

## ISSUES IN BRANDING OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES

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### ABSTRACT

*These days' intangible assets have assumed greater importance as far as modern companies are concerned. Brand is a powerful differentiator indeed. In simple words, brand is a recognized symbol or name or term associated with a product in a unique way thereby providing it a specific identity. The American Marketing Association has defined brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol or combination of these intend to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate from those of competitors". Now days, educational institutes have started understanding the value of brand. The major challenge in branding an educational institution is that the lives of its students, parents, alumni, faculty, and staff are intimately attached to it. For building a brand the educational institute needs some unique points of differentiation. Major stakeholders involved here are promoters, students, parents, alumni, employers, researchers and society at large. In India, IIT/IIM's are major brands as far as education is concerned. But as far as branding is concerned, the issues involved in case of an academic institute are different from branding in the core corporate sector. In the present paper, the various strategic issues and other implications regarding branding an Academic Institute will be considered in detail. Various issues involved in developing and promoting brand of an educational institute will be analyzed in detail.*

**Keywords:** Branding, Education, Educational Institutes

## INTRODUCTION

The education sector in India offers a huge untapped market due to low literacy rate, high concentration in urban areas and growing per capita income in the country. India's aspirations to establish a knowledge society in the wake of increasing liberalization, privatization and globalization, is based on the assumption that higher and technical education essentially empowers people with the requisite competitive skills and knowledge. That is why increasing attention has also been given to quality and excellence in higher education. Keeping in mind the scope and growth in the education sector in India, a number of private sector educational institutes/universities have mushroomed across the country. The very energetic entrepreneurs are making great efforts to get more and more admissions. It has been commonly accepted now that brands represent real and significant financial value to their owners. Establishing and then, managing a brand therefore definitely requires careful and strategic stewardship.

Therefore, the entrepreneurs these days have been adopting each and every measure possible to build a brand name of their institute/university.

It is known to all that seats in IITs/IIMs are limited, therefore it is not possible for all the aspirants to get seats in these top notch Institutes. In order to study, the students will have to look beyond these institutes. Students are now ready to pay the fees in lacs to get admission even in an institute that assure him a job after completing his studies in the respective stream.

Such an ever growing demand for quality education has led to education institutes/universities mushrooming across the country. It has been seen that people having businesses in garments, real estate, sweets, iron and steel, automobile dealership, manufacturing and other fields are becoming "entrepreneurs" and have started entering the educational field. Various educationists and other professionals have also entered the field of education in the recent past and opened up institutes to provide quality education to the students. A number of institutes have created a particular respectable name in the field and are able to fill their seats within a few days only of opening the admissions.

### **Essentials for Educational Brand:**

Creating the brand name and then promoting it, is very essential to attract students from far off places. Branding principles are universal. The educational institute must define its brand, decide what it stands for, and articulate its distinctive

features, develop a brand plan and then implement it. A brand name for educational institutions is defined by intangible factors like the quality of the education it imparts, its faculty, culture and resources available for students.

Various other factors like campus size, infrastructural facilities available, quality of the graduating batch and their track record in getting jobs, assistance in placement of the students after completing their studies are very much relevant. For education institutes, the product is the education and the prospective customer is the student and generally the consumer cannot enjoy two competing products at the same time. An educational institute, to be reputed, must concentrate on the following very basic issues:

- Curriculum and Teaching Pedagogy.
- Technology-enabled learning.
- Promising state of art Infrastructure.
- Well-qualified Faculty.
- Proper Accreditation and Affiliation.
- Maximum Courses under one roof.
- Proper Industry Linkages.
- Scholarships/Fellowships offered to students/faculty.
- Student and faculty exchange programmes.
- Career Counseling and Placement services.
- Developing soft-skills such as communication and inter-personal skills
- Research and Innovation.
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It must be noted that financial health of an educational institution is highly dependent upon the revenue generated from student in the form of fees and other charges. The competition in the higher education sector has increased manifold than ever before. These days educational institute compete on price, quality, service, and reputation. Now due to the explosion of online education and the increasing mobility of students, it has become very much difficult for the institutes to get the enrolment of the students for even the survival of the institutes.

#### **Measures Adopted To Build Brand:**

Branding an educational institution is very much needed these days of cut throat competition and a good brand name can really benefit an educational institute greatly. It is very easy for an educational institution having great brand image, to attracting best faculty worldwide, meritorious students and hardworking staff. The branding of an educational institute involves serious strategic implications as the lives of its students, parents, alumni, faculty, and other supporting staffs are intimately tied to it. Brand building should not be limited to implementing a new logo or a tagline; in fact, effective brand building should take a holistic view of the institute and capitalize on its strengths and unique qualities. Various well known measures adopted by these entrepreneurs have been discussed as under:

The educational institutes have started spending very much annually on advertising the educational institutes have started spending very much annually on advertising and promotional activities. Such advertisements are not limited to newspapers/journals of repute only, rather these institutions have started giving their advertisements on a number of reputed TV Channels like Aaj Tak, NDTV India, Star Plus, Zee TV to name a few. In Punjab, Lovely Professional University (LPU), Phagwara, Chandigarh University, Morinda and Desh Bhagat University, M. Gobindgarh, a few private universities have been promoting their brand using TV, radio, newspapers, Internet and various other options available in the modern era of technology. Almost all such educational institutions have established the unique means/methods to gauge the effectiveness of their advertisement through various media. OP Jindal Global University in Haryana has been talking to reputed schools in

Uttarakhand as part of its publicity campaign. Amity University, a reputed private sector university is known for its aggressive marketing strategies. IIPM motivates the students to dare to think beyond the IIMs.

Celebrity Endorsement is being used by a few educational institutions to promote their brand name. Cricketer Anil Kumble endorses the Manipal Education group.

Bollywood Superstar Shahrukh Khan is invited by IIPM to host its annual business and marketing quiz. The educational institutes must keep in mind that they cannot buy the reputation; it can only be created over a time period by the quality of its faculty and students, the infrastructural facilities and most importantly the research activities being conducted by the institute.

Various new educational institutions try to secure admissions on the basis of their top various new educational institutions try to secure admissions on the basis of their top class infrastructure and unique teaching methodologies. Such initiatives are relevant in the short term only; in the long run what matters is the quality indeed. There are a number of students and their parents also, who rely solely on word of mouth about the institute forwarded by the passing out students of that institute.

Modern era is the era of constantly evolving digital world. ICT has transformed the Modern era is the era of constantly evolving digital world. ICT has transformed the way young students communicate, network and access information. Educational institutions must make concerted efforts to cater to the needs of this online. Various social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook must be used in order to attract the students.

A number of educational institutions have initiated a few social welfare measures to create their brand image in the society. Notable measures are organizing Blood Donation camp, offering scholarship test for the needy students, organizing HIV-AIDS awareness campaigns among rural masses etc.

Leveraging the alumni network is one of the most effective and low cost options to Leveraging the alumni network is one of the most effective and low cost options to create and then promote the brand.

Another important aspect of branding is to effectively use the Internet. Education another important aspect of branding is to effectively use the Internet. Education institutes need to invest in social media solutions over the long term. This

Will help them create and entrench a positioning, engage prospects, and counter negative feedback. Quality of academic and research activities must be first and foremost thing to be Quality of academic and research activities must be first and foremost thing to be forwarded while creating a brand of an educational institute. Other facilities and resources available must support the basic platform i.e. academics and research.

Apart from concentrating on issues like research capabilities, academic reputation and great infrastructure, the educational institute must try to attach emotionally with the prospective students.

Educational Institutions/Universities may take steps to make the campus more environment friendly, pedestrian-friendly; some other unique measures may be taken to build a brand. These institutions must respect the sense of green and try to engage students, faculty, and staff in their sustainability efforts. Be mindful of how brand campaign language may be perceived internally. Educational Institutions/Universities should appreciate the fact that there is no single perfect phrase to sum up their institution.

Educational Institutions/Universities should try to put their best face forward. Posters, direct mail, radio spots, and the web are the communication methods, and parent feedback indicates that the campaign has identified the university as offering a quality education.

Educational Institutions/Universities must be prepared to tackle the misperceptions in Educational Institutions/Universities must be prepared to tackle the misperceptions in an effective way.

Educational Institutions/Universities should involve their students in the brand building exercises. In other words, students should be given a chance to contribute to the branding effort. Colleges can raise visibility and build their brand with their target audience by offering programs tailored to that audience.

Branding message must be conveyed to the audience in such a way so that each Branding message must be conveyed to the audience in such a way so that each constituent group feels valued. As separate groups, students, alumni, donors, and trustees should not receive information meant for a general audience.

Educational Institutions/Universities should try to develop a comprehensive but user- friendly branding manual. It promotes a consistent look and feel for all print and electronic materials.

Educational Institutions/Universities must incorporate some features like real stories about students, faculty, and alumni to make admission brochure somewhat special instead of concentrating on typical facts and figures found in a typical college brochure. In fact, these institutions should use your admissions application as a branding tool.

Educational Institutions/Universities must try to make brand connections in the Educational Institutions/Universities must try to make brand connections in the classroom and beyond. Further, it must be ensured that all staff members exemplify the brand.

Connect donor passions to institutional priorities. Marketing materials should allow development officers and others to begin and advance dialogues.

Create a virtual tour with personality. Through audio, video, and graphics, online campus tours can provide potential students with a personal experience that identifies the unique offerings and culture of the institution. All designed to give prospective students a look at what people on campus are like.

Educational Institutions/Universities must rely more on their strengths and they must deliver to the students what they had promised earlier. They must try to take advantage of the opportunity by striking when the iron is hot, but it must not contradict with their providing quality education. They must be prepared to jump on unplanned ideas that may drive the brand message.

**Conclusion:**

It must be remembered that brand promotion without the brand promise is often counterproductive. The institute must be in a position to fulfill the expectations generated from promotional campaigns. In the modern era the students are really smart and malpractices/false promises/fake data on placement records cannot be fooling the students anymore. The brand image of an educational institute is largely determined by the students.

The institutions must also keep in mind that even established brands need some sort of revision every now and then. It must be ensured that the brand name stays relevant in the mind of people.

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