

Bricks in the Wall; Determining brand equity and its essentials in educational sector

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ABSTRACT

Educational sector all over the world is marketized in current era. These days the concept of brand equity is emerging with the actual provision of education in developing and developed countries. Brand equity is a concept which reflects endowed value of a product/service in the mind of the customer. While taking on account the concept of brand equity the measurement of brand equity is divided into two big dimensions, financial aspect, and marketing aspect. This paper is considering the marketing aspect of brand equity. While understanding the roots of brand equity it has a strong linkage with brand knowledge and brand recall. Hence brand knowledge constitutes on brand awareness whereas brand image is depending upon brand recall and brand loyalty. The purpose of this study to find out the essential factors of developing brand equity in education sector of Karachi, Pakistan. In this research study brand loyalty, brand image location of the university, and awareness of the brands are considering factors which impact brand equity of higher education institute.

1. INTRODUCTION

In last couple of decades, the concept of brand equity is been developed as an area of interest for many researchers, most of them address marketing activities play vital role in the development of brand equity (Barwise1993). Brand equity is basically how your customers are perceiving and recognizing your offerings different from other brands in the market. Mainly the focal point was on exploring the sources of brand impartiality, rather finding those factors and element which cause it. Shocker, Srivastava, and Ruekert (1994) explained, further consideration is required in the expansion of a system view of brand and goods to insert how non physicals formed by the price, and promotional actions, services provided, allocation channels etc, and the brand executive

combines with the formation itself to create brand impartiality and influence buyer verdict (P.157). It is been known that service sector is always a difficult task for marketers to market because of its distinct characteristics, credence quality and variability. Due to these characteristics it is always very difficult task to select the good service, another factor in extension of this is consumers face difficulties in service selection because of advance of purchase (Parasuraman et al.,1998; Laing et al.,Mitchell,1999). Brand can hold this situation as a risk reliever and make consumer more comfortable by giving them more confidence on their purchase decision (Erdem and Swait, 1998). As per the trust of Gabbott& Hogg, 1998, brand is not just a source of information but it provides a tool to identify the point of differentiation among other service providers (Moore and Truly, 1995). Brand equity is an additional worth supplementary to product by its brand identity, for example Coke, Nike, Levi's, Pepsi, (Farquhar, Han, and Ijiri 1991 Kamakura and Russell 1993; Park and Srinivasan 1994; Rangaswamy, Burke, and Oliva 1993). Many researchers recommended that brand impartiality can be measured by dropping the usefulness of substantial characteristics of product as of entire efficacy of a brand. As an essential benefit of the business, brand impartiality augment money flows of the company (Simon and Sullivan 1993). In behavioral term, brand impartiality is substantially important to construct points of how product is different from other competitive products which lead to the competitive advantage (Aaker 1991).

Kapferer (1997) explains that "the brand is a sign –therefore external-whose function is to reveal the unknown qualities of the product which are in accessible to contact" (p.28). The prdoduct recognizes as brand is providing the distinction or point of differentiation among other product, and similar is the providing distinction to service providers. Since last 20 years, the area of greater interest of many researchers is building a strong relationship between consumer and brand. It is the most often argument that brand is the most important and valuable asset that company acquire. (Aaker, 99a, b, 2003; Kapferer, 1997; Blackest, 1993).Even though brand equity concept is been researched and explore by many researchers in term of physical attributes but very less is been explored in term of service sector context. During last 20 years the concept of service in marketing is emerged largely and most of the countries around world are expanding their economies through services (Fisk et al., 1993). Education is been considering as a transmitting factor of culture(Singleton, 1974).Most of the educational institutions are working as organizations which are playing their roles as socializing

people (Brim and Wheeler, 1996, p.57). Quality of education provided is becoming the major area of focus in many developed and developing countries these days (Baldwin, 1991; Marceau, 1993; Harman, 1994; Lindsay, 1994; Edmond, 1995).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand equity:

Aaker (1999), recommended brand like name, brand logo, or a package that build the product and service unlike. But Marconi (1993) define brand is not only the name which is used for recognizing the product and brand is to create value and bring about personality. Brand equity is important for building strong and profitable brand for an organization, because it provide marketers that piece of information which help them to bridge their past experiences with future endeavor (Keller, 2003). Krishan (1996) explain that brand equity development is been divided into three basic elements. Brand valuation (how mature brand can leverage their equity through its extension in brand line, and calculating the established brand equity from consumer perspective. Within those three areas, consumer based brand equity captured great attention of many researchers (Netemeyer et al., 2004). Keller (1993) explain consumer based brand equity is a disparity consequence of brand knowledge and its awareness on consumer behavior and eventually his response toward the marketing and purchase decision of brand. Many researcher worked on finding out this (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2003). Many of them pursue brand equity differently due to different objective and different research settings. For higher education concept the most comprehensive measurement is discuss by Aaker (1999; Keller, 2003). The current concept of brand equity is quite advance from previous work. Aaker (1991a) explain representation of impartiality of brand which include 5 important characteristics are, aware of brand name, relationship with brand, brand faithfulness, and apparent excellence, which play part in brand equity.

2.2 Brand Equity Meaning with respect to service theory:

A review of past studied come across with the dilemma of no consensus on the exact meaning of brand equity, as well as its dimensions that it must comprise in the context of higher education (Bosch et al; 2006; Clark, 2005; Nha and Leblanc, 200; Palacio et al., 2002). Nha and Le Blanc (200; p.303) describe the definition of brand meaning as the by and large impression made on the mind of the customers about an organization. Coop (sighted in Bosch et al, 2006) define brand meaning as concrete impression of the relative position of a brand by its customers or those who are using it, in comparison with its

opponents. Clark (2005) fixed with Coop and further investigate brand meaning of educational institutes (universities, colleges) based on eight characteristics primarily: Ease of accesses, facilities provided by the campus management, offering by educational institutes structures related to specialized field, offering of extra curriculum activities, fees structure, reputation of the university among other competitors, number of students enrollment, number of courses offers and availability of scholarship. To sum up, previously brand meaning is been conceptualized through key elements (a) Brand meaning is closely related to those customers who experienced it (b) the existence of elements of comparison means point of differentiation which make brand unique from its competitors. Muller (1998) analyzed some factors of brand impartiality in the portion of service, in restaurant industry and discovers that service excellence, service release time, and ease of delivery, perceived images, symbols, and indications were the most fundamental factors of building brand equity. Another side, parasad and dev (2000) analyze the performance of brand equity in hotels. The fundamentals of this research (Mackay, 2001) talk about the loyalty of brand, quality of service, images about service are those factors which come under the account of brand awareness. Based on Bryn (1995), Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), and Chen (2008), Higher education find out that service image is the most potential factor which is associated with the risk of evaluation of service quality provided.

2.3 Brand associations and its types:

There is an amalgamation of forms of brand links, one way to differentiate is its intensity of generalization (Alba & Hutchinson 1987; Chattopadhyay & Alba 1988; Johnson 1984; Russo & Johnson 1980) ----which means how much in turn subsumed in association. Brand association can be classified into three basic categories, attributes, benefits sought, and attitudes. Attributes are physical features and characteristics of any product or service which consumer believe on and due to these features consumer make his purchase decision. Attributes can be distinguished in various further categories (Meyers & Shocker 1981). In this place attributes are those factors which are directly related to product's or service's presentation. Product connected functions and characteristics are explained as ingredients necessary for performing arts the physical appearance of the product and service functionality. In manner of service sector these attributes depend on service requirements. On product related features related to external aspect of the product or service which relate to its purchase decision. Features

which come under non product related attributes are, price in sequence, wrapping, form, user descriptions (what type of person are using the product). The price of the product and service are measured as non product related elements because it is an important tread in purchase decision but it do not have direct relationship with product's performance or service functionality. Similarly, user imagery and packaging are also very important factors of consumer's purchase decisions but in most cases are not related with product's performance or service functionality. Association of a particular brand user depends on some other factors like demographic factors, psychographic factors etc. Benefits are personal values consumer attaches with particular brand or service attributes. Benefits can be added classified into three categories (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986), functional benefits, experimental benefits, representative benefits. Functional benefits based on some psychological and safety need of consumer and directly related with the Maslow theory (Maslow 1970), and work for solution provision. (Fennell 1978; Rossiter and Percy 1987).Experiential benefit is mostly product related attributes and work for how it will feel like to use such product. Symbolic benefits are non product related characteristics and focus on social esteem and fundamental need for social consent.

2.4 Brand Awareness:

Associated with the network memory model, brand knowledge s been considered as brand node in which various memories are interlinked. This conceptualization arises some basic questions, like what characteristics do brand node and brand association have? The quite relevant dimension here is brand awareness in term of brand recall and its recognition. Brand awareness. The first important dimension which differentiates brand knowledge is brand awareness. Brand awareness basically focuses on the strength of brand node or traces of previous memory, and these are identified by the consumer's ability to identify the brand in different situations(Rossiter and Percy 1987).Brand awareness is related to brand recognition and brand recognition relates to consumer's first interaction to brand and his ability to confirm that previous interaction. Brand recall relate to the ability of consumer to retrieve the memory of actual brand when any other product of the same category come in front. Brand recall and brand recognition both affects the consumer's ability to make decision toward buying of any particular brand.(Keller and Aaker 1992) has given the concept of how customer should use their brand knowledge while evaluating extension in brand line. Hence, knowledge create such

a series of continuation in the mind of the customer which impact the tendency of customer toward decision making after looking at the extended brand of the same company. (Bridges, 1992) brand line extension is the field that is effected actual brand equity. Previous brand knowledge plays a very important role at the time of brand extension as it cost very less because of already established brand name and knowledge about it (Smith, 1991; Smith and whan Park, 1992).In addition to this, brand awareness shows the repeated purchase of product or service (Keller 2003).Brand awareness and brand image are those two factors of brand equity which specifically are related to the recall of the customer, in the case of both product and service. Hoyer and Brown (1990),Lin and Chang (2003), Keller (2003) Jiang (2004).

2.5 Brand Image/loyalty

Since many years brand image is recognized as one of the basic factor in marketing (e.g.'Gardner and Levy 1955). There are many definitions provided (Dobini and Zinkhan 1990). Brand image is the last impression of the product in the mind of the customer which creates, develop and change perception over time. According to definition provided by Herzog (1963) and Newman (1957), as network associative model concern brand knowledge, brand image are basically related to the perception of the specific brand ad this perception reflects any previous interaction of consumer with any particular brand. Point of differentiation, variable and unique features are some dimensions which make brand knowledge distinguishable when consumer is making decision while buying high involvement products. The theory of consumer perception itself is explaining the consumer behavior about when they select, organize and interpret intrinsic and symbolic features to develop image and quality of any particular product in their mind(Schiff man, Kanuk, &Kumar 2010). Brand image is the acquired position of any particular brand and service in the mind of customer and though continuous efforts of marketers by marketing programs they create strong nods in customer's memory (Ward et al., 1999).While talking about the higher educational institutes which are more to word service side ,user imagery puts a crucial impact. User imagery (the type of person who is using the brand o who is receiving the services).User imagery can be well established when the type and the nature f the customer is known for example there are many types of personality (excited, rugged, competent, loyal, and receptive) specially in education sector (Keller 2000).

2.6 Brand Equity of Educational Institutes:

Branding is the concept which is emerging globally over last few years. Brand equity in educational institutes refers to how your customer or prospect recognizes you differently from your competitors. Too, many feature scan impact straight on the measurement of the equity of education and also educational institute's perceived brand image (Kurez et al., 2008) , Mourad and El Mahdi,(2008) and Mourad (2010) include some other factors which directly impact on the evaluation of brand equity of educational institute are quality of the employees, location of the university with respect to transportation and accessibility, size and area covered, reputation of university in terms of international agreements. It is been observed that many universities and other educational institutes adopt brand strategies for the betterment of their ranking in higher education market (Brunzel, 2007). Waeraas and Solbakk (2009), reason it out as increasing competition among educational institutes on the basis of their differentiated features offerings, nationally and internationally. As been discussed educational institutes/universities belong to service sector and their main focus is to create customer based brand equity. For that purpose they need to create strong brand associations with students as well as their parents, so this positive impact would be long lasting. (Keller 1992) mentioned five sage models that include need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternative, purchase decision, post purchase decision. Many other researchers like Bone (2009) support Keller's claim and said that all five steps are involved at the time of selection of university by the students and their parents .Cubillo, Sanchez, and corvine, (2006) has also identified the same as Keller said. Chernatory (2011) explained that the brand knowledge of an educational institute not only created through creating awareness and brand image but it require intense efforts by management on communicating the policies and procedures implied by them.

Determinants of Brand Equity

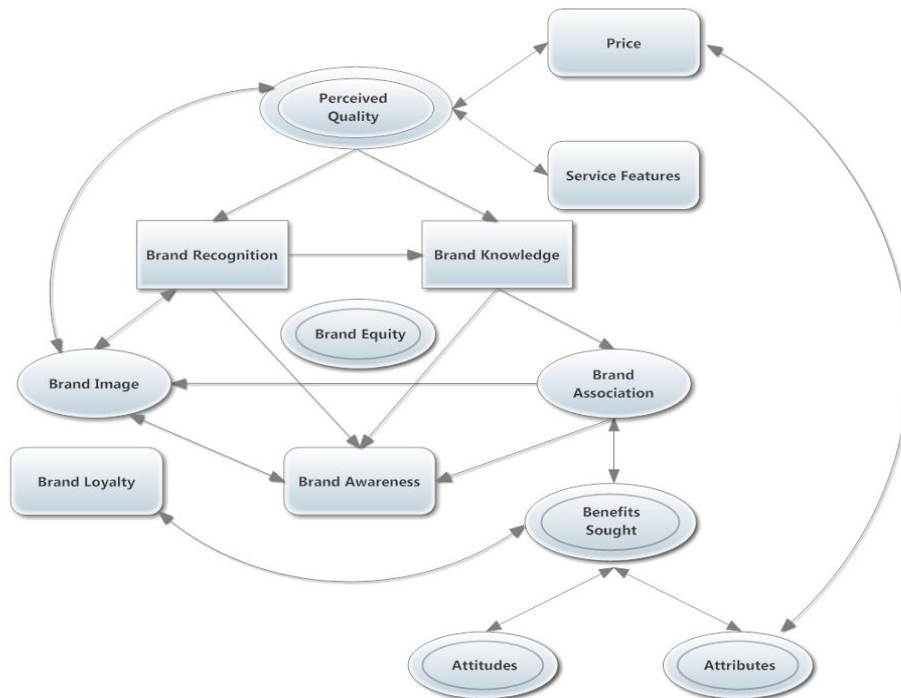


Figure 1. Theoretical frame work

2.7 Research Problem:

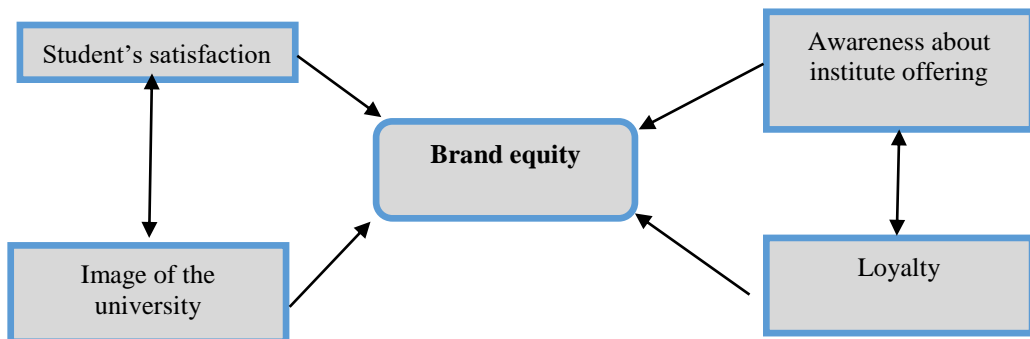
Education sector is becoming one of the competitive sector in terms of providing education and profitability all over the world. Now the concept of developing brand equity by providing variety of facilities and offering is emerged almost all operating sectors of developed and developing countries including education sector. Nowadays every university/educational institute is in the queue of developing its brand all over the world or among surrounded universities. Pakistan is among one of the countries who are striving to enhance the effectiveness of its educational sector. This research paper is intended to highlight some essential factors of brand equity in Pakistani educational system context.

2.8 Objective of the study

The main Objective of this study is to find out the importance of some key factors which can build brand equity of an educational institute while taking higher educational institutes on account we consider brand equity as creating service brand equity.

The objective of conducting this study is to find out the relationship between all identified factors which determine brand equity of educational institutes of Pakistan. As Pakistan is a developing country, and currently facing many hurdles and situations (law and order, economic, political) while creating brand equity. This research study will help out brand managers to focus on identified attributes in term of changing the attitude of customer's toward educational institute and factors which are impacting positively the people's perception.

2.9 Conceptual Frame Work



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research philosophy

This research study follows phenomenology as the determinants of brand equity are existing factors in the market that is why phenomenology is the most suitable strategy to further explore the topic in term of finding the impact of determinants on brand equity.

3.2 Research design

This study is qualitative in nature and is conducted through collecting non numeric data. Since topic is highlighting on essential factors of developing brand equity of higher educational institutes in Pakistan that's why it lies under phenomenological tradition of inquiry.

3.3 Population

Frame of reference

The population of this study comprise on 10 program managers of various different universities who are involve in administration as well as academics matters of university. The reason of choosing program managers as a source of gathering

information is, as program managers are involved in conducting the whole semester's academics as well as administrative work. That's why they are in a better position to understand the importance and context of this study and can give better insight in terms of response regarding this topic

Sample and sampling methods

This study follows the qualitative technique that's why defining the sample size is one of the important segments. For this study, it is planned to collect data from 10 individuals belonging to management through interviews. Interview guide is developed to ask further explanations about the topic. Purposive sampling is considered as technique to approach sample.

Instrument selection

For this research study both primary and secondary data is considered. Secondary data is extracted in order to collect information about brand equity as well as other factors which play part in creating brand equity in service sector (Educational Institute). Whereas primary data is collected through interviews and discussions.

3.4 Criteria for Data Analysis:

For analysis certain steps followed, suggested by Moustakas (1994).

1.4.1.1 Horizontalization of the data

- Each interview has been analyzed separately and found statements which represent interviewee personal experience about the topic.
- Each statement has been given equal worth and developed a list of non repetitive and non overlapping statements.

3.4.2 Meaning Units

- All the statements grouped into lists of meaning units.

3.4.3 Textural Description

- Meaning units then describe into the texture of experiences, what happened etc.

3.4.4 Imaginative variation and structural description

- Seeking all possible meaning, and divergent perspective about the phenomena and construct the description of how the phenomenon was experienced.

3.4.5 Essence

- Construct an overall description of the meaning and essence of the experience.

4. DISCUSSION

Through the discussion with intended sample on essential factors of brand equity certain points revealed.

Table 1: Satisfaction with university offering

Administration/teacher's Perspective	Student's/Alumni perspective
Intrinsic satisfaction	Intrinsic satisfaction
Flexible timings	Worth taking lectures
Adequate work load	Sufficient time in each session
Sufficient staff	Adequate number of students in each class
Recognition on completion of task.	Courses offered are covering practical application of concepts
Reward system	After completion of course, contents are completely understood.
Sufficient time for further studies	
Pleasant environment and promotions without gender discrimination	
Opportunity of attending and giving lectures at different universities	
Teacher's training programs	
Extrinsic satisfaction	Extrinsic satisfaction
Financial/salary package	Affordable fees
Provision of further facilities (medical insurance, study loan, laptops, separate offices and cubicles)	Compatible fee installments /scholarships, and reward on attainment of high CGPA

Teacher's training is another important factor as knowledge is an ongoing and

contineous process.[F1]1. That's why quality comes when teachers are well trained and equipped with the latest technique of teaching. Another important factor here is satisfaction level of teachers[F3]1. A famous quotes regarding this is "Happy the employee, grows the company" [F3]4. Another important factor to be considered here is intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction level of Teacher's and administration[F3]4. Extrinsic satisfaction is in term of financials (salary packagein term of provision of further facilities , medical, study loan, insurance, laptops etc), separate offices[F1]3[F3]2 . Whereas intrinsic satisfaction includes flexibility of timings, adequate work load, sufficient time to study and prepare lectures, continual promotions, recognition on achievement of tasks(like publication etc)[F4]5.

Table 2: Quality of Education

Administration/Teacher's perspective	Student's perspective
Non physical Features	Non physical Features
Offering of various programs	Choices among number of courses in specialization
Evaluation of each program on continual basis	Combination of more demanding courses
Affiliation withforeign reputable universities	Student exchange program on affordable fees
Availability of on merit and need based scholarships.	
Physical Features	Physical features
Spacious and sufficient numbers of class rooms	Spacious classrooms
Facility of projector in each class	Other facilities of projector and availability of connections
Hygienic food available in canteen	
Spacious place at canteen	
Highly technology equipped labs. where numbers of PC and connection available	

Quality determine by both physical and non physical features as per administration perspective [F1]2[F5]9. Quality is something which reflects organization's inside out. If faculty and administrative staff are not satisfied with provided facilities then it

is almost next to impossible to get positive feedback on organization's offering. Educational branding is an emerging phenomenon, and has diversity in its application. It is a fundamental factor for an educational institute to develop its brand equity as it grows older [F5]9. While considering the main features of an educational institute, it must provide the quality education rather focusing on physical infrastructure[F4]7. Physical infrastructure is also an important factor but it lead prospect toward artificial cosmetics .Whereas when we are talking about the pure knowledge it comes with quality of education prospect acquire from university[F4]6 Quality education does possess offering of different program and maintain the benchmark in all of them, evaluation of programs on comparative basis with highly reputed university will definitely help in maintaining and increasing quality in program. Affiliation with foreign university and student exchange program is very positive feature of maintain brand equity especially in developing countries [F5]7[F3]12. Scholarships on need based as well as merit based should be available to maintain quality and parity among students. Student's internships and job placement can also catch the attention of prospect and their parents [F2]15.

Table 3: Image of the university

Administration/teacher's perspective	Student's perspective
University participation in different competition	Alumni placement in career.
Student' counseling on continual basis.	Career counseling
Alumni guest speaker sessions	Recognition and affiliation from higher authorities
Arrange seminars often on current topics	
Opportunity to attend on national and international seminars	
Opportunity to participate in national and international teacher's training programs.	

Image is a conceptual or perceptual picture of any service or a product that has been develop in the mind of the customer on the basis of previous experiences

Table 4: Creating Brand loyalty

Administration/teacher's perspective	Student's perspective
Advertisement on print media	Referral system
Brand ambassadors in international and national university fairs	Parents/teacher's meeting
Alumni WOM	Accessible location
Keep track of Alumni and arrange annual dinner	
Job placement	
Internship placement	
Parent's meeting on quarter basis	
Relaxation in fees if applicable	
Opportunity of full scholarship on merit basis annually	

Brand loyalty runs from generation to generation. Loyalty is a factor that grows slowly and gradually and through this marketers can evaluate the performance of the institution[F5]10.

F1.....F10 are the statements narrating managers perspective regarding determinants of brand equity.

5. CONCLUSION

Through the discussion it is concluded that educational institutes especially in developing countries are operating well and trying to meet the benchmark of international universities. However, it is been observed that in developing (south Asian countries) the phenomena of private educational institute is emerging and is not completely developed that is why some deficiencies should be under consideration by the management. As student's and management's perspective taken on account to analysis the gap between student's expectation and management's providing as well as management and administration perspective regarding university's internal and external operations. It is been concluded that private institutions have to collaborate with the international systems in order to prepare its students to cope up the level of competition with international students. Similar is the case with administration/management, when they are satisfied

and university offerings are satisfying their intrinsic and extrinsic values then the output which management give will be a building block for university reputation. As validated from students and management's views that loyalty with any product/service or any institute/university is a phenomenon that takes times. The prolonged time period is a part of a consumer evaluation process and repetition of good experiences after every step is eventually turns out to be loyal customer. As all variable which are creating brand equity are interrelated that's why image is another factor that builds a positive perception and through constant provision of desired facilities loyalty gain as year passed. Similarly brand awareness has a strong and obvious relationship with satisfaction level of students as well as management/administration staff.

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