



Study on the Influencing Factors of Branding of Private Higher Vocational Universities-Taking Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology as an Example

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Abstract

The objectives of the study were: 1) To explore will brand awareness affects the branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology; 2) To explore will brand positioning affects the branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology; 3) To explore will brand management affects the branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology. This study adopted a quantitative research method. In this study, a total of 378 questionnaires were distributed, with 346 valid questionnaires and the validity rate was 91.53%. The population was the instructors of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology. Combined with branding theory. The results: 1) Brand awareness has a significant positive effect on branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology; 2) Brand positioning has a significant positive effect on branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology; 3) Brand management has a significant positive effect on branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology. Recommendations for branding should focus on the follow aspects: 1) Strengthen brand awareness; 2) Focus on brand positioning; 3) Refinement of brand management.

Keywords: Influencing Factors; Branding; Private Higher Vocational Universities

Introduction

The continuous development of the economy and society will inevitably affect higher vocational education, which is closely related to it. With the development and reform of the market economy and society, the number of social demands for technical and skilled personnel is increasing, and the quality



requirements of organizations and employers for graduates are also improving, which requires higher vocational education to increase the training of students and continuously improve the level and capacity of education and teaching. All these put forward new challenges to the development of higher vocational education (Köpsén, 2019). Modern higher vocational education is the inevitable product of the development of the times, it serves the needs of economic and social development is to promote the organization and the employer production line staff of sustainable career development of the type of education. With the reform and opening up, scientific and technological progress and the development of new industries, the importance of modern higher vocational education is gradually reflected, has become an important support for the comprehensive competitiveness of the country (Li & Islam, 2021).

The development of China's higher vocational education is relatively rapid, and the basic capacity of vocational universities has also been improved with the strong support of the government. The combination of industry-academia-research and school-enterprise cooperation within the institutions has been continuously strengthened, and inter-industry organizations have been encouraged to participate in the revision of the talent cultivation program and the curriculum construction of the institutions (Guleva, 2020), which have all led to the development of higher vocational universities to present a good trend. The development of higher vocational education has not only cultivated a large number of technical and skilled talents for the rapid development of China, but also gained wide recognition from all walks of life. Although the state vigorously promotes the development of vocational education, but in the process of this rapid development, China's vocational education exists worrying problems (Mincer, 2020).

Higher vocational universities have a low degree of social recognition, most people do not have enough recognition of higher vocational education, and the employment market is also usually hit the wall phenomenon occurs. If you want to look for survival space in the competitive disadvantage of the situation to tap the prospects for development, higher vocational universities must strengthen the brand awareness, aware of the importance of branding for the development of their institutions, pay attention to the construction of their own brand, and combined with their own advantages to strengthen the construction, the use of brand advantages in the market competition to occupy a relatively advantageous position. Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology is representative of private higher vocational universities (Köpsén, 2019; Li & Islam, 2021), facing the problem of



homogenization. Therefore, branding is a certain necessity and urgency. There are many factors affecting branding, and they need to be fully studied and analyzed and the best strategy proposed in order to provide reference for the branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology.

Research Objectives

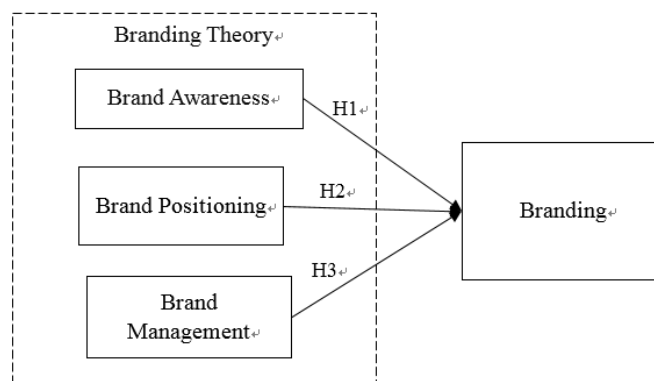
1. To explore will brand awareness affects the branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology.
2. To explore will brand positioning affects the branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology.
3. To explore will brand management affects the branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology. Other schools are not included in the scope of the study. The research subjects are the employees of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology. The surveyed employees need to have worked in Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology for at least one year, have some understanding of the school's branding, and be able to give some comments. The study period is from October 1, 2013 to February 1, 2024. A questionnaire was used to collect information during the study. The questionnaire contained two main sections. The first part is the basic information about the survey sample. The second section mainly deals with Brand Awareness, Brand Positioning, Brand Management, Branding etc.

Theoretical Framework

This study takes higher vocational and technical universities in particular and higher vocational colleges in general to form their own characteristics, improve teaching quality, and expand the visibility and reputation of colleges through brand creation as a way to build core competitiveness and win the market. Based on the analysis of Cognitive Evaluation Theory, Brand Awareness, Brand Positioning, Brand Management as the influencing factors of branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology. Among them, brand awareness, brand positioning, brand management are independent variables; Branding is the dependent variable.



Hypotheses

The independent variables in this study are brand awareness, brand positioning, brand management. The dependent variable is branding, and the model is constructed based on the analysis and the relationship between the variables. The relationship between variables is set through hypotheses. Therefore, hypotheses are formulated: H1: Brand awareness has a significant positive effect on branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology. H2: Brand positioning has a significant positive effect on branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology. H3: Brand management has a significant positive effect on branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology.

Literatures Reviews

Brand Definition: The earliest of branding is derived from medieval Old Norse, which was initially used as a mark on cattle so that they could be distinguished from other people's property belongings. In the Middle Ages, a brand was a mark of a commodity, and its connotation was simply a visual identifier that represented or symbolized a product. The concept of branding has developed and evolved over time due to its own connotations, and so have the definitions made of it. Until today, there is still no unified, universally recognized definition of a brand in the marketing and advertising world (Moorthi, 2017). Branding is a kind of symbol that can distinguish competitors. Brand is a name, noun, mark, symbol, design or a combination of them, the purpose of which is to identify a seller or a group of sellers of products or services, and make it different from competitors' products and services. A brand is a feature that distinguishes one product from another. Brand is the relationship between the product and the consumer. Brand reflects the relationship between the product and the customer. Brand is a commodity through the consumer's perception, experience, trust and emotion, to obtain a place in the relationship established by the core of the meaning of the brand is unique, and



uniqueness depends on the consumer's perception. Brand is an intangible asset of an organization. A brand is the intangible sum of a product's name, attributes, price, packaging history reputation, and advertising methods, i.e., a brand is an intricate symbol of an organization's and consumers' impression of its use (Tollington, 1998).

A brand is a promise made by an organization to its consumers. A brand is a visual pattern or name given to the products and services offered by an organization to distinguish it from competitors' products and to assure customers that the product is of high and lasting quality. In the era of brand consumption (Boon et al., 2016), winning the hearts of consumers is far more important than production itself, and brand image is far more important than products and services themselves. This paper believes that brand is a specific thing that can be distinguished from competitors by the combination of name, symbol, attribute, packaging, culture, reputation and advertisement, etc. This group of specific things not only contains the commitment and credit of the product or service provider, but also includes the consumer's perception and emotional relationship to the product or service (Nabbe & Brand, 2021).

Branding Theory: The most valuable assets of an organization are not tangible assets, but intangible assets built on branding, so branding has become the key to the formation of an organization's core competitiveness and sustainable development. Branding is a long-term dynamic process, refers to the owner of the brand design, publicity, maintenance of behavior and efforts (Jin & Phua, 2014). The research on brand creation theory has lasted for more than half a century, and the theoretical research has been progressing and developing. Western scholars on the theory of brand creation can be roughly divided into four stages: advertising marketing, marketing integration, full brand creation and brand creation based on added value. The most representative brand creation theories include brand positioning theory, brand creation theory based on customer value creation and brand creation theory based on brand identification (Kosmützky & Putty, 2015) (Ng & Forbes, 2009). Brand identity theory is a great addition to brand creation theory. The creation of brand theory is mainly divided into three steps: the first step is to start the strategic analysis of the brand, which includes customer analysis, competitor analysis and self-analysis; the second step is to design the brand recognition system through the analysis of the internal and external environment. Brand identity is mainly embodied in four aspects: brand products, brand organization background, brand personality and brand symbols and meanings. Finally, the brand's goal orientation is determined: the value that can be created for customers is functional,



emotional or self-expression benefits, and it is clear whether the brand can provide support for other brands (Nabbe & Brand, 2021).

Brand Awareness: Brand awareness plays a crucial role in the branding of higher vocational education. First of all, brand awareness is the embodiment of the school's popularity and recognition in the external society. Through effective brand communication and marketing strategies, schools can convey their own characteristics, advantages and core values to the society at large, thus establishing a positive brand image. The establishment of such an image is crucial to attracting more students, outstanding faculty and staff, as well as the support of resources outside the school. Second, brand awareness also has a direct impact on the building of campus culture within the school. (Cakmak, 2019) A school with strong brand awareness is often able to gather more alumni, students and staff to work together for the development of the school, forming a united and positive campus cultural atmosphere. This cultural atmosphere can not only enhance the sense of belonging and pride of school members, but also inject more positive energy into the school's brand image (Ali, 2019).

Brand Positioning Brand positioning should take the product as the carrier, seize the consumption psychology of potential customers, and find a strong position in the minds of consumers that distinguishes it from its competitors. It emphasizes the streamlining and selection of information dissemination to obtain the desired effect, adapting to the intense changes in the internal and external environment through repositioning, consolidating the original positioning or obtaining new development through repositioning. Brand positioning is the core and centralized expression of market positioning. Establishing a good brand as well as organizational image can gain the recognition of target consumers and build a bridge between products and consumers (Himawan, 2019). Brand positioning should not only consider consumers, but also analyze the consumer market and products. Brand positioning is a strategic behavior, generally based on market research and segmentation, to find the organization in the industry sector has the uniqueness and advantages, the use of points of difference to position the organization's brand, and match with the needs of consumer groups in the target market, to make clear a unique position, and then the use of publicity media, to capture the consumer's consumption of psychology, leaving a deep impression in their minds, and to establish a strong association and a special impression. The goal of brand positioning is to gain a competitive advantage in the industry, correct positioning and distinctive features can clarify the target market (Janiszewska & Insch, 2012). Successful



positioning of the brand will make the consumer group pay attention to the uniqueness of the goods from the subjective point of view, so as to form a stable consumer group, so that the organization to establish a reputation, in the same industry competition to form an advantage.

Brand Management: Brand management refers to the process of systematic and comprehensive planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling the brand in order to achieve the brand objectives. Determining the school's brand positioning is the first task of brand management. Through market research and analysis, determine the school's core competitive advantages and target audience, and clarify the school's positioning and differentiation advantages in the education field. Brand management entails communicating the school's brand image and core values to the external community and target audience through effective communication strategies. This includes online and offline means of branding, advertising, and PR activities, as well as the use of social media, websites, and other platforms for the distribution and dissemination of brand content (Lin & Siu, 2019). Brand management for schools needs to focus on the brand experience of internal audiences such as students, staff and alumni. Through the provision of quality educational services, colorful campus cultural activities and a good campus environment, the internal audience's sense of identity and satisfaction with the school's brand can be enhanced. Brand management requires the establishment of an effective monitoring mechanism to continuously monitor and evaluate the brand image and reputation (Chernatony, 2014). Through regular brand surveys, public opinion monitoring and competitor analysis, problems and challenges in brand management can be identified and solved in a timely manner, and the brand management strategy can be optimized continuously. Brand management also requires the establishment of a sound crisis management mechanism to respond to various emergencies and negative situations that may affect the brand reputation in a timely manner and protect the image and reputation of the university brand. Brand management plays a crucial role in the brand construction of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology, and through effective brand management, the brand image and reputation of the school can be improved, and the competitiveness and attractiveness of the school can be enhanced.

Research Methodology

Quantitative research method was used in this study. his study focuses on the influencing factors of branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational



Technology. Combined with Branding Theory, the independent variables in the research model were identified as brand awareness, brand positioning, brand management, and the dependent variable was branding. The questionnaire is set according to the classical scale in the research process, and the hypotheses are formulated according to the relationship between the variables. The research population and specific sample size were determined according to the purpose of the study, and the data collection was done by mail. The reliability and validity of the collected data need to be analyzed before analyzing the relationship between variables and hypothesis testing. The reliability of the data was judged by Cronbach's alpha. Validity was judged by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO). And Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were judged. This study conducted a survey to collect data. Sample data was collected using Likert 5-point scale. The study period is from October 1, 2013 to February 1, 2024. After counting, 378 electronic questionnaires were distributed and 346 valid questionnaires were recovered, with a recovery rate of 91.53%.

Results

Reliability analysis: The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of Brand Awareness is 0.894, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of Brand Positioning is 0.874, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of Brand Management is 0.873, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of Branding is 0.868. All of them are in the range of 0.8~0.9, which indicates that the reliability of this paper's questionnaire is better, and then the validity can be further analyzed. This indicates that the reliability of the questionnaire of this survey study is very good. Table1 Reliability test

Variate	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Brand Awareness	0.896	6
Brand Positioning	0.902	6
Brand Management	0.889	6
Branding	0.837	4

Validity analysis

The larger the KMO value is, the stronger the correlation between the variables, the more suitable the original variables are to be analyzed in factor analysis, and vice versa. According to the KMO criterion, the KMO should be greater than 0.7 for factor analysis. The validity of the questionnaire was analyzed, and according to the results of the data amount analysis, the validity of the questionnaire was good. The index of validity analysis is Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling



Adequacy (KMO), the KMO value is 0.927, which is greater than 0.7, and the Sig. value of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is less than 0.000, which indicates that it is significant.

Table2 Validity

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.927
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3525.006
	df	1953
	Sig.	0.000

Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis is a statistical research strategy that investigates whether there is any form of interdependent link between research subjects. If the correlation analysis reveals the presence of a dependent relationship between the objects of investigation, the direction and degree of correlation between the variables can be investigated as indicators. Correlation analysis is typically used to assess the degree of correlation between variables and factors. Pearson's coefficient is commonly used to assess the correlation between these variables; a coefficient more than 0 indicates positive correlation, a coefficient less than 0 indicates negative correlation, and an absolute value closer to 1 indicates greater correlation.

The correlation coefficient is commonly denoted by the symbol r in research. A correlation coefficient of less than $r \leq 0.3$ indicates no linear correlation between the two variables. A correlation coefficient of $0.3 < r \leq 0.5$ indicates low linear correlation, $0.5 < r \leq 0.8$ indicates significant linear correlation, and $0.8 < r$ indicates high linear correlation. According to the correlation analysis, it can be seen that the correlation coefficient between the brand awareness, brand positioning, brand management and branding has a correlation coefficient between 0.232 and 0.516. This means that indicates that each of the two variables are significantly correlated while $p < 0.01$, indicating that the correlation terms are positively correlated.

Table3 Correlation between variables

	Brand Awareness	Brand Positioning	Brand Management	Branding
Brand Awareness	1	.243**	.419**	.232**
Brand Positioning		1	.480**	.492**
Brand Management			1	.516**



Branding				1
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NOTE : *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation coefficient between Branding and Brand Awareness is 0.232, and $P < 0.01$, indicating that there is a correlation between Branding and Brand Awareness, and it is a general correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Branding and Brand Positioning is 0.492, and $P < 0.01$, indicating that there is a correlation between Branding and Brand Positioning, and it is a general correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Branding and Brand Management is 0.516, and $P < 0.01$, indicating that there is a correlation between Branding and Brand Management, and it is a general correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Brand Management and Brand Awareness is 0.419, and $P < 0.01$, indicating that there is a correlation between Brand Management and Brand Awareness, and it is a general correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Brand Management and Brand Positioning is 0.480, and $P < 0.01$, indicating that there is a correlation between Brand Management and Brand Positioning, and it is a general correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Brand Awareness and Brand Positioning is 0.243, and $P < 0.01$, indicating that there is a correlation between Brand Awareness and Brand Positioning, and it is a general correlation.

Discussions

Brand Awareness has a significant positive effect on branding: The Pearson correlation coefficient between Branding and Brand Awareness is 0.232, and $P < 0.01$, indicating that there is a correlation between Branding and Brand Awareness, and it is a general correlation. The relationship between branding and brand awareness is complementary. Branding is a series of marketing activities and strategies aimed at increasing brand awareness, image, reputation and cognition, so as to establish a positive brand image and brand value in the target market. Brand awareness, on the other hand, is the degree of consumer knowledge and understanding of the brand, including brand awareness, brand characteristics, brand values and other aspects. Branding increases the degree of consumers' cognition and understanding of the brand through various publicity, promotion and marketing activities, thus increasing brand awareness. Consumers will have a deeper impression and cognition of the brand after being exposed to the brand's advertisements, promotional activities, public relations activities and other information, thus increasing brand awareness.



Branding positively affects brand awareness by increasing brand awareness, shaping brand image and values, enhancing brand trust and loyalty, and forming brand awareness networks. There is a mutually reinforcing and complementary relationship between branding and brand awareness, which helps enterprises establish a strong brand influence and competitive advantage in market competition.

Brand Positioning has a significant positive effect on branding: The Pearson correlation coefficient between Branding and Brand Positioning is 0.492, and $P < 0.01$, indicating that there is a correlation between Branding and Brand Positioning, and it is a general correlation. Branding involves a series of marketing activities and strategies aimed at increasing brand awareness, image, reputation and recognition. Branding includes brand positioning, culture, communication, and image building. Brand positioning, on the other hand, identifies and communicates the brand's position and differentiating characteristics in the target market to meet the needs of specific consumer groups and to differentiate the competitive strategy from competitors. The success of branding needs a clear brand positioning as a foundation. Brand positioning determines the position and characteristics of the brand in the minds of consumers, while branding is a series of marketing activities and strategic implementation based on this positioning. There is a close positive correlation between branding and brand positioning. They influence each other, shape the brand image together, and are affected by market demand, competitive environment, and corporate resources and capabilities. Therefore, when formulating brand strategy, enterprises need to consider branding and brand positioning comprehensively to ensure the success of the brand in the market.

Brand Management has a significant positive effect on branding: The Pearson correlation coefficient between Branding and Brand Management is 0.516, and $P < 0.01$, indicating that there is a correlation between Branding and Brand Management, and it is a general correlation. Branding is influenced by brand management and there is interaction between the two variables. In the process of branding, the influence of brand management should be considered, and brand management should be strengthened to realize the rapid improvement of branding.



New Knowledges

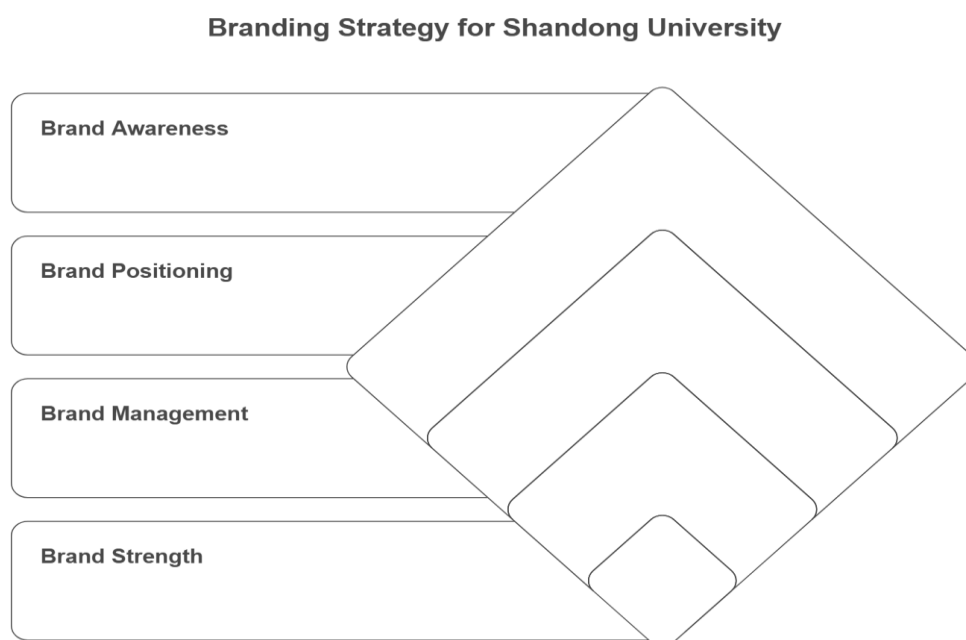


Figure 1: Brand awareness affects the branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology.

Conclusions

According to the results of data analysis, Brand Awareness has a significant positive effect on branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology. Hypothesis H1 holds. Brand Positioning has a significant positive effect on branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology. Hypothesis H2 holds. Brand Management has a significant positive effect on branding of Shandong University of Engineering and Vocational Technology. Hypothesis H3 holds.

Suggestions

They must consider the problem from the perspective of market economy development, give full play to their own advantages, and pay attention to and strengthen the brand construction of the college. Establishing brand awareness is the basic premise of the brand strategy of higher vocational colleges, and it is also an important condition to enhance the brand value.

Establishing and strengthening brand awareness should not only be publicized in the management group, but also in the teachers, staff and even students.



The establishment of brand awareness is actually adapted to the laws and choices of the market economy, especially to the whole school teachers and students work together in order to form the centripetal force and cohesion of the college. Higher vocational universities can only make the college in an advantageous position by vigorously developing the overall construction of the college and carrying out branding.

Recommendation

Reasonable brand positioning is the basic premise of branding, which should be people-oriented and start from the fundamental interests of satisfying consumer needs and market demands, and according to the principles of brand positioning, it should give full consideration to the characteristics of the product, resource conditions, competitor positioning and cost-benefit ratio.

It can analyze the aspects that affect the brand positioning, such as school philosophy, professional training objectives, curriculum construction, etc., and finally clarify the brand positioning of the institution.

The brand management department should recruit specialized personnel with branding and education marketing background to carry out brand management.

The brand management department must, according to the actual situation and changing trend of regional economic and social development, combine with the college's own advantages, carry out timely maintenance work such as brand image updating and brand positioning modification.

Brand crisis management refers to the organization in the sudden emergence of brand crisis, should take what corresponding measures to resolve the crisis, and strive to minimize the damage to the brand image in the crisis.

The establishment of crisis early warning system can only minimize the frequency of crisis, but cannot guarantee that the crisis will never happen. Therefore, once a brand crisis occurs, we should quickly clarify and formulate the process of crisis management and adopt corresponding crisis management strategies.

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