Model on Marketing Communication and Branding Strategy of University (MMCBU): The Milieu of Bangladesh

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Abstract

'Model on Marketing Communication and Branding Strategy of University (MMCBU): The Milieu of Bangladesh' is started with 'Quality information with Clear University Identity: logo, color, font, layouts, and about services of the university' which is with the university branding strategy undertakes quality marketing program towards different stakeholders of the university. The stakeholders are Potential Students, Guardians, & other interest groups that are UGC, Govt. general people, and potential employee etc. The stakeholders may too communicate for information to information desk, employees, website, and existing students and their guardians of the university. The feedback should be positive in each query made by stakeholders. And the positive feedback depends on the proper information design, satisfaction of the existing students and its guardians, and well trained, professional and loyal employees.
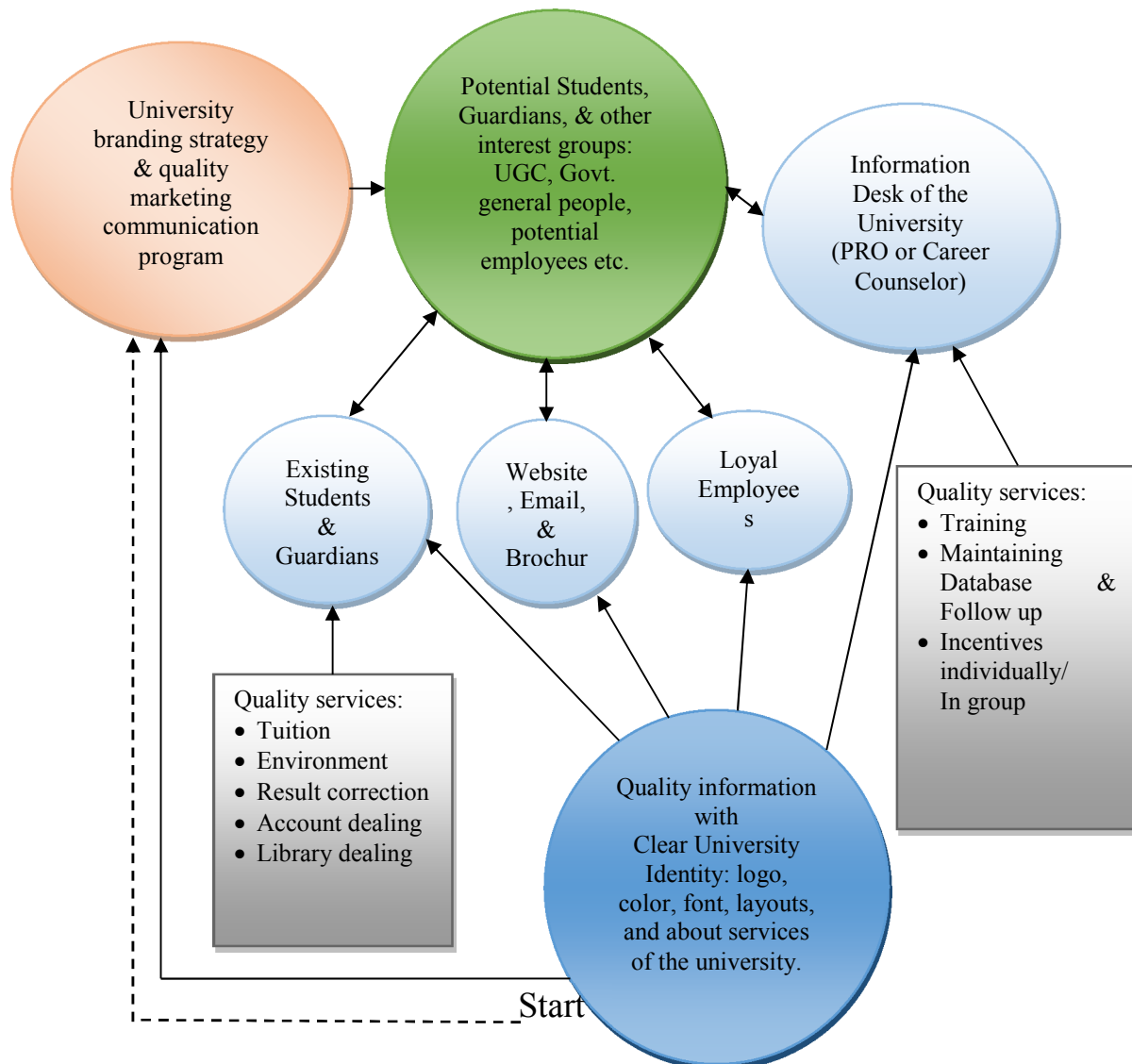
Keywords: marketing communication of university, branding of university, marketing communication and branding of service providing organization, factors of satisfaction of university students, corporate identity of a university.

1. Introduction

There is a primitive notion in Bangladesh about the marketing communication of universities that university is a service providing academic institution build up for noble causes of providing tuitions, conducting researches etc. and that is why it does not require giving any advertisement to allure students. Moreover, university authority may think that many popular universities do not take that much marketing communication activities, so it will be a cheap approach to take marketing communication activities. There is a proverb 'Rome was not built in a day' and without effort. The universities that are getting adequate or more than adequate potential students, that they can able cater, may not need to take vast marketing communication activities.

Communication activities are taken by university or any other organization does not make cheap perception about organization, rather the poor way of communication makes bad perceptions. Universities have to find the smart way of communication. The smart way of communication does not only mean the design of communication elements but also its media. For example social media like Facebook has been one of the very much effective and economical media for reaching young generation that are potential market for university.

If universities have programs which are positively different from other universities in terms of requirement of the country, career opportunities, style of providing tuitions, ease in paying tuition fees, good academic and infrastructure environments and other benefits which may be helpful to the career of the present and potential students as well as to the nations then it may be a healthy practice of informing and alluring students to the university. Now the problem is how to inform and inspire the present and potential students.

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2. Quality Information with Clear University Identity (Corporate Identity)

At the beginning of the marketing communication strategy, university authority has to decide about the information and how much of the information and in which design or format the information is to publish to the different stakeholders. As the model says the stakeholders are the potentials students & their guardians, different interest groups like government people, University Grants Commission (UGC), different educational bodies those gives affiliations and responsible for accreditation, potential employees (a good employee also looks for the standard of the organization he is intended to join), general people, existing students & their guardians, and employees of the university specially the employees of information desk. These stakeholders should have the clear information in distinctive design about the university.

A clear university identity will help to recognize and recall the information as well as to build the clear positive perception about the university. The university identity will include the name, logo, color, unique typography, different layouts for letterhead, visiting card, invoice, envelops etc. And this identity should be used in different communication medium (website, brochure, advertisement, letter, application etc.) of the university in a distinctive manner. The repeated use of the university identity will help in recalling the university name as well as to build positive identity. On the other hand, using of no distinctive identity or an ambiguous identity may create an ambiguous perception to the stakeholders. And that is why a clear university identity must be there in a university.

Sometime people measure the organization's standard by the thickness (paper GSM) and proper design of letterhead, folders, brochure, and business card and by the professional and positive behavior of PRO or

Counselor.

3. University branding strategy & quality marketing communication program

After being prepared with distinctive corporate identity, university will take strategy for branding and will go for marketing communication program to communicate with its stakeholders.   Proper marketing communication is about impossible without fixing strategy for branding and marketing communication program. Every strategy is made to achieve some goal. Strategy is fixed by observing many factors carefully and methodically of the related field. That is why; decisions without strategy may not work well due to lack of attention.

"No company can win if its products and services resemble every other product or offering. As part of the strategic brand management process, each offering must represent right kind of things in the mind of the target market" (Kotler, Keller, Koshy, Jha 2012)

A university or any organization cannot get success if it does not design its offering and its image to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of target market. And to get a distinctive place in the mind of present and potential students and its other stakeholders' university should have a differentiated marketing strategy and communicate this to its target market. The process of doing so is called positioning. There are many positioning strategies: positioning by product attributes and benefits, by price/quality, by competitor etc. University should have a positioning statement which identify the university positively different from others and make the market interested to it. In the positioning statement one thing must maintain that the statement should say the students benefit rather than universities satisfaction. For example, "Destination for higher education of the nation"- the statement is sounds good, but the statement may not able to convince the market. Market (the present and potential students) always looks for their benefit. But the benefits should be more than the common benefits of other universities.

Quality marketing communication program requires planning about integrated media and planning for designing information to communicate in different media. The word 'integrated' is used for integration of different media instead of one media. This integration is not required for every communication but for promotion. Now a day's peoples are puzzled with information. Wherever they goes, they get to see information, in home, books, television, internet; in road banner, billboard, signboard, leaflet, poster etc.; in university or office notice board, newspaper, internet; and many others. In such era of communication and full of information a single media is not enough to get a distinctive place in the mind of target market. It requires the integration different media. The promotional of university may goes in newspaper, television, local cable TV channel & billboard at a time. The repetition of same design and information will help in recalling the university name and information. Ultimately it will help in developing brand.

The frequency of advertising is also important. If advertising is given all of a sudden once in a blue moon target market may not see it and if they see it once then forget it. That is why attention should be given to the frequency of advertising to make it visible. Some owners or authority claim that advertising is expensive. If a single newspaper advertisement directly or indirectly contributes in admitting a single student, then, university will get benefit of four times of the advertisement expenditure.

Another important media for promotion is **publicity**. For the publicity through newspaper article need not to pay but to motivate journalist to write article for the university in education or career page. It comes in the form of feature, news story, editorial, or announcement about organization or its products and services. People may not believe advertisement positively but they believe article in newspaper as it is not directly paid. That is why concerned person should create and maintain good relation with those journalists.

Many organizations do not give proper attention in designing their advertising. But it is important. Primarily, the design of the advertising and the amount of space is purchased in the newspaper for the advertisement has a great impact on perspectives' judgments on the organizations' stander. The placement of advertising in newspaper is also important. If the advertising placed in classified advertising page prospects will consider it as classified standard advertising or it will be lost by neighbor black colored advertising (as generally seen in Bangladeshi Newspapers). In case of television commercial the selection of channel and telecasting time is important. A good designed advertising increases the image of university. On the other hand, a bad designed advertising can ruin the existing image of the university.

4. Potential Students, Guardians, & other interest groups

It is common notion that only the present and potential students and their guardian required to give information. Beside these many other interest groups also there to get information, such as UGC, Government, general people, and even potential employees those likes to do job in a prominent University or organization. Different educational bodies those gives affiliations and responsible for accreditation.

Potential students, guardians, & other interest groups takes or gets information from information desk, employees, website, brochure, existing students, their guardians, and of course from the infrastructures of the university. As a result university authority must give attention to these sources of information. Now the question

is how all stakeholders can get quality information. It will be discussed in the following topics:

5. Information Desk of the University (PRO or Career Counselor)

Information desk is very much important because it creates the first impression about the university. Primarily, the stakeholders take information from the information desk and from website of the university. So the environment should be well decorated, friendly and systematic. On the other hand, career counselors should be well informed about the programs/courses, career opportunities, fesses, departments, hostel, library, and other related issues all times.

If any stakeholder comes to get information, he or she should not be bored, should not wait for long time. There should be a maximum waiting duration limit like five to ten minutes. While their waiting they may be given university brochure to go through. Within five to ten minutes the Admission Counselor should attend the prospective in friendly and systematic way. Now, the question is how the Counselors' can be made friendly and systematic.

Admission Counselors can be motivated to be friendly by giving incentive on number admission after filling their target number of admission. The incentive can be given to the team instead of individually. But the incentive to individual may create competition within Counselors to make better than others.

Training session should be arranged to train how to counsel, the phone manner, how to maintain good relation with the prospective, and about the programs/courses, career opportunities, fesses, departments, hostel, library, other related issues etc. The Counselor may be evaluated by the number of enquirers stepped in and how many students of which have taken admission.

Division of work in admission section not only makes admission counseling process systematic, but also it increases the efficiency of Admission Counselor. For example, some should assign to cater telephone quarries; some should assign to cater face to face quarries and some should assign to administration work. There should have a form which will be filled up by the potential students (with all his/her information) and submit it to concerned Counselor. The concerned Counselors will create a database of those potential students to maintain good relation & follow-up the potential by phone call or email.

People whoever comes to front desk to get information; along with counseling the career Counselor must give brochure or leaflet in a good looking folder. This leaflet or brochure and even good looking folder may be seen by their relatives and friends to build the awareness of the brand.

6. Existing Students & Guardians

Existing students and their guardians are a very good opportunity for marketing and branding because most of the potentials trust the statement of existing students and their guardians more than the university employee. But the less satisfied or dissatisfied students will not advocate for the university.

After HSC examination students those intend to take admission in private university, they not only buy the tuitions of the program but also a satisfactory, pleasing university life. The satisfaction of existing students may depend upon the following factors.

6.1 Quality tuitions

The quality tuition means to the students and their guardians of South Asian country is an opening the door of good career opportunity after passing out; a smart knowledgeable or sometime skilled faculty members;   less effort but good result.

6.2 Friendly environment & polish university life

Students not only want to pass a pleasant university life but also want to be proud of being students of the university. They want good looking university building, well decorated class rooms, labs, and studios; good prayer space, a good canteen where good foods are available and created & catered by person with wearing apron. They expect the 4th class employees to wear apron. Ultimately, they want such an environment for which they feel proud to their relatives, friends, and others.

6.3 Friendly dealing with Examination Controller's office

Whenever students go to controller of examination office to correct their result or any other purposes they should be treated rationally, logically and gently. University authority must remember that the most of the cases the mistake occurs because of the mistakes of faculty member or the mistakes of exam department. In few cases there would have been the mistake of students. Even if it is students' mistake the concern person should be positive to the student because it is a mistake. But very often it is found that these three (examination department, faculty member, students) are more inclined to play blame game rather than solving the problem.

The problem can be overcome by arranging training and by developing a web based university automation where concern faculty member can give input of their result.

6.4 Friendly account & library dealing

It is observed that accounts people loses their temper at the time of examination. As all students goes to accounts and library to get information and clearances at the time of examination it is really difficult to control their temper.

This problem can also be overcome by arranging training and by developing a web based university automation where students can get their necessary information regarding accounts and library.

6.6 Emphasis should be given to students' participation in different events

Events are the part of students' quality university life. Students not only enjoy the events but also they like to share it with their friends and relatives.

6.7 Transport and Hostel facilities

Students those who live in distant need transport or hostel facilities, especially for female students. It is not only ensure the safe, secure journey or stay in hostel but also it has a great impact in making admission decision.

7. Website, Email, & Brochure

Today is the era of information. Website is the most convenient, comfortable and easiest way of having all information. Even if people can get information from website by their cell phone. University website should maintain its identity through its color, font, proper proportionate logo, illustration, layout etc. so that the market can recognize it at the first sight. Digital brochure should be available in website such a place viewer can locate it easily. Web site should have email address if anyone have further query. The website may have images of different events. But the images should be clear and polish otherwise it may damage the universities image.

8. Loyal Employees

Employees are the key factors for quality service in a service providing organization. A convinced and satisfied employee not only gives quality service but also recommends their relatives and students to take admission in the university.

A satisfied employee is a loyal employee though 100% satisfaction is about impossible as the demand is unlimited. But a satisfactory level of satisfaction is possible. Beside the financial benefit (salary and bonus); employee satisfaction depends on many other factors. Such as designation, work environment, respectful behavior, faith and responsibilities etc.

9. Accreditation and tied up with different international educational bodies and universities

Now a day's concerned students intended to take admission like to know the international ranking and affiliation or accreditation of the university.

Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that quality employee can give quality service and then quality marketing communication program will ensure that the quality service is communicated to the target market. If any of these three factors (quality employee, quality service, and quality marketing communication program) is missing, it will then be difficult to reach its optimum goal of the university. On the other hand students are not only attracted to get admission in university for its quality education and satisfactory services but also its friendly environment which includes well designed campuses, arrangements pleasing events, and finally an image of the university. The image of a university may be positioned by giving attention on the factors discussed throughout the article.

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