

Abstract

A study of Communication Strategies in Brand Building in Private Universities Affecting Decision Making of Higher Education. The study focuses on two parts.

The first part is the study of message carriers which has the objectives of the study of strategies, processes and steps of communication in Brand Building and factors affecting the brand building of Private Universities in 2007 in form of Qualitative Research and In-Depth Interview with executive members of three different private universities, Bangkok University, Dhurakit-Bundit University and Rungsit University.

The second part concerns with the study of message receivers with the objectives of the study of communication strategy in Brand Building in Private Universities Affecting Decision Making of Higher Education of the first-year students in private universities in form of Quantitative four parts of questionnaires which are personal data of students, study of the acceptance and the finding of the information of private universities, study of pattern or activities affecting the decision making of studying in private universities and the result of the communication in brand building in private universities respectively.

It is found that brand building and brand management are highly important and necessary for education business since brand is a tool and the management of marketing communication to create brand awareness, brand credibility and to achieve the high acclaim in terms of bringing out qualified graduates. Also, brand building can enable the institution to survive from the high competition especially in education business regarding management of the private universities. Therefore, private higher education institutions employ various communication strategies for brand building in terms of activities and presentation of information highly accessible for the target group to have an advantage over the competitors and to make the university or the curriculum differ from others with the following summaries of the case study.

I. Three private universities present their brand building of the institutions with processes or steps of creativity starting from specifying the target groups, brand designing, brand characteristics and brand building operation. Each step has to be in line with the set visions of each institution. The communication strategy suitable for brand management of Higher Education Institution will focus on the Marketing Public Relations due to its nature of giving credible information about the institution. Apart from this, educational institution should highlight on fact communication beneficial to the public as well as the activities beneficial to the society. Moreover, the focus on the communicating tools through the Integrated Marketing Communications from various media to enable the target to be familiar with the curriculum. This leads to knowledge, familiarization and confidence in further education especially through New Media such as Internet and mobile phones, the easiest and the most effective media to reach the target and less investment media compared to other media. In order to obtain the highest achievement of the communication efficiency, higher education institutions should apply the strategy of Customer Relation Management especially the customer database including the main target group, the group of people who can influence the target group decision to continue the study or the press group. The communication through various media could result in database of the experience of the target group to create the good impression and loyalty in that institution.

II. Factors affecting the brand building of private universities which need to employ the open organization management dealing with factors affecting the educational business. These external factors are economy, politics, and society while the internal factors are organization structure, policies, capital and organization culture. The factor most affects the brand building management of private universities is the government policies regarding the change to non formal of public universities including the special admission resulted in more competition. The termination of loan the funds tired to future income and change to student loan resulting in the decreasing number of students asking for loans and the upgrade of Rajabhat colleges to university level as well as the nationwide location and the unlimited admission.

III. The result of the communication strategy to create the brand of the private universities affecting the decision making of further higher education has found that the information regarding the curriculum including the curriculum detail, study period, tuition fee, scholarship, certificate or degree awarded, technology application in teaching methodology and the response of the curriculum toward the labor market. This information can most affect the example group decision making which is the target group. As for the communication strategy of private universities for brand building, it is found that the promotional strategy for marketing is concerned with the provided information through press, job opportunities after graduation, the preparedness of library and lab service, student's activities such as study trip, training and the convenience most affecting the decision making of continuing study in Bachelor degree.

In addition, the management of brand value of the private higher education institution can be measure from the point of view of the consumers in terms of the perception and the behavior. It is found that when the target group has decided to study in a private universities for some time, the institution has to create the good relationship and impression among the target consumers such as activities, continuous development of curriculum. Since the education business is a kind of business investment the target consumers may decide to reinvest. Therefore, the key factor of the management of brand value depends on the brand loyalty among the consumers for the long term business operation.

In summary, to create a successful brand, the higher educational institution has to study and assess the brand building in terms of perception and behavior of the target customer for long term result and sustainability with the process of brand value management leading to the maintaining of brand positioning and the adjustment of communication strategy to compete the competitors if compared by the target in the time of buying decision.