



Quality Determinants and Brand Perception: A Review of Brand Building Approach for Higher Management Educational Institution

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Abstract: *Higher management education is losing its charm and institutions have become degree production houses rather than producing highly talented individuals. How to improve quality in higher management education is a hot topic of discussion throughout all quarters of the higher education community and outside the community. Being a service industry quality is determined by customers using various criteria like; credibility, security, access, communication, tangibles, responsiveness, competence, reliability etc. Marketing of service sector especially higher management education is becoming a challenge now a day. At the same time all institutes wants to become brand but branding is not only all about marketing, promotion, and awareness and admission number game. It has much bigger scope and required years of persistent efforts. This research paper finds various service quality determinants, various marketing and branding approaches suggested by many authors.*

Keywords: *Service quality determinants, brand perception, GAP analysis of higher management education system.*

I. INTRODUCTION

History of Indian education very enriching. In early days, under the supervision of guru education was commencing. Education was one of the methods to achieve moksha or enlightenment. Education was open to all. With the progression of new era, because of the superiority complexes, the education became case oriented. Gurus prescribe strict monastic guidelines and students were expected to follow those guidelines very strictly. Trend changes and urban learning became popular. Varanasi, Nalanda, Taxila and many such others became popular education centers. Philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, grammar, logic, arts, crafts, architecture any many such others multitude of disciplines were been provided by these institutes. By the 12th century onwards India faced constant invasions and traditional education system was been disrupted. After independence many efforts were been made to transform scenario. Today, with 348 universities and 17625 institutions, India became third largest higher education system. Looking to high population growth and increasing demand for higher management education many private players entering into this sector. This has intensified the competition. To enroll more number of students, institutes started all around marketing approach. TV, radio, print, social media, outdoor media played a vital role to increase awareness. At the same time high industry growth rate increased demand for highly educated, skilled and talented youth. By examining the conceptual framework of modern marketing and service quality determinant criteria established by Berry and Parasuraman (The free press 1991), the aim of this paper is to see how branding can be well utilized into marketing of higher management education.

II. OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH

Aim of this research paper is,

- To identify importance of service quality determinants in higher management education
- To understand various GAP co-exists in services offered by various management institutions or universities.
- To evaluate how decision making process is been affected by brand perception in higher management education.

III. METHODOLOGY

In the process to fulfill objectives of this research paper we have done secondary data analysis. Literature review analysis are been made of various research papers in the field of branding in higher management education and few opinions are been collected on the effect of brand perception on decision making in higher management education.

IV. CURRENT SCENARIO OF HIGHER EDUCATION

High population growth and demographic profile is significant driver for educational change. It is been assumed that India will outpace china as the country with the largest tertiary education by 2020 as more than 50% of India's population is under the age of 25 years. India has carved its presence in quality education with the presence of IIMs and IITs, while other sides there are number of universities which have been founded with the sole objective of making easy money. As a result of this only 25% of technical graduated and 10-15% of other graduates are found employable as per IT/ITES industries. Indian higher education is



often criticized for its rote learning rather than problem solving. UGC found 39 fake institution operation in India. As per the reports of New Indian Express, Indian higher education system seems to be producing zombies as they do not spend time in research, projects and discovery based creative learning. On excellence front of higher management education, lack of research and shortage of high quality faculty are plaguing the sector. If we talk about Indian higher management education, full time MBA programs reported contrasting fortunes. State common admission entrance test for admission to management colleges showed 35-45% dip in registration. Even registration for Common Admission Test (CAT) 2014 has fallen by 7.35%. There are plenty of opportunities for private sector in higher education. These players can provide learner centric, experiential and lifelong learning approach. New pedagogical techniques like blended learning, flipped classroom, and experiential learning using massive open online courses can be implemented. High quality faculties can be attracted and retained by introducing incentive and reward system.

V. SERVICE QUALITY DETERMINANTS IN HIGHER MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

The biggest challenge for marketers of education comes in the form of the intangibility of service. Service offered by higher management education institute or university is been evaluated by the students or their parents by analyzing the course contents, buildings and other infrastructure facilities. Many of the time service offered by these institutions falls far short of customer expectations. The phenomenon called customer gap does carries due to the gap between what the customer expects and what the organization offers them. There are many reasons for this gape like; failure to understand stakeholders expectations, failure to design the right service, not setting and communicating the right service standards to employees and intermediaries, failure in delivering service standards, failure to take customer feedback and review the service continuously.

The intangible and perishable nature of service makes it difficult for organizations to measure their quality, identify the loopholes and take necessary steps to improve the quality. Higher management education services have two important components- functional (right admission process, warmth of service providers, promptness in solving service query, and responsiveness toward the results.) and technical (designing course modules and content as per industry requirements, quality standard mechanism in student training and in imparting education, evaluation of papers and performance). Usually the technical component of service is easier to evaluate than the functional component. Berry and Parasuraman have indentified five main dimensions of service quality determinants. Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy.

Tangible component have to be design very carefully as higher management education as service is intangible in nature. Therefore, institutional service providers have to ensure that they provide right ambience and infrastructure to students and their smart and intellectual faculty members and well trained administrative staff members offer high quality service. Meeting the expectations of students and other stakeholders consistently and constantly striving to meet up high expectations is required. It is only than the stakeholders consider the service reliable and the institution or university dependable. All the service which are been offered should be tested prior to their launch. In responsiveness component, promptness in attending to students and service their requirements is highly essential. The faculties and administrative personnel have to be proactive in attending the problem situations where the stakeholders have some complaints. In the assurance component, the subject faculty should have complete knowledge about respective market, issues, challenges that are going to arise by applying theories or concepts when students will work in corporate sector after getting placement. Faculties should provide strong and timely advice to his students. An empathy component includes easy accessibility and open communication with staff members. All members of institution and staff members should empathize with stakeholders who report problems.

VI. SERVICE GAP ANALYSIS OF HIGHER MANAGEMENT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OR UNIVERSITIES

In order to have introspection and to diagnose the syndromes that the Indian higher management education system has been suffering from and to suggest remedial measures and strategies for preventing or minimizing the specific syndromes and for revamping the various strategic elements of system, GAP model analysis of quality developed by Zeithml, Bitner and Parasuraman of USA can be better utilized. Keeping in view the emerging trends in the international arena of higher education India has to realize that it is the high time for it to reorient and transform itself from protectionist to participative manager by adopting service marketing concept in improving the quality of higher management educational services. Gap model analysis is one such tool that can be used for analysis. Gap model analysis of higher management education suggests mainly five gaps;

University Gap 1: Services expected by students minus universities perception of student's expectations

University Gap 2: University's perception of student's expectation minus student- driven service designs and standards

University Gap 3: Student driven service designs minus service delivery

University Gap 4: Service delivery minus external communications to students

Student Gap 5: Student's expectations of service minus student's perception of service.

VII. HOW BRAND PERCEPTION AFFECTS DECISION MAKING PROCESS IN HIGHER MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

The definition of branding “ any signs capable of being represented graphically, particularly words, including personal names, designs, letters, numerals, the shape of goods or of their packaging, provided that such a signs are capable of distinguishing the goods of services of one undertaking from those of other undertaking”. But this definition is too narrow and there is one major brand myopia, still dominant today called customer myopia. It has to do with looking at brand from the perspective of seller versus customer. But in actuality, the activity of the brand is not a restricted to products and consumers. Brand activity is of



relational exchanges between the organizations and its stakeholders, starting with the most internal ones, and the employees. When the aim of branding is not only the products on sale but also all exchanges made by different stakeholders in the name of the brand, we have broader less myopic vision, a healthier one.

Product segments which are most popular and imaging are extremely competitive. Higher management educational institutional market is becoming most complex and competitive as multiple brands competing for “share of mind” in the battle for overall market share. Many institutional services have very similar features and price points. Customer’s decisions to select one product over another brand came often be the key discriminant factor. Brand is essentially the sum of all experiences related to the product, service and companies that make and deliver the product. Brand perceptions for only institutions or university are been shaped by functional experiences (i.e. quality, reliability, assurance, value of degree and empathy) as well emotional experiences (i.e. feeling satisfied by joining institute, improvement in student’s performance, making student’s life or job more gratifying or easier)the students associates with the institute or university. Brand experience regarding any higher management institution and perceptions are developed overtime through a variety of sources, including; previous experience with that institute, interaction with sales/ student service/ faculties and other employees, recommendation from friends and colleagues, reviews by reputable sources, advertising etc.

The top management of the institution need to know what is important to students/ stakeholders when making a brand decision, where stakeholders get information about products and services and what customers think about institutional brand. Marketing department of an institute should constantly work on to measure unaided and aided brand awareness, to determine brand share, to assess stakeholder’s brand preferences, to identify the key factors students consider before selecting a brand, to measure brand performance affect on price, goodwill and profit etc..

VIII. CONCLUSION

Institutions dealing in higher management education do not have high service quality standards. Rather than improving quality of service and focusing on stakeholder’s satisfaction they merely interested in making easy money. Quality audit mechanisms established by regulatory authorities are not functioning effectively. Looking to the growing young population and high requirement of quality people in industry, many players have ventured in higher management education sector. With increase in completion institutions have started all around marketing activities to lure students. Many promises and commitments are been given to students at the time of admission and many of them are either false or not been fulfilled. Services are not been designed and delivered by keeping in mind the service quality determinants. Brand is a promise, commitment to stakeholders and it is an exchange of relationship, values and goodwill. Brand has much bigger scope rather than narrow view towards products and service. It is all about building an image, reputation, perception and institute should constantly strive to meet higher expectations of stakeholders. To become an institutional brand is years of process and institute must have mechanism to measure the brand performance.

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