CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This chapter proposes to summarize and consolidate the major findings of the research and outline the policy implications of the same for the students, faculty members, and management institutes of NCR. The importance of this study has become more relevant in the light of the fact that the expectations of students from management institutes are on a constant rise. NCR has a wide range of management institutions affiliated to GBTU which can be benefitted by an efficient branding process.

The present study was structured with the aim of examining various existing branding strategies which would be contemporary and appropriate for the present times. The opinions, expectations, satisfaction or dissatisfaction levels of students, and faculty members and administrative staff on various aspects of branding have revealed an insight of the present situation. Follow up work done on these would enable institutions to identify and understand their strong and weak areas to reframe their strategies that in turn would aid them in reaching their optimum level of efficiency. It has also contributed in evolving an appropriate precise mode of branding strategies for management institutes.

For a thorough investigation of branding of management institutes, selected GBTU affiliated institutions were approached. These institutions were offering management courses and belonged to the educational belt of Noida, Ghaziabad, and Greater Noida. The study was conducted through the survey of opinions of students, and faculty and administrative staff. For survey, a representative sample of 300 students was selected. These students were undertaking or planning to acquire management degree in future from management institutes. It included BBA, B.Tech, and MBA/PGDM, students. In addition, 232 faculty members and administrative staff including professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and administrative staff were approached in the sampled institutes. For collecting the primary data two questionnaires were used one for the students, and other for faculty and administrative staff.

8.1 Major Conclusion of the Study

The major conclusions of the study are summarized below:

8.1.1 Branding Strategies of Management Institutes of NCR

Various factors determine the branding strategies of B-schools. Factor analysis was done on three major domains - academic attributes, services and facilities,
and positioning of the institute that require the attention of the business schools. These domains facilitate in developing strategies for branding of the institutes in NCR.

The academic attributes (the first domain) included 13 dimensions which have demonstrated academic characteristics of the institutes. The dimensions of academic attributes have been categorized into two factors 1) interpersonal relationship management, and 2) institutional credentials. It symbolized the importance of relationship between faculty members-administration, faculty-students, and faculty-parents of the institutes. It is a known fact that the importance of relationship management has been constantly increasing in other sectors also. Faculty, staff, and administrators are considered as decisive resources that play an essential role in the long-term success of institutions. They constantly involve in serving students and contribute in achieving students’ satisfaction. In fact, motivated faculty and administrators are a pre-requisite for having satisfied students. Interestingly, relationship among students-faculty-administration needs receptiveness in management education sector. Sincere efforts are required to encourage them for being associated with an institute.

Many of the b-schools claimed to be up to the mark in relation to the issues concerning their stewardship of academic standards, for attracting attention of the students and stakeholders. However, students stressed upon the fact that the reality is far from the state which these institutions claim. The strategies of factors of academic attributes would be helpful in creating long-term relationships with the stakeholders.

The services and facilities (the second domain) available to the students have been classified into five factors. They are 1) services delivery 2) national/international status 3) academic progression 4) convenient location, and 5) other corroborating factors. The expectations of students have increased towards services of institutions including placements, curriculums and specializations in correspondence with the present corporate requirements.

The preferences of students regarding services and facilities may differ due to their age, gender, family income, and courses being pursued. The history of the institutes, including its past results, local recognition, and location together with proximity to the bus stand, railway stations, and metros also stimulate the choices of students. The services and facilities of institutes are beneficial in creating an image of the college among students.

Globalization has extensively created impact on students and faculty. Furthermore, the dimensions of seven factors of positioning (the third domain) have the highest correlation. It included 1) national/international collaborations 2) procedural aspect 3) informative prospectus 4) accreditation and academic alliances for global exposure 5) unique association 6) societal contribution 7) promotional expenditure. The students are also aware of the market demands and desire to obtain competence in order to face the market challenges. They seek internationalization of their institutes with foreign collaborations, and inclusion of foreign courses of international universities in their curriculum.
Services delivery, convenient location, informative prospectus, accreditation and academic alliances for global exposure and promotional expenditure positively contribute in the students’ status in society. Unique association has highly contributed in students’ status in society followed by societal contribution. It has been required to work on the factors. Societal contribution is conversely affecting the students. Though, societal contribution variable is highly related to the expectations of society of getting professionally committed and responsible youth from the higher education institutions.

Students should be precisely aware of the accreditations and academic alliances of the institutes. The interaction among faculty, administration, and students need to be improved. The tangible features of the institutes have attracted the attention of students.

8.1.2 Brand Positioning of Management Institutes of NCR

Brand positioning would enable management education industry competent and competitive b-schools. The features of brand positioning for management institutes have been explored which allow formation of long term relations with its stakeholders. Any actions taken by the institutions have a direct impact on them. Hence, stakeholders’ importance cannot be denied in this sector. The interest of the stakeholders needs to be recognized in advance with immense care. The scope and significance of the institutes must benefit students, faculty and other related individuals and groups. In the present competitive environment, the marketers of institutions are needed to establish strong and unique brand association with the target markets (regional, national, and international stakeholders) for their growth and survival.

The comparative study between faculty and administrative staff, and students was done to seek their opinions on the first domain, and the third domain. On the dimensions of the academic attributes (first domain) both categories of stakeholders have different opinions from the branded institute. They equally lay emphasis on establishing better relationship among students, teachers, and parents, and are attracted towards advanced technology in learning practices and theories of subjects. Previous results and historical background of the institute have influenced the attention of students and faculty. Faculty members are needed to be motivated to a great extent and contribute in service of the institutions, they should take interest in co-curricular activities for further growth and being interactive with students.

The dimensions of the third domain (positioning) are the key factors that have attracted the attention of students which brings them the notion of branded institute. On the other hand, faculty members, and administrative staff utilize these dimensions as tools that authorize them to add meaning to their institutes’ framework representation.

The factors of the third domain accreditation and academic alliances for global exposure and societal contribution have made significantly different impact on both stakeholders. These differences in the opinions of both groups may be the result of
less interest of students for exposure and perhaps designations of faculty members and administrative staff, their working conditions, expectations from the institutes for career growth also reflects the reason of distinction.

Both stakeholders are desired for arranging experts’ sessions for overall personality development programmes. The awareness level of students, faculty and administrative staff was not adequate on internationalization of the institutes with foreign collaborations, corporate house alignment, and community participation. A number of students and faculty members were either not interested or unaware about these attributes of the institutions. The possible reasons may be lack of effort in gaining awareness for these aspects, fear of losing authority due to alliances, unwillingness to change or probably due to inadequate career counselling students did not realize the meaning of the degree and its requirement. They have shown casual interest to screening process which facilitates in bringing the right talent to the right place and provide right future for both; the students and the institute. Screening of the students should be adequate, so that inappropriate or unsuitable students, who lack the required aptitude, would not enter into this field. This would bring in overall qualitative improvement and enhance the chances of employability of students. It will also affect other factors that would help towards an overall improvement of the institute, this would help to get the needed numbers of students and accordingly make sustainable programmes in the institutes. There should be regular faculty development programmes (FDPs) for the faculty and their interaction with industries should be increased and encouraged to allow them to assess the exact demand of corporate and bring it into the curriculum.

Placement, wide range of specialization, and infrastructure majorly affect the decision of students in selecting their prospective b-schools. The management institutions should also provide variety of curriculum as per the current need of the corporate sector. The significance of activities of CSR was not as widespread. The students give value to tangibility, and are not seriously open to CSR. However, CSR activities provide exposure to students and also bring in a sense of responsibility; real life management issues come alive to them through these projects, which is essential for responsible future managers.

In order to fulfill the gap of expectations of faculty members and administrative staff and students from their institute four tools have been determined. These tools can help in exploring the innovative ways of brand building of the institute. They are- 1) identity formation (with attribute positioning or benefit positioning), 2) recognize the position of stakeholders, 3) authenticity and transparency in promises 4) identification and development of the stakeholders’ values as a brand.

8.1.3 Impact of Branding Strategies on Students

The analysis accessed the differences in perception of students on the factors related to various dimensions of the three major domains- academic attributes, services and facilities, and institutes’ positioning factors for branding. The demographic
profile (age, gender, annual family income) of the students has influenced their choices on various dimensions of the factors.

The age of the students were classified into two categories including 1) up to 21 years, and 2) above 21 years. The factor of first domain, *institutional credentials* has impacted differently on both age groups. Possible reasons of this difference may be due to the exposure of students to changed surroundings, self exploration of credentials of the institutes, or they have made their perception on the opinions of friends, relatives, and teachers.

However, on the aspect of *interpersonal relationship management* they were indifferent. Further, the factor *informative prospectus* of third domain has created a significantly different impact between both age categories. The difference in the opinions of students exists probably due to their maturity level, seriousness for career prospects, associations with other groups, their family status, and the influence of their ideal personalities. Though, the factors of second domain have failed to do so. Both groups have granted equal value to five factors of services and facilities of institutes.

The assessment based on gender has influenced neither male nor female students differently in the dimensions of first domain. While *corroborating factors* in the second domain (services and facilities) consisting of local recognition and outlook of the institutes have created significantly different impact between the two genders. The possible reasons for differences in preferences could be their family, societal influences, lack of resources to approach other dimensions, sense of protection from being cheated since many fraudulent institutions are promising fake services and degrees in NCR. Interestingly, students of both genders had different opinions on the dimension of *unique association*, in the third domain which shows the brand distinctiveness of the institutes. Male and female students have different levels of satisfaction in relation to brand distinctiveness.

The students’ annual family income have been categorized into three levels - 1) less than Rs.3 lakhs, 2) Rs. 3 lakh to Rs. 5 lakhs, and 3) above Rs.5 lakhs. The dimensions of the first domain have no relation with the annual family income of the students. However, interlayer dimensions in the second domain, *services delivery* include intangible facilities and ‘academic progression’ which comprise of history and result of the institutes, were significantly different between the students having income levels less than Rs. 3 lakhs and Rs. 3 lakh to Rs. 5 lakhs, in addition amid Rs. 3 lakh to Rs. 5 lakhs and above Rs. 5 lakhs have also created significantly different impact on students in selecting the dimensions of both factors. These differences may have arisen due to their standard of living, own status symbol, and awareness levels of these aspects. The factors of third domain were not successful in creating differences among the three income levels which signify the same preferences regarding factors of institutes’ positioning among students of three income categories.
8.1.4 Interpersonal Relationship with Stakeholders

In order to maintain interpersonal relationship with stakeholders the institutes obtain support from media, alumni association, and support of management links for branding of the institute. Among these supportive measures *electronic media* was the most influential and convincing source of information for branding of the management institutes among students, faculty members and the administrative staff. Print media, word of mouth, family and society, opinion leaders also have influenced them. The internet has overtaken various other mediums of promotion. The prospective applicants are believed to assemble most accurate and important information about b-schools from the internet. Moreover, some also rely on new technologies to maintain online channel of communication with students, alumni, and other stakeholders. The advertising media has partially turned into an effective means for appealing the stakeholders in shaping the management institutes as a brand.

Most students were not aware of alumni of the institute appropriately which showed deficiency in the efforts of the institutes in attracting the attention of students towards alumni. Unlike students, more than half of the faculty members and the administrative staff were aware of this aspect. However, the implication of alumni support and management associations was found to be very useful in development of the institutes as a brand. This finding confirms that appropriate action is required in this respect.

On the aspect of the impact of branded institutes on the status of students, the perception of male and female students was not different. Majority of the students have admitted that media rankings played a role in their decision to select branded management institutes in the NCR. Media rankings seem as a reliable source of information to them which facilitates the comparison of institutes. The perception of both genders on the dimensions of institutes’ offerings was different. Students have disclosed a mismatch of their expectations in respect to the gap between the expectations of students and the offerings promised by institutes. It implies the need for an appropriate assessment of the expectations of students as per the requirements of today.

In addition, in the case of institutes’ benchmarks set up for progress evaluation, the awareness level of faculty and administrative staff was low. It seems there is less involvement of faculty and administrative staff in planning of the processes and progress of the institute. Its importance was greatly felt in its contribution to the branding of the management institutes of the NCR. On the other hand, faculty members and administrative staff are particular about positive role of fair practices (ethics) in management education institutions.

The management education sector has potential to develop management graduates who directly create impact on the company’s growth as well as society’s growth. The management institutions are facing tough competition for their survival in the NCR due to which the need for branding strategies has arisen. The present research has revealed branding strategies followed by management institutions. They are-
1). Institutions promote the advantages of NCR location, as it includes the external regions of Delhi and neighbouring states that has abundant opportunities for supporting one’s career. Thus many students looking for management education from small towns are attracted to study in metropolitan cities.

2). Enhance institutional credentials via improved educational services with advanced technology and historical background of the institutes. The institutions are endeavouring to facilitate opportunities for creativity and innovation, arrangement of workshops, seminars, and conferences, awards and achievements for faculty and students, retaining faculty, staff, and students from different culture, and academic results.

3). For brand awareness the institutions provide complete information through prospectus which include entire details of the institutions’ vision, mission, courses offered, extra-curricular activities, profile of directors, faculty and board members, placement of old students, various national and international tie-ups, publications, accreditations, infrastructure and other services delivered which let students to assess the environment of institutions.

4). For brand distinctiveness institutions link excellence of tangible and intangible features that associate with the stakeholders expectations. The institutions organize extracurricular activities for social causes, community participation, corporate social responsibility which may aid in societal contribution. These assists in building long term relations with stakeholders and establish distinctive reputation.

5). Offer quality services including availability of career opportunities, curriculum variety and specializations in accordance with the expectations of corporate, experienced faculty, placement, convenient timings and shifts, support of administration staff, students aid like educational loan, scholarships, concessions and fee structure.

6). The institutions use imagery associations to promote the brand through different mediums likewise media rankings, online social media, electronic media, print media, word of mouth, family and society, and opinion leaders that assist in enhancing the power of brand among students, faculty members and the administrative staff.

7). The institutions draft functional and emotional benefits of being associated with the organizations. This also ensures brand performance through reliability, durability, service effectiveness, efficiency, empathy, style, design and price.

8.2 Policy Implications

Branding is an exclusive collection of tangible and intangible added values that are perceived and valued by stakeholders. A brand signifies a personality, an emotional bond with the stakeholders emerging from the perceived characteristics. The assured set features of a brand grow out of various sets of additional values that may comprise of history and academic results, additional services and facilities, promotional messages, quality, popularity of the organisation amongst a certain group of clients and other associates who are very important to them. These measures demonstrate that a
powerful brand cannot be established in a day. This development takes time; it needs to be supported by a sound financial marketing plan.

Marketing proficients are required to get an insight into the needs of students. The institutions should have an ability to produce an offer that meets those needs. There must be enough creativity to generate persuasive advertising and ability to communicate differentiation in a manner that students and others understand. It should strike their attention and keeps them motivated in a positive way.

The findings of the study have essential policy-implications for both the students, faculty members, and the management institutes of NCR. These are briefly stated below:

8.2.1 Implications for Students and Faculty Members

a) The students and faculty both should be aware of the changes in market demand as well as the features of the institute in which they are studying/ in employment. As these changes directly affect both. They should be desired of obtaining proficiency for facing the market challenges in a realistic manner.

b) They should not only enquire and ascertain complete information about the tangible features but also gain information of intangible features of the institutes which have attracted them.

c) Both should realize the meaning of the degrees and its requirements. Their ignorance could result in hazarding ones’ career prospects. Frequent counselling session should be attended or organized so that it allows insights for choosing an appropriate career path.

d) They should be open to participate in co-curricular activities. Special activities should be held for students which enhance their candidness and self-belief. The activities should be divided into different stages, for each stage a time frame should be defined so that the growth of the candidates can easily be accessed. These kinds of activities provide exposure to students and faculty which brings a sense of responsibility to them. The faculty should also be encouraged to participate in regular FDPs and their interaction should be managed with industries to assess the exact demand of corporate for present day and time.

e) Both (students and faculty) construct an identity for themselves in relation to the institutes in which they are interested in studying or are being employed. In the branding era, the issue of relationship is increasingly achieving importance among its stakeholders. Evolving interpersonal relationship management between students, faculty and management institutes are the need of today. It is evident by the results, which is seen as important by a majority of students and faculty members.
8.2.2 Implications for Management Institutes

Globalization has a multi-dimensional effect on the system of education; it has transformed the traditional approach of the system with a much more efficient professional one. It has also introduced new courses in accordance with trends, yet there is inadequacy in its performance, therefore, the corporate groups are facing great trouble in getting good managers. With the passage of time the expectations of students from the management institutes, as well as recruiters have increased. A mismatch between the students’ expectations and institutes offerings was noticed that presents a challenge before institutes. The placements, curriculum, specializations do not meet the present day expectations of the corporate appropriately.

All the dimensions of the three domains represented in the study are important for the development of the brand for an institute. The rationale and significance of the existing institutions has to be determined with the help of excellent planning, its scope of key services should provides a wide range of services, facilities and benefits which are represented to show its competence and competitiveness. Thus appropriate assessment of the expectations of students and corporate should be done to maintain a balance in the chain of demand and supply. The institutions of NCR should arrange regular workshop, seminars, and conferences, provide variety in the curriculum as per the current corporate requirement. The management institutes should attempt to maintain world-class infrastructure that attract students and faculty from different regions and nations because diversity provides exposure and allows one to explore the path of new experiences. In order to achieve this, purposeful interactive sessions of faculty-students and people from the corporate ought to be managed. The institutes should not be money-oriented, but must be study-oriented.

In order to develop academic standards-framework of accreditation, academic alliances, partnerships, foreign collaborations, corporate house alignment and community participation have to be incorporated. The employers of the institutes should provide appropriate work environment for motivation of their faculty and staff. Known visionaries and practitioners from India and other foreign institutes should be invited to plan the academic standards. The faculty and administrators should take guidance of visionaries and practitioners. The awareness level of the students with regards to the same aspects was lesser. Hence, significant effort is required to portray its importance.

Due to increased competition, institutes must tune their brand with changed expectations of stakeholders. To bridge the gap of students, faculty and administrative staff, their expectations, institutions should equip their employees with tools which acknowledge their expectations as stakeholders. These tools can be- 1) identity formation with attribute positioning or benefit positioning, 2) recognize the position of stakeholders, 3) authenticity and transparency in promises 4) identification and development of the stakeholders’ values as a brand. A variety of media and emotional appeals in advertising formulates success in brand communications. These tools would enable to explore innovative ways of institutes’ branding that can lead to an emotional and rational understanding of the educational branding.
In case of alumni associations, limited efforts have been taken by the institutes. In many institutes, involvement of alumni is restricted to the annual alumni-meets only. These institutions are not utilizing this resource and the untapped potential it possesses as well. Alumni can bridge the gap of the students and corporate expectations by sharing their own experiences. They are the medium through which the institutes could acknowledge their strength and weakness. They can suggest new ideas as well as further improve the framework towards becoming branded institutions. Thus, management institutes of NCR need to follow holistic marketing approach and form an alumni cell that should keep continuous touch with the alumni.

Experienced faculty should be involved in the benchmarks setup for progress evaluation of the institutes. They also have adequate knowledge of performance levels of other competitors due to their work experience. They organize various events of own institutes and also participate in other colleges events. It would acknowledge them the comparative strength, weakness, opportunities and threats of other competitive institutions.

Besides, above measures differences due to age, gender and annual family income of the students were also noted in relation to institutional credentials, informative prospectus, corroborating factors, services delivery and academic progression, accreditation, academic alliances for global exposure, and societal contribution. These dimensions should be revised according to the time and inputs received.

The findings of the study are expected to be useful to management institutes, students as well as to the faculty of these institutions. The conclusion of this research hopes to contribute to existing knowledge in the potential areas of brand management for the education sector, relationship management with stakeholders and services marketing.

8.3 Scope for Future Research

Today, India is poised to become a superpower, the focus is on building a knowledge society for tomorrow, and hence management education will assume a crucial role. The branding of education industry enables potential to develop long term relations with stakeholders for becoming competent and competitive organizations.

Day by day, fierce competition keeps everyone on one’s toes so the survival of management institutes is also reaching at critical point. There is a need to understand and develop proper branding strategies. A research on branding strategies of management institutes in NCR would be advantageous for the recruitment companies, students, faculty members and for the institute itself. Although various dimensions of the strategies for branding have been evaluated, also the students, faculty members and administrative staffs’ perception about these branding strategies have been examined.
Rapid changes have been introduced in the management education sector post liberalization and privatization in India. The expectations and knowledge of students and stakeholders with the management institutes are expanded.

Research in the area of brand marketing of services industries is becoming a regular process, coupled with brand innovations. The management education industries are service providers and have close encounters with students and stakeholders. These industries are concerned with their prospective as well as current students and stakeholders’ dissatisfaction and grievances.

The present study can have limited scope of investigation. Same parameters can be studied in further educational and non-educational sectors. On a broader perspective, various other parameters have not been included but are important in the present scenario, while further methodology can be unveil the effect on stakeholders of the education sector.

Researchers may also consider it worthwhile to explore dissatisfaction and grievances of students and stakeholders, brand innovations, comparative studies of different universities or top Indian management institutes to acknowledge the loopholes in branding strategies, qualitative research can also be done in the areas of branding.