Chapter 3

Building B-School Brand
SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER-3
BUILDING B-SCHOOL BRAND

3.1 Introduction
3.2 Salesmanship and Brand Building
3.3 Services
3.4 Major Attributes of Brand Building
3.5 Important Tools and Techniques Which Develop Strategy to Build the B-School Brand
3.6 Concluding Remarks
3.1 Introduction

The American philosophy of business is: business of business is business, is not appreciated by educationalist. However, in reality the biggest business today is business of education. The market for business education is a big business across the world. It is estimated that the global corporate education and training market is around US$65 billion. The global management education market is estimated to be US $22 billion (Friga, Bettis and Sullivan 2003). It is growing at about 10-12 percent per annum.¹

U.S is the largest market. About 900 American Universities offered a master in business (Pfeffer and Long 2002). Since the market is lucrative and entry costs are relatively low, there is continuous growth of new entry. In India the government liberalized education market since 1990, resulting into a rapid growth of B-Schools offering both undergraduate and post graduate levels. As competition is increasing the reputed schools are globalizing and branding their services. This is likely to see a reputation and brand driven growth.²

Management thinkers today strongly believe that the customer is a king. The single most important job in marketing is the job of creating and retaining a customer. Numerous research studies across the world have proven that the best way of creating and retaining customers is by building strong brands. Now what are brands? What are Products? What is Enhanced Product? What are products with name? What is the equation or formula which turns a commodity into a brand?

Brand = Product + Images

E.g Titan = Time Keeping Device + Status
A brand is much more than the mere product it stands for. A brand is the amalgam of the physical product and the notional images that go with the brand. When we recall a brand, not only do we recall the physicality of the product but also the images it conjures.
3.2 Salesmanship to Brand Building

The hub of advertising today is to go beyond mere selling. Advertising has to create those positive images that linger in the customer's mind and lead to 'brand' building. Advertising that only sell will end up, in today's market environment, merely creating commodities brands. The task of advertising today, therefore, is to sell and simultaneously endow the brand with all those positive values that will make it more attractive to the target consumers.³

Credit cards, telecom service, airlines, housing loans, hotels, educational institutes—all offer services to customers and satisfy consumer needs in different ways. They are classified neither as consumer products nor as consumer durables. Hence a convenient sub-group name is given to them: services.
3.3 Services

How do you define a service? Is it something you don’t touch and feel? Is it something that is there yet not there?

With product paucity being the rule of the day in consumer product and consumer durables, all products, in a way, are ‘services’ brands. Today a number of products are positioned on the better services platform. But here we are not looking at them. We are looking at ‘services’ brands.

When we say ‘services’ brands, what comes in our mind? Nothing. Don’t be surprised. Services are probably the least ‘branded’ products, even in the global arena, where mega-services brands like AT&T and Sheraton exist. Unlike consumer products or consumer durables, none of these brands can be touched or held hands. So how does branding work?

Our old equation

- Brand = Product + Image

For Service

- Brand = Services received + Image
- University Pass Out Graduate = Education +?
- M.B.A from Top 10 B-Schools = Education + Competitiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branding of Product</th>
<th>Branding of Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand = Product + Image</td>
<td>Brand = Service received + Image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In product branding 4P’s of marketing mix is manipulated</td>
<td>In product branding 7P’s of marketing mix is manipulated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement on T.V plays an important role in promotion mix</td>
<td>Word-of-mouth, Public Relation, Networking, Seminar, Conference plays an important role in promotion mix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advertising efforts in services are aimed not just at creating an 'image'. They often extend beyond image creation to soliciting a response, a visit, an enquiry etc.

In service advertising, it is often also necessary to consider all the various players who go on to build the brand. The ad world has emerged as the biggest spender and not surprisingly much of it in image building related ad. For an industry where the only deliverable is knowledge, it is ironic that they should be spending so much in hard selling their case.

The bulk of B-schools in India, are entirely depending upon the fee income for their survival and in the case of the bigger schools, the fee income represent less than 60 percent, the students number are absolutely sacrosanct. Running a business school is all about getting the right number. These number do not just happen and even if they do, they are not about to cough up fee which the school would like to have.

The real challenge is to build a brand that would justify the means of charging a high fee. It is not uncommon to see the schools that start out charging RS.40,000/- as annual fee quickly move up to fee charts to reach and cross Rs.1.5 lakh mark.

Moving the fee chart means building a saleable brand and the methods to build up the brand.

Every year we see the ranking of different B-Schools conducted by different business magazines. Naturally, one can raise the question to oneself: what is the magic that from 1100 B-Schools only 10 B-Schools comes under A + category. Do these 1% B-Schools have “Allauddin Chirag” with them? Yes, they do have “Allauddin Chirag” and it is the well connection of the 7P's of marketing mix in an innovative and creative way to build the strong B-School brand.

There is already brand differentiation like IIM and non IIM brands.
The branding strategy and programme of a B-School need to go far beyond the product portfolio and embrace the whole offering from the business school including products, price, place and more importantly people. **One can't make a circle without every P's of service marketing being a part of it.** A B-Schools branding is based on not only who you are, but also how do you perform as well.

However, developing a brand need attention on certain attributes which are discussed in section 3.4 (given below)
3.4 Major attributes of Brand Building.

REPUTATION OF B-SCHOOLS
- High Ranking Institute
- Through knowledge of subject
- Toughest admission exam
- Achievement of alumni
- Institute has international recognition.
- Tie-up with foreign institute.

SPECIALIST UNITS
- Known for Marketing Programme.
- Known for Mass Media Programme.
- Known from Finance Programme.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY
- Student Faculty Ratio 1:1.
- Excellent Teaching Methodology.
- Very Good Counseling.
- Good Industry Exposure.

PLACEMENT
- 100 Percent Placement
- Multiple Placement Option

QUALITY OF PLACEMENT
- Average Salary Best in the Industry.
- Placement Abroad and in MNCs.

INFRASTRUCTURE
- High Speed Internet Connectivity.
- Excellent Infrastructure, library and computers.
• Enables Financial Aid.
• Institute at Convenient Location.
• High Standard Hostel and Mess Facility.

ADMISSION ELIGIBILITY
• Prefer students with Work Experience.
• Admission to Engineers only.

FACULTY
• High Quality Research Paper.
• Visiting Professors- Industry Captains.
• Well-trained Faculty.

3.5 Important Tools and Techniques Which Give the Strategy to Build the B-Schools Brand

**Ranking**

Students work day and night to grab an admission in top 10 B-Schools. Similarly corporate houses have accepted that the students from top 10 B Schools are competitive. But the basic question is: from where this perception comes? Normally, students and corporate houses get influenced by the survey conducted by business magazines: Business World, Business Today, India Today, Dalal Street, Outlook, Indian Management etc. Ranking gives an overall idea where B School stand and what should be done to move up in ranking ladder. For alumni it’s a feel good factor if his *Alma Mater* achieves a good rank.⁵

**Visibility through Writing in Magazines/Journals**

It is one of easiest way to create awareness about institute. Encourage and motivate the faculty members to write in different MBA coaching institute, magazine on topic related to written exam, group discussion, interview skills etc. This will definitely create awareness in the mind of MBA aspirants.

Publishing In-house magazines and inviting students/alumni/CEO/ M.D etc also contribute towards the brand building exercise.

**Faculty** should be encouraged to write books/research paper etc. For example **XIM-Bhubneshwar** pays faculty members a perk of Rs.65,000/- if a paper is published in international journal and Rs.1,00,000/- for authoring a book, a maximum Rs1,50,000/- per teacher for attending international conference and seminars.⁶
Tie Up

Visibility should not be restricted at the national level but it should be borderless. Institute should develop the wider acceptability. Global visibility is done through tie-up with foreign university, students and faculty exchange should be done on a consistent basis. For example International, student exchange programmes at India’s premier management institutes are attracting more students than ever before. Corporate like Lehman Brothers, Deutsche Bank, Merrill Lynch, Reliance Industries and the Tata group are now joining hands with the institutes to sponsor students for such programmes. At IIM-C, the US-based global management consultancy firm Diamond Management & Technology Consultants has sponsored students for the first time. IIM-C Students Exchange Programme (STEP) representative have also initiated talks with Lehman Brothers. XLRI Jamshedpur is also in talks with Tata Steel. Tie up with the corporate houses, consultancy firms, placement consultants, market research organizations, NGOs, government organizations for upgrading, developing and bridging the gap between the theory and practice. For example the IIM-A keep an eye on improving its international ranking focuses on research tie-up with reputed foreign universities. The IIMS – Ahmedabad, Bangalore, and Lucknow – are in the process of entering the research partnerships with global B-Schools.

IIM-Lucknow is also exploring research tie ups with five B-Schools in the U.S, Europe and France. IIM-A is in talks with the University of Amsterdam, Duke University, for research collaboration. At present IIM-A has exchange agreements with 45 reputed institutions in the world.

The research tie ups are important for cross-culture learning. Research collaboration adds to the international reputation of the institute and faculty.
Event Management

Education institute gives advertisement of admission notice once in a year. After the admission process is over there no visibility of institute in news. To enhance the awareness and presence throughout the year B-Schools organize different events like Organizing Seminars, Workshop, Quiz Competition, and Best Business Idea Competition, Musical Evening, Road show, Debate, Elocution Competition, Industrial Visit etc or sending the student to participate in the event organized by the other institutes at national and international level. For example Nirma Institute came in to lime light when its students performed at par with I.I.T students in science exhibition. Participation and winning the competition augments visibility and brand image.¹⁰

Online

In dot.com culture, online interaction is far superior to the traditional interaction. Web site of the institute should be made more informative and interactive. Upgrading information from time to time; provide interesting stuff to the outsiders which can create interest to surf the website. At the time of admission the Admission Form and other relevant information should be made available on the institute website. The entrance result should also be made online.

Make it compulsory for every student to write at least one web article in every trimester for different MBA sites like- cool avenues, bizkool, indiainfoline, pagalguy etc. To make the issue serious, some amount of weightage should be given for their internal marks or some grade should be given and it should be reflected in their mark sheet. All the information about the upcoming events should also be uploaded on the web site.¹¹
Alumni Association

Alumni play an important role in building brand name and giving useful feedback. They are the biggest assets and undoubtedly, the alumni association has played an important role in not only marketing the institute’s brand name but also getting inputs to improve the college and enhance the learning experience for the students. Networking is the order of the day. Alumni form a very strong element of the school community. They are the interest group that supports school’s new initiatives and has a lifelong involvement with the school and its progress. Most alumni desire participation in order to contribute to the growth of the school and see it as a way of showing their gratitude. In addition, the school’s growth is a matter of individual pride. They also have an interest in seeing their school does well as it enhances their individual reputation. Above all there is an emotional attachment that goes beyond education but has to do with linkages formed at the school. On the whole, alumni view their association with their old school very positively.

Alumni can play a variety of roles in the development of the school:

- from well wishers to critics,
- from providing industry’s view on programmes & perspectives to participants in their design,
- from providing individual support on various activities of the school to providing a collective voice before the government or industry,
- from seeking services from the school to participating in life-long learning through workshops,
- from providing a window to the world of business & industry to providing avenues of employment to future generations of students,
- from presenting the opinion of industry & society at the school to presenting the school’s perspective to the outside world; and
- from celebrating their past to celebrating the future etc.
Several mechanisms are used by B-Schools to remain engaged with the alumni. These can be categorized at three levels:  

**Services for Alumni**

This would include providing workshops and programmes exclusively for the alumni, life long email/contact through the school, support to alumni chapters, annual reunions (socials and value adding activities), affinity services (e.g., Penn/Wharton has a club house in New York City which has a restaurant, meeting spaces, reading rooms, and accommodation for stay – this place has become the hub of activity of Penn/Wharton alumni who are in the city or are passing by; Wharton students hold an annual musical for the alumni called Wharton Follies (a spoof) in NYC); an excellent alumni magazine; quality merchandizing and its retail (this adds to the school pride issue mentioned earlier); a group insurance; group travel during summer etc. At most WCS the school’s alumni come back for various executive programmes offered by the school (sometimes these are specially designed for the alumni). Schools organize a regional conference for its alumni in one region of the world each year. Several schools have also developed job & recruitment support for the alumni. These schools have a very active alumni services group – a separate secretariat that is headed by a very active Director of Alumni Services who helps create events that maintain the link between the school and the alumni. Moreover, this secretariat helps bring the alumni back on campus frequently and takes the school (through its activities & representatives) to various alumni chapters. The alumni services group is directly administered by the Dean of these schools.  

**Advisory Support to the School**

Several schools have regional alumni advisory councils (e.g., one for Asia, another for Europe etc.) that provide another layer of support/thinking for plans of growth and advancement of the school. This group meets once a year, chalks out individual and group objectives and provides the necessary interface with special interest groups around the world, helps forge linkages with the government, advances the cause of
Building B-School Brand

the school in the external world and supports/leads the fund raising activities of the school. This group comprises the most illustrious leadership from the alumni.14

**Detailed Involvement with the School**

The alumni office regularly tracks the careers of alumni, keeps track of significant work done by them, keeps information on significant media appearances etc. This information is conveyed through alumni journal to others and is passed on regularly to faculty as well. The latter would then invite alumni who may have done significant work in related area as guest speakers. Similarly, alumni participate in major curriculum re-designs, community & related projects, planning & implementation of fundraising activities, become ambassadors of the school in other countries, provide guidance to students, participate with faculty in research etc.15

**Help the School in Augmenting Resources**

This is one of the most-significant contributions of the alumni to the school at all B-Schools their contribution includes regular individual contribution, corporate support for various activities at the school, participate in organized fundraising and bequeathing property to the school in their will etc.

The older is the business school, the bigger is the alumni base. Make the database of the alumni – batch wise, sector wise and constantly upgrade it. Alumni should be made aware about the development takes place at the institute. The best way is to keep them inform through S.M.S or through e-mail.16

**Brand Reflection / Merchandizing**

Designing the logo and punch line of the institute visible in all the activities performed by the institute, student and faculty members develop the sense of attachment and also create awareness about the institute. Many premier institutes in India form different clubs like Marketing Club, Finance Club, and H.R Club etc. Each
club should come out with their T-Shirt having a brand of institute printed or imposed on it. At I.S.B. there is a complete set of accessories like

- Coffee Mug
- T-Shirt
- Wallet
- Cap
- Air Bag
- Pen
- Pen stand
- Sticker
- Files and Folders
- Computer Screen etc
3.6 Concluding Remarks

In the light of the discussions, following conclusions with respect to brand building may be drawn by pulling all the common thread of brand building together and boil down the entire discussion, it is very clear that the institutes desirous of marching forward and keeping their competitors behind, they should play the 7P’s card carefully, skillfully and innovatively. All 7P’s should grow hand in hand. Putting too much emphasis on one “P” may not serve the purpose. It is therefore essential that all the P’s should be maximized i.e. Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical infrastructure and Process subject to the external environmental constraints vis-à-vis characteristics of service industry namely intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity etc. Last but not the least, brand building demands consistent and untiring efforts to play continuously well with the seven P’s of service marketing.
References

1 BS Commercial Feature “Management Education in India” March 2005 Business Standard, Pp-2

2 S Bowender, S L Rao “Management Education In India: its evolution and some contemporary issues, Excel Books Pvt Ltd, New Delhi


4 Ibid- pp 105-106

5 Saptarishi Sarkar “B School Branding”, Bharthidasan Institute of Management, Trichy, Pp-1

6 Premchand Palety “New Age Schools – The Rising” Outlook September 19,2005, pp-38

7 Sreeradha D Basu and Writankar Mukharjee “Corporate Punch to STEP up at B-School” The Economic Times, Ahmedabd, Friday 18 August,2006

8 Mansi Bhatt “IIMs Activates Research Engine Abroad” -- The Economic Times” Wednesday 23 August 2006.

9 Op Cited-4


11 Op Cited p-2

12 Op Cited p-3

13 Op Cited p-3

14 Op Cited p-4

15 Op Cited p-4

16 Op Cited p-5