



# The Role of Branding on Educational Performance in the Egyptian Private Universities

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## Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the role of branding in achieving a good performance level for Egyptian universities. It explains the value of impact of each dimension of the Branding, which are: Design, Communication and Feedback, on Performance, represented in Alumni, Employment and Learning Efficiency. Regression analysis and SEM were conducted and results show that none of the Branding dimensions significantly affects Learning Efficiency. On the other hand, all Branding dimensions are significantly affecting Alumni. It could be concluded that there should be some enhancements regarding the programs provided for post graduates to be able to achieve the required level of learning efficiency.

## Subject Areas

Education

## Keywords

Branding, Performance, Private Universities, Education, Design

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## 1. Introduction

Educational sector in Egypt is facing many challenges nowadays in several issues. Several researches had been done to improve the performance of educational institutes but still it is not as appropriate enough to achieve the desired level. Researches had been done to show that such branding capabilities could achieve a competitive advantage for educational institutes [1]. Most researches highlight the relationship between branding and companies' competitive advantage but few of them focus on the impact of this on performance [2].

## 2. Literature Review

Branding is an integral part of marketing strategy; it is the creation of a corporate identity and reputation. Because branding efforts are not limited to “consumer” products, firms in various service industries have been trying to utilize branding strategies to build stronger brands. In this regard, higher education and universities have also begun to realize the need to develop sustainable brand strategies. Therefore, branding has become a strategic issue and focus for universities and other post-compulsory educational institutions in order to develop meaningfully differentiated brands to communicate their strengths [3].

Recently, the economic environment has had a major negative impact on the financial situation of most higher education institutions. More enduring is that vast numbers of universities and colleges (*i.e.* brands) in the marketplace often compete for the same students. Moreover, the relatively simple promotional tools of the past no longer work as they once did. As today’s prospective students are fully immersed in a variety of digital worlds, institutions of higher education sometimes struggle to understand and embrace their needs. It is in this context that colleges and universities are turning to branding as they seek to thrive, and in some cases to survive [4].

Branding strategy is defined as the way companies mix and match their corporate, house, family and individual brand types for their products or services. This mix and match of brand types generates a variety of options for the companies from which they can select a suitable branding strategy for a product/service. An appropriate branding strategy is crucial as it would reinforce the desired positioning and hence influence purchase behavior. Unfortunately, even the best brand managers have struggled to choose the most appropriate branding strategy, in part, due to a lack of academic clarity and study. Neither type of branding strategy is better than the other; rather suitability of the branding strategy depends on the matching of the branding strategy with the characteristics of the offering. Based on inherent product category characteristics such as risk, involvement, purchase transaction amount, and frequency of purchase etc. [5].

Corporate Brands: A key precept of this article is that corporate brands can be regarded as a distinct identity type. To reiterate, corporate brands are associated with key corporate associations and expectations, which are evoked by a corporate name and or logo. A corporate brand is separate and divisible from an organization’s corporate identity: the latter—a corporate identity—refers to an institution’s Defining, Distinctive and Differentiated institutional attributes. Within the literature, there is growing consensus that the corporate brand should be closely calibrated with the corporate identity. It was asserted, for instance, that the building of corporate identity underpins corporate brand management [6].

Corporate brands have been characterized as follows: The corporate branding philosophy, at its core, represents an explicit covenant between an organization

and its key stakeholder groups including customers. The covenant is set forth by senior management in terms of a clearly articulated corporate branding proposition. It is professed via the multiple channels of communication. It is experienced through corporate and staff behavior, and, importantly, through the organization's products and/or services. A corporate brand, although it creates awareness and recognition via a name of logo, needs to articulate its accord with key stakeholders by demonstrating, unceasingly and over time that it has kept its corporate branding pledge. As such it became a mark of assurance [7]. Corporate branding provides a mechanism for developing this cultural emphasis. The goal of corporate branding is to conceive, manage and communicate corporate brand values in order to guide managerial decisions, actions and normative firm behavior [8].

Since corporate brand values originate from organizational heritage and culture, and guide employee behaviors, they enable the company as a whole to unite behind a particular strategic intent. However, corporate brand values and the way that they are translated into staff behaviors and conveyed to customers and other stakeholders are generally overlooked in existing studies of market driving, although some contributions use examples of companies with strong corporate brands to illustrate this approach. When internationalization is involved, it is also important to consider a firm's actions at both the global and the local levels. A market driving strategy applied in a local market is more likely to succeed if supported by a clear and consistent global brand vision, and a value laden resource base that can be mobilized and implemented at the local level [9].

Corporate Branding allows luxury firms to create distinguishable brands in return for customers' preferences and loyalty [10]. Doing so highlights the strategic, relational nature of place branding. The authors focus specifically on first- and zero-order capabilities, integrating absorptive capacity (first-order) and an innovation capability (zero-order) into a place branding framework. We define an innovation capability within a place branding context and offer absorptive capacity as a mechanism through which DMO leaders can exploit external knowledge acquisition [11]. Service branding studies often stress the importance of internal aspects of branding. Indeed, employee branding is effective when employees internalize the brand image and are motivated and empowered to project it to customers and other stakeholders [12]. However, employee branding becomes ineffective if the brand does not reflect reality [13].

On the other hand, internal branding helps an institution overcome internal resistance to branding efforts. It helps the institution take an identity-development strategy beyond traditional approaches, such as new logos, snappy taglines and expensive advertising campaigns, to an embedded cultural approach that guides everything from communications, fund-raising, marketing and personnel policies to enrollment management and program development [14].

Country Branding (also known as nation branding): it is the creation of a dif-

ferentiated identity in targeted international markets through the use of name, logo and other branding elements. The definition of nation branding was “the strategic self-presentation of a country with the aim of creating reputational capital through economic, political and social interest promotion at home and abroad” [15].

Branding is considered to be one of the most important assets of any institution. Corporate brand management plays a critical role in forming positive attitudes towards the institution. The intangibility and inseparability of HE services makes branding even more important. The importance of the development and management of a distinctive brand helps to create and maintain a competitive advantage in the HE sectors. The management of the corporate brand, which consists of periodic audits, is one of the most important tasks. Currently, branding in HE has become an increasingly essential issue with substantial commitment of financial resources allocated to branding activities. However, the degree of importance of corporate branding varies between different institutions as well as countries [16].

There is evidence in the literature that suggests that organizations struggle to formulate and implement their corporate branding strategies. This might be due to its paradoxical complexity, the newness of the field, and its cross disciplinary nature [17]. Many organizations are unsure of how to manage their corporate brands. Much of the work has been theoretical and there has been limited empirical investigation [18].

[19] suggests that firms branding capabilities can be understood along two dimensions: internal related (comprising asset-related and knowledge-related capabilities) and external driven (comprising of market factors and institutional factors). Additionally, [20] also puts across their perspective of branding capabilities to embrace three facets. They include a firms’ ability to design high-performance products at competitive prices, the ability to carry out fruitful, beneficial collaborations with stakeholders, and the ability to communicate the component brand at low cost.

Furthermore, [21] describes branding capability to comprise four approaches: identifying brand meaning; using branding as an operational tool; communicating consistent brand meaning and; getting staff to support the brand [22]. Another considered measurement for Branding Capability, is that it can be conceptualized as brand value (inertia) plus change [23].

Brands have become an increasingly valuable marketing tool in a crowded marketplace because they allow consumers to distinguish sellers and goods and make choices based on information that is more reliable [24]. The term brand is defined as a complex symbol representing a variety of ideas and attributes that build up in the minds of consumers over time, whose legal term is trademark; the brand is fundamental for competitiveness and long-term survival. Moreover, brand personality might be, in some cases, more important than technical features of the product.

From an academic point-of-view, this issue has been under-investigated, apart from few studies [25], which focus on large corporations and generally show a positive impact of brand and trademark activities on firm economic and financial performance. Further, even though small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) account for 95 per cent of the business population, and recently provide evidence of stronger brand investments [26], studies on the relationship between marketing activities and firms' performance have not taken them into consideration [27].

Branding industrial services organizations requires a special approach. First, service provider selection is a strategic choice. Second, the interaction between the buyer and the industrial service provider is highly complex and long-lasting. It was suggested that corporate branding is more suitable for services companies than service branding, owing to the inherent difficulties of differentiating between services. In corporate branding the whole firm is mobilized to participate in branding and the brand is used to influence both customers and other stakeholders. Thus, although opposing views have been presented, research strongly supports the particularities of branding industrial services companies with corporate branding strategy [28].

Literature has long recognized that firm capabilities (such as branding capabilities) are vital impetuses for organizational performance [29]. In spite of the burgeoning state of branding studies, however, three key deficiencies are observed in marketing literature. First, a significant gap exists regarding the amount of branding research focusing on small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in comparison with those carried out with large organizations settings [30]. Second, the branding literature exhibits a paucity of research works emanating from emerging or less-developed economies compared to those from developed economic settings [31]. In addition to this, management research and institutional theory recognizes that the functions of firm capabilities are likely to fluctuate with the nature of market environments [32].

Although the definition of branding capability is not firmly rooted in literature, a number of conceptualizations on what it constitutes have been put across by scholars. [33] conceptualizes branding capability as a firm's capacity to marshal a bundle of interrelated organizational routines to perform activities such as communication, and marketing programs in delivering a consistent brand meaning with customers. [19] suggests that firms' branding capabilities can be understood along two dimensions: internal related (comprising asset-related and knowledge-related capabilities) and external driven (comprising of market factors and institutional factors). Additionally, [20] also puts across their perspective of branding capabilities to embrace three facets. They include a firm's ability to design high-performance products at competitive prices, the ability to carry out fruitful, beneficial collaborations with stakeholders, and the ability to communicate the component brand at low cost. Furthermore, [21] describes branding capability to comprise four approaches: identifying brand meaning; using branding as an operational tool; communicating consistent brand meaning and;

getting staff to support the brand.

From the various conceptualizations, a broader theorization may suggest that firms do not only select brand elements/identities but also incorporate marketing mix programs and communications, as well as leverage on secondary associations when implementing branding efforts [34]. These branding efforts are developed through learning and configuration mechanisms, which continually shape firms' competencies and can be sources of sustainable competitive advantage because they are not easy to replicate, imitate or learn.

Therefore, branding capabilities are not only generated internally within firms but also attainable from external parties. The latter form of branding capabilities is particularly important for firms in emerging economies, where institutional, social and market changes take place more rapidly [19] amidst lingering shortage of resources, unbridled competition and inadequate infrastructure [35].

Therefore, branding activities could be classified as company values and ideas, designing, stabilizing, communication, networking and feedback [13].

### 3. Methodology

The current research is an explanatory quantitative research using the questionnaire survey, as it will explain the impact of branding capability on educational institutes performance. Research variables are classified as the Branding Capabilities, representing the independent variable, Educational Institutes performance, representing the dependent variable. The questionnaire statements depend on using a five-point Likert scale will be adopted for research variables to be able to evaluate the educational institutes' performance. The research strategy sheds the light on some of the findings of survey that will be conducted in private universities in Egypt. It will intend to gather information about the educational performance and the educational process in Egyptian universities to help in achieving the higher educational performance of educational sector in Egypt.

**The research hypothesis could be stated as follows:**

H1: There is a significant impact of Branding on Alumni.

H2: There is a significant impact of Branding on Employment.

H3: There is a significant impact of Branding on Learning Efficiency.

### 4. Results and Findings

This section will present the validity and reliability testing of the research variables, descriptive analysis of the research variables, and hypothesis testing using regression analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM).

Validity and reliability tests are two requirements to prove the accuracy of results extracted from the questionnaire. Therefore, validity and reliability tests were performed to ensure that the data is adequate for analysis. Validity refers to the extent of accuracy of the results of the study. It could be either internal or external. Internal validity refers to the analysis of the accuracy of the results obtained, while external validity refers to the analysis of the findings with regards

to whether they can be generalized [36]. The validity of the data could be confirmed when the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of all quality factors are greater than or equal to 50% and all items loadings are greater than 0.4 [37]. Reliability refers to the internal consistency between the items selected to measure one variable. Cronbach's alpha value is one common measurement of reliability. The higher the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value, the higher is the internal consistency, where the minimum value for acceptable reliability is above 0.7 [38].

**Table 1** shows the validity and reliability tests for the Knowledge Sharing and its dimensions for the trainees receiving ECDIS generic training, where all AVEs and item loadings are above these cut-off values, implying adequate validity for the data under study. It also shows that all Cronbach's alpha values for this study exceed 0.7, implying that the data is reliable.

**Table 2** shows the mean and standard deviation of the research variables, as well as the corresponding frequencies for the responses of the Educational Institutes' Performance. It was noticed that the mean values of all the research variables are above average of 2.5. Also, all frequencies of research variables are relatively lying in the zones of neutral and agree.

**Table 3** displays the results of the regression analysis of Educational Institutes' Performance; Program Design, Communication, and Feedback on "Alumni". The multiple regression analysis shows that there is a significant impact of Program Design on Alumni, as p-value is 0.000. Similarly, Communication (p-value = 0.001) shows a significant impact on Alumni, Similarly, Time (p-value = 0.000) shows a significant impact on Alumni. Moreover, the table shows that Program Design, Communication and Feedback explain 36.2% of the variation in Alumni, as R Square is 0.362.

**Table 4** displays the results of the regression analysis Educational Institutes' Performance; Program Design, Communication, and Feedback on "Student Employment". The multiple regression analysis shows that there is a significant impact of Program Design on Student Employment, as p-value is 0.000. Similarly, Communication (p-value = 0.000) shows a significant impact on Student Employment, while Feedback (p-value = 0.640 > 0.05) has an insignificant impact on Student Employment. Moreover, the table shows that Program Design, Communication and Feedback explain 27.9% of the variation in Student Employment, as R Square is 0.279.

**Table 5** displays the results of the regression analysis Educational Institutes' Performance; Program Design, Communication, and Feedback on "Learning Efficiency". The multiple regression analysis shows that there is insignificant impact of Program Design on Student Efficiency, as p-value is 0.149. Similarly, Communication (p-value = 0.704) shows insignificant impact on Learning Efficiency, Similarly, Feedback (p-value = 0.153 > 0.05) has an insignificant impact on Learning Efficiency. Moreover, the table shows that Program Design, Communication and Feedback explain 0% of the variation in Student Employment, as R Square is 0.007.

**Table 1.** Validity and reliability tests for the research variables.

Variable	Item	AVE	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Program Design</b>	Item 1	62.842%	0.632	0.844
	Item 2		0.506	
	Item 3		0.584	
	Item 4		0.852	
	Item 5		0.567	
<b>Communication</b>	Item 1	58.831%	0.518	0.820
	Item 2		0.519	
	Item 3		0.732	
	Item 4		0.574	
	Item 5		0.598	
<b>Feedback</b>	Item 1	64.372%	0.643	0.814
	Item 2		0.601	
	Item 3		0.695	
	Item 4		0.636	
<b>Student Alumni</b>	Item 1	66.141%	0.663	0.742
	Item 2		0.575	
	Item 3		0.746	
<b>Student Employment</b>	Item 1	68.170%	0.677	0.766
	Item 2		0.627	
	Item 3		0.742	
<b>Student Efficiency</b>	Item 1	63.611%	0.585	0.713
	Item 2		0.640	
	Item 3		0.683	
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	Item 2		0.640	
	Item 3		0.683	



**Table 2.** Descriptive analysis of the research variables of educational institutes' performance.

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Frequency				
			1	2	3	4	5
Program Design	3.1161	0.88987	23	72	196	144	13
Communication	3.3371	0.91484	19	56	152	197	24
Feedback	3.0647	0.95903	25	91	1888	118	26
Alumni	3.1964	0.87305	10	76	207	126	29
Student Employment	3.1496	0.91101	20	74	196	135	23
Student Efficiency	2.8504	0.84475	23	124	203	93	5

**Table 3.** Regression analysis of independent variables on alumni.

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	p-value	R Square
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	1.091	0.139	7.866	0.000	
Program Design	0.262	0.050	5.204	0.000	0.362
Communication	0.165	0.049	3.403	0.001	
Feedback	0.241	0.045	5.347	0.000	

**Table 4.** Regression analysis of independent variables on student employment.

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	p-value	R Square
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	1.248	0.154	8.107	0.000	
Program Design	0.272	0.056	4.886	0.000	0.279
Communication	0.337	0.054	6.249	0.000	
Feedback	-0.023	0.050	-0.468	0.640	

**Table 5.** Regression analysis of independent variables on learning efficiency.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	p-value	R Square
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	2.891	0.167	17.264	0.000	
Program Design	0.088	0.061	1.445	0.149	0.007
Communication	-0.022	0.059	-0.381	0.704	
Feedback	-0.078	0.054	-1.433	0.153	

**Table 6** displays the results of the regression analysis of Educational Institutes' Performance; Program Design, Communication, and Feedback on "Alumni". The multiple regression analysis shows that there is a significant impact of Program Design on Alumni, as p-value is 0.000. Similarly, Communication (p-value = 0.000) shows a significant impact on Alumni, Similarly, Time (p-value = 0.000) shows a significant impact on Alumni. Moreover, the table shows that

Program Design, Communication and Feedback explain 50.8% of the variation in Alumni, as R Square is 0.508. Also, displays the results of the regression analysis of Educational Institutes' Performance; Program Design, Communication.

Also, displays the results of the regression analysis; Program Design, Communication, and Feedback on "Student Employment". The multiple regression analysis shows that there is a significant impact of Program Design on Student Employment, as p-value is 0.000. Similarly, Communication (p-value = 0.000) shows a significant impact on Student Employment, while Feedback (p-value = 0.637 > 0.05) has an insignificant impact on Student Employment.

Moreover, **Table 7** shows that Program Design, Communication and Feedback explain 39.8% of the variation in Student Employment, as R Square is 0.398. Also, it displays the results of the regression analysis; Program Design, Communication, and Feedback on "Student Efficiency". The multiple regression analysis shows that there is insignificant impact of Program Design on Student Efficiency, as p-value is 0.274. Similarly, Communication (p-value = 0.789) shows

**Table 6.** Research model SEM output.

		Estimate	p-Value
Program Design	Alumni	0.257	0.000
Program Design	Employment	0.271	0.000
Program Design	Learning Efficiency	0.074	0.274
Communication	Alumni	0.213	0.002
Communication	Student Employment	0.421	0.000
Communication	Learning Efficiency	-0.018	0.789
Feedback	Alumni	0.292	0.000
Feedback	Student Employment	-0.034	0.637
Feedback	Learning Efficiency	-0.063	0.338
Program Design	Alumni	0.257	0.000
Program Design	Employment	0.271	0.000
Program Design	Learning Efficiency	0.074	0.274
Communication	Alumni	0.213	0.002
Communication	Student Employment	0.421	0.000
Communication	Learning Efficiency	-0.018	0.789
Feedback	Alumni	0.292	0.000
Feedback	Student Employment	-0.034	0.637
Feedback	Learning Efficiency	-0.063	0.338

**Table 7.** SEM fit indices.

CMIN/DF	p-Value	GFI	CFI	REMSA
2.409	0.000	0.900	0.926	0.056

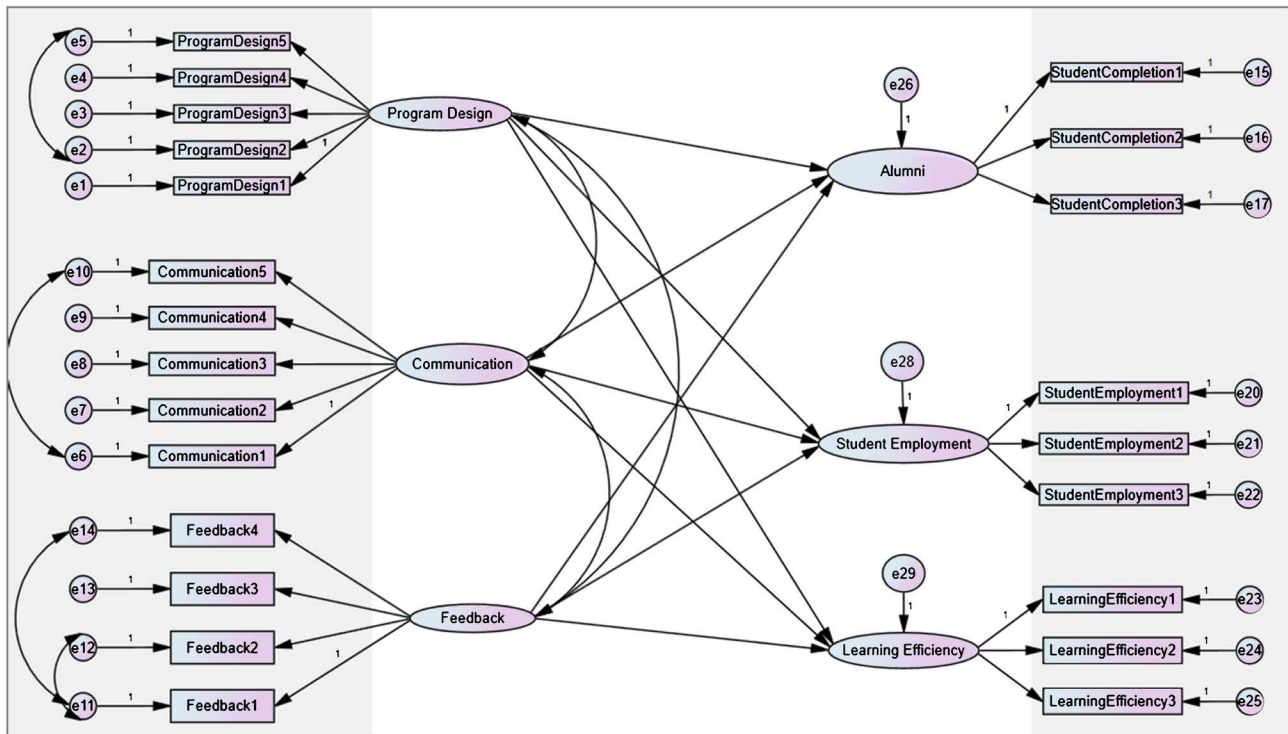


Figure 1. Research SEM model.

insignificant impact on Student Efficiency, Similarly, Feedback ( $p\text{-value} = 0.338 > 0.05$ ) has an insignificant impact on Student Efficiency. Moreover, the table shows that Program Design, Communication and Feedback explain 0% of the variation in Student Employment, as R Square is 0.007 (Figure 1).

The model fit indices;  $CMIN/DF = 2.409$ ,  $GFI = 0.900$ ,  $CFI = 0.926$ , and  $REMSA = 0.056$  are all within their acceptable levels.

## 5. Conclusions

The above results shed the light on the role of branding in the performance of the private universities. It could be concluded that there should be some enhancements regarding the programs provided for post graduates to be able to achieve the required level of learning efficiency. This result was observed as none of the branding dimensions affect the learning efficiency dimension.

Also, it could be observed that there is a significant role of branding in enhancing private universities performance level. This means that managers of private universities should focus on the program designs, as well as keeping on communicating with students and getting their feedback to improve program designs in turn and, in addition, increase students' completion and progression levels.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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