually on advertising and promotion activities. These institutes confuse spreading awareness with brand building. Branding is not bought by buying media space and Public Relations; it is too created by the quality of students, the faculty and the research culture of the Higher Education Institutions. Brands can be built two ways – top down by using advertisement to build brand name and appeal or bottom up by building a brand through grass-root work and reputation build-up.

Keyword: Brand Building, Research Culture.

Introduction

A brand provides the base that facilitates establishing the organization among its competitors. The American Marketing Association (AMA) has defined brand as a name term, sign, symbol or design, or say a combination that is made of these, and it is intended to identify the set of these goods or services or the group of these sellers and also try to differentiate them from those of its competitors. These differences may also be functional, rational, tangible or intangible but they all are co-related to the product performance of the brand.

They may also be more symbolic, emotional or intangible - related to what the brand represents (Kotler and Keller, 2013). "A brand is a name or mark intended to identify the product of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate the product from competing products" (Etzel, Walker, & Stanton, (2006). If a brand is positively acknowledged in the market, customers are likely to strengthen the prolonged existence and eminence of products and services by showing their dedication.

"A company can license its name, or corporate logo, or the name of one of its brands" to take advantage of their reputation to prospective customers (Revoyr, 1995; in Lamboy, 2011). "The reputation of a brand also influences customer loyalty among buyers of services as well

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as business and consumer goods" (Etzel, Walker, and Stanton, 2006; in Lamboy, 2009). Moreover, Wunderman (1999) opined that customers must not only be familiar with a particular brand, but they must be assured that the brand will fulfill their individual needs "from packaging to point of purchase, repurchase, and after-sale service and communications" (Lamboy, 2011). On the other hand, Pinar et al., (2011) explained that "the brand's identity provides the DNA for the entire ecosystem, and ultimately brand equity".

Review of literature

Stone and Desmond (2007) categorize branding strategies as; 1). Company brand in which the company uses the corporate name as the focus for all external communications, through advertising, products, and letterheads. 2). The individual brand indicates that the company behind the brand maintains a low corporate profile concerning customers and focuses on the creation of strong brand identities. 3). Mixed format referred to as an endorsed brand where the brand identity is displayed prominently with featuring the corporate identity also features.

Gopalan, Stitts, and Herring (2006) investigated branding strategies of the top fifty global MBA programs and revealed that branding typologies that originated in the US have only a limited application overseas because there are several strategic branding differences even between US and European programs. They found that in some cases name, logo, and symbol of the university are being used for branding, whereas in other cases the only name of B-school is preferred without using the name of the university. In dual branding strategy, both identities of the university and the school received equal attention.

Research Methodology

The description of research methodology includes the area of the study, size and selection of sample, rationale for selecting management education sector, questionnaire design, method of data collection and analysis, and limitations of the study.

Objectives of Study

1. To study the interrelation and interdependence of various stake holders in terms of Branding of Engineering Institutions.
2. To propose a model for Branding strategies for Engineering Institutions resulting in the Brand tactics yielding the successful promotional campaigns.

Hypothesis

H1: There is an interrelation and interdependence among stake holders in terms of their Brand preferences in Engineering Institutions.

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Data analysis

To test the hypothesis “There is an interrelation and interdependence among stake holders in terms of their Brand preferences in Engineering Institutions” independent sample t-test is applied using SPSS v20 taking type of stakeholder as grouping variables and factors representing awareness, association and loyalty towards particular brand as test variable, where following results were obtained:

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
I know what the logo of the college of my choice looks like.	Equal variances assumed	.057	.812	-.713	498	.476	-.07905	.11088	-.29689	.13879
	Equal variances not assumed			-.705	275.011	.481	-.07905	.11212	-.29976	.14167
I would recognize the college logo amongst logo’s of other colleges.	Equal variances assumed	.826	.364	-1.068	498	.286	-.13238	.12395	-.37590	.11114
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.043	267.746	.298	-.13238	.12686	-.38216	.11740
When I see the logo, unique characteristics comes to my mind.	Equal variances assumed	.539	.463	-.942	498	.347	-.11524	.12232	-.35557	.12509
	Equal variances not assumed			-.930	273.645	.353	-.11524	.12397	-.35929	.12881

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I think I would feel proud of myself for studying in the college I have selected.	Equal variances assumed	.146	.703	-.788	498	.431	-.09333	.11847	-.32610	.13943
	Equal variances not assumed			-.777	273.710	.438	-.09333	.12005	-.32967	.14301
My college is associated to a top University	Equal variances assumed	.174	.677	-.805	498	.421	-.09143	.11353	-.31448	.13163
	Equal variances not assumed			-.793	272.773	.428	-.09143	.11522	-.31827	.13541

From the above analysis it is found that, the sig. 2-tailed value obtained in case of all the factors representing awareness, association and loyalty towards brand preference is more than 0.05 ($p>0.05$), which states that there is no significant difference among stake holders in terms of their Brand preferences in Engineering Institutions. Hence, the hypothesis i.e. *there is an interrelation and interdependence among stake holders in terms of their Brand preferences in Engineering Institutions* is **accepted**.

Conclusion

Determining and assessing the aspirants' opinion with their brand preference is very crucial because it can help the colleges and Universities to build strong institutional branding to attract the prospective students. From the results, it is clear that advertising has a significant impact on building the brand equity of the institute. Thus, it confirms what other literature try to suggest here, which is by improving marketing mix and brand equity dimensions, it may potentially improve the brand preference among the Engineering aspirants. It is important to verify here that from the multiple regression analysis, two dimensions like perceived quality and brand loyalty are the most significant factor in explaining brand equity of the higher education institutions.

The entrants have ranked the marketing mix dimensions to give better understanding to their choice towards the higher education institution. In the Kendall's ranking performed, eight marketing dimensions viz., placement, process, professor, price, program, physical evidence, promotion and place are significant in predicting the overall preference towards the higher education institutions.

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