

“Measuring Consumer Based Brand Equity of Private University in Chhattisgarh”

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Abstract :Brands are fundamentally about experiences and relationships, and therefore they form prime basis of an private universities connection with their stakeholders. With the mushrooming of private universities in India and having huge competition globally it is imperative for private universities to differentiate and build strong brand in the competitive business educational space. Private Universities must now go to greater lengths to differentiate themselves from competitor institutions. In today’s complex and highly competitive marketplace, universities are turning to branding as a solution in dealing with global challenges. Topor (2005) suggests that universities need to build reputation, which can be done by enhancing brand equity and goodwill. Brand equity measures the value of the brand. However, the concept has been less explored in the service sector, especially in higher education (Mourad, Ennew, & Kortam, 2010). This research aims to assess the brand equity of private universities (from the student’s perspective of UG) using this present study proposes a framework of familiarity–perception–preference–choice for measuring customer-based brand equity of universities. The framework includes determinants of brand awareness (i.e. brand familiarity), brand image dimensions (the perceived quality–product and service attributes; overall brand image – symbolic attribute; and perceived value for money (VFM)), willingness to pay a price premium, and customer choice (behavioral indicators/outcomes of brand equity) (Keller, 1993). This research gives an opportunity to extend the current knowledge in measuring the brand equity of private universities, especially in Chhattisgarh. This study would be helpful to private universities to apply brand equity measurements to their business and implement focused branding efforts to gain the increasing enrollment, expanding fundraising capabilities, and build quality education brands.

Keywords :- Consumer Behaviour, Brand Preference, Brand Equity, Consumer based brand equity, Branding.

Introduction

Brands are pivotal sources for generating and sustaining a competitive advantage, which is a source of strong and favorable differentiators (Aaker, 1996). The world of Indian education is in an enriching churn and the last 20 years have seen a phenomenal growth of education in India. The universities have introduced several contemporary courses to meet the industry demand (Kumar & Dash, 2011). Building an educational brand has become an important agenda for universities, particularly due challenges from newer institutions, shrinking global boundaries, and fragmentation of consumers. More stringent competition and increased expectations on brand performance have increased the importance of assessing brand equity for private universities. However, there has been very limited academic research to understand the role played by private university brand equity, especially in the Indian context.

Education branding worldwide is still largely at the stage of differentiation, which is based on self-defined sets of attributes and benefits. Universities in India are still striving to establish their own differentiated value proposition. Currently they are focusing more on functional attributes – which are ‘parity points’ rather than ‘differentiators’, but they need to uncover the intangible attributes on which they can position themselves. In a global market where functionally similar products and services are available from a wide range of suppliers, the ‘brand name’ has become an important differentiating tool, as it offers promise of value and quality to consumers (Kartono & Rao, 2008). Strong brands help consumers cut through the proliferation of choices available in product and service categories.

The goal of brand building in educational institutions is to create awareness in the minds of target audiences and focus on the intersection of the institution’s core values and the expectations of target audience. Branding is about finding the sweet spot between what the institution is and what their audience wants (Sevier & Sickler, 2004). Parameswaran and Glowacka (1995) in their study of university image conclude that higher education institutions need to maintain or develop a distinct image to create an advantage in an increasingly competitive market. It is this image that will impact students’ willingness to apply to that institution for enrolment or for other research and developmental activities. The image portrayed by the institution of higher education plays a critical role in the attitudes of the institution’s publics toward that institution (Yavas & Shemwell, 1996).

In today’s complex and highly competitive marketplace, universities are turning to branding as a solution in dealing with global challenges. Topor (2005) suggests that universities need to build reputation, which can be done by enhancing brand equity and goodwill. Brand equity measures the value of the brand. However, the concept has been less explored in the service sector, especially in higher education (Mourad, Ennew, & Kortam, 2010).

With this background, this present study proposes a framework of familiarity–perception–preference–choice for measuring customer-based brand equity of universities. The framework includes determinants of brand awareness (i.e. brand familiarity), brand image dimensions (the perceived quality–product and service attributes; overall brand image – symbolic attribute; and perceived value for money (VFM)), willingness to pay a price premium, and customer choice (behavioural indicators/outcomes of brand equity) (Keller, 1993).

Indian Education System :-

India holds an important place in the global education industry. The country has more than 14 lakh schools with over 2270 lakh students enrolled and more than 36,000 higher education institutes. India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world. However, there is still a lot of potential for further development in the education system.

India's online education market size is expected to touch US\$ 40 billion by 2017. An RNCOS report titled, 'Booming Distance Education Market Outlook 2018' expects the distance education market in India to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 34 per cent during 2013-14 to 2017-18. Moreover, the aim of the government to raise its current gross enrolment ratio to 30 per cent by 2020 will also boost the growth of the distance education in India.



Source – taken from <http://www.ibef.org/>

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to contribute toward brand equity literature adopting a descriptive approach to empirically measure the customer-based brand equity of private universities in Chhattisgarh. Specifically, the study at identifying the key antecedents and consequences that could be hypothesized in the prediction of customer-based brand equity after controlling for mediators. Therefore, the present study aims at empirically examining three issues:

- 1) To measure the CBBE of private universities in Chhattisgarh,
- 2) To explore the moderation effect of gender, religion, and parental occupation on the CBBE of private universities in Chhattisgarh.

Literature Review

For the identification of workable research gaps in the area of branding in higher education, a review of literature published in the reputed academic research journals between 2000 and 2016 was done in which the academic literature was subjected to content analysis for the purpose of classification. Content analysis as technique for compressing texts using explicit rules of coding has been recognized as a systematic and replicable technique for literature review (Weber, 1990). According to Holsti (1969), content analysis is a technique for drawing inferences by systematic and objective classification of data. In content analysis, the researchers use five key criteria as suggested by Kassarijian and Robertson (1991) as well as Kolbe and Burnett (1991). These five key criteria include: sampling, objectivity, reliability, systemization and quantification. For this literature review, the communications population was specified as private university and educational branding literature restricted to the five well-known online databases:(1) Science Direct, (2) Emerald Fulltext, (3) Sage, (4) SpringerLink, and (5) Taylor & Francis. In this literature review, the researchers have taken only academic literature published in academic journals published in these databases, however, there could be many sources apart from these five databases, e.g. practitioner publications and reports, conference papers, master's and doctoral dissertations, textbooks and unpublished working papers. Since both academicians and practitioners use journals as a source of new findings in their respective domains (Ngai, 2005). Therefore, the decision to use journals as the primary source of literature could be one of the rationales.

The identification of papers for the communication population started with an online search for literature based on the keyword descriptor, “social exchange relationship” and “employee creativity”, using the above mentioned five databases and for the period ranging from year 2000 to 2016. The keyword descriptors were queried in the above mentioned databases in the title, abstract and the keyword list of the published articles. The initial search using the above discussed keywords and databases for the specified time period resulted in approx. 600 articles, which was a number too large for the critical review of literature. Therefore, the full text of each research paper was re-examined and further eliminations were done on the basis of present research themes, i.e. papers which did not fall in present research themes were rejected from the communication population. The review finally yielded 109 research papers related to employee creativity, and social exchange relationship sourced from 56 journals. This final set of 109 research papers was finally reviewed after classification. Although, a census approach was used for identifying key papers on the research theme but it has serious limitations with regard to source and time and therefore the findings cannot be generalized to the larger universe of literature. Content analysis typically uses smaller units of analysis such as paragraphs, sentences, words and so forth (Unerman, 2000). Nonetheless, entire articles can also be used as the unit of analysis in a content analysis (Stock, 1997). In the current study, the unit of analysis is the full text research paper. The full text of each of the selected research papers was carefully studied by the researcher to identify the appropriate categorization. This process was repeated by another independent researcher. Based on mutual discussion, the two researchers decided to classify the entire literature on the above mentioned themes. Both the researchers felt that the entire literature can be very well classified through mutual discussion and negotiation, would help in achieving objectivity, which is a mandatory characteristic of research.

Chris Chapleo (2015) The purpose of the study was to examine and explore the factors necessary with in Non Profit Organization for successful branding and challenges in their implementation. The approach was qualitative one, conducted through depth interview. Researcher found some factors considered important to branding were identified, particularly leadership and clear vision. It was interesting that respondents generally agreed that limited marketing budget were not necessarily a major problem. I felt that such challenges in implementation that a specific conceptual framework for NPO branding could add real value.

Ashita Aggarwal Sharma, Vithala R. Rao & Sapna Popli (2013) The study aims to assess the brand equity of select Indian business schools using a familiarity-perception-preference-choice framework. This study highlights how consumer-based equity measures can be used to improve business school positioning and hence the brand image therefore it would help imitations apply brand equity measurements to their business schools and implement focused branding efforts to gain a higher student share and build quality education brands. CBBE framework measures related to different stages of hierarchy in business school decision making for calculation of brand equity in terms of familiarity, perception of quality, brand assessment and preference. As the findings suggest that brands have a significant role to play in business school selection. Thus, the prospective students as stakeholders infer the business school brand on overall brand image, which is build through ‘ word of mouth’. Therefore, the role of public relations and social media becomes critical.

Puja Khatri Yukti Ahuja Sharma (2011). Study was conducted to know the developing an ethical institutional brand in India and the objective was To know the ethical practices in HEI can be powerful tool for branding and attaining competitive advantage and Educational Brand can be built on the basis of just and fair practices at the institution. Limitation was sample taken only in Delhi-NCR, not covered tier 2 and 3 cities. Output of the study was academic processes an ethically strong institution can be built and also perception of UG and PG level students on different variable of ethical practices leading to brand building are found to vary.

Musa Pinar Paul Trapp Tulay Girard Thomas E Boyt (2011) The purpose of the study to make the brand ecosystem frame work in order to develop branding strategies for colleges and universities. Framework include core value creation which cover student experiences of the university in term of branding strategies, academic services and supporting activities which cover developing student learning experience that co created with students and faculty. As he found both creating activities will help to student learning experience and ultimately a strong university brand. I found conceptual framework is not easy to apply in other area.

Chris Chapleo (2010). Title was what defines successful university brands ?, the purpose was the study to know the marketing variable associated with branding activities and explore and identified as having successful brand in UK. Limitations was hard to measure how successful university brands are when there is little empirical literature on the aims of branding in universities and also lack of knowledge underpinning the precise objectives of university branding. Researcher found that even among those brands considered successful, challenges such as lack of internal brand engagement and limited international resonance may be apparent and certain common positive success factors are also suggested.

Geoffrey Soutar Margaret McNeil (1996) The study was conducted to measure the service quality of education provide in Australia. Researcher apply performance indicators, SERVQUAL scale to understand the service quality, he found gap between expectation and perceptions and also the result was fail to measure the quality of education and as performance indicators – measures of activity rather than true measure of quality of student.

Research Methodology / Design

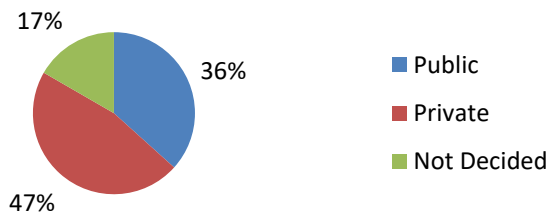
Research design is the blueprint or the skeleton which consists of methodologies regarding sampling, instrument development, data collection and data analysis. This research attempts to explore the relevance and importance of customer-based brand equity measures in the HEI context and its possible role in strengthening a university brand. Such study of consumer’s perceptions will help universities in India to improve the efficiency of their marketing program and also provide guidelines for international expansion and portfolio enhancement.

- Research Design : Descriptive Research
- Sample member : 12th students
- Sample size :- 30
- Data Analysis :- Graphical representation
- Collection of data :-
 1. Primary Data: Questionnaire and Personal interview
 2. Secondary Data: Internet, Books, Journals, Newspapers Paper presentation on schools & colleges

Data Analysis

Question	Public	Private	Not Decided	Total
Do you prefer a public or private university ?	11	14	5	30

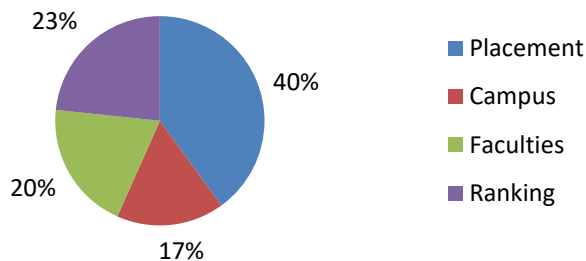
Do you prefer a public or private university for your further study ?



Analysis :- According to the survey of prospective students for undergraduate courses in Chhattisgarh, researcher has found that out of 30 students, 47 % students are looking for private universities, whereas 36 % students are interested for public universities and 17 % students are not decided yet.

Question	Placement	Campus	Faculties	Ranking	Total
What parameter you check while selecting the university	12	5	6	7	30

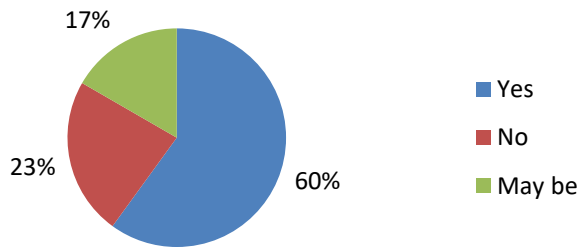
What parameter you check while selecting the university



Analysis :- According to the survey of prospective students for undergraduate courses in Chhattisgarh, researcher has found that out of 30 students, 40 % students are focus for placement, 23% prefer ranking of institute, 20 % prefer faculties and 17 % prefer good campus .

Question	Yes	No	May be	Total
Are you going with universities ranking	18	7	5	30

Are you going with universities ranking ?

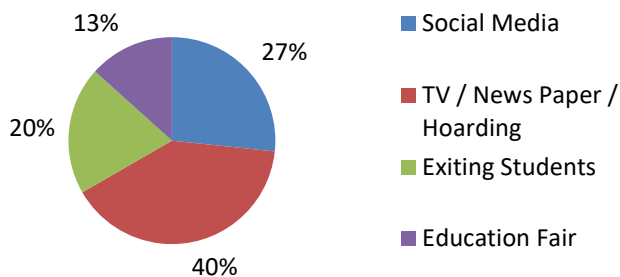


Analysis :- According to the survey of prospective students for undergraduate courses in

Chhattisgarh, researcher has found that out of 30 students, 60 % students prefer universities ranking, whereas 23 % students are not be leave in ranking and 17 % students are not sure about ranking.

Question	Social Media	TV / News Paper / Hoarding	Exiting Students	Education Fair	Total
How did you find out Any University	8	12	6	4	30

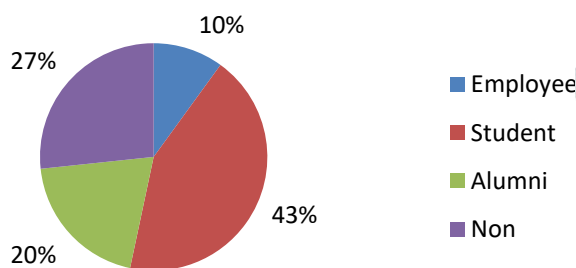
How did you find out Any University



Analysis :- According to the survey of prospective students for undergraduate courses in Chhattisgarh, researcher has found that out of 30 students, 40 % students are take the help of TV, paper ad and hoarding and 27 % students take social media help, 20 % students take the exiting students reference and 13 % students prefer education fair.

Question	Employee	Student	Alumni	Non	Total
Any of your family / friends members associated with	3	13	6	8	30

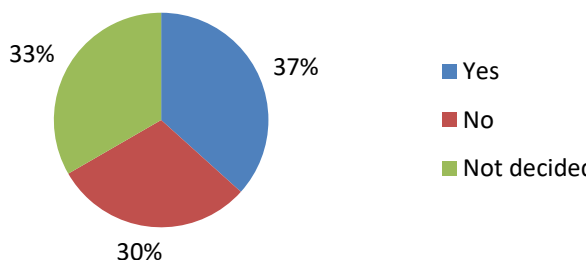
Any of your family / friends members associated with



Analysis :- According to the survey of prospective students for undergraduate courses in Chhattisgarh, researcher has found that out of 30 students, 43 % students influence by students, 27 % come as a fresh case, 20 % come through alumni and 10 % students come through employee referral .

Question	Yes	No	Not decided	Total
Are you willing to spend premium price for reputed university ?	11	9	10	30

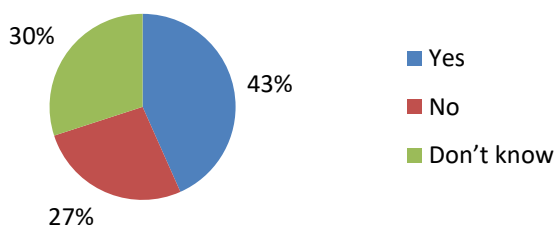
Are you willing to spend premium price for reputed university ?



Analysis :- According to the survey of prospective students for undergraduate courses in Chhattisgarh, researcher has found that out of 30 students, 37 % students are ready to pay price premium, where as 33 % not decided yet and 30 % students are not interested to pay price premium.

Question	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Do you feel that logo of a brand should have the maximum visual effect to attract target audience ?	13	8	9	30

Do you feel that logo of a brand should have the maximum visual effect to attract target audience ?



Analysis :- According to the survey of prospective students for undergraduate courses in Chhattisgarh, researcher has found that out of 30 students, 43 % students are be leave that logo of a brand attract to target audience, where as 27 % disagree with the same and 30 % students doesn't have much idea.

Findings

Survey has been done on the student available in open market and who has the option of selecting Undergraduate courses in various universities in Chhattisgarh. Total 30 student are taken into consideration for conducting the survey. After survey and analysis some of the following conclusions can be drawn:

- According to present survey, 47 % of students are showing their interest on private universities. As private universities have flexibility to design their own / updated curriculum. That is why % is higher for private university, while 36 % students are showing their interest on public universities and where as 17 % student are not decided yet.
- 2nd finding was during the selecting of universities what parameter you would prefer. Hence researcher has found that out of 30 students, 40 % students are focus for placement, 23% prefer ranking of institute, 20 % prefer faculties and 17 % prefer good campus. That means students are giving more weight age, where student would get good placement.
- University ranking is also one of the major criteria while selection any education branding. As researcher has found that out of 30 students, 60 % students prefer universities ranking, whereas 23 % students are not be leave in ranking and 17 % students are not sure about ranking.
- Regarding how did you found any universities. Researcher has found that out of 30 students, 40 % students are take the help of TV, paper ad and hoarding and 27 % students take social media help, 20 % students take the exiting students reference and 13 % students prefer education fair. That means day by day students are more attract with TV ads / paper ads and social media, instead of education fair and they come to know about any universities and their courses which they offers.

The study of above parameters help to push the prospective group of student for the enrollment in particular educational brand also the factors helps for targeting the student / parents at the time of personal counseling.

Few finding for establishing an education brand :-

- a. Lack of initiatives in the field of research. The amount of funding that is currently available for research in Indian universities is meagre by global standards. Apart from increasing the quantum of funds -- and promoting specific research on the state of the Indian higher education system itself -- there is a need for significant reform in the overall policy and management framework of disbursing research grants.
- b. We do not have world class training programs for academic administrators. High quality education administration is one of the seriously ignored aspects of the Indian higher education system. As providers of relevant educational support services, academic administrators form the backbone of any educational institution, especially one that aspires to constantly improve the academic experience of its students and teachers.
- c. World-class university requires world-class faculty supported by a world-class administration. Unfortunately, there are no comprehensive training programs for academic administrators in India who deal with different nuances of our higher education system.
- d. The lack of managerial training programs for higher authorities in education administration has compromised the evolution of generic best practices in the sector. Institution-building has suffered and creativity has been stifled as the Indian higher education system continues to be driven by individual persona and the charm of education administrators instead of adherence to sustainable and institution-driven quality assurance mechanisms and innovative processes.
- e. International collaborations in the form of student exchanges, faculty exchanges, joint teaching, joint research, joint conferences, joint publications, joint executive education programs, summer and winter schools and study-abroad programs are ways to promote the global engagement of Indian higher education institutions.
- f. Skill / Competency-based learning or Competency-Based Education and Training is an approach to teaching and learning more often used in learning concrete skills than abstract learning. It differs from other non-related approaches in that the unit of learning is extremely fine grained. Rather than a course or a module every individual skill/learning outcome, known as a competency, is one single unit. Learners work on one competency at a time, which is likely a small component of a larger learning goal.

Conclusion

The findings of this research provided evidence that the consume-based brand equity model can be applied to the private university context and used to guide marketing activities for Universities. Following this, the implications for branding theory and private university marketing are discussed, before concluding with the limitations of this study and opportunities for further research.

The intent of this research was to identify the elements of consumer-based brand equity applied in a private university context by using existing theory. Despite the large amounts of research into brand equity, none appeared to have focused on private university context, which is how I arrived at the purpose for this research. The purpose of this study was to explore the application of existing brand equity theory to private universities in Chhattisgarh and what are various factors influencing consumer to chose any private universities in Chhattisgarh. The study used Keller's (2001 & 2008) model on building customer-based brand equity and established how it could be transferred to private university context. The findings of the research related to selection of private or public universities for undergraduate courses in Chhattisgarh, researcher has found that out of 30 students, 47 % students are looking for private universities, whereas 36 % students are interested for public universities and 17 % students are not decided yet. One more question asked randomly what parameter you check while selecting of any universities, so researcher has found that out of 30 students, 40 % students are focus for placement, 23% prefer ranking of institute, 20 % prefer faculties and 17 % prefer good campus.

Opportunities for further research exist in researching the elements of customer-based brand equity from the demand-side as well as developing a theoretical model to measure it. This could be performed by a longitudinal study of students undertaking private university in Chhattisgarh. This would provide for better insight into building brand equity in different educational contexts, thus increasing the transferability of findings to more cultures. It is hoped that this research will encourage further investigation into the area of customer-based brand equity in private university specially in Chhattisgarh.

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