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Measuring Brand Image of North Iraq Higher Education Market: A Comparative Study of Public and Private Universities

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Almost all brands of products are still available and all companies are working to improve and protect their brand reputation. A brand is a sign that remains in the minds and hearts of consumers who create a certain sense of meaning and feeling about the product. For that reason, the brand is not just a logo, name, symbol, trademark or label attached to a product (Wijaya, 2013). Brands and branding are not new phenomena for academics and the business community. However, in the sixteenth century, the brands we have seen today began to take on a similar shape. Some of the oldest known brands were founded by British ceramic expert Josiah Wedgwood and French fashion designer Rose Bertin (Burk, 1996; de Paola, 1985). Since the 18th century England and France, there has been a great development of knowledge, processes and theories in the branding process. Modern branding theories have emerged in the mid-20th century, especially in terms of the development of mass media advertising (Farquhar, 1995). From the mid-1990s, the concept of branding has been recognized by many academics for institutions. Since that time, branding has not only been applied to products and services, but has also started to be used in different institutions (Balmer et al, 2010). In the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, products increasingly packaged, labeled, and promoted so that the identity of the source is added to the use of the product. The common use of growth and the term brand management has raised the idea that everything and everyone has a brand image. Within a short period of time (i.e. the last 55 years) the functions and thoughts related to branding have transformed into the image of property and reputation brand, symbolic values, fantasy and relationship partner (Bastos & Levy, 2012). It has been argued that a university brand should be created in such a way that it evokes associations, emotions and images these impressions differentiate the university from other competitors (Bulotaite, 2003). In other words, the brand of a university should be thought of as a demonstration of the features that meet the needs of the students. The university branding is an important issue because of the increase in the capacity of the students in universities. For this reason, the competition between the universities is increasing with the supply of places exceeding the demands (Szekeres, 2010). Brand image plays a significant role in the development of a brand since the brand image will combine the brand's reputation and its credibility to create a specific experience for testing and using a product or service for the consumer mass and will determine whether the consumer is a brand loyal or just an opportunist (Wijaya, 2013). Brand image is a type of picture

that contains collected information about a particular product that exists in the mind of the consumers. This information may be empirical, it may come from your friends, advertisements and packages so on (Patrik, 2007). Brand image is a multidimensional structure triggered by consumers' cognition, emotion, symbol, values and attitudes and it is an integral element of brand equity because it conveys the value of the brand to consumers (Malik et al, 2012). Kotler (2001) describes the image as the set of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person holds about an object. For this reason, while talking about the brand image, it concerns the mental representation of the brand based on individual consumer beliefs, ideas and impressions. As Aaker (1996) states that the brand image is called as a set of associations organized in a meaningful way and in the same context Keller (1993) calls it brand perceptions in consumer memory. Aaker (1996) points out that brand identity is a unique set of brand associations that brand strategist wants to create or maintain, while brand image is perceived by consumers as a brand. Its origin is in the mind of the consumers.

Purpose of the Study

This research is aimed at finding the importance of brand image for the persuasion of students in the selection of university for the higher education. The study is a deductive research where different concepts are taken to constitute the independent, effective and dependent construct leading to build a new concept. The present paper analyses the issues of brand image of universities and the formation sources of that image. The main objective was to clarify how different public or private university constructs their image. As we reach the year 2018, three things are clear that university branding is no longer a choice but a necessity, it no longer conceived as a function to be performed individually by the university, if done effectively, university branding can provide 'soft power'. University branding is relevant because some students rely heavily on university images to make their future decisions (Coulson, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

The brand image of the university is a dimension that has not got elevated by researchers yet. The main research problem observed in this study is "measuring the public university and private university as a brand for the selection of higher education by students, since brand image plays an important role in other sectors, so the education sector also needs to grow with other sectors exploring this dimension as brand image that can make the universities more powerful with recognition and strengthen the ability to serve more students". Further to make the process more

clear and to get the clear solution for the research problem formulated a set of questions are needed. The broader research problem is further broken down in a set of questions to get the solution for research problem. These questions are the investigating tool to find the answer that will lead to the solution of research problem. Questions formulated here are related to student's choice for education in university and the role of brand image "public or private" in the selection of the university. Identifying driving forces taking the universities for building brand image. The process and variables affect the brand image building process. Based on the extensive literature review and existing models of the study, it is observed that the brand image concept has been studied in different industry differently for different aspects. Different independent and effective variables have been considered for the brand image measurement for the business. This specific study views the research problem as "to draw the idea and conceptualize the new relationships among independent variable (personal factors and situational factors), effective variable (internal factors and external factors) and the dependent variable (brand image) to measure the role of independent and effective variables in the brand image building of universities".

Rationale for the Study

During the literature study, a number of factors studied by researchers have provided the rationale for the study. This study investigates the university's brand image with the aim of explaining the components of image and effects of image on students' university selection and also the study examines the relationships between the different components of the university image. The present paper analyses the issues of brand image of universities and the formation sources of that image. The main objective was to clarify how different public or private university constructs their image. The aim of this research is to investigate the branding phenomenon that has not been researched extensively in the university environment yet.

Significance of the Study

This study emphasizes the significance of one of the consideration factors (brand image) in the university choice and this study might be useful to the future study of higher education and be productive for student parents, students and university administrators as well as universities might benefit from the information gathered in this study. In terms of academic interest, the study has the potential to contribute to what is already known about the process of selecting a college or university. The characteristics of students' decisions to enter certain colleges or universities are not well understood (Puffet, 1983). The study may increase the knowledge about the factors

considered to be effective. As Beswick (1973) states that parental involvement in the selection process can vary from insignificant to important. The study can help the parents understand the process, the relevant factors and the contribution they make. Branding has been around for centuries as a means to distinguish the products or services of one company from those of another (Djakeli, 2012). University branding is about strategic marketing to promote a university's image, products, and attractiveness that are associated with certain qualities and characteristics for students and parents at home and abroad (Chickering & Havighurst, 1981). It was proved through research that consumers considered brands as an important factor in their purchase decision, even in the case of everyday products (Hampf & Limberg-Repo, 2011).

Research Questions

The development of the research question is the most important aspect of a research project. A research project can fail when targets and hypotheses are unfocused and underdeveloped. Questions formulated here are related to student's choice for education in university and the role of brand image "public or private" in the selection of the university.

This study is to answer the following research questions:

(1) How universities build their brand image?

(2) What are different variables build university brand image?

(3) How the brand image effects student's university selection?

(4) What are the different criteria students evaluate public and private universities?

(5) Do universities use brand image as a tool to increase demand?

Research Hypothesis

A research hypothesis is an expectation or prediction statement that will be tested by research.

Hypotheses of the study are:

Hypothesis 1: Personal factors affect brand image.

Hypothesis 2: Situational factors have effect on brand image.

Hypothesis 3: Personal factors effect on CRM.

Hypothesis 4: Personal factors affect internal marketing.

Hypothesis 5: Personal factors affect advertising.

Hypothesis 6: Personal factors affect social media.

Hypothesis 7: Situational factors affect CRM.

Hypothesis 8: Situational factors affect internal marketing.

Hypothesis 9: Situational factors affect advertising.

Hypothesis 10: Situational factors affect social media.

Hypothesis 11: CRM has the effect on brand image.

Hypothesis 12: Internal marketing has the effect on brand image.

Hypothesis 13: Advertising has the effect on brand image

Hypothesis 14: Social media has the effect on brand image.

Research Objectives

The study is based on specific research objective formulated to reach the research goals and formulated as:

• To know the importance of brand image for universities as public or private in selection of higher education by students.

• To know the brand image building process and effect of different variables on this.

• To get a comparative outcome between public and private universities in the sense of brand image.

Novelty

The study is a new of its kind where the study is concentrated on finding the importance of brand image in academic institutions. Though, different research by different authors has shown the importance of brand image in international context too. Here this research is new as it has deducted different dimensions from many other studies in different areas, mean having varied scope. As the conceptual model represented here shows having independent variables, dependent variables and the new way of testing of effect having effective variables are introduced here. Conceptually the concept can get justified differently and having new approach. At the same time scope too defined is new in all aspect. Statistically as well it is defined with an innovative way. To distinguish a university that needs to be branded from other universities, the brand activities that are now being explored to talk about the importance of brand activities that are increasingly significant in the higher education sector should be assessed and measured. Marketing professionals talk about the challenges of branding activities in higher education sector but they do not necessarily have a consistent view of the objectives of branding activities. So, they suggested some measures of branding activities particularly in universities to differentiate their organizations in order to attract the attention of stakeholders and in line with the current educational trends. Shehzad et al. (2014) state that brand image or brand name has significant positive relationship with consumer buying

behavior and also they show that students are brand conscious and prefer branded product. According to Azizi, Elezi and Mazreku (2013), it is showed the existing differences between public and private universities in terms of improvement of quality in higher education market.

Theoretical Framework

Earlier studies on university brand image have not examined the effects of university brand image on students' university selection process. So, this thesis contributes to the existing theory by taking into account the specific variables that have not been examined before in a conceptual model**.** Maxwell (2005) states that conceptual or theoretical framework should serve two purposes: It demonstrates how your research has already been known (relational theory and research with existing ones) and it also shows how your research contributes to the field (intellectual targets). The study in this research is based on different concepts examined earlier and is trying to find out what other dimensions the researchers cannot see. As the conceptual model represented here shows having independent variables, dependent variables and the new way of testing of effect having effective variables are introduced here. Conceptually the concept can get justified differently and have a new approach. This study conceptualizes new associations between independent variables (personal factors and situational factors), effective variables (internal factors and external factors), and dependent variable (brand image) to measure the role of independent and effective variables in the university's brand image formation process.

Theoretical and Practical Value of the Study

The academic system is developing all around the world and academic knowledge has been a criterion for judgment of social development. There are two types of institutions providing the academic learning one is Public and the other is Private. Though all the academic institutions getting controlled by government bodies and follows international standards too. When a student needs to get admission for higher education in a university, there are many points come in picture that affects the student's selection of a particular university. The research that will be conducted in this study is aiming at finding the importance of brand image for universities in Kurdistan. Public university and private university vary too much with each other on many aspects. It is very important for universities to be aware about their brand image in eyes of their stake holders. The outcome of this research can be of a great help for universities showing their reality. The final analysis and conclusion of this research will justify the gap lying with universities. Private or public universities are in the world of the competition that is the case today so to increase their

share in the market, become more competitive, be constant, and differentiate their organization they should offer the market new projects and new activities about branding.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are three common research approaches, quantitative method, qualitative method and mixed method. Quantitative research is the process of collecting, analyzing, interpreting and writing the results of a work. Qualitative research, unlike traditional quantitative approaches, is an approach to data collection, analysis and reporting (Creswell, 2009). This thesis presents an explorative research using collected survey data at six universities in Kurdistan (in Northern Iraq) compared the criteria used by public and private university students, especially the university brand image, when choosing the universities they apply. This study examines the brand image of the university in order to explain the components of the image and the effects of the image on the university selection of the students, and also examines the relationship between the different components of the university image and how the university image can influence students' satisfaction. The main purpose was to clarify how the image of different public or private universities was created. The importance of university selection criteria varies among participants for public and private institutions. Private university students seem to be evaluating reputation, selectivity, personal interaction, facilities and cost, whereas public universities provide support for students, programs, athletics, reputation, cost, accommodation and settlement, but different interpretations of inventions are common opinions (Joseph, Mullen & Spake, 2012). The study is descriptive in nature and for this purpose both the sources of data get used such as primary source of data and secondary source of data. Firstly the secondary data was used as literature review to understand the existing theories in Northern Iraq and around the globe. The purpose was solved by the visit of different online libraries, published articles available with different online databases and the printed published journals, magazines, newspapers and books. Stratified sampling method of probability sampling used to select the respondent from the whole population, a stratum selected based on cluster of students, out of which respondents selected randomly. The different stages of data collection have divided into two main phases in the field. The first phase aimed at collecting qualitative data (secondary information) and the second phase aimed at collecting quantitative data (survey). Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected. A self-prepared structured survey questionnaire about demography and all the specified variables in the model tested for credibility. In the questionnaire different scales of measurement were used such as nominal, ordinal, interval,

and ratio scales. For collecting interval scale data, a five-point Likert scale from 1 to 5 was used, where "1" accounted for the minimum possible value and "5" for the maximum possible value. Qualitative data interpreted and descriptively presented while quantitative data analyzed using statistical multivariate data analysis techniques, such as Factor analysis, T-test, ANOVA, and regressions. All these quantitative methods were used keeping in mind the research objectives. SPSS software package was used to analyze the data.

Type of Research

The study is descriptive for this purpose both the data sources the primary data source and the secondary data source was used. First, the secondary data was used as a literature review to understand the current theories in northern Iraq and the world. The aim was solved by visiting different online libraries, articles published with different online databases, and printed publications, magazines, newspapers and books. Most of the data collected from the secondary source was filtered and used for reference in the final thesis. Second, primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The stratified sampling method of the probability sampling was used to select the respondent; a stratum selected based on cluster of the students randomly from the participants.

Exploratory Research

The main purpose of the exploratory research is to determine the boundaries of the environments in which the problems, opportunities or situations exist and to identify the important factors or variables that may exist in the research (Van Wyk, 2012). If a new field is searched or little is known about the field of interest, exploratory studies are carried out. It is used to investigate the exact nature of the event and other factors related to it (Polit et al., 2001). The exploratory research design is a research that collects secondary or primary data and interprets them in an unstructured way. Some exploratory research methods include "focus group interviews, in-depth interviews, and sample pilot studies" (Hair, 2006). As van Wyk (2012) states that exploratory research is the most useful (and appropriate) research design for projects that address ambiguity, uncertainty, and ignorance about the topic and when the problem is not well understood (i.e. little research is done on the subject matter).

Descriptive Research

The descriptive research method is more structured and tries to find answers to specific market behaviors. The researcher wants to know the properties of the identifiers. This research method

can be used to find information about almost anything in the business environment; competitors, market trends, and environmental issues. Such research uses scientific methods to collect data. Descriptive research presents (or includes) the factors or variables that are related to the research question in an accurate and valid way (van Wyk, 2012). This kind of research is more structured than exploratory research. The descriptive research approach is a basic research method that examines the situation as it exists. Descriptive research involves predicting the qualities of a given phenomenon on an observational basis or investigating the correlation between two or more phenomena (Polit et al., 2001). Descriptive research is designed to provide a picture of the nature of a situation. It can be used to justify the current practice and to judge and develop the theories (Burns & Grove, 2010).

Sources of Data

The research was conducted in three public and three private universities in Kurdistan, and participants were students from existing universities. For the purpose of this study, two sources of data have been used very efficiently named as primary source and secondary source. Though the primary source is more important for the justification of the concept but secondary source is the base for concept building.

Primary Source: The primary data means raw data that cannot be interpreted yet and can be obtained through a questionnaire or in-depth interview (Hair, 2006). It is collected specifically to solve the problem by a decision maker, a marketing company, a university or an extension researcher, etc. Unlike the secondary data, the primary data cannot be found elsewhere. Primary data may be collected via questionnaires, focus groups or in-depth interviews or through experiments such as taste tests (Curtis, 2008).

By selecting a sample from a population, the accuracy of the data collection will be more efficient than if a whole population is considered, as that would be extremely time- consuming. A sample is selected to exemplify the population for the given geographical area. There are mainly two kinds of approaches of sampling used in business studies: probability approach and non-probability (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Probability approach is a sample chosen randomly, where each person in the population has the equivalent opportunity of being chosen. There are four types of probability samples are simple random sample, systematic sample, stratified random sampling and multi-stage cluster samplings. Non-probability sampling is not chosen randomly, therefore, the population has not been represented and it is not possible to carry out a legitimate inference about the population.

Sampling methods includes convenience sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In this thesis, the sample was picked randomly by asking students in different public and private universities in Kurdistan to answer the questionnaire. Therefore a simple random sampling method was used, in order to give the individuals of the population equal chance of being chosen for the survey.

Secondary Source: Secondary data which was collected by others previously for other or similar research objectives. The secondary data means that it has already been interpreted, and its sources are, for example, libraries, the internet and data already collected in a company or magazine (Hair, 2006). It is the information previously collected and generally published or electronic and it is often collected, analyzed and organized by taking into account a specific purpose, so there may be limited applications to specific market research (Curtis, 2008). However, some of the advantages of using secondary data for market research include cost and time savings. The data issued by government agencies is available and may be free and require permission for the use of data collected and analyzed by private companies (Curtis, 2008).The latter is less time and cost consuming, though the data may not be applicable, based on the sample and its objective (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Quantitative cross-sectional studies are based on surveys (Ringdal & Lossius, 2009), and thus the process of collecting data will be cost and time saving as they can be conducted through the Internet, telephones, postal, face-to-face and similar self-administered questionnaires (Schiffman et al., 2008). In this thesis, the questionnaire was self-administered and handed out to a random sample of respondents to get a representative sample of the population, which gives a minimum of interviewer bias, while permitting the interviewers assessments and provide necessary explanations.

Sampling Plan

A sampling plan is a method or procedure that specifies how to retrieve an instance from a population (Terstriep, 1986). Stratified sampling method of probability sampling was used to select the respondent from six universities students, three clusters of students from three public universities and three clusters of students from three private universities chosen for the study, out of which respondents were selected randomly. It helped to draw inferences about specific subgroups. Sampling Methods can be classified into one of two categories: Probability Sampling: Sample has a known probability of being selected. Non-probability Sampling: Sample does not

know probability of being selected as in convenience or voluntary response surveys (Best & Kahn, 2016).

Sampling Structure

Sampling provides the means to obtain information about the population without having to examine the entire population (Creswell, 2002). Stratified sampling method of probability sampling was used to select the respondent from the whole population, a stratum was selected based on the cluster of students, out of which respondents were selected randomly. It helps to draw inferences about specific subgroups. The number of samples will be five times the variables observed during the literature review and questionnaire preparation (Krosnick, 1999). The different stages of data collection have divided into two main phases in the field. The first phase was aimed at collecting qualitative data (secondary information). The second phase is aimed at collecting quantitative data (survey). Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected. The information provides essential input for designing a survey for collecting quantitative data. Furthermore, qualitative information becomes very useful for interpreting quantitative results and complementing them while qualitative data is interpreted and descriptively presented. Maintaining permanent plot data with different sampling designs over an extended period of time in an organization and sharing this information among organizations requires the use of common standards (Byrne & Stage, 1988). Sampling can provide a valid, defensible methodology, but it is important that the required sample path matches the required analytical method (Creswell, 2002).

Sample Frame

One of the most important aspects of sampling design in surveys is the framework. Sampling frame is the set of source materials from which the sample is selected. The sampling frame is to provide a means to select specific members of the target population to be interviewed in the survey (Turner, 2003).

Further the formula adopted is: As stated on www.qualtrics.com/blog/determining-sample-size/

Necessary Sample Size = (Z-score) 2 * StdDev*(1-StdDev) / (margin of error) 2.

The confidence level corresponds to a Z-score. This is a constant value needed for this equation. Here are the Z-scores for the most common confidence levels: 90% – Z score = 1.645,   95% – Z score = 1.96,   99% – Z score = 2.576. Confidence level: 95%, Standard deviation: .5 and a margin of error (confidence interval) of +/- 5% are assumed respectively.

Again another way stated by www.qualtrics.com/blog/determining-sample-size/

Necessary Sample Size = (Z-score) 2 * StdDev*(1-StdDev) / (margin of error) 2.

 ((1.96)2 x .5(.5)) / (.05)2 = (3.8416 x .25) / .0025 = .9604 / .0025 = 384.16

So the necessary sample size should be 385 for this study.

According to necessary sample size equation above the minimum sample size must be 385 for public universities and 385 for private universities, but in this study the sample size considered as 481 for private universities and the sample size considered as 481 for public universities were used based on Cohen (1988)'s table for effective sample size. Though it was more difficult work, more students' thoughts were wanted to be in this study.

The sample size was neither based on the total population nor selected randomly; it is considered that the sample has been highly representative of the population. The usage of power analysis was accepted in behavioral sciences for effective sample size selection for multiple regression analysis (Cohen, 1988). Any statistical test was based on the assumption that it was the probability of getting significant result. We were taking the F distribution with the assumption that the variance of the proportion in dependent variable is zero. So, the recommended values of f2 in power analysis had been presented as small (0.02), medium (0.15), and large (0.35) size effects available in power of F test tables (Cohen, 1988). According to Cohen (1992), the effect size (sample size) was the further development of Cohen (1988) and provides the table for effective sample size depending upon the statistical technique applied on data.

Sampling Technique

The original list of contacts selected was based on secondary information (internet search) and recommended by the Ministry of Higher Education of Kurdistan Region. Afterward, people interviewed recommended other institutions and organizations that became the part of this study, including participant and non-participant in the education system. A self-prepared questionnaire was used for the collection of information from respondents. Each discussion was based on the objective to gather maximum information possible continued for long hours as per respondent interest. Next, the survey conducted for university students was based on stratified sampling taken into consideration the public university and the private university.

Sample Selection

In any research conducted, people, places, and things are examined. The opportunity for these people to examine the whole population of places and things is an effort that the majority of researchers do not have the time and/or money to undertake. The idea of collecting data from a

population is a matter that has been successfully used over the years and is called a census (Latham, 2007). In this thesis, the sample was randomly selected by asking students in different public and private universities in Kurdistan in Northern Iraq to respond to the questionnaire. Therefore, a simple random sampling method is used to give people the chance to be selected for the survey.

Methods of Data Collection

In this study, quantitative and qualitative research has been done to quantifying data and creating meaning through objectivity. Quantitative research using empirical methods (Cohen & Manion, 1980) is a type of research in which numerical data is collected and statistical analysis is performed to identify and explain the phenomena (Cresswell, 1994). The main outcome of the study is based on the primary data collected using a self-prepared questionnaire using the survey method. Secondary data collected from extensive literature review from many resources. The base for the concept was deducted from the literature published by the leading authorities in the area. All dimensions of the study framed based on the exploration of literature from the area broadly. The next step was taken to collect the primary data. The primary data collected from two specific categories public universities and private universities. Furthermore the three universities were chosen for both categories. The first phase of the survey conducted in one public university and one private university to check the reliability of the instrument. The second phase again continued with two universities in both categories. The data collection is the most challenging task in this study as the population is at the nascent stage of academic learning and development, so making the respondent understand and believe that the study is only for the academic purpose and this research can help the academic institutions to be better in all aspect Data collection performed with the help of academic staffs and assistants of the academic institutions. The survey questionnaire is prepared in three languages as English, Arabic and Kurdish for the clear understanding of the items presented in the survey questionnaire. The questionnaire distributed to the respondents based on their preference of the language to response. Most of the students chose the Kurdish version where some of them chose English and Arabic version too. Sufficient time provided to respondents for filling up the survey questionnaire. The filled up survey questionnaire checked thoroughly and asked to fill up completely, then taken back and transferred to the excel sheet for further analysis.

Secondary Data Collection

The practice of using existing data for research is increasingly widespread at a time when a lot of researchers from around the world are collecting and archiving a lot of data (Johnston, 2017).

Secondary data analysis is the analysis of data collected by someone else for another primary purpose. This provides a viable option for researchers who may have limited time and resources to use existing data (Johnston, 2017). Secondary data was used to understand the current theories in northern Iraq and the world. The goal is solved with visits to different online libraries, published articles with different online databases, and printed publications, magazines, newspapers and books. Most of the data collected from the secondary source was filtered and used for reference in the final thesis. Secondary information forms the basis of the research. Most of the existing literature and theories have been united and clarified for understanding the thought.

Primary Data Collection

The primary data are collected in aggregate, using methods such as data, interviews and surveys. There are many methods of collecting primary data (observed or collected directly from first-hand experience) (Berman et al., 2006). It is the data collected for the first time and always given as raw material and original character. Such data require the application of statistical methods for analysis and interpretation (Saunders, 2011). Primary data was collected using structured survey questionnaire. The main conclusion of the research will get drawn on the basis of data collected from primary sources by survey on the basis of one type of questionnaire done over the respondents. The stratified sampling method of the probability sampling was used to select the participant from the whole population, and a stratum was selected based on the student group (cluster) in which the participants were randomly selected.

Instrument of Data Collection

Survey, interview, observation and reading are the tools of data collection. Essentially the researcher should be sure that the selected instrument is valid and reliable. The validity and reliability of any research project depends heavily on the suitability of the instruments (Annum, 2015). The main outcome of the study is based on the primary data collected using a self-prepared questionnaire using the survey method. Secondary data collected from extensive literature review from many resources. The base for the concept deducted from the literature published by the leading authorities in the area. All dimensions of the study framed based on the exploration of literature from the area broadly. The primary data was collected at the next stage. The primary data was collected in two specific categories, public universities, and private universities. Furthermore, the three universities were chosen for both categories. The first phase of the survey was conducted in one public university and one private university to check the reliability of the instrument. The

second phase again continued with two-two universities in both categories. The data collection is the most challenging task in this study as the population is at the nascent stage of academic learning and development, so making the respondent understands and believes that the study is only for the academic purpose and this research can help the academic institutions to be better in all aspect. Data collection performed with the help of academic staffs and assistants of the academic institutions. The survey questionnaire is prepared in three languages as English, Arabic and Kurdish for the clear understanding of the items presented in the survey questionnaire. The questionnaire distributed to the respondents based on their preference of the language to response. Most of the students chose the Kurdish version whereas some of them chose the English and Arabic version too. Sufficient time provided to respondents for filling in the survey questionnaire. The filled up survey questionnaire checked thoroughly and asked to fill up completely, then taken back and transferred to the excel sheet for further analysis. The survey conducted using a self-prepared instrument having seven variables (Personal Factors, Situational Factors, CRM (Internal Factor), Internal Marketing (Internal Factor), Advertising (External Factor), Social Media (External Factor), and Brand Image) to measure related to concept and seven variables related to demographic information (Gender, Age, Marital Status, Education, Family income, Profession, and University type) search.

Quantitative Tools and Techniques Used

Descriptive statistics were calculated after the reliability of the constructions was measured by Cronbach's alpha test. Descriptive statistics performed for this thesis included Factor analysis, T-test, Anova and Regressions. One way to measure reliability is to perform the Cronbach's alpha test (Bland & Altman, 1997).

Factor Analysis for Public University

KMO and Bartlett's Test for Public University

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.829
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	40161.014
	Df	4095
	Sig.	.000

Factor Analysis for Private University

KMO and Bartlett's Test for Private University

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.714
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	41187.088
	Df	4095
	Sig.	.000

The tables above show that the values of KMO and Bartlett's Test. KMO values are more than 0.5 so for public and private universities they are reliable and for Bartlett's Test, P values that are 0.000 (P<0.001) so for public and private universities are statistically significant. The findings are in favor of the next level of study. Thus, the study was accepted for further analysis.

Reliability TEST for Public Universities and Private Universities

Reliability for Public Universities

Dimensions	Number of items	Sample	Cronbach's Alpha
Public University Personal Factor (PUUPF)	9	481	0.851
Public University Situational Factor (PUUSF)	12	481	0.733
Public University CRM Internal Factor (PUUIFCRM)	12	481	0.794
Public University Internal Marketing Internal Factor (PUUIFIM)	12	481	0.806
Public University Advertising External Factor (PUUEFA)	12	481	0.876
Public University Social Media External Factor (PUUEFSM)	12	481	0.820
Public University Brand Image (PUUBI)	22	481	0.919

	91	481	0.961
ALL	91	481	0.961

Reliability for Private Universities

Dimensions	Number of items	Sample	Cronbach's Alpha
Private University Personal Factor (PRUPF)	9	481	0.605
Private University Situational Factor (PRUSF)	12	481	0.734
Private University CRM Internal Factor (PRUIFCRM)	12	481	0.688
Private University Internal Marketing Internal Factor (PRUIFIM)	12	481	0.786
Private University Advertising External Factor (PRUEFA)	12	481	0.729
Private University Social Media External Factor (PRUEFSM)	12	481	0.728
Private University Brand Image (PRUBI)	22	481	0.824
ALL	91	481	0.860

The tables above show that the values of Cronbach's alpha for each factor. All the factors for public and private universities are reliable since their values of Cronbach's alpha are higher than 0.70.

FINDINGS

This part of the research has the extensive discussion on the research findings and the outcome of the study. The study is an exploratory research and the concept building was done based on literature review as explained in earlier chapters. Data was collected as the opinion of respondents specifically students who participated in this research and shared their opinion on different items prepared for the study. The findings of the T-test for the public university and private university with the test value 4 almost all dimensions are showing highly significant result, so all dimensions have been taken into a consideration for the study and were used to move to the next level in the study. For the One way ANOVA testing for the public university and the private university as well we can consider most of the items and dimensions with university name are significant and can get used for further study. The findings are in favor of the next level of study. Furthermore, the analysis of regression was done to check the relationship and cause-effect of relationship in

between independent variable and dependent variable. For the public university, all relationships are showing a better and significant result so accepted in the study for analysis as findings. The regression analysis for private university also shows significant outcome with most of the variables except a few like private university social factors with private university external factor advertising, private university social factors with private university external factor social media and private university internal factor customer relationship management and private university brand image not having a significant result.

Review of Findings with Objectives

The research is based on the pre-defined research objectives stated in the introduction. The complete research is following the objectives and has been completed by analyzing the data to reach objectives. Research objectives set for this study are formulated as to know the importance of brand image for universities as public or private in selection of higher education by students, to know the brand image building process and effect of different variables on this, and to get a comparative outcome between public and private universities in the sense of brand image. For this specific purpose Factor analysis, T-test, ANOVA and regression techniques of statistics applied to data collected using the structured survey questionnaire.

The T- test result applied to test all dimensions acceptability and the value of brand image for both types of universities categorically, public university and private university. The first objective stated as to know the importance of brand image for universities as public or private in selection of higher education by students has come up with the positive outcome for public universities, the regression analysis has well explained and justified it with having very significant result of hypothesis tested using regression analysis meaning the brand image is one of the very important factors in choosing the university for higher education in the case of public universities. Furthermore, the fulfillment of the same objective for private university shows that the private university is selection for higher education has the importance of brand image but not always the same. For example, the result of the test of regression of customer relationship management with the brand image is insignificant, so this is not getting considered in the selection of the private university, reason may be in the beginning students are not knowing and do not understand the value of customer relationship management in higher education in private universities.

The second objective was observed as to know the brand image building process and effect of different variables on this get justified very well with the regression analysis with fourteen

hypotheses with both types of universities taking in two different sets. The ANOVA has well represented the brand image building process for public universities and private universities and at the same phase the regression test has measured the effect of all variables considered for brand image building process. In the case of the public university all variables are showing significant result and accepted well but in the case of the private university, all variables are accepted except three ones; private university social factors with private university external factor advertising, private university social factors with private university external factor social media and private university internal factor customer relationship management and private university brand image having insignificant results.

The third objective was formulated to get a comparative outcome between public and private universities in the sense of brand image also have got checked and it shows by the regression analysis only one variable is differing in the case of significant acceptance i.e. customer relationship management. It is being important for public universities but not for private universities.

Hypotheses Test Results

There are 14 hypotheses formulated to test the effect on brand image and more importantly the measurement of success of brand image building process. The same applied for the both public university and private university. Below is the presentation of outcome and the explanation for all hypotheses.

For Public University

Hypothesis 1: Personal factors affect brand image.

 - The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.508. This shows that there is a very high effect of personal factors affect brand image.

Hypothesis 2: Situational factors have effect on brand image.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.614. This shows that there is a very high effect of situational factors affect brand image.

Hypothesis 3: Personal factors have effect on CRM.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.576. This shows that there is a very high effect of personal factors effect on CRM.

Hypothesis 4: Personal factors affect internal marketing.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.391. This shows that there is a very high effect of personal factors effect on internal marketing.

Hypothesis 5: Personal factors affect advertising.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.280. This shows that there is a very high effect of personal factors effect on advertising.

Hypothesis 6: Personal factors affect social media.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.487. This shows that there is a very high effect of personal factors effect on social media.

Hypothesis 7: Situational factors affect CRM.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.576. This shows that there is a very high effect of situational factors effect on CRM.

Hypothesis 8: Situational factors affect internal marketing.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.391. This shows that there is a very high effect of situational factors effect on internal marketing.

Hypothesis 9: Situational factors affect advertising.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.524. This shows that there is a very high effect of situational factors effect on advertising.

Hypothesis 10: Situational factors affect social media.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.531. This shows that there is a very high effect of situational factors effect on social media.

Hypothesis 11: CRM has the effect on brand image.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.693. This shows that there is a very high effect of CRM effect on brand image.

Hypothesis 12: Internal marketing has the effect on brand image.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.627. This shows that there is a very high effect of internal marketing effect on brand image.

Hypothesis 13: Advertising has the effect on brand image.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.664. This shows that there is a very high effect of advertising effect on brand image.

Hypothesis 14: Social media has the effect on brand image.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.735. This shows that there is a very high effect of social media effect on brand image.

For Private University

Hypothesis 1: Personal factors affect brand image.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.112. This shows that there is an effect of personal factors affect brand image.

Hypothesis 2: Situational factors have effect on brand image.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.159. This shows that there is an effect of situational factors affect brand image.

Hypothesis 3: Personal factors effect on CRM.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.090. This shows that there is a very less effect of personal factors effect on CRM.

Hypothesis 4: Personal factors affect internal marketing.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.118. This shows that there is a very low effect of personal factors effect on internal marketing.

Hypothesis 5: Personal factors affect advertising.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.109. This shows that there is a very low effect of personal factors effect on advertising.

Hypothesis 6: Personal factors affect social media.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.136. This shows that there is a low effect of personal factors effect on social media.

Hypothesis 7: Situational factors affect CRM.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.182. This shows that there is a very low effect of situational factors effect on CRM.

Hypothesis 8: Situational factors affect internal marketing.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.093. This shows that there is a very low effect of situational factors effect on internal marketing.

Hypothesis 9: Situational factors affect advertising.

-The hypothesis cannot get accepted conceptually having the highly insignificant outcome with the Beta value of -0.004. This shows that there is a negative effect of situational factors effect on advertising.

Hypothesis 10: Situational factors affect social media.

- The hypothesis cannot get accepted conceptually having the highly insignificant outcome with the Beta value of 0.049. This shows that there is a very less effect of situational factors effect on social media.

Hypothesis 11: CRM has the effect on brand image.

- The hypothesis cannot get accepted conceptually having the highly insignificant outcome with the Beta value of -0.004. This shows that there is a negative effect of CRM effect on brand image.

Hypothesis 12: Internal marketing has the effect on brand image.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.168. This shows that there is a very high effect of internal marketing effect on brand image.

Hypothesis 13: Advertising has the effect on brand image.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.095. This shows that there is a very low effect of advertising effect on brand image.

Hypothesis 14: Social media has the effect on brand image.

- The hypothesis got accepted conceptually having the highly significant outcome with the Beta value of 0.263. This shows that there is a high effect of social media effect on brand image.

Limitations of the Research

The Limitation phenomenon is a general acceptance of almost all researchers. Potential limitations of this thesis are discussed here:

The research conducted here has passed through many challenges through the strong execution plan made it efficient in to reach the specified objectives. The research process driven is the part of research plan, where it is well explained and carried with systematic approach. As the extensive literature review created the platform for literature review. The literature review was challenging

as was planned to incorporate the literature development in the area of brand image measurement and the study related to the university education which can show the roadmap for the development of research in the process. It could do in a comparative better way as planned because many good kinds of literature were present as the open access as well many got accessed from different databases. The access to literature was a little time consuming as the right selection of literature is one of the important aspects of research that must be in the consideration. The arrangement of literature as per the chapters and specific areas become the another challenge as to keep the flow of discussion. Based on the literature review dimensions that explored to measure challenges and the research instrument got prepared.

The research instrument implementation selecting the right set of respondents has been another challenge. The sample size decision is one part of the study in sampling technique, which is theoretical.

Another part is the research is the selection of samples the right respondents' selection that can have the understanding of the instrument items and be generous in giving the responses. When it comes to the decision about implementation of survey instrument was much challenging as students are not finding the interest after their hectic classes to participate in such study. As we know Kurdistan region is in the process of development and the population is not much exposed to such extensive academic activities. Respondents understanding on the questionnaire and the patience to fulfill questions asked in the survey become the most challenging and took much of the time of complete research.

The real limitation of the research felt in the access of respondents as universities don't feel comfortable to share their information easily and public universities are not willing to share the data feeling may get exposed and will have the negative impact on their system. The data collection and transfer of data in Microsoft excel file was not a big deal but a tiresome task consumed more energy and time to finish it. The usage of SPSS for data analysis was planned from the very beginning so it is now the transferring and defining the data in SPSS that kept busy for a long time as the data definition and putting it in SPSS is quite technical part, not the part of the concept rather the part of statistical understanding. Learning and implementation of SPSS were somehow challenging but the conceptual clarity and understanding of statistics made it easier. Finally data analysis and interpretation of the outcome of SPSS on selected dimensions become more time consuming. But slowly the patience work and continuous development of the research make it

easy to finish though there has been a long time lapse. Finally with all the planning and understanding the study moved to the next level where all chapters got planned and put into sequential order by overcoming of the limitation of understanding of the concept, the organization of the thesis and the presentation of information collected and analyzed**.**

Recommendations for Further Research

The study further can get moved with many other scopes that can lead to making the university brand image process more efficient. As the conceptual model has tested the existing relationships among explored dimensions and has been tested it empirically. This study can get conducted in the broader aspect including the schools' education in KRG. The same way the study can get conducted in other countries too to know the importance of brand image and the brand image implementation process. This study can incorporate some other variables based on the literature that can be a moderator to have the more impact on the university brand image. The study could be a road map for the successful implementation of the academic system for KRG and for more efficient public and private university that could provide more satisfaction. It will help universities and KRG governments to reduce the migration of students who move for a better brand image that can contribute to social and economic contributions.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the university's brand image with the aim of explaining the components of image and effects of image on students' university selection and also the study examines the relationships between the different components of the university image. The study measures the effectiveness of universities stake holders' personal factors as well as situational ones in brand image building of an academic institution through a conceptual model. The main objective was to clarify how different public or private university constructs their image. This research is aimed at finding the importance of brand image for the persuasion of students in the selection of university for the higher education. The research was conducted taking into consideration the importance of university brand image. The study continued for more than two years where the conceptual map building done with extensive literature review and was used with citation and references in the literature review the conceptual review. Based on the literature review conceptual model developed taking all important variables needed to incorporate in the study. The survey questionnaire prepared incorporating all variables and has enlisted all items valid to measure variables with the empirical data. The instrument was translated into local languages (Kurdish and

Arabic) for the better understanding of the respondents about the asked items. Data collection implemented on many phases with different public universities and private universities with a systematic approach to data collection with specified samples. Lastly data collected transferred to SPSS statistical package. A well-structured frequency test, Factor analysis, T-test, ANOVA and regression analysis performed based on the data collected and explained in data analysis and interpretation part. Further, it got tested for the formulated hypothesis and incorporated with matching the objectives formulated. All hypotheses tested for both types of universities public and private get explained well to reach the underpinning variables affecting the university brand image. The study concludes here that it has the extensive information on the variable effect on the brand image of university; the independent variable (personal factors and situational factors), effective variable (internal factors: CRM and internal marketing and external factors: (advertising and social media) and the dependent variable (brand image) have been tested with regression model which is presented in analysis.

After doing all the necessary tests to find the effects of the different variables, here it has the evidence that the university brand image is affected by all the aforesaid variables in the case of public university but in the case of private university it was found that not all the effects are significant for private universities such as private university social factor with private university external factor advertising and private university social factor with private university social factor with private university external factor social media are showing insignificant result may be the reason is not explored in quantitative test but the qualitative exploration of the situation in the reason shows that the university education is the government control system rather than being free selection of university. Here is the case student choice is not measure factor for selection because it is determined by Ministry of higher education so the student knows that they cannot switch over from private to the public university since as per the guidelines of the Ministry of higher education of Kurdistan. Public universities are assumed to have upper ranking than private universities, therefore, the student knows these advertising and social media cannot change their university choice and they are bound to be the same university as well private university internal factor CRM with private university brand image is showing insignificant result may be in the beginning students are not knowing and do not understand the value of customer relationship management in higher education in private universities.

If the university works on weak points, it is more likely to satisfy existing students and attract more candidate students.

List of publications related to this Dissertation.

1-Sahin, O. (2014). An investigation of student satisfaction factors. *Journal of Research in Business and Management*, 2 (6), 8-12

2-Sahin, O. & Singh, U.S. (2017). A Literary Excavation of University Brand Image Past to Present. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 3(3), 174-187.

3- Sahin, O. & Singh, U.S. (2017). Measuring the University Competence Comparatively For Nurturing Future Leaders. *Scholars Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 4 (10), 669-680.

4- Sahin, O. & Singh, U.S. (2017). Leadership Practices Effect on University Brand Image: A Study on ISHIK University. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences,* 5 (9C), 1284-1295.

5- Sahin, O. & Singh, U.S. (2017). Measuring the Effectiveness of Sales Promotion Activities on Brand Loyalty: A Study on COCA COLA. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies,* 3(3), 159-173.

6- Sahin, O. & Singh, U.S. (2015). Value of CRM and its Benefits to the Cellular Operations. *International Journal Management Res. and Business Strategy*, 4 (3), 276-288.

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8- Sahin, O. & Singh, U.S. (2015). Modern human resource practices and industrial relations. *Journal of resources development and management*, 13, 106-119.

9- Sahin, O. & Singh, U.S. (2015). Issues with the success of micro finance. International *Journal Management and Business Strategy*, 4 (4), 146-157.

10-Sahin, O. (2014).The role of information technology on hospitality management. 9th Silk Road International Conference on Business, Economics. P.

11- Sahin, O. & Singh, U.S. (2017). A Concept Building Approach to Measure University's Brand Image. *Journal of Business*, 6(1), 47-54.

12- Sahin, O. & Singh. U.S. (2018). Measuring the Brand Image Association with Personal and Social Factors for Private Universities. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences,* 6(5), 1028-1040.