

A Concept Building Approach to Measure University's Brand Image

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Abstract

The study is a conceptual roadmap for the development of the idea to measure the effectiveness of universities stake holders' person factors and as well as situational ones in brand image building of an academic institution. Customer Relationship Management (CRM), internal marketing, advertising and social media are playing the role of mediating constructs and it is hypothesized that they are much more important in the brand image building process. The study is a deductive research where different concepts are taken to constitute the independent, mediating and dependent construct leading to build a new concept. Brand image has been studied in a different industry. However, the brand image of an academic institution that attracts the students to take the admission with measuring the effect of other components on it, is a different kind of study. This research is in its preliminary phase where it has been checked with literature. Secondary information serves as the base of study. Most of the available literature and theories have been incorporated and explained clearly for the understanding of the thought.

Keywords: advertising, brand image, CRM, internal marketing, social media

JEL: M31, M37

Introduction

The study conducted here is deductive research where different concepts are considered relevant to the study and their summary has been the base for further study. The main aim of this paper is to build a concrete base for the conceptualization and formulation of the conceptual model. Furthermore, the paper is mining sufficient literature base for the justification of the conceptual model. Different dimensions covered in this study are Customer Relationship Management (CRM), internal marketing and advertising and social media is playing the role of mediating constructs. It is hypothesized that the mediating constructs are of higher importance in the brand image building process.

Undoubtedly, these days branding has been becoming a popular subject among academics and researchers who have done a significant amount of work on the new product launch and brand awareness. Chapleo (2015) explores the challenges of university branding on the issue of cultural issues, brand-conscious creation concepts and frameworks, and on the architecture of brands, rather than trademarking. The study shows not only differences between universities and trademarks but also culture, brand concepts and brand architecture (Chapleo, 2015). Brand history and its big effect on customers, corporations and managers are presented in literature (Salzer-Morling & Strannegard, 2004). The brand has become the most crucial asset for the corporation since late 1980s and gained center stage in market-

ing managerial talk. This study states that one of the most significant priorities of the marketing approach is to create relationships between consumers and the offered brand. Increased competition at the market is taken into consideration and there is no evidence that this competition will end; so, consumer-brand bonding will be the main concept for companies (Roy & Banerjee, 2008). If it were as good as the American Marketing Association, it would set out a definition: " Brand; It is a name, a term, a sign, a symbol or a design that aims to describe the goods or services of a seller or group of sellers and distinguish them from our competitors" (Jevons, 2005). Obviously, today's open market is the rising value of the market, the brands that brand managers who are able to identify and meet the needs of customers on the market can be proud of their brands. Rindell, Korkman & Gummerus (2011) examine the effect of brand images on consumer practices for uncovering brand strength as well as understanding brand strength that is based on image and it also identifies and systematically categorizes consumer practices and proposes that related to brands. The study shows that brand communication has more influence on brand image than brand trust, and that brand communication can have a strong influence on brand trust and brand loyalty through brand image that strongly influences brand trust. Brand trust and brand loyalty are especially in a strong relationship (Chinomona, 2016). While

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market supply and brand image for the success of a growing recognition of the relevance of the organization have been expanding, as signs propose, good long-term loyalty to the brand image of the customer experience and improve satisfaction Ogba & Tan (2009). This study intends to deeply understand the roles consumers play in time and context in the process of creating brand image over time Rindell & Iglesias (2014) and the paper claims that for further understanding image construction processes since it is necessary to go beyond just physical (location) and psychological (social) circumstances. The study should consider systematic efforts to determine the key role of brand strategies in consumer moments of brand image formation (Rindell & Iglesias, 2014). Buyers build brand images regarding special cases and everyday instants in their lives over time. This work gives some information about positioning of a brand and the creation of a brand image through a clear and consistent image creation campaign; positioning a brand is the cornerstone of brand marketing practice, and marketers spend millions of dollars each year to create and support brand images (Bhat & Readdy, 1998). This study suggests that brand functionality and symbolism are separate concepts in consumers' minds and brands could be positioned to satisfy either functional or symbolic needs (Bhat & Readdy, 1998). Rotfeld (2008) discusses conceptual problems of the family brands, and how conflict of images can work to the detriment of all lines and the study states that regarding companies' corporate history, companies more focused on the name than on what the name means. The research found that companies are often more concerned about creating a well-known brand than what consumers think about the brand (Rotfeld, 2008). The main purpose of this research is to contribute to the literature on the historical development of branding, its uses and implications (Bastos & Levy, 2012). The present study seeks to contribute to our knowledge by using a multi-faceted approach to the historical development of brand consciousness and the main forces behind these developments (Bastos & Levy, 2012). This paper states that brand awareness has become a significant variable that has effects on customers' perceptions of a brand. The study focuses on the importance of these dimensions (brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand image and consumer behavior) of the brand value created by the customer in the brand sense of the consumer (Karam & Saydam, 2015). The main aim of the paper (Jakeli & Tchumburidze, 2012) is to present whether branding is a suitable concept to be applicable at the Georgian political market. It also identifies the problems realized in a managerial approach to branding in Georgian politics and forwards an electoral learning perspective as an alternative. Political parties have recently begun to utilize branding in a lot of countries around the world as a concept and nowadays it is one of the most significant tools for the success of the parties (Jakeli & Tchumburidze, 2012). As (Horowitz & Spector, 2004) evaluate the effect of private high schools against state high schools concerning the undergraduate students' academic performance that they have registered at Ball State University, in the context of this evaluation having compared students' performance relating to the results of this study those who went to religious high schools performed better than private and public school students. The marketing focus, the relationships be-

tween organizations and customers and the values resulting from this interaction are increasing. The study (Saunders & Rod, 2012) aims to expand traditional research on consumer-brand relations and suggest alternative ways of considering these interactions. The paper states that the importance of a relational network approach in supporting brand-customer relationships is supported. This will help to determine the relationship between companies and brands and the impact of branding on existing or newly created services (Saunders & Rod, 2012).

Literature Review

Coulson (2009) wants to compare public, private, and market schools regarding international evidence. The article commits to undertake such a study that assesses the results of decades of international research comparing market and government education delivery and explains why these international experiences are related to the United States (Coulson, 2009). The study deals with school selection and direct payment of parental fees, autonomy for educators, poor regulation, strong competition among schools, and profit for the least of schools and the most effective and responsive education systems (Coulson, 2009). Literature investigates the effect of brand meaning on brand equity of higher education institutions and compares the effect of brand meaning on brand equity between public and private higher education institutions as well. The study provides empirical evidence to verify the results of past qualitative studies thus proving that the stronger the degree of brand meaning of higher education institutions the higher their brand equity (Teh & Saleh, 2011).

According to Vukasovič, 2015, it is essential to determine the key elements of brand equity for international students through exploring the applicability of existing brand value theory to international higher education. The work demonstrates the higher education sector to develop academic understanding of brand value and the implications for management practice study (Vukasovič, 2015). The paper shows that a customer-focused brand equity model can be applied as an element of higher education content to the competitive advantage and used to guide marketing activities for universities internationally (Vukasovič, 2015). The study (Azizi, Elezi, & Mazreku, 2013) examines some current issues related to the study and urges to resolve some current problems in the future. People have different opinions about their children's decision making processes for the university choice for many reasons: the amount of payment, quality of teaching, stereotypes created by the individual cases and so on that the public or private university provide various opportunities for students (Azizi, Elezi, & Mazreku, 2013). Azizi, Elezi, & Mazreku (2013) reveal the existing differences (e.g., weaknesses and priorities of universities) between public and private universities in terms of improvement of quality in higher education in Macedonia. According to Shehzad et al., (2014), they state that for any company or business, the brand name that can change people's buying behavior positively as a tool or brand image plays a very important role in order to improve their

performance. It also analyzes the influence of brand name on consumer buying behavior among University students of Gujranwala, Faisalabad and Lahore. The study reveals that brand image or brand name have significant positive relationship with consumer buying behavior and they also demonstrate that students are brand conscious and prefer the branded product (Shehzad et al., 2014). Effectiveness of branding activities is also widely given in literature which is now becoming increasingly important in the higher education sector able to distinguish a university from other universities branding if the university needs to be assessed and measured (Che, 2013). Marketing professionals talk about the challenges of branding activities in the higher education sector but they do not necessarily have a consistent view of the objectives of branding activities. So, they suggested some measures of branding activities particularly in universities to differentiate their organizations in order to attract the attention of stakeholders and in line with the current educational trends (Che, 2013). The study proposes that university branding is complex in nature and, therefore, the use of a commercial approach can be easier (Che, 2013). Private or public universities are in the world of the competition that is the case today. So, to increase their share at the market, become more competitive, be constant and differentiate their organization, they should offer the market new projects and activities about branding. The literature investigates the choice of institutions and the expectations of Malaysian Chinese students' application for admission on selected factors to become more competitive regarding past research that affects the competition in private higher education (Kim & Periyayya, 2013). The paper found that the factors influencing an important electoral process for the election of the higher education institution had academic integrity, teaching quality, length of stay, future employability, education fees, foreign and local degrees offered, institutional reputation and past record, student expressions and new opportunities for exposure to the social environment. As Kim & Periyayya, 2013 states, for branding strategies to work, an institution of higher education has to take into account expectations that matter most to students. The literature searches the role of corporate brands and how effectively they communicate with customers who are compared across a series of key brand dimension as a source of information about attributes of a service (Mourad, Ennew & Kortam, 2010). Intangibility and inseparability of the service is generally thought to naturally increase the risk perceived by consumers in making purchasing decisions. The service sector chosen for the empirical research was higher education service that is a professional service described by a high level of experience qualities in Egypt (Mourad, Ennew & Kortam, 2010).

The aim of this study is to measure and maintain the service quality factors that are invisibility, perishability, inseparability, and heterogeneity in private universities of Bangladesh (Sultan & Tarafder, 2007). Regarding the results of the paper it is found that private universities should have infrastructure, proficient faculty members and competent staff. Academic understanding of brand value in the higher education sector (Mourad, Ennew, & Kortam, 2010) is developed and its implications for governance practices are explored. It is often claimed that it is relatively difficult to car-

ry out marketing in the service sector because of the unique features of service and the dominance of experience and credence qualities. Undoubtedly, brand equity is the value given by customers to the brand.

Methods

Research Problem

Based on the extensive literature review and existing models of the study, it is observed that the brand image concept has been studied in different industry differently for different aspects. Different independent and mediating variables have been considered for the brand image measurement for the business. This specific study views the research problem as "to draw the idea and conceptualize the new relationships among independent variable (Personal factors and Situational Factors), mediating variable (Internal Factors and External Factors) and the dependent variable (Brand Image) to measure the role of independent and mediating variables in the brand image building of universities".

Research Objective

- To explore the variables affecting the brand image of universities
- To find the mediating variables affecting the brand image of universities
- To conceptualize relationships among independent variables, mediating variables and dependent variables for universities.

Conceptual Review

Constructs formed for the study and the bases used for them are explained. The basic definition and applicability with example and implemented citations is making it very worthy for the research. The conceptual model developed on the basis of literature review considering the concepts of (Zaichkowsky, 1986) to form the independent variables and dependent variable.

Independent Construct

In this conceptual model there are two independent factors; personal factors and situational factors.

Personal Factors

Personal factors consist of age and way of life, purchasing power and revenue, lifestyle, and personality and self-concept. The features of each customer obviously affect decisions and buying behavior.

Age and Way of Life

Customers generally purchase different goods or services at different ages, such as, a customer will not buy the same goods or services in 25 or 65 years. Customer behavior,

interests, surroundings, way of life, values, environment and actions progress during his/her life. Factors affecting the procurement decision process may also change. The individual's family life cycle will also be effective in value, lifestyle and buying behavior. He lives in a region and a city (large city, small town, countryside, etc.) as well as the country of origin. It can be interesting to define, understand, measure and analyze what measures and personal factors influence customer behavior for adapting to a brand or a retailer.

Purchasing Power and Revenue

Obviously, purchasing will have a significant impact on behavior and purchasing decisions based on power, income and capital. This can clearly reflect the level of price prejudice in the perspective of his money and purchasing decisions. As for the social status, some customers can search for "social value" of the goods they purchase in order to reveal "external indications" of their income and to show the buying power.

Lifestyle

A person's way of life includes all his activities, interests, values and opinions. A customer's way of life influences their lifestyle, behavior and purchasing decisions.

Personality and Self-Concept

Personality, that is the product of the interaction of the individual's psychological and physiological characteristics and causes continuous behavior, is a set of characteristics and properties of each individual.

The concept of self resembles the image that the individual has - or desires to possess - and conveys it to its surroundings. These two concepts significantly affect the individual in the selections and the way they are in everyday life.

Situational Factors

Situational factors consist of the reference and membership groups, family and social roles and status.

Social factors that are divided into three categories: reference groups, family and social roles and status are among the factors that significantly affect customer behavior.

Reference Groups and Membership Groups

Membership groups of an individual are the social groups and an individual belongs to them. Therefore, they affect him. Membership groups are generally related to their social origin, age, residence, work, hobbies, leisure time, etc. More generally, reference groups are given to persons who provide some direct or negative comparison points regarding their behavior, way of life, wishes or consumer habits. Whether he is a member of a membership or a non-membership group, they affect the image of the individual as well as his behavior.

The aspirational reference group is a subcategory of an applicant group; the individual may be influenced by a group of aspiration that he does not yet belong to, but he wants to be a part of them.

Family

No doubt, the family is one of the most influential factors on the individual.

It creates an environment of socialization in which an individual develops, shapes and acquires values.

Social Roles and Status

A social role is a sequence of attitudes and activities that an individual is expected to make based on his / her occupation and position in the workplace, position in the family and gender etc. Social role and status deeply affect customer behavior and buying decisions.

Moderating / Mediating Factors

Mediating constructs play a very important role to know the direct and mediating effects of concept. In this conceptual modal moderating factors consist of internal factors (Internal marketing and CRM) and external factors (Advertising and social media).

Internal factors

Internal factors are the internal influencing factors on the organization, and the organization can often influence them. Internal factors consist of human resources, product, location goal, strategy, technology and dimension.

Internal Marketing

Internal marketing (IM) is used to define the internal implementation of marketing within an organization. Each department and every person is both a supplier and a customer and the organization's staff works together to support the company's strategy and objectives.

The study talks about the factors that may affect an employee's perception of their company's level of internal marketing orientation (Naude, Desai & Murphy, 2003). The levels of internal marketing orientation are affected by the single item variables that are age location, and length of tenure. Naude, Desai & Murphy (2003). Concerning the more complex "person & situation" multi-item variables, the study states that the perceived market orientation of local and direct managers/supervisors are the most significant determinants as well as aspects of communication, socialization, and workplace satisfaction. Moreover, according to the paper, internal marketing orientation is one of the core components of the broader concept of market orientation. As Huang and Thiele, 2015 state, in recent years, internal marketing programs have gained momentum in the services markets. Internal marketing is a strategic weapon that can help service marketers to ensure customer satisfaction

and accomplish high quality service delivery. The aim of this study is to synthesize internal marketing measures in two service settings across both Western and Eastern backgrounds (Huan & Thiele, 2015). The paper provides a new measure of internal marketing practice that is a three-dimensional concept ideally consisting of internal market research, training and communication activities for use in future (Huang & Thiele, 2015).

CRM

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has become one of the most dynamic technology issues of the millennium. The aim of this article is to investigate how customer relationship management (CRM) enhances customer satisfaction and affects customer retention (Bahri-Ammari & Soliman, 2016). According to the study, the importance of perceiving CRM and service quality in maintaining a sustainable and profitable relationship has been emphasized (Bahri-Ammari & Soliman, 2016). The study found that there is a significant relationship between CRM and quality perception, satisfaction and loyalty but no significant relationship has been identified between CRM and retention or CRM and profitability (Bahri-Ammari & Soliman, 2016). This paper investigates the impact of using mobile customer relationship management (m-CRM) on employees' personal performance (Kim et al., 2015). Innovation and change in the age of mobile communications have begun to play a very important role in business success (Kim et al., 2015).

External Factors

In this conceptual model external factors consist of advertising and social media.

External factors of organizational structures come from outside the organization and the company cannot influence them. They contain the institutional environment, integration processes as well as the market and application of scientific achievements.

Advertising

Nowadays marketers use different advertising methods to attract the attention of the target market to influence their behavior. Today, the most convenient way to reach targeted customers for companies is to leverage the most appropriate advertising methods - digital media, such as, print media, banner ads, mobile ads and advertising social media. This study is investigating the impact of online students encouraging Facebook to link university students at social sharing sites to their librarians' Facebook page (Chan, 2011). The article examines the influence of television commercials on children's attitudes (Priya, Baisya & Sharma, 2010). The main goal of this work is to understand more about search engine advertising, which is a useful form of advertising for consumer point of view, as the keyword and the advertising message are matched according to the entered search term (Olbrich & Schultz, 2014).

Social Media

It's no surprise that universities embrace social media. Any university student uses the social networking site Facebook page for different purposes and it became the main part of their lives; so academic libraries realized it and opened their own Facebook pages. Today's students have grown to communicate and share experiences on social media sites like Facebook and now they are helping to increase the popularity of new platforms like Instagram. Social media is a key to us and has created huge connection with a mass audience, future mothers and fathers, not just potential students. In this digital age companies utilize any advertisement, especially, television one, to attract children's attention on their products. The aim of the study is to examine health-related advertising in university settings and evaluate the study, health-related advertising environment and policies implemented on university campuses (Szymona et al., 2011). Nowadays, online advertising is one of the cheapest and fastest advertising methods, given the rapid development of new information channels, in order to reach potential and real customers. As Tenzinde et al. (2002) stated, in general, e-mail advertising has increased all over the world and communication technology has become the most successful form, marketing success has improved and brand image has been improved.

Dependent Factor

In this conceptual model brand image and its three sub-components (mystery, sensuality, and intimacy) serve as the dependent factor.

Brand Image

In this study, brand image is considered as an important concept in consumer behavior because brand and product selection by consumers is based on the evaluation of the brand image (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). A consumer has shaped his/her perception and feelings for a brand through direct/indirect brand experiences that capture cognitive, sensory, and emotional aspects. These are reflected in three dimensions of mystery, emotionality and sincerity, respectively (Roberts, 2004). Brand awareness has arisen as the top management priority in the last decade as brands have become increasingly aware that firms are among the most valuable intangible assets they have. Brands are based on the product itself, the accompanying marketing activity, and the use (or non-use) of the others as well as the customers. In this paper they have developed academic understanding of brand value in the higher education sector and explored the effects on governance practices. It is often claimed to be relatively difficult marketing in the service sector due to the unique characteristics of the service and the dominance of its experience and safety features (Mourad, Ennew, & Kortam, 2010). As regards the effectiveness of brand activities which are increasingly gaining importance in the higher education sector, evaluation and measurement of negotiations on the ability to distinguish a university from other universities branded at universities is a matter of question. Marketing specialists are talking about

the challenges of branding in the higher education sector but they do not need to have a consistent view of the brand's goals. For this reason, especially, in universities, stakeholders are urged to label activities in order to attract the interest and distinguish their organization from existing educational trends (Che, 2013). Shehzad et al. (2014) indicate that brand image or brand consumers are positively related to buying behavior and that students have brand awareness and prefer branded products.

Mystery

Cognitive aspects of the brand image reflect the mental thoughts that consumers have created by taking into account brand product features, service, performance and symbolic or psychological meanings.

The cognitive aspect of the brand image reflects the mental thoughts that consumers have created by taking into account brand product features, service, performance and symbolic or psychological meanings. Cognitive experience is shaped by future dreams and aspirations as well as past and present interactions with a brand (Roberts, 2004). As one of the subcomponents of the mystery, Roberts tells inspirational and wonderful stories of a culture's legends, iconic characters and dreams; it combines the past, the present, and the future.

Sensuality

The sensory aspect of the brand image expresses brand experiences that are shaped by a consumer's physical senses (i.e., vision, smell, sound, touch and taste) (Robert, 2004). Sensuality reflects pleasant sensory experiences, such as, music, color scheme or design style in the shop or a Web site, and the environmental smell of the store, sensory experiences that may lead to sensuality (Robert, 2004). The study (Roberts, 2004) suggests that visual elements of a product, like a screen, logo design, packaging and beautiful colors, music, smell and texture diversity develop emotional experiences.

Intimacy

According to Roberts (2004), intimacy is defined as the emotional aspect of the brand image that is at the heart of brand experiences that involve what consumers feel when interacting with a brand. Intimacy gets emotional and binding experiences between consumers and brands. The study cited the importance of intimacy toward a romantic partner or a brand/firm to awaken positive feelings and perceptions, respectively (Sternberg, 1997). Intimacy is defined in Robert's sub-component concept as the firm's empathy, consumer's commitment and consumer enjoyment. Creating a sense of mystery, sensuality and intimacy to the brands' experience form brand love. Brand love is defined as a strong affection or profound emotional commitment that consumers have for a particular brand (Roberts, 2004).

Results

The research was conducted here to keep the research problem and research objectives at the highest priority. The conceptual model (Figure 1) presented here is the planned outcome as was the research problem to conceptualize the different variables in one frame to get a sustainable model for the study. The conceptual model proposed here has three types of variable relationships as an independent (Personal factors and Situational Factors), mediating (Internal Factors and External Factors) and the dependent (Brand Image) ones to measure the role of independent and mediating variables in the brand image building of universities. The dimensions are presented here with the relational line as hypothesis where it is hypothesized with fourteen relationships considering all dimensions and sub dimensions. The objectives of the study could get reached as they explored the variables affecting the brand image of universities and found the mediating variables affecting the brand image of universities. Finally, it conceptualized the relationships among independent, mediating and dependent variables for universities with the hypothesized relationships among the variables explored for the study.

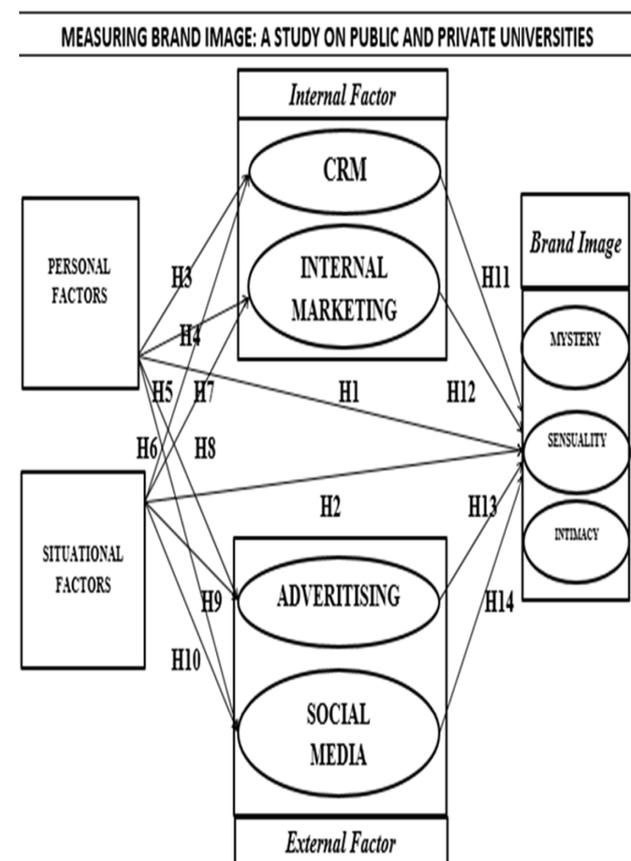


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

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