Customer Brand Awareness on Professional Educational Institutions in Sri Lanka

D.H.L.Ariyarathna, D.H.P.Ayesha, H.A.M.D.Hettiarachchi, K.M.D.P.Kumara, W.G.H.K.Kumari, M.A.Nimesha, S.V.G.M Samanthika, S.M.A.P.Senevirathna

Supervised by
Ms. Ridmi Gajanayake

Abstract

The main objective of this research is to enhance understanding of customer brand awareness on professional courses in Sri Lanka. On the other hand increase student knowledge for the brand awareness on professional course. Information gathered using secondary sources such as articles, journals. In this research data are collected from eight articles. Most researcher discussed brand awareness with brand equity. Customer brand awareness variables have intermediate relationship and the results provide partial support for the brand equity being far more significant than awareness-related determinant.

Keywords: Brand awareness, Brand equity, Professional education

Paper type: Research Proposal

Introduction

Every person hopes to be successful in life. Key to success in life depends on right career choice. Correct higher education choice is the key to achieving your hope for success in life. Hence, it is imperative that any higher education that a person engages in will build up confidence to face challenges of the modern world and truly to be successful in life.

One of the noteworthy features of the Sri Lankan education system is 'accessibility' to education for all irrespective of ethnicity, gender, caste, class, religion or social background. While it is true that accessibility to education has created a level playing field in the primary and secondary education sector, the same cannot be said about the tertiary education sector. With nearly 300,000 students sitting for the GCE Advanced level examination and over 100,000 qualifying to enter a university, the state universities are able to absorb only 21,000 to their courses each year. Education system in Sri Lanka can be divided into two parts, Academic education and Professional education.

A professional course is a college-level course designed to target those who are in, or about to enter, the workforce in corporate, government or technology fields.

A wide variety of people, such as teachers, military Officers and non-commissioned officers, health care professionals, lawyers, accountants and engineers engage in professional education. Individuals may participate in professional education because of an interest in lifelong learning, a sense of moral obligation, to maintain and improve professional competence, to enhance career progression, to keep abreast of new technology and practices, or to comply with professional regulatory organizations. Indeed many are also forced to participate in so called professional education courses as part of a human resources exercise; the point and use of which is debatable

Professional education is always an important and sometimes it is mandatory to become licensed in that particular field. At the very least, professional education is necessary to maintain a license in good standing. Licensing certain professions provides the credibility necessary to prove expertise and experience within a certain field.

There are popular professional educational institutes in Sri Lanka. As below,

NDT Electrical engineering tech, Sri Lanka Institute of architecture, Sri Lanka institute of information technology, Sri Lanka institute of marketing, Institute of charted accountancy, Sri Lanka foundation institute

These are number of professional courses in Sir Lanka among them CIMA, CMA, ACCA, CIM, CA, Banking & LLB are branded and as a result those courses has high demand in various fields. On the other hand there are some course like civil engineering, NAITA not much popular and as a result has a low demand.

There are online professional educational portals that provide the necessary class work for insurance professionals. The benefit to online classes is they can be taken at times most convenient for the student. The classes can be worked around other schedules rather than other schedules reworked to accommodate the classes.

There are typically different study methods available for such classes and include online self-study, mail order self-study and mail order / online testing. The choice

of method depends on the student and the method that best suits their needs and accommodates their schedule.

According to selected articles are examined about various academic courses like MBA, HRM diploma courses, accounting diploma courses including other master degrees. Through our research, expect to study customer's awareness on professional educational institutions in Sri Lanka There are so many researchers have been done relating to the customer awareness of higher education, but not for professional education. So this an interesting research to follow.

The article is organized as follows. We begin by identifying the types of brands Used by market. On the one hand, we examine the market researches (article) relating about customers brand awareness of professional courses.

Research problem
Find out factors affecting to the brand awareness on professional educational institutions.

Research questions

- How to brand reputation impact on brand awareness?
- How to lecture delivery method affect on customer brand awareness in professional education?
- Do economic factors affect on selecting professional educational institute in Sri Lanka?
- How to customer brand loyalty affects on brand awareness in professional education?

Objectives

- To determine the level of brand reputation on customer brand awareness in professional education.
- To determine how lecture delivery method affects on customer brand awareness in professional education
- To determine which economic factors affect on customer brand awareness in professional education.
- To determine the level of customer brand loyalty on customer brand awareness in professional education.

Hypothesis study

H₁: High levels of brand reputation have a high level impact to brand awareness.

H₂: High levels of lecture delivery method have a high level impact to brand awareness.

H₃: High levels of economic factors have a high level impact to brand awareness.

H₄: High levels of customer brand loyalty have a high level impact to brand awareness.

Literature review

This literature review will analyze established theory concerning brand, brand awareness, and more specifically professional education system & professional education trends in Sri Lanka. Then it will look at research conducted into customer-based brand awareness on professional education.

Aaker (1991) describes a brand as a logo, name or even a package that differentiates the products or services of different providers. However, Marconi (1993) stressed that the brand is not just a name because the name is created to identify the product whereas the brand is created to add value to the product and give it a personality. Other researchers have articulated similar definitions and stressed that the buyer must perceive a unique image and added value for the brand (De Chernatony, L, 1993) (De Chernatony, L; Riley, F.D, 1999) (McWilliam, G; Dumas, A, 1997) (Ambler, T; Styles, C, 1996)

Then the research study focuses on brand awareness or brand name awareness. According to (1991) the brand name awareness is one dimension of brand equity. (Keller, 1993) Defines brand equity as the effect of the brand on the consumers response to the marketing activities associated with a particular product. It is clear from the above definitions that "brand equity is a multi-dimensional concept" (De Chernatony,, L; McDonald, M, 1998)and brand equity from the financial perspective emphasizes the brand as a name which represents an asset which is of value to the organization because of its ability to create future earnings/cash flow (Shocker, A.D; Weitz, B, 1988) (De Chernatony,, L; McDonald, M, 1998) (Kim, et al., 2003) From a consumer's point of view, brand equity represents attributes such as better product performance, stronger risk reduction, lower information costs and a positive image of the product. From a firm's point of view, brand equity represents attributes such as lower financial risk, incremental cash flow, higher rent, higher entry barriers, lower marketing and distribution cost for extensions and protection from imitation via trade

marking (De Mooij, 1993). (Aaker, 1991) Identified five dimensions of brand equity, namely <u>brand name awareness</u>, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty. This research paper pay attention to the customer brand awareness on professional education or it is no wrong identify this research paper as customer brand equity on professional education. Because brand equity is the best method to measure customer brand awareness on some product.

Professional Education

Professional educational can be defined in different ways. It can be defined by the goal of education. In this definition Professional educational would be the education of different level by means of which people qualify for a certain profession or specialty. Every country has its own system of professional education, each differing in types of universities and Professional schools, <u>the duration of teaching,</u> the <u>degree offer</u> and the <u>possibility of continuing education at next level.</u>

Professional educational practitioners as well as the general public have recently identified a number of key issues that afflict the Sri Lankan education system that might be generally identified as issues that are not directly linked to notions of education and learning, broadly and technically defined. Among these are violence in schools, severe competition in schools exemplified by the examination system as well as the increasing trend of private tuition parallel to the school system and finally what appears to be the dismantling of the creativity and imagination of students

Branding in professional education helps students and their parents to identify the particular services offered and encourage them to purchase (Harvey, 1996) identified four groups who benefit from professional education: students, parents, institution authorities and society at large. Although the core product, such as the development and transfer of knowledge, is intangible, educator's measure elements of branding in terms of assessment of students and alumni perceptions of the quality of their education and satisfaction with the educational experience (McAlexander, et al., 2006)Professional education is a service firm not a particular product. So empirical research papers dedicated specifically to professional Education branding are relatively scarce, despite the growing importance of this subject. Those researches that do exist tend to be contradictory (Onkvisit, S; Shaw, JJ, 1989) and encourage service firms to develop multiple brands. (Berry, LL; Lefkowith, EF, 1988) Argue that in services, the company name is the brand name and that services do not lend themselves to individual branding the way tangible products do (Turley, LW; Moore, PA, 1995)

The limited literature on the branding of universities that is in higher education focuses on surveying international students – gathering their perceptions on a variety of marketing activities conducted in the recruitment of international students, and subsequently determining their effectiveness. On the demand side, a considerable number of papers have focused on the choice factors of the student-consumer (Baldwin, G; James, R, 2000) (Umashankar, 2001) (Pugsley, L; Coffey, A, 2002) (Binsardi, A; Ekwulugo, F, 2003).And also there has been some research conducted in the field of higher education marketing, though the areas explored are quite varied and sporadic. This research covered include influences on student choice of institution and destination (Mazzarol & Soutar,, 2002) (Maringe; Felix, 2006) the role of institutional image and reputation on loyalty (Nguyen, N; LeBlanc, G, 2001) and the effectiveness of communication materials (Gatfield, T; Barker, M; Graham, P, 1999). Furthermore there has been extensive research into marketing of Higher Education institutions, possibly resulting from the opportunity for economic gain in the growing industry of international student mobility. Research is however limited in the area of 'University' branding, and is virtually non-existent in the area of customer-based brand equity in a higher education international student context.

The following section looks at the four different stages of the customer-based brand equity model in detail.

Brand Resonance Pyramid

Left Pyramid (bottom to top):

- Brand Salience
- Brand Performance | Brand Imagery
- Consumer Judgments | Consumer Feelings
- Consumer Brand Resonance

Right Column 1 (bottom to top):

- 1. Identity = who are you?
- 2. Meaning = what are you?
- 3. Responses = what about you?
- 4. Relationships = what about you and me?

Right Column 2 (bottom to top):

- Deep, Broad Brand Awareness
- Strong, Favorable, & Unique Brand Associations
- Positive, Accessible Responses
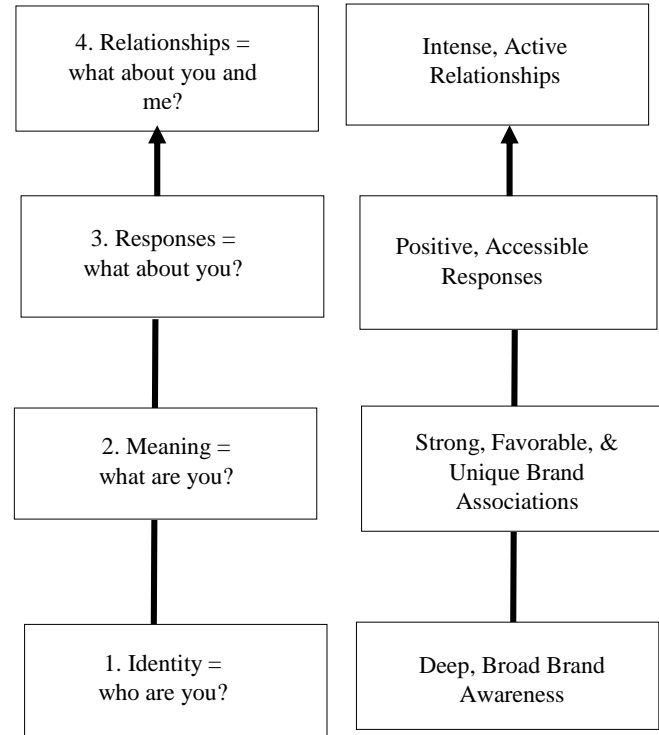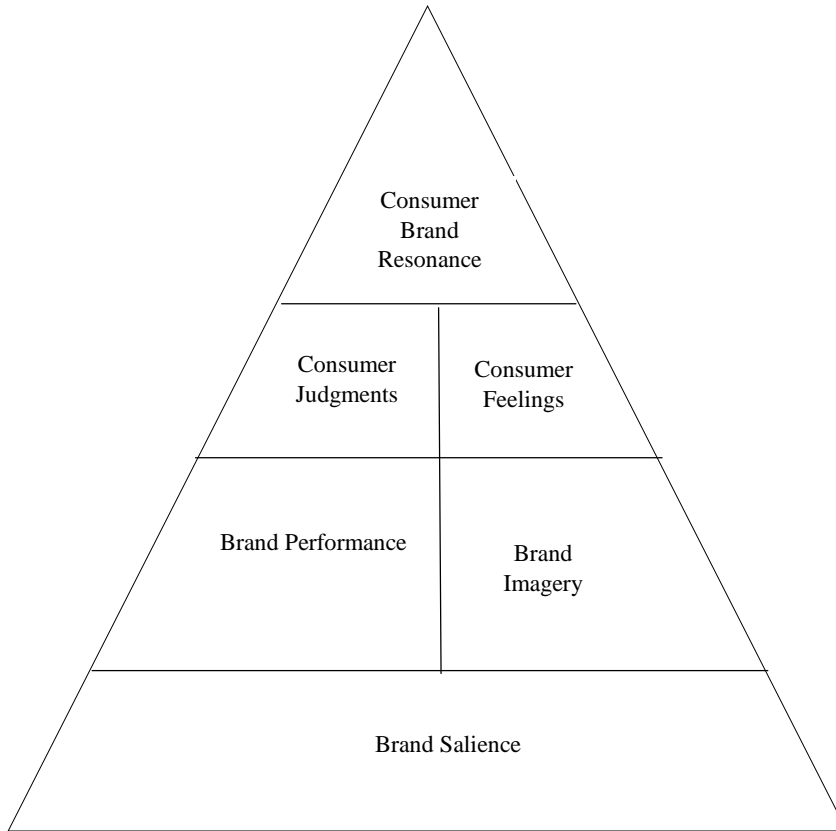- Intense, Active Relationships

Figure 2.1 – Customer-Based Brand Equity Pyramid (Keller, 2001: 7)

The first stage relates to brand identity and uses brand salience as a measure of the awareness of the brand (keller; Kevin, L, 2008). In essence, by developing the level of brand awareness it helps customers to recognize the industry in which the brand competes and the particular products of this brand (keller; Kevin, L, 2008)

The second stage relates to brand meaning and uses two building blocks entitled performance (brand perspective – meeting and/or surpassing customer's functional needs/expectations) and imagery (customer perspective – meeting the customer's psychological or social needs) (keller; Kevin, L, 2008)

The third stage relates to brand responses and looks at brand judgments (best defined as thoughts coming from the head), and brand feelings (defined as thoughts coming from the heart) (keller; Kevin, L, 2008).

Finally, the fourth stage relates to brand relationships and uses brand resonance as a definition ultimate relationship and identification between the customer and the brand (Keller; Kevin, L, 2001). This stage essentially addresses the intensity of the loyalty among of the customer to the brand and is broken down into behavioral loyalty, attitudinal attachment, sense of community, and active engagement (Ibid, 2001). A key consideration for this stage of the brand building model is the concept of customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is often personified in customers through repeat purchases, something that is not as common in the higher education industry as in other service industries. Rather, the notion of service loyalty in this context should be broadened to include the customer's rejection of competitive offerings (Nguyen, N; LeBlanc, G, 2001). The most relevant, and possibly most transferable, to higher education would be the categories of sense of community and active engagement. It is expected that there may be a degree of overlap between these two categories. Brand communities are seen as the most applicable example of brand relationships within the higher education industry. To explore this through the empirical research, interview questions will address the areas of brand communities and how they are utilized by each University. Perhaps the most established form of brand community within academia is the alumni society. This is an example of a company-initiated brand community.

Section 2 and 3 in this research describes customer brand equity in higher education. And the research identifies specific factors affects to customer brand equity in higher education. When considering customer brand awareness on higher education and professional education, the research recognizes same factors that are affect to brand awareness in both educational levels. Destination and reputation and the effectiveness of communication materials, economic factors, and customer loyalty educational level are the main factors affect to consumers equity on higher education. In our view also that those all factors affects to customer brand awareness on higher education. And also the duration of teaching, the degree offer and the possibility of continuing education at next level.

Conceptual Framework of Study
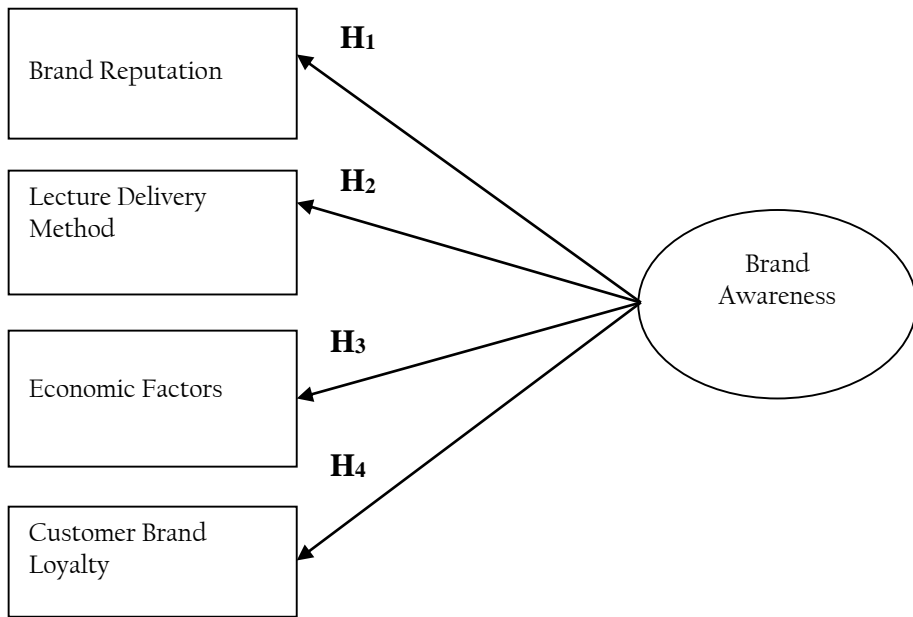
Research Methodology

Sample: The sample chosen for the current study targeted 200 undergraduates of Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya out of the total population of the state universities offering commerce and management education.

Data collection method: The method of data collection is based administered questionnaire where 200 questionnaires were distributed among students of university of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka. For that questionnaires given a choice of response on a scale 1-5 and a scale from 1 performed Strongly disagree to a scale of 5 performed Strongly agree .We expect to get response mainly based on six areas. First is related to challenges getting good job opportunities. Second is related to Professional courses contribution to getting good job opportunity. Third is related to what are criteria effects to select a good professional Institution, Fourth one is related to reputation level of professional course affect to select a professional course, Fifth one is that what are the economic factors affect to select a professional course, Final one related to relationship between delivery method and its affection.

Data Analysis: Data will be analyzed used to calculate population mean, Sample mean, frequencies and standard deviations.

Research Limitation

The research focus on collecting data from 200 undergraduates in commerce and management faculty of University of Kelaniya. And their knowledge is limited to professional educational institutions relates to commerce streams. And it will reduce accuracy of data.

Expected outcomes

- The research articles expect to find out level of relationship between brand reputation and Brand awareness.
- The research articles expect to find out level of relationship between brand reputation and Brand awareness.
- The research articles expect to find out level of relationship between brand reputation and Brand awareness.
- The research articles expect to find out level of relationship between brand reputation and Brand awareness.

Time Frame of proposed Research

	Task Name	Jul				Aug				Sep				Oct				Nov				Dec			
1	Literature review	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
2	Preparing Proposal For the Project	■																							
3	Sample Selecting		■																						
4	Preparing Questionnaire			■																					
5	Gathering Information					■	■	■																	
6	Analyzing Data									■	■	■													
7	Writing First report													■	■	■									
8	Analyzing Further Implementing needs of the research																	■							
9	Writing final report																	■	■	■					
10	Presentation																					■			

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