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Branding Strategies of Private International Schools in India

Balasubramanian Varadarajan
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Balasubramanian Varadarajan

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Review Committee
Dr. Timothy Malone, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Julie Ducharme, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Peter Anthony, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2016

Abstract

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Private international schools in India are considered by many to be a *quality brand.* They have grown rapidly leading to competition among schools for student enrollments. The purpose of this case study was to explore the branding strategies used by leaders of Indian private international schools. The study population consisted of private international school leaders in India as well as the faculty and parents from the study site. The double vortex brand model served as the conceptual framework for the study. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 5 school leaders, 5 faculty, and 5 parents from an international school in Chennai. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. Secondary data was collected from school website and school policy manual. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The major themes that emerged related to vision, mission, values, culture of the school, and the school's functional capabilities. Study findings suggest international schools in India adopt branding strategies based on core values to inspire, motivate, and educate employees to implement internal branding and communicate their school's brand story using social media tools. School administrators looking to enhance their school brand may find social benefits through improved sustainability, resource availability, and a more harmonious relationship between school leaders and parents. Social implications include better educational outcomes for students who then become better prepared to continue their academic pursuits after high school. The study may be of value to school leaders looking to enhance their school brand.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my parents. I recall their guiding words which stand as a beacon light to me: Dad says “The more I learn, the more I can do.” My mother always said, “Life is tough, son, but so are you!”

Acknowledgments

I am very fortunate to have as my committee chair, Dr. Timothy Malone, who handheld and encouraged me throughout the journey to put my best foot forward. I am grateful to my committee members, Dr. Julie Ducharme, and Dr. Peter Anthony, for ensuring that my doctoral study adhered to the Walden University's rubric and standards. The residency courses helped align my thinking under the guidance of Dr. Jim Savard and Dr. Gene Fusch – my heartfelt thanks to them. I express my gratitude to Freda Turner for dedicatedly directing the DBA program with high integrity. I wish to thank the school leaders, faculty, and parents for willingly sharing their experience during the data collection phase.

I am eternally grateful to my parents, Dr. R Varadarajan, and Mrs. Saraswati Varadarajan. Their high expectations of me enabled me to dream big and supported me in achieving them. Special thanks to my sister, Viju, and my brother-in-law, Khitish, for encouraging me at every intersection. My sincere thanks to my wife, Maheeka, and my sons, Yash, and Shaurya, for keeping me motivated continuously. I will always remember the encouragement of my friends Geeta, Lata, Pankaj, Mahalakshmi, and Primrose.

I cannot forget the Lord but for whose grace I would never be what I am. My genuine faith in His mercy has kept my spirits high. His support and love keep me ticking along!

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Brands serve several valuable functions. For firms, brands serve as markers of their product and service offerings. For consumers, brands can signify a certain quality level, reduce perceived risk, engender trust, and simplify choice for customers (Tybout & Calkins, 2005). Consumers develop perceptions of brands based on their experiences with a firm's products or services (Tybout & Calkins, 2005). Brands also play a significant role in marketing activities like advertising (DiMartino & Jessen, 2014). In the financial sense, brands are an asset. The advantages of branding available to physical goods are also available to services. Fulfilling the brand promise can help a service organization to build strong service brand relationship (Nyffenegger, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Malaer, 2015). Branding can help kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) schools to differentiate themselves from their competitors (DiMartino & Jessen, 2014). K-12 schools need to embrace branding to remain a viable choice in the future (DiMartino & Jessen, 2014).

Background of the Problem

Because of globalization, rising income, and a keenness for education, Indian parents are increasingly turning to international schools based in India for the education of their children (Prasad, 2013). In the first decade of the 21st century, the number of private international K-12 schools in India doubled, and India ranks sixth in the International Baccalaureate statistics (Prasad, 2013). Because of competition school leaders need a strategic plan from the branding perspective to sustain the complex challenges faced in the education sector globally (Suss, 2012). Thus, a need exists for a research study that will help explain how private international schools in India can use branding strategies to enhance school brand.

Bock, Poole, and Joseph (2014) researched the role of branding for higher educational institutions. DiMartino and Jessen (2014) conducted research on how public schools in New York City could manage their school brand. However, based on my review of the literature, no research has been published from an Indian perspective on how school leaders can use branding strategies to enhance private international school brand. The aim of this doctoral study was to explore how private international schools in India use branding strategies to enhance school brand.

Problem Statement

Private international schools in India are considered as a *quality brand* and have grown rapidly in numbers leading to competition among schools for student enrollments (Hallinger & Lee, 2012; Prasad, 2013). School brand image plays an important role in the parents' choice of schools (Chen & Chen, 2014). Malik, Mushtaq, Jaswal, and Malik (2015) found that 62.6% of parents preferred a branded private school instead of opting for unknown or new one. The general business problem for my study was that some private international school leaders in India are facing competitive pressures regarding student enrollment. The specific business problem was that private international school leaders in India lack branding strategies to enhance the school brand.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore the branding strategies that private international K-12 school leaders in India use to enhance the school brand. The targeted population consisted of private international school leaders from one of the private international K-12 school in Chennai, a city in India. The secondary population consisted of faculty and parents from the same school in Chennai. I believe that this population was appropriate for my study because it enabled to understand the branding strategies that private international K-12 schools adopt. Study findings may help private international K-12 school leaders improve student enrollments, improve retention of teaching and nonteaching staff, reduce overall competition, and increase financial resources. Improved teaching staff availability may further lead to improved educational outcomes (e.g., writing skills, levels of subject matter knowledge, better college placements) for school students.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative method for this study. This method was most suitable for my study because this method allowed me to explore my study phenomenon in depth. Qualitative methods offer researchers a conceptual orientation for understanding the phenomenon of branding in real-life contexts (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The qualitative method enabled an extensive discussion of the evidence provided by school leaders on branding and its role in the image enhancement of their respective private international schools. Quantitative and mixed method approaches were not pertinent for my study because quantitative data could not have provided in-depth information on the school leaders' experiences (Allwood, 2012).

Specifically, I chose a case study design for this study. A case study design approach enables a researcher to explore the differences within, and between cases

(Baxter & Jack, 2008). The case study design approach helped me in drawing comparisons of how school leaders act to enhance brand image within bounded systems of activity as atypical cases. The ethnographic design was not suitable for this doctoral study because I was not exploring cultural groups of individuals or choice of schools by representatives of groups (Hallett & Barber, 2014). Nor was the phenomenological design suitable for the problem because the intent of the study was not applicable to the exploration of real-life experiences related to the experiential processes of branding (Hunt, 2014). Researchers consider evidence from case study designs to be more compelling and robust than other qualitative research designs because data for cases are represented and interpreted independently in an overall comparative framework of themes (Yin, 2014).

Research Question

The central research question for my study was what branding strategies do private international school leaders in India use to enhance the school brand?

Interview Questions

The interview questions that I asked senior management of my study school were following:

1. How is your branding strategy aligned to the vision, mission, values, and culture of the organization?
2. What market research did the school conduct before deciding a brand strategy?
3. What are the critical factors you used to plan branding strategy for your school? Please elaborate.

4. What are your ongoing brand strategies?
5. How do you promote internal branding?
6. What strategies do you use to enhance the functional capability of your brand?
7. What are the functional benefits that your brand delivers to your customers?
8. What are the emotional benefits that your brand delivers to your customers?
9. How does your brand promise match with the customer's perception of your brand? Please elaborate.
10. What digital and social media resources does your school use for brand communication?

I asked the following questions to faculty of the school:

1. What type of systems and procedures are implemented to enable employees to carry out their roles and responsibilities in line with the brand promise?
2. What other initiatives does the organization use other than the systems and procedures to help improve service quality in the delivery of the brand promise?
3. In what manner does the organization share customer knowledge or insights with its employees?
4. How does the organization encourage employees to take the extra step and use their initiative? Give examples.
5. What are the methods of internal communication used by senior management with faculty to help them deliver the desired service quality?
6. What is your experience with your school brand?
7. How is your feedback about your organization used by school leaders?

8. What is the difference between your and customer's perception of your school brand?
9. How is your job aligned to the school's vision, mission, values, and culture of the organization?
10. How do you differentiate your school brand from your competitors?

I asked the parents (external stakeholders) the following questions:

1. Which components of the school brand attracted you to admit your child to this school?
2. How does the organization communicate with you about its vision, mission, values, and culture?
3. What is your perception of the school brand? Please elaborate.
4. What are your views about the matching of brand experience with the brand promise the organization made?
5. What internet or social media tools does the organization use to communicate the brand with the parents?
6. How has the school brand evolved?
7. Why would you recommend or not recommend this school to your family and friends?
8. Why is this school different from other schools in the neighborhood?
9. What changes should the school leaders make to improve your perception of the school brand?
10. What market research did the school conduct to understand its brand positioning?

Conceptual Framework

I selected Chernatony and Riley’s (1998) double vortex brand model as my conceptual framework. As per the double vortex brand model organizations can develop brands using the vision, mission, values, and culture of an organization. These are strategic drivers implemented through the sourcing programs that include elements such as naming policy, functional capabilities, service, risk reducer, personality, legal device, and crisp communicator (Chernatony & Riley, 1998). A consumer gains confidence in a brand based on the rational and emotional forces that influence consumer’s perception of the brand (Chernatony & Riley, 1998). A trusting relationship reinforces positive attitudes leading to the perpetuation of the virtuous branding cycle to build and sustain brands.

The double vortex brand model was relevant to my doctoral study because this model depicts branding as a process for the firm leading to another vortex that is the consumer's brand perception (Chernatony & Riley, 1998). Aligning brand image projection with consumer's brand perception is the objective of organizations while crafting branding strategies (Chernatony & Riley, 1998). The double vortex brand model aligned with this qualitative exploratory case study method concerning brand strategies of international schools in India.

Operational Definitions

Brand audit: An objective evaluation of brand alignment with the strategic goals of the institution and the customer’s image of the institution (Williams & Omar, 2014a).

Brand design: A phase that comes after the brand concept leading to publicity touchpoints with the consumer (Tybout & Calkins, 2005).

Brand differentiation: Seeks to define the value associated with the brand as fundamentally different from its rivals (Tybout & Calkins, 2005).

Brand flux: It is the uncertain stage between two definite courses of action (Williams & Omar, 2014a).

Brand identity: Brand name, slogan, logo relating to the brand image are conveyed to the consumer to develop a brand identity (Williams & Omar, 2014a).

Brand image: It is the coherent set of relationships which form an impression (Williams & Omar, 2014a).

Brand positioning: Relates to the significance of the brand in the consumer's mind (Tybout & Calkins, 2005).

Brand soul: The authenticity of a brand (Williams & Omar, 2014a).

Internal branding: A process whereby an organization seeks to instill in its employees the brand strategy chosen by the company (Sinanis & Sanfelippo, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are things considered as true for research (Leedy & Omrad, 2010). An assumption for my study was that school leaders of private international schools would be sincere in sharing information about their branding initiatives with me. School leaders from the study site would willingly share their branding strategies and other insights to enable me to come to correct conclusions about the brand issues that my study school may be facing. I believe that the school chosen as the case study was adequate. I chose a private international school as a unit of analysis based on its ranking given by a credible public body. There was no selection bias because of such an approach. By using techniques such as a reflexivity journal, member checking, and triangulation, I was able to minimize bias during data collection.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses in a study that a researcher has identified (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). I interviewed school leaders and other stakeholders of a private international school from Chennai. Therefore, the results of my study may not be transferable to other private international schools in India. I would have liked to reveal more information about the school and the branding strategies of school leaders, but doing so would have compromised the anonymity of the school. Therefore, issues of anonymity and confidentiality posed a slight problem in presenting the findings. Because this was a qualitative study, my presence during the data collection process might have affected the responses given by the participants.

Delimitations

Delimitations refer to what the researcher is not going to do in the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). In this doctoral study, I collected data from multiple stakeholders of only one private international school from Chennai City, India. The second delimitation was that I selected participants only through purposive sampling that is not transferable to a larger population (Palinkas et al., 2015). The third delimitation was that I did not collect data through participant observation as this method is more suitable for a descriptive case study, and my doctoral study was exploratory (Yin, 2015).

Significance of the Study

The implications for positive social change and effective business practice are substantial. The significance of the study subsection includes the contribution to the business practice and implications for social change.

Contribution to Business Practice

Research regarding the role of branding strategies to enhance school brand of private international schools, especially from the Indian context, is meager. This doctoral study may contribute to the existing knowledge in this area and be of value to the business because it may enable school leaders from private international schools in India to understand the effect good branding strategies can have in improving school image, and consequently, student enrollment. School leaders need to change their marketing approach and develop a sense of branding to survive (leaders of universities and colleges engage in marketing) (Suss, 2012). This doctoral study may contribute to the effective practice of business because improved enrollments may lead to improved sustainability of schools.

Implications for Social Change

The positive social change includes improved sustainability which may further improve the resources available to private international schools. This research may help improve staff retention (teaching and nonteaching). Improved resource availability may lead to improved educational outcomes for school students (e.g., writing skills, levels of subject matter knowledge, better college placements). Improved student learning outcomes may result in a good relationship between school leaders and parents. Better educational outcomes may further lead to an educated workforce in future, lower adult mortality rates and lower rates of crime (Lleras-Muney, 2005; Lochner & Moretti, 2004).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Branding strategies are an intrinsic way that private international schools project themselves and their identity. The brand image perceived by the consumer contributes to influencing decision making. To conduct an in-depth study of branding, I scrutinized relevant journals. I was able to gain a better understanding of the subject of branding by using scholarly peer-reviewed articles and seminal books. In this section, the literature review is divided into several segments beginning with the conceptual framework. I further discuss the role of branding.

Organization of the Review

The subtopics listed indicate an organized review of the professional and academic literature. These subtopics symbolize the eight fundamental elements and support the purpose of the study. These are (a) conceptual framework, (b) role of branding, (c) role of branding in education sector – school, (d) role of branding in education sector- higher educational institutions, (e) role of branding – international schools, (f) branding and marketing, (g) branding and consumers, and (h) metrics in branding.

Literature Search Strategy

I found the articles used in this literature review using Walden Online Library's EBSCO Host Business Source Complete Database, ProQuest ABI\INFORM Complete, ProQuest Central Database, and Google Scholar. Publication dates ranged from 2012–2016, and I specifically focused on peer-reviewed journal articles. I used the following search terms and combinations to find the articles for literature review: *branding of schools*, *branding of Higher Educational Institutions*, *brand audit*, *double vortex brand model*, *qualitative analysis using case study approach*, *internal branding in service*, *brand identity*, *brand image*, *brand equity*, *data collection in qualitative analysis*, and *data saturation*. I included 76 sources in the literature review. Sixty-eight references (89.5% of the total) were published within 5 years of the expected completion date of this study. The total peer-reviewed references used in the literature review were 75 (98.7%).

Purpose

Private international school leaders increasingly recognize the importance of branding. Whereas most school leaders do not have a structured framework of initiatives in the form of a branding strategy, school leaders do involve themselves in advertisement and publicity interventions. Few school leaders would think it worthwhile to spend time studying the effect of their initiatives under the name of branding.

An association of branding exists with the corporate world especially in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector in which brands become household names and sometimes replace the name of the product by the brand itself. The identity of the brand plays a role in which brand image and brand associations converge in the minds of the consumer. The brand soul, which is an alignment of internal stakeholders such as employees, is important for sustainability. Employees have to live positively and perceive the organization's brand. I performed a case study method to explore the various branding strategies that leaders of a private international school in Chennai, India use.

Conceptual Framework on Branding

In this section, I reviewed the double vortex brand model originally explained by Chernatony and Riley (1998). I describe why I chose this model as the conceptual framework for my doctoral study. I also deliberated about two other branding models.

Double vortex brand model. Chernatony and Riley (1998) conceptualized the double vortex brand model (see figure 1.). Please see appendix A for the permission to use this copyrighted figure in my doctoral study. Chernatony and Riley revised the nine elements that formed the earlier brand model known as *Atomic model* to conceptualize the double vortex brand model based on interviews with 20 brand consultants in the United Kingdom. The researchers explored and verified the effectiveness of the model and developed a revised version based on the fundamentals of a brand. Functional capabilities relating to hardcore product performance and intangibles relating to brand personality emerged as the most important characteristics of brands. The next commonly identified feature was company ownership behind the brand. Most brand consultants acknowledged the atomic model to be comprehensive and suggested the addition of the vision, mission, and values into a dynamic framework (Chernatony & Riley, 1998).

The visual elements of name, logo, and product design are brand components that have an effect on the brand image or perspective of the consumer (Chernatony & Riley, 1998). The intangible and symbolic elements relate to the emotional and representational aspects of beliefs created in the minds of the consumer. The different elements vary in importance depending on the audience such as staff, consumers revealing the brand. Figure 1 indicates the revised version of the brand model known as the double vortex brand model developed after taking into account all the feedback from the consultants (Chernatony & Riley, 1998).

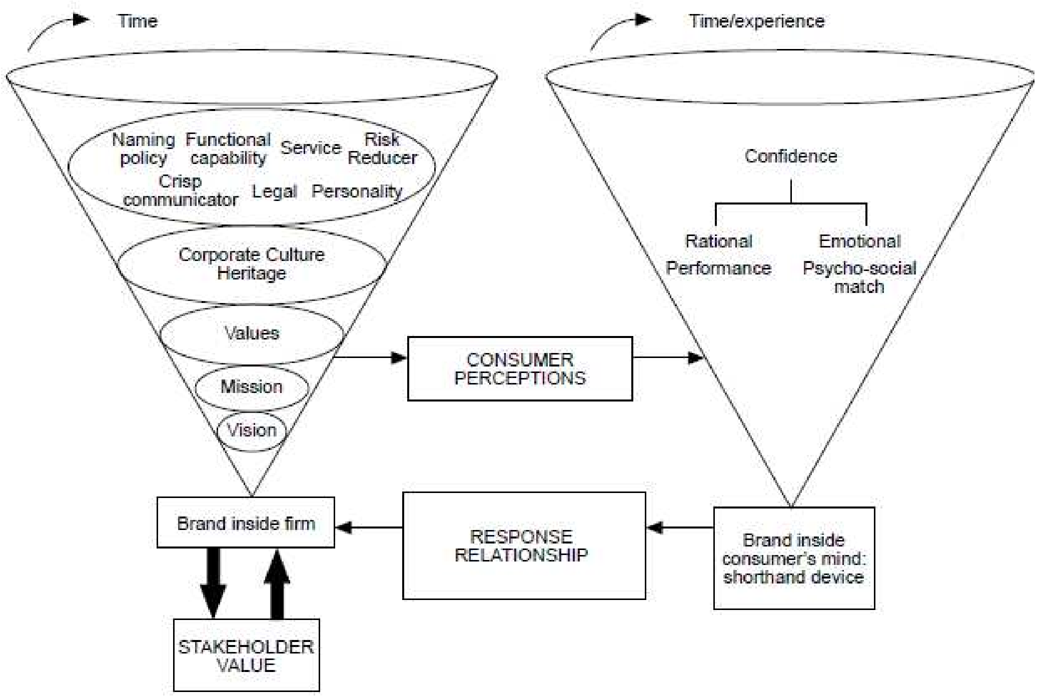

Figure 1. Double vortex brand model. Adapted from "Modeling the Components of the Brand," by L. de Chernatony and F.D. Riley, 1998, *European Journal of Marketing, 32,* p. 1085. Copyright 1998 by the Emerald Group Publishing Limited

The vortex on the left depicts how managers build brands, and the vortex on the right side depicts the brand perceptions of the consumers. The strategic drivers of vision, mission, and values, culture, and heritage incorporate the seven resourcing elements (i.e., naming policy, functional capability, service, risk reducer, personality, legal device, and crisp communicator) of the program (Chernatony & Riley, 1998). The rational and emotional dimensions describing the price-performance and the psycho-social benefits characterize the consumer's confidence in the brand. The model indicates sustained relationships between an organization and its customers The model is applicable for an umbrella or retail brands (Chernatony & Riley, 1998).

To map various brands on a two-dimensional functional and representational matrix, Chernatony and Riley (1998) described the eight stages of the brand evolutionary model from an input to output perspective. The eight stages are differentiation, a sign of ownership, functional, service, legal, shorthand, risk reduction, and symbolic stages. Chernatony and Riley used the sectors of toothpaste brands and high-interest deposit accounts to study the resourcing elements. Brands evolve from manufacturer-centric to becoming consumer-centric. At the differentiation stage, the marketer focuses on the distinctive nature and name of the brand along with eye-catching packaging. At the sign of ownership stage, the consumer starts associating the brand with the brand owner leading to the functional stage wherein the benefit becomes strongly associated with the brand. The service stage ensures that the consumers receive the service they appreciate. The service stage causes brand entrenchment in consumer's perception. The next step is to take legal action to protect the brand from adulteration and copycats. Consumers slowly develop clearer perceptions and cognitive abilities to recall the cluster of benefits (Chernatony & Riley, 1998).

By reducing concerns about performance risk, marketers use many ways to instill confidence in a consumer who becomes a brand ambassador (Chernatony & Riley, 1998). Brands mature to another stage by taking on a symbolic role. The brand becomes a signature statement for the consumer symbolizing gracious living or peer esteem. One can use a two-dimensional functionality and representational map to compress these eight stages. By mapping brands, marketers can categorize brands and derive benefits from the brand-planning tool (Chernatony & Riley, 1998).

Use of the double vortex brand model. King and Grace (2005) extended the double vortex brand model to explore the role of employees in facilitating organization and market interface. Organizations can manage a brand successfully by linking the organization and the consumer by managers and devising brand plans which are consistent with consumer's choice of brands based on their perceptions. In this context, King and Grace explored the role of employees by seeing them as an interface between brand's internal and external environments. Thus, employees are part time marketers and must understand their specific behavior and actions while interacting with customers. Employees must consider the core values of the organization and grapple with the brand's purpose and their role about the brand. Employees have to be customer conscious and be service oriented to promote high-quality services as their internal philosophy that leads to customer satisfaction. Positive brand attitude generates positive word of mouth and brand loyalty when employees deliver service quality in alignment to the brand promise. King and Grace (2005) conducted the research study with a single embedded case design using semistructured interviews to explore managers' perspectives regarding influencing employee behaviors. Their findings illustrate the need for brand knowledge on the part of an employee with systems and procedures that would help to be definitive along with the essential part of customer related information to provide direction.

Parkerson and Saunders (2005) extended the double vortex model to make it applicable to city branding for Birmingham city in the United Kingdom. Parkerson and Saunders investigated the relevance of product and service branding models for cities. They identified the unique characteristics of city brands. City brands such as New York, Paris, or Rome evoke certain images in the consumer's mind. Parkerson and Saunders identified 10 characteristics that configure a brand and point to relevant areas of excellence. These are delivering benefits to customers based on value and so positioned in a consistent manner that there is sustainability in the brand equity. The creation of a virtual organization and positioning it to a central decision-making body facilitated the brand program for Birmingham. By deconstructing the tangible and intangible features of the Birmingham, brand enabled the possibility of applying the double vortex model (Parkerson & Saunders, 2005).

Parkerson and Saunders (2005) identified four themes as part of the framework of analysis for city branding. These themes are the influence of a network on brand models, segmentation of brand elements, corporate branding, and the political dimension. Thus, the double vortex model is flexible enough to incorporate several dimensions and serve as an analytical framework in the branding phenomena.

O'Cass and Grace (2004) studied customer experiences within a service brand. Core service, brand experience, self-image, congruency, feelings, servicescape, interpersonal service, publicity, advertising, price, and brand are significant dimensions for servicing consumers. Effective consumer-centered marketing calls for an understanding of the core differences in goods and services that increase in complexity with respect to processes, people, and infrastructure. Researchers have developed conceptual models to understand service branding and brand equity that comprises of brand awareness and meaning of a brand. Based on their research findings, O'Cass and Grace cited Chernatony and Riley's (1998) double vortex brand model as depicting the dimensions of branded services such as workforce, infrastructure, experience, and word of mouth.

Noting the fundamentals of services branding, Chernatony and Riley (1999) recognized how goods and services are different with respect to branding strategies. They underlined the need for emphasis on service characteristics regarding reinforcing the brand vision and brand values. Making a corporate brand identity relevant to employees will inspire consistency and trust from consumers leading to a virtuous circle wherein the company becomes a strong brand. The brand is differentiated from the competition, leading to the motivation of employees, stimulating them to offer better service, delighting the customers leading to further differentiation from competitors, and favorable word of mouth to reinforce a favorable image in the mind of the consumer (Chernatony & Riley, 1999).

Other service branding models. Branding instills trust in the strength of the service brand, promising future satisfaction. The components of a service brand are a company's depicted brand, brand awareness, external brand communications, brand meaning, consumer experience, and brand equity (Berry, 2000). Organizations build strong brands through publicity and advertising focusing on distinctiveness and message consistency. Berry (2000) presented a service branding model, which shows how organizations can cultivate brand equity by focusing on targeted customers and underserved markets. Service performers jointly with consumers convert brand vision into brand reality. The positive advantage that the company gains through synergetic brand awareness and meaning is improved brand equity.

Williams and Omar (2014a) discussed the consequence of increasing competition in the education sector leading to the need for branding and brand management skills. The specifics of the education sector conferred features such as brand status and brand community. The branding process comprises of firm based, employee based, and customer based equity brands as three brand points. Organizations can use a brand audit to judge the health of the brand. An audit can lead to several brand flux options when a situation of uncertainty requires different initiatives like (a) retire, (b) revitalize, (c) refocus, or (d) rename. Brand image (held by the stakeholders), brand identity (promoted by the institution), and brand soul (held by the employees) all contribute to creating worth and delineate brand equity.

Choosing a model for this study. Even though Berry (2000) presented a services branding model, and Williams and Omar (2014a) presented branding process model, I chose to use double vortex brand model for my doctoral study for the following four reasons: (a) the model includes all the stakeholders involved in the branding strategy process, (b) the model is more detailed and holistic, (c) the model is dynamic as compared to other service brand models, (d) the model recognizes that the consumer's perception of the brand can be different from the brand image as portrayed by the company.

Role of Branding

Callister, Blevins, Kier, and Pettway (2015) discussed how branding was new to the realm of education. In the context of an educational institution, Callister et al. urged the need for a better insight on the role of branding. History of branding started with branding cattle to declare ownership and has progressed beyond a name, logo, or image. Brand comprises of consumers' image of the product or service and the degree of favourable opinion about its value to the owner. Branding is slowly spreading to the world of education and is more visible in higher education than for grade school academia (Callister et al., 2015). Branding helps to differentiate one product from another. Modern technology from Apple, Google, Facebook, and Amazon have transformed connectivity. New adaptations in curriculum and communication in a competitive market make the role of branding all important for educators and administrators.

Moving from an informed customer to a loyal customer is the role of branding. A positive brand image attracts students, retains teaching talent, and enhances the image of the country. Positive impression of the quality of education is important apart from the prestige of the school. Students are digitally connected, and K-12 schools have to remain relevant by using gadgetry suitable for internet application. Quality and cost affect product brand, but experience sticks most often in the consumer's memory.

Hirvonen, Laukkanen, and Reijonen (2013) examined the brand orientation, performance relationship in the context of 797 responses from small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) of Finland. In the investigation, Hirvonen et al. identified six moderators such as the type of industry, age and size of the firm, the know-how of branding, type of customer, and market life cycle. External factors affect brand orientation performance relation, especially in firms serving consumers and operating in a stable market (Hirvonen et al., 2013). The researchers used a contingency framework to study how to include brands in strategic planning. Brand oriented firms have an internal approach to developing their brand based on vision, mission, and values. In an SME, the link to brand building depends on the role played by owner or manager. In an SME brand building is not a formalized process or policy.

Hirvonen et al. (2013) developed their hypothesis based on the literature review leading to three internal factors and three external factors. The major finding of this study by Hirvonen et al. was that external environment of the firm has an effect on the value of brand orientation. Flexibility and quick response time enable SMEs to build their brands. With respect to external factors, a process of strategic adaptation is required. Investments in technology and innovations can lead to strong business brands. Hirvonen et al. suggested that detailing of additional factors is a requirement for investigation as moderators such as organizational structure, level of internationalization, type of product, and type of top management. Studying brand orientation in combination with other strategic brand orientations to examine their effect on brand performance is beneficial.

Miller (2014) examined the concept of corporate brand building and brand heritage. Miller compared two era's entrepreneurial and professional brand building, beginning with the Second World War and after 1965 for two decades, spanning a period of 90 years. Earlier brand values and brand heritage formed the basis of brand building activities but later on brand orientation and brand strategy implementation gained importance.

Miller (2014) took one firm as a sample for two distinct brand-building periods and conducted the thematic analysis of the data. The three stages identified were brand value or brand formulation, orienting to the brand, and implementing the brand strategy. Miller researched how leaders in charge of the brand could establish brands of a corporate type and demonstrated the efficacy of brand historic analysis. Three major theoretical aspects emanated from the study. Brand buy-in gained importance along with reconceptualization of the nexus between brand acceptance, legitimacy, and leadership. Usefulness of historic analysis because of changing times requires different brand building capabilities.

Yoo (2014) studied the long-term effect of keyword search ads on brand awareness and evaluation. Ad rankings influence memory of consumers while evaluating unknown brands vis-à-vis well-known brands. Empirical studies about eye tracking technology show that ads listed high on the search engine result page will receive more attention leading to enhanced memories. Online consumers evaluate brands based on their direct experience and external information. The study by Yoo was about branding and persuasion knowledge in the context of using search engines to online users.

Casidy (2013) examined the association of factors such as perceived brand image, fulfillment, allegiance and behavior after university enrollment in Australia. Convenience sampling and prior knowledge of sample students about reporting the findings to the university may lead to bias in response. A selection of students from a faculty of business who are more knowledgeable may affect the perception of the brand image. This study by Casidy was a pioneer in the investigation of student's perspectives of brands with respect to education.

Branding in the Education Sector

Schools. Chen and Lin (2013) provided an operational strategy for private nursery schools in Taiwan where school leaders faced the issue of more schools, fewer children, and higher enrollment competition. With the government in Taiwan playing a major role in the education sector, many public and private nursery schools did the integration of kindergartens and childcare centers. Education was emerging as a free market in Taiwan, and there was competition between public and private nursery schools. Private nursery schools did not have the advantage of low tuition fees had to attract students by developing own special brand and characteristics. Thus building brand image is important as the brand effect is a factor for choosing nursery schools for parents as it projects an educational image of service quality.

For parents to widely accept a brand, the school should strengthen its characteristics regarding teaching, course content, and attract and retain parent's attention (Chen & Lin, 2013). As education is an invisible product, internal marketing regarding special teaching model and external marketing to win the trust of parents and create, positive interaction is required. Chen and Lin suggest interactive marketing to develop friendly cooperation between internal and external stakeholders. The operational strategy suggested in this paper is very relevant. The strategy focuses on enriching infrastructure, faculty courses, and establishing unique brand characteristics that will result in a good word of mouth response, helping parents who decide positively about schools (Chen & Lin, 2013).

Kiriago (2013) studied how institutional stakeholders to communicate with the external target audience most frequently use word of mouth. External communications have an effect on the image of the school. When placed in the larger context of communication toward influencing parents' perspective for decision-making, school leaders link word of mouth approach for external communication and feedback. The school leaders favored channels of communication such as word of mouth, letters, circulars, telephone, and face-to-face meetings.

It is possible to transform schools not doing well into high performers as discussed by Oei (2015). The study by Oei included an Indonesian private catholic vocational school and highlighted low-performance characteristics like ineffective leadership management, poor infrastructure and resources, less attraction, and poor promotion. The perception of the school community was an important research question. Another research question was regarding the strategic effect that the school leader would have in transforming the stakeholders.

The principal of the school realigned the vision and mission and placed special emphasis to high student achievement, effective school management by leadership, recruited the right type of human resource and developed infrastructure, public relations, and motivated student organization. The school culture develops depending on the growth of professional development, teaching and learning activity, and community involvement (Oei, 2015). For judging effectiveness, Oei (2015) suggested to work out the SWOT analysis, market the product, and promote the school. Working toward creating an effect on the school committee could improve the communities' perception of the school and school leader. Focused attempts by the school leaders help influence the community perception.

Lidstrom, Holm, and Lundstrom (2014) identified motives and strategies behind students' school choices in Sweden. The researchers drew on strategies used in the education market, on the careership theory that interconnects rational career decisions, the influence of individual's resources, and the turning points in the process. Word of mouth was an important medium of influence. Some of the recommendations based on the findings were that it was essential to provide youngsters with knowledge and skills for school choice and career management competencies and career education. Lidstrom et al. presented the importance of word of mouth along with other influencing factors in student enrollment. Policy makers have to provide sufficient information and guidance to tackle risk and uncertainty considering the capabilities and preferences of students.

In the exploratory qualitative study of 21 private schools in Dehradun, India, Gautam (2011) surveyed and collected data from the administrators and principals of the schools by using in-depth interview technique. Student enrollment in private schools is enhanced by the school's image and publicity. Gautam studied whether the effect of promotional variables such as publicity, public relations, advertisement, and school appearance was positive on school enrollment. The percent of schools that used electronic media advertisements was 61.90%, 52.38% used publicity, and 85.71% schools used public relations.

Das (2014) studied the phenomenon in Indian elementary schools that enrollment in government schools was not as good as that in private schools. Based on the time series data from 1993-94 to 2007-08, the program of Sarva Shikshan Abhiyan was analyzed for student enrollment. Extant literature included comparative studies across geographies between public and private educational institutions. From secondary data from published government sources, Das showed a slow growth in the number of privately built schools for primary education though there was a marked preference for private schools. Price sensitivity, entry barriers, and poor social infrastructures like roads connectivity and transport prevent the growth of schools. The absence of administrators with leadership quality prevents effective management of such schools and, the scalability of private schools for mass education. Despite national movements on the education front, low-cost state-managed schools jeopardize the learning outcome of the first-generation learners from low-income families.

In India, government schools are managed by various bodies. The privately managed schools can be categorized into those receiving an aid grant in aid from the government, those recognized by the government, and those unrecognized by the government. Gouda, Chandra Das, Goli, and Maikho Apollo Pou (2013) studied differences between government and privately managed primary schools of India with respect to infrastructure, costing of schools, and student performance. In India, spend per student is less despite outlay in education in the government sector. Private school students, however, outperform their counterparts in the government sector in basic skills. Infrastructure standard and schooling costs have a significant impact on student performance. In private schools teachers are more committed, and there is less absenteeism as compared to government schools.

Van Wyk and Moeng (2013) discussed the importance of designing and implementing a strategic plan for primary schools in South Africa. The findings based on triangulation and documentary analysis related to the complexity of formulating and executing strategic plans. Strategic planning calls for advanced technical skills, intensive training, stakeholder participation, clear written manuals in the language easily understood and supported by government departmental officials. Stakeholders rarely understand nature, framework procedure, and the importance of strategic plans (Van Wyk & Moeng, 2013). Communication skills, availability of resources, well-defined roles is necessary because the process of strategic planning is more important than the document. Development of strategic planning is a collaborative approach to a consultative, inclusive, and coherent process.

Higher educational institutions. Brand management is influenced by the various touchpoints that occur. Khanna, Jacob, and Yadav (2014) identified 13 influencing touchpoints during the education journey. The touchpoints occur from the preadmission stage to post passing alumni stage. Education is an experiential service and of a special kind because of the intensity of contact. Different strategies of teaching in higher education sector and high expectations from employees contribute to a varied range of outcomes as seen from the business management schools in Mumbai. The touchpoint wheel of Davis and Dunn (2002) included the four touchpoints as prepurchase, in use, postpurchase experiences, and influencing factors. The factors are soft and hard infrastructure, alumni and student recommendations, the role of media, and placements. Other factors are fees and location of the institute, learning resources, co-curricular activities, industry interface, knowledge enhancement, career growth, alumni involvement, innovativeness, and stakeholder perception.

The influencing touchpoints are those that create an impression on the consumer indirectly. A similar model developed by Khanna et al. (2014) classified 13 factors into four distinct touchpoints. Data was collected online for an exploratory study based on convenience sampling of 276 questionnaires responded by students of management schools in Mumbai. Khanna et al. presented a statistical analysis using a five-point scale, and factor analysis. One finding was that an institution can use preadmission touchpoint to enhance the education brand further.

An online questionnaire limits the sample size as compared to direct interviews. Further, the touchpoints could be more than the thirteen considered in the study. Other touchpoints may include the reputation of the leadership of the higher education institution. Presenting the managerial implications Khanna et al. (2014) highlighted the need for knowledge enhancement and preadmission touchpoints for enhanced effective communication at the social media level to propagate brand value to alumni and students. So also, the post passing touchpoints of amplifying alumni achievements and enhancing the strength of the institute can create a virtuous cycle of brand strength. A longitudinal study of the touchpoints would be useful. Future research can devolve around the cumulative effect of the various touchpoints and effect of social media and alumni on brand strength.

In their exploratory study of Indian business schools, Gulla and Gulla (2014) found that accreditations through local and global agencies are preferred to enhance the business school's brand image. Indian business schools are shifting from a practitioner to an academic orientation and seek aggressive branding along the lines of the United States and European business schools. The brand equity of business schools gives them a reputation enabling premium price for their service, attracts placements for their students, creates sustained loyalty, and makes its offerings different from competing schools in a meaningful manner. Business schools communicate through elements like faculty, placement, accreditation, target audience, and the brand identity they have created through their personality and values resulting in an image promising benefits to customers. Branding is an expensive exercise and attracting customers in the context of globalization is a challenge. Indian business schools are not globally branded. One needs to understand the branding strategies of their MBA programs to study how the brand identity can become memorable, distinct, and differentiated.

Websites depict the brand personality of the organizations, and Gulla and Gulla (2014) studied the websites of 20 Indian business schools from the list of Business India magazine of 2010. A visual examination of the websites revealed that best institutions were focusing on branding through certifying authorities, student-placements, faculty, location, and outreach programs jointly through centers in other countries (Gulla & Gulla, 2014). None of the 20 institutions used the dual or hybrid strategy used by foreign institutions calling for the clubbing of two powerful brand names. The faculty's research work, academic credentials, awards, and consultancy assignments add to the positive image of the school. Multiple accreditations, including international certifications, help to improve the global brand image. Positioning is equally important including the geographic location and the city brand. The institutional leaders focusing on innovation, bringing foreign faculty, co-authoring books, and higher placement records created a positive brand image through their student exchange programs and having offices in the overseas market. Business schools use accreditation as a branding strategy that leads to awareness and brand loyalty via brand identity.

Angulo-Ruiz and Pergelova (2013) developed and tested a student retention model. The findings were that higher education administrators need to manage brand association through the proper mental positioning of the institution. Angulo-Ruiz and Pergelova developed a conceptual framework and hypothesis regarding factors affecting student retention through an empirical model using a data set of 396 students from a Canadian university. The respondents belonged to a random sample of students from a school of business, bachelor of commerce program. Angulo-Ruiz and Pergelova provided a theoretical perspective and unravel various factors involving student dropout.

Bock et al. (2014) discussed how market segmentation is critical for developing a brand strategy implying the identification of consumers and tailoring the offerings to suit the market. Sustainable markets are responsive, accessible, large, and profitable thus improving the competitive position of the educational institution. Based on a literature review, Bock et al. classified university customers into right and wrong. The third group was *at risk* where customers were at risk of leaving organizations. Bock et al. did segmentation in higher education market by lifestyle, rationale, and emotional factors depending on the type of student and institution. Bock et al. emphasized that where competition is fierce, ensuring student enrollment calls for creating an identity through branding. Despite the importance of branding, university leaders are paying meager attention to branding. Therefore, branding and segmentation of the university students into three clusters of satisfaction seekers, financially focused, and deliberators are important.

Chawla and Lenka (2015) studied the antecedents and consequences of learning organizations focusing on resonant leadership and strong employer branding along with total quality management, knowledge management, and entrepreneurship affecting learning organizations. In India, more than 35,000 affiliated colleges and 700 degree-granting institutes enroll around 20 million students annually. Sustained competitive advantage implies continuous learning, creativity, and innovation, which are the main features of a learning organization. Chawla and Lenka chose faculty members as respondents because faculty members have a strong positive motivation and relationship with their institute leading to professional satisfaction and high quality of service. Chawla and Lenka highlighted that the role of an emotionally intelligent leader was to provide dynamism and support in recreating goals, shared vision, manage the change proactively, and focus on teamwork through training and development. School leaders are prepared for change through zeal and flexibility to enable knowledge management and justify the role of a learning organization, which emerges as a strong employer brand. The discussion that applies to Indian higher education institutions can as well apply to the school level education of international schools.

Joseph, Mullen, and Spake (2012) presented an exploratory study of two U.S. universities. Programs, sports, image, housing cost, and location are of primary importance to students of public universities. Private university students evaluated the image, selectivity, personal interactions, infrastructure, and cost. Universities need to customize their branding initiatives by institutional type. Many students seek a campus which is attractive, has community participation, and state-of-the-art technology, which are hallmarks of a modern university experience.

A relationship exists between brand and internal culture. Joseph et al. (2012) exhorted that higher learning institutions should approach brand building, not through technical and visual executions but gain constituent support to find the real purpose of branding. The importance of the selection criteria may also vary depending on the size, program offerings, religious affiliations, cost, amenities, and reputation. Further research can be done to explore different selection criteria, different student group, or institution types. Though the study by Joseph et al. was about university branding, the findings can apply to K-12 equally legitimately. Developing and co-creating branding with the help of internal stakeholders is an important ingredient.

Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) and name can influence the perception of a university and its lecturers (Idris & Whitfield, 2014). Leaders influence brand identity and image by a change in visual communication. One finding of the study by Idris and Whitfield was that CVI affects the opinions of professors according to their gender. Trustworthiness, reputation, attractiveness, and intelligence influenced the choice of name and logo, particularly with a male lecturer.

Talbert (2012) used a conceptual data model to introduce the perspectives of academic leaders regarding enhancement of student enrollment, retention, and graduation. Talbert reviewed a sample of 104 leaders from Minnesota. The study comprised of special planning and development programs on the minority population, first-generation students, and new attendees. The conceptual framework for Talbert's study lied in the robust model called the student integration model that theorizes the social integration of students to develop cohesive relationships between students and faculty and focuses on maintaining a good learning environment. Bonding creates a sense of belonging to the student, reducing student attrition. The two groups of leaders consisted of academic administrators and faculty members. The findings related to administrative and strategic approaches toward student performance and expanding advertising techniques. Other findings for teaching effectiveness included alignment of English as a second language, careful planning design, delivery, and assessment.

Durkin, McKenna, and Cummins (2012) described the brand repositioning exercise and explored an emotionally-driven approach to the branding of likeability within a UK University. The case study approach provided a theoretical and practical perspective on emotion acting as an enabler for the national decision-making process. The University of Ulster established a dedicated division for marketing to students.

Creation of new branding device to connect with the potential undergraduate customers could emotionally connect with school pupils of all ages in the postprimary market. An animated character from a TV show in a visual allegory ran for 3 weeks supported by the outdoor activity, radio advertising, and dedicated web presence. Durkin et al. conducted a quantitative research study to measure recall and influence on customer perceptions of the university and the choice making process. The finding of the study was that emotion is a way of connecting to the minds of young potential customers. School leaders could learn from the mechanisms of repositioning their brand.

Tas and Ergin (2012) explored the factors and criteria that Turkish students considered for selection of a university in the United States using a structured technique called Analytic Hierarchy Process. They analyzed multi-criteria decisions. They found that postgraduate career prospect was the most prominent criteria. The United States has the largest international student population, and thus the researchers focused on components that contributed to a university brand. Career prospect is a distinctive feature. Advertisement designs and external communication go a long way to project a university as world class. Tas and Ergin showed that students were affected by brand reputation, ranking, and accreditation issues contributing toward a high paying career. Further research will help to understand the university branding concept and how students perceive factors that add or detract value from the brand of a university.

Williams and Omar (2014b) used a qualitative multiple case study approach adapting reinforcing, revitalizing, refocusing, renaming, and retiring a brand, as provided a graphic presentation of changes in brand position. Brand audits are necessary, and they emphasize that benchmarking brand management process and associating it with the stages of brand flux model will provide valuable insights. Student enrollment exhibits purchasing power and depicts a consumer's approach focusing on the return on investment and career preparation instead of the love of academics. Brand management is required to provide what customers want and need. Leaders of higher educational institutions (HEIs) must position and market themselves to achieve brand enhancement. If a brand is unsuccessful despite repositioning or rebranding efforts, renaming would be the option. Williams and Omar (2014b) took three institutions in the mid-Atlantic US region and adopted multiple interpretive practices. Williams and Omar (2014b) focused on the renaming of Beaver University as Arcadia University. When repositioning and rebranding were not successful, the leaders of the university required a different brand management plan beyond the word of mouth range. The university leaders took 4 years to reinforce the renaming decision by continuous and conscious realignment of the strategic goals. Despite higher education becoming more marketable, clear branding models are lacking. Extenuating circumstances prompting the renaming are often not implemented because of inertia and risks inherent because of the nature of the service industry.

Williams, Osei, and Omar (2012) focused on generating positive brand associations and a positive country brand image for Africa. Exhibiting nationalism is one method to develop branding for the continent apart from creating unique competitive brands for individual African countries. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) is a college of technology established by government ordinance in Ghana. The motivation driver for renaming KNUST was a change in government power to convey a return to stability from a national brand point of view. Williams et al. highlighted eight principles of renaming including naming criteria, stakeholders, heritage, internal marketing, resources, timing, management team, and internal and external roll out of activities.

Popescu (2012) discussed branding strategies designed for cities that have prestigious educational institutions as part of the tradition and play a central role. Usually, the implementation of the branding strategy of the city is coordinated with that of the university. Popescu provided a listing of some examples of such institutions and their best practices. One example is the University of Lyon and Eindhoven *Brainport of the Netherlands* and Edinburgh as a major historic and cultural center in the United Kingdom. Lessons were drawn from the best practices of branding. City leaders have a role in the development of the local community. If cities have a strong brand image at the local and international level, they appear more interesting and attractive (Popescu, 2012). The focus is on the quality of education and partnerships between stakeholders to shape and implement branding strategies. University branding aims at communicating competitive advantage, promoting awareness, and clarity on what it does thereby enhancing its reputation. Popescu emphasized that the relationship between branding of the university and internationalization worked as a spiral and provided a theoretical and conceptual framework emphasizing the four pillars of people, technology, business, and basics that form the structure of the branding strategy.

Brooks and Waters (2014) provided a case study of England to project how globalization has affected United Kingdom Higher Education. They analyzed websites, prospectuses, and other documents in the public domain of 30 elite schools in England, 10 each from influential and high-performing private schools and high-performing state schools. The analysis revealed differences among state and private schools. Internationalization appeared more in private schools as compared to high-performing state schools. Private schools provided more international mobility and had more international students and displayed examples of hidden internationalism in their activities. An international curriculum and sister schools abroad are other examples of internationalism. Overseas trips and student exchange programs contribute to the well-roundedness of extra-curricular activities that present no threat to the school's English identity. As a contrast to other countries, the approach to international activities is more explicit and celebratory. International pupils are critical for the sustainability of United Kingdom schools, but the push to English education is the public face presented by many.

International Schools. Lee, Hallinger, and Walker (2012) stated that Asia Pacific has seen the most rapid growth of International Baccalaureate (IB) Schools and expanding exponentially globally. International curriculum, multicultural student body, global portability of the degree are traits associated with international schools. Based on an independent literature review, Lee et al. identified several problems that leaders of IB Schools face. They provided a conceptual framework to tackle issues such as competitive pressure for student intake.

Findings indicated challenges faced by the leadership of IB Schools. The school principal faces public communication and public relation challenges. The multi-method adopted in the study is a complex one and highlights the need for probing further into the global cultural context of education. IB schools have further challenges: consistency across all three IB programs, managing a complex organization with human resource issues of recruitment and training of leaders for their professional development and managing parental expectations.

Hallinger and Lee (2012) explored how instructional leadership was distributed at IB schools to foster coherence among the school's discrete programs. Hallinger and Lee adopted a mixed method study based on resources from coordinators of IB schools to elicit information on responsibilities of leadership, their contributions toward effective program transition, and cross-program coherence. Because geography and sociocultural facets highly contextualize the study on leadership, the results are not easily generalizable. This study by Hallinger and Lee was important to understand how leadership enacts and influences in different environments. IB coordinators were the focus of the study by Hallinger and Lee. As per the study by Hallinger and Lee a fairly critical assessment of program transition was offered, and frequent meetings between teachers of each program were beneficial to the strategic development of vertical and horizontal articulation documents. Hallinger and Lee urged further study about the leadership of IB schools as also the distributive nature and instructional leadership practices and responsibilities.

Sidhu and Dall'alba (2012) examined the practices and representations of international education scrutinizing whether students that emerge from the process are strengthening or undermining the cosmopolitan sensibilities of international education. The cross-border mobility of international students, leads to the embodied learner, in the context of minorities. Although there is an influence on pedagogic practices and concepts of cosmopolitism and universalism, the question raised was whether it was merely western parochialism. Promotional materials brand and portray images of the United Kingdom, United States, and Australia. Sidhu and Dall'alba concluded that the international students are self-directed students in the process of gaining knowledge and pushed to neo-liberal globalization and corporate cosmopolitanism. Sidhu and Dall'alba's concern was valid when viewed against a long-term backdrop of several decades. Immediately the concerns of economic growth, technological capability, and bridging socio-economic inequalities against a fear psychosis of terrorism seem a more prominent need to adopt a multi-cultural fabric of concern for humanity.

Song (2013) discussed the effect of the rapid rise of English-medium international schools that admit South Korean nationals along with international students. Fear exists that international schools may further widen the schism between the social classes in South Korea. International schools in South Korea have transformed themselves into government-approved private education providers to meet the needs of globalization. English is a popular medium of instruction and education is a consumer choice to facilitate international mobility apart from social mobility within the country.

India is an emerging economy where there is a phenomenal emphasis on the English language and equipment of skills for working in a global workplace (Song, 2013). One concern that Song (2013) expressed relates to how education ought to be a strategy for eliminating social polarization but is promoted to be a tool for the social divide. International schools in South Korea are no longer a free market response to the global need, but an exclusive sought after option of the privileged classes. Restrictive admission criteria and high tuition fees serve to justify further the class-based analysis of the education sector.

Kenway and Fahey (2014) explored how elite schools adopt globalization practices. Kenway and Fahey studied elite schools under the three axes of globalization: global forces, global connections, and global imaginations. There was an over-emphasis on language and humanities during the colonial period along with the spread of Christianity, leading to an elite formation of patronizing top English universities. The privileged transnational class connected to transnational companies seeks elite schools and geographically mobile families all leading to global market capitalism. The schools have high curriculum standards for business studies program involving hyper-competitiveness and a future ensuring high prestige, pay, and power. Apart from the global force of colonialism and market capitalism; Kenway and Fahey also studied the global connection, transnational links, and networks in migrants, students, and workers in India, Hong Kong, United Kingdom, Argentina, and Australia.

The concept of the global village and global citizenship encourages students to go across continents and become part of the village community to build something alongside the villagers. Regarding the global imaginations, a school becomes a strategic actor on the global stage. Based on the national curriculum the school proceeds to accumulate western oriented knowledge and become global consumers of cross-cultural cosmopolitanism. The global world of finance and business further beckons the students to develop integrative practices with transnational class imaginations globally. The schools are reinventing themselves and are always on the move. The study by Kenway and Fahey (2014) is a comprehensive summary of the elite school movement of which IB schools are a leading factor. While Kenway and Fahey caution about social distress and class distinctions, they are not able to suggest how to stem the tide of globalization.

Doherty (2013) studied three International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD) schools across Australia to highlight the difference IBD creates in the local context based on the curricular market. The absolute quality of schooling depends on the receptive students, quality teachers, and good infrastructure as much as the relative dimension that is the differential in the educational level attained by others. Doherty focused on who chose IBD and why, how the stakeholders perceive the curricular attention, how IBD offering affects the community, and what the difference is between local and IBD curricular experience. A literature review by Doherty of IBD schools across the world indicated that IBD schools acted either as an incubator for global nomads, an experiment in schooling, with a pedagogical influence, and carrying cultural dissonance. Resnick (2012) used a global comparative multi-scalar design to explore how IBD brand, organization, curriculum, and practices interact with local systems in a possibly harmful manner by eroding national systems. Although there is little systematic, empirical research in this area, the literature documents IBD movement as an influential program toward neo-liberal policy. Doherty used glocalisation as a conceptual framework that is realistic. The study indicates that despite geo-cultural similarities, the market for IB schools matters regarding local ecology and socio-economic context thereby affecting its positioning.

Tarc and Beatty (2012) discussed how the International Baccalaureate Program is emerging and described its geographic diffusion. The pilot study at a school in Ontario supported academic progress and internationalization. Based on International Baccalaureate Organization estimates, more than a lakh of students enrolled in IB programs in approximately 3295 IB schools in 141 countries. A study by Tarc and Beatty indicate that IB programs are a choice option in secondary schooling and an exemplar of gifted education. There is also some research that raises questions about how IBD benefits mainstream programs, teachers, and students. There is also concern that IBD is too resource intensive and produces a clique of students who do not interact with the larger student body. Tarc and Beatty emphasized that excellence in academic performance at postsecondary education was strongly predicted for IB students by enhancing a student's competence.

The pilot study by Tarc and Beatty (2012) comprised of focused group interviews along with a survey that yielded a positive response regarding time management and critical thinking. Pilot study may not help to promote international-mindedness depending on what efforts the students include. Tarc and Beatty suggested further research with additional partners about a comparative basis incorporating non-IB students to judge the efficiency of IB programs on a multi-sited basis. Regarding the theory of knowledge, Tarc and Beatty recommend a multisite study to illuminate pedagogic practices and their effect on student learning.

Keller (2014) used the metaphor of the Roman God Janus to focus on opposite perspectives of the leadership concept of international schools. Taking up an International

School in Turkey, Keller used a two-stage framework to analyze spatial and temporal dualities in the education niche where international school leaders are operating. Globalization has fueled the growth of international schools (Keller, 2014). Fifty-four percent of international schools were in Asia, 22% in Europe, 12% in America, 9% in Africa, and 2% in Oceania (Keller, 2014). Leaders of such institutions face challenges of complexity and ambiguity. Accepting these dualities is possible by resolving unique problems from a different perspective.

Using Simkin's model, Keller (2014) resolved many issues such as objectives of the firm, conception, leadership skills, and delegation of authority in a temporal manner. The second stage is reframing specific leadership challenges through four distinct perspectives, structural, human resources, political, and symbolic. For example, there is a dichotomy between nurturing pride in one's cultural heritage and international-mindedness. A leader could play the role of a social architect and appoint two committees, promoting both the causes and create a cohesive culture. Keller identified the realities of the complex international school leadership and suggests a novel mechanism; however, each school leader has to evolve new paradigms and approaches.

Sunder (2013) discussed international education from the teacher perspective regarding the emotional labor expended. Voicing teacher experiences based on 28 research participants from an international school in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the research involved data collection through semistructured interviews and via emails. Several themes emerged from the data such as the importance of teaching to cultural context and pressure of parental influence. Other gaps included students not speaking

English and leadership roles where school leaders burden young teachers with heavy responsibilities of leadership. The need to incorporate local and global significance in teaching and learning is a disadvantage that becomes an opportunity to promote conceptual understanding rather than a regurgitation of facts. Teachers are reflective practitioners who belong to professional learning communities and can achieve much through collaboration and peer mentoring programs. The rewards and challenges in international school pedagogy are more than the investment demand regarding emotional labor (Sunder, 2013).

Hill (2014) adopted an outlook toward school leadership based on extant literature review. A school with a global mindset teaches international curriculum irrespective of the geographic location or cultural diversity by ensuring global perspectives and interdependence in training students. The pedagogy favors critical and interdisciplinary thinking to provide lifelong learning skills based on humane attitude. The IB curriculum continuum and the underpinning IB learner profile positively enhance school leadership. The open-mindedness of school leadership endears to the multiple social interactions at all levels, which help to understand social realities to make the school a cultural artifact. Artistic images motivate school leaders, making the leaders effective facilitators rather than supervisors. Leaders define values and possess the tool of clear communication regarding organizational identity. An international school leader projects the idea of a strong, wise guide. The more internationally minded the leader, the better the school community will be to provide different perspectives.

Nisbet (2014) discussed the possibility of coexistence of national and international education. Nisbet questioned the meaning of international schools and whether it was different from international education. International schools are organizations that run in more than one country and try to get together students from different countries to follow Cambridge International curriculum or International Baccalaureate curriculum or catering to overseas citizens. A school offering national curriculum could also be emphasizing international curriculum to meet the rising demand for such education in most countries. Contextually education or globalization is linked to exposure to ideas across the world and could sometimes be used as a euphemism for Westernization. The other scenario is a national education program that emphasizes patriotism and commitment to national values.

Regarding the discussion whether the two could co-exist, Nisbet (2014) proposed a few possible answers. One position could be to adopt an evolutionary perspective in which the stronger of the two will survive. Second, ethical internationalist position accepts a potential conflict between the two types of education but provides for shaping the students' questioning mind. An extreme stand accepts the compatibility and balance between the two, which are the emphasis on individual rights on the one hand and consideration for society and family on the other. Tipping the balance is the argument that acceptance of the flourishing of national education alone is the only antidote to excesses of internationalism. Nisbet's position advocated an ongoing dynamic relationship between international and national education where each informs and challenges the other. Exposure to international thinking is the only way to engage students in real dialogue with their peers in countries across the globe, which provides the greatest potential for growth (Nisbet, 2014).

McDonald, Pini, and Mayes (2012) analyzed the school prospectuses of 65 elite schools in Australia. They studied communication regarding identification, juxtaposition, self-publicizing, self-expansion, and reframing leading to marketing rhetoric to persuade parents to choose between schools. Prospectuses are an important strategy, and the study used them to understand the messages for persuasive communication to internal and external audiences. The research study by McDonald et al. indicated that further research is required to understand how to influence parental and student choice in the education sector.

Branding and Marketing

Barker (2013) urged that a tactical and corporate brand perspective is required to provide impetus to integrated marketing communication (IMC). Barker called this new perspective as Strategic Integrated Communication (SIC). SIC focuses on the strategic intent of the organization. SIC helps a firm to improve strategic, integrated communication, and knowledge management using creative media strategies. Barker used qualitative method for research and performed literature review drawing on the useful viewpoints and the implication of current studies to suggest an alternative perspective on IMC, known as SIC. Barker wanted to ascertain the main premise of IMC and the concepts that enhance it. Barker proposed alignment of all communication based on a SIC perspective. The study was valuable because the information helped understand how IMC has evolved. The study stimulates debate on whether IMC is an idealistic reality. Barker proposed a new perspective on marketing, called SIC, keeping in mind the changing times.

Tawanda, Chisango.Future, and Maposa (2013) evaluated the marketing strategies at the Zimbabwe Open University to enroll new students. The research was descriptive, and Tawanda et al. employed survey method based on a structured questionnaire. The results indicated that current and former students were not promoting the university brand. Because the university itself was not promoting its brand, the students were vulnerable to negative information about the university. Tawanda et al. recommended placing advertisements in newspapers establishing information centers, paying incentives to alumni for aggressive promotion and increasing the visibility of the university. The recommendations are generalizable for other universities. Low student enrollment may indicate problems in marketing strategies especially when there is fierce competition in the education sector.

Education marketing is becoming a sector whenever schools are competitive and getting branded (Natale & Doran, 2012). An ethical crisis follows of low morale among students, poor teacher engagement, lack of ability to think critically, and inadequate academic rigor. The contemporary face of education considers students as a revenue stream before, during, and after their lifetime value chain as a student. Marketing education implies driving university rankings to drive student enrollment and revenue. Accountability and measurement of outcomes highlight the conflict of the role of educator vis-a-vis business leader, critical thinking skills for students vis-a-vis learning marketable skills. A conflict exists regarding treating education as a public good or as a means of self-aggrandizement for the student consumer that may help the university to fulfill its financial goals.

The parental need to know the return on investment based on retention rates, graduation rates, and job prospects drive the rankings of universities. The ethical crisis is that such education is not equitable as financially disadvantaged students would find it difficult to gain entry into such institutions. Advertising through glamorous brochures of highly ranked universities also provides a shaded picture to the students making marketing schools unethical. Traditionally, one viewed education as a pattern; which has turned into a product, highlighting the importance of accountability over academic freedom, utility over truth, and performance over thoughtfulness. Natale and Doran (2012) highlighted the markers that have to be borne in mind so that education serves its intended purpose.

Gurmmesson and Gronroos (2012) provided a Nordic school perspective of service marketing theory. Mass-manufactured consumer goods gave way to exploration of the integrated goods and services approach. The method stems from Northern Europe and relates to the literature review of various market cultures, business practice, and marketing theory. The focus is toward bringing in service as a value added concept. The basic theory is that goods and services are interdependent, and long-term relationships are more relevant to bring the concept of service management as a process (Gurmmesson & Gronroos, 2012).

The perspective of service interdependent with goods as a process involving the consumer instead of just talking about marketing as an exclusive department or function is a relevant approach. The perspective ties up well while dealing with sectors such as health and education. Relationship marketing has its issues of quality and satisfaction. Human perception comes into play leading to both extensive and intensive qualitative studies of a phenomenological nature (Gurmmesson & Gronroos, 2012).

Urde and Koch (2014) identified that along the spectrum of marketing and branding, positioning is an important concept that is also strategic to integrate positioning research through a structured overview based on existing literature. Urde and Koch traced the evolution of positioning the brand, regarding the unique selling proposition (USP) to the 1950s. Urde and Koch highlighted the concepts of segmentation, targeting, and communication culminating in brand-oriented and market-oriented positioning depending on the type of organization. Five distinct schools of thought depending on what techniques one uses to project the brand are: (a) to fit a particular demand, (b) to rhetorically wordplay, (c) distinction from rivals, (d) creating value and identity of the brand, or (e) bypass competition.

To the questions regarding whether an identity should guide an organization or be responsive to the views of others, the answer from the study was that both market and brand-oriented positioning are important. Urde and Koch (2014) gave an efficient overview of the literature and classified the action of positioning regarding various paradigms. Empirical case study based research can identify how these paradigms are workable. Longitudinal studies are also possible. Both theoretically and practically, positioning as a process is crucial to the understanding of all types of markets be it fast moving consumer goods or services such as health and education.

Ho (2014) addressed the Taiwan school scenario in a slightly different manner as compared to the research done by Chen and Lin (2013). Using questionnaires, Ho collected data from 500 principals in Taiwan to understand the frequency and use of marketing strategies. The finding was that major differences existed in the strength of the marketing tactics used and their frequency. Ho suggested that schools have to improve their marketing tactics, and a uniform standardized approach is inadequate. Each school's environment and needs are unique as are the internal and external factors.

Different marketing tactics have different strengths. Chen and Lin (2013) identified twelve marketing tactics. Principals from remote areas relied heavily on price and promotion than the city school principals. Gender and level of education of the principals affect the differences in the marketing strategies. In this study by Chen and Lin, the sample size is sufficient, and the perceptual map is a useful concept giving the various tactics and their relevant strengths. Many principals believe that innovative curriculum, quality faculty, and location as the three most important features that bring long-term benefits and a competitive edge (Chen & Lin, 2013).

Mizala and Urquiola (2013) explored the Chile Sistema Nacional de Evaluacion del Desempeno (National System Performance Assessment - SNED) program that evaluates the effectiveness of schools and studied its effect on student enrollment, school tuition fees, and the socioeconomic composition of the students. The effect of competition on school performance influences the parental perception of school quality and thereby enrollment. From the article by Mizala and Urquiola, the empirical study of the Chilean SNED school system does not seem to support the hypothesis despite several modifications to the regression analysis to ensure a reliable investigation. The only step left out is not implementing a proper control group to ensure adequate comparison. While the conclusion is surprising and many reasons are given to justify it in the Chilean context, the fact remains that the SNED program of Chile is not representative of all countries. However, Mizala and Urquiola raised a note of caution for other researchers in education; school markets are not an automatic function of school quality or effectiveness.

DiMartino and Jessen (2014) discussed the implication of marketing and branding practices of public education in New York. Based on two city-based case studies of the 250 high schools opened by the New York City education department, DiMartino and Jessen explored marketing practices and parental response. In New York, education reforms in the context of newly set up smaller schools of public-private partnerships have given rise to a marketplace of education that offers a wide choice to students irrespective of neighborhood boundaries. DiMartino and Jessen provided a theoretical framework on what branding and marketing practices exist how they affect parents and student choice as well as the outcomes regarding education access and equity.

Branding can become an institutionalized symbol for the school. Based on the literature DiMartino and Jessen (2014) observed that schools do not necessarily possess marketing plans but just react to situations in the form of promotional activities like open houses and brochures. Principals and teachers must be open to the needs, to consumers, and collect data from research and test scores to make strategic marketing decisions.

From evaluating the effectiveness of marketing, DiMartino and Jessen found disconnects between what school authorities provided and what parents needed.

DiMartino and Jessen (2014) considered two case studies for investigation of visual branding and other marketing strategies. School leaders' desire to carve out a market niche may jeopardize the distinction between the public and private schools, regarding the role of branding and marketing. DiMartino and Jessen underlined the need for training school leaders, on how to align marketing materials to school needs, the budgeting process for the purpose, and the target population.

Suss (2012) presented a case for schools to market themselves and assures the stakeholders that the school dedicates to serving the educational needs of the community to the highest degree possible. Parents are looking for alternative schools, and many different types of schools exist, all competing for the same students. Suss used an open-ended questionnaire, followed by interviews to understand the attitudes of principals and teachers in Israel toward marketing. Many of them thought there was no need to market schools. Some also bring up the reason of lack of financial resources and ignorance about how to go about marketing schools. Suss urged principals and teachers to focus on education by thinking regarding marketing and branding that is a big challenge.

Word of mouth is a potent marketing tactic, and an institution should use it to project a school's uniqueness. A strategy is also proposed to determine goals that are smart, bringing in functional and emotional value in the form of a vision that visualize the core characteristic representing the DNA or USP. School leaders must manage to market by promoting the content to establish a relation with the media and community. The positioning of the schools depends on the USP that is the brand.

Blomback and Brunninge (2013) discussed Sweden and German-based family businesses to uncover heritage based corporate identities and brands. The researchers adopted external marketing orientation to study how family and business provide a ground for brand heritage regarding differentiation and distinctiveness. Brand heritage provides a credible and authentic positioning as a strong and long lasting relationship. Several perspectives and identities exist in hybrid identity and history, however, family businesses because of longevity, track record, and core values project a historic route to uncovering heritage, identities, and branding. Blomback and Brunninge identified six approaches to representing family businesses as part of corporate branding by communicating the history and provide empirical illustrations. Family history, family heritage, company history and heritage, family in company history, and family in company heritage are mechanisms to show entrenchment in branding. Blomback and Brunninge suggested further research into strategies and integrating history through family and business identities that will establish trust and stability. Managing the duality of continuity and change provides an opportunity to renew family business while providing a connection to the past.

Choy and Kim (2013) use associative network theory to delineate the threats posed to market leading brands by copycats. The study involved 160 participants who were randomly assigned a two (similarity: high, low) X two (familiarity: high, low) matrix regarding brand design. The findings indicated that entry of another brand leading to dilution of an existing brand affects consumer's choice. New brands copy the features of original brands regarding the name, logo, symbols, and packages. Six criteria for choosing brand elements are memorability, meaningfulness, likeability, transferability, adaptability, and protectability. A combination of unique brand elements makes a trademark that creates a product impression on the consumer. By infringement of a trademark, there is potential harm to the brand as the infringement will create brand confusion. Brand imitation occurs via features or themes. Themes are more implicit than the features that could be regarding verbal or visual aspects. Quite often inappropriate imitations may lead to the negative attitude among consumers toward copycats. Original brands, based on their brand personality, can distinguish themselves from copycats. Product and product-related aspects form brand personality (Choy & Kim, 2013).

Based on research, junior brands with similar degrees of verbal and visual elements affect consumer perception of the senior brand through changed attitude and buying intention (Choy & Kim, 2013). The study also indicated that senior brands stand to gain if there is a likeness between the junior and senior brand. The reverse is true if very little similarity exists between junior and senior brand. Using repetitive ads and marketing promotion, the first comer brand must increase consumer familiarity to stem competition. The time exposure to different brands was limited in the study by Choy and Kim (2013) that can extend to using experimental designs to reflect real-life time settings. Future researchers can also investigate other distinctive brand elements other than verbal and visual.

Branding and Consumers

With the help of the frequent flier program of an airline, Nyffenegger et al. (2015) empirically examined how customers can be encouraged to develop brand relationship quality (BRQ). Nyffenegger et al. studied the methods in which service brands could associate to customers at cognitive and emotional levels. Nyffenegger et al. provided a definition of hot and cold BRQ. Cold BRQ is the strength and depth of consumer's belief in and evaluation of the service brand performance. Hot BRQ is the strength and intensity of a customer's personal connection and closeness with a brand based on the favorable feelings the consumer gains toward the brand. Nyffenegger et al. presented a research framework with the characteristic of customer service brand relationship as a central component. The framework also included the three outcomes of the word of mouth (loyalty), the share of wallet (amount spent) and price premium (willingness to pay) for the brand.

Nyffenegger et al. (2015) used in-depth qualitative interviews. The two most critical factors emerging from the study were self-congruence (Fit between consumers and brand personality) and partner quality. Data collection involved sending 5000 invitation emails to the frequent flying members of an airline. The researchers ensured the rigor of the research through factor analysis with the help of AMOS 17.0. Nyffenegger et al. expanded the extant literature and discussed both conceptually and empirically hot and cold BRQ along with the antecedents and consequences. Self-congruence and partner quality affect the BRQ differentially at different stages (Nyffenegger et al., 2015). Sustainability of a service brand is dependent on both old and new consumers highlighting the effect on brand performance (Nyffenegger et al., 2015). The managerial implications for brand relationship quality are many. The study is not generalizable as it confines to only one service category. Factors other than self-congruence and partner quality may affect BRQ like consumers' personality and effective brand sensory experience drivers.

Kumari (2013) suggested that sensory marketing can lead to creating subconscious triggers influencing consumers' perception and posed the question about how to gain an edge in the context of increasing markets and products. While 83% of commercial communication appeals to the ego, the other four senses influence 17%. Smell is the only sensation linked directly to the brain. Kumari studied various features of sensory choice especially in the context of India's diverse population providing a sensory overload. Strategic use of sensory information helps in building the brand. While noting that multi-sensory branding may not be the best option for all brands, Kumari exhorted the use of common sense in deciding about catering of the five senses.

Various factors such as teaching strategies, nutrition, hygiene, child safety influence a parent's choice of preschool. Dahari and Ya (2011) studied the connection between institutional features of preschools and consumer behavior of parents and children using a multiple regression analysis on a sample of 162 parents in Malaysia. The findings of the study were that the main factors influencing parent's choice of preschool are branding (84%), language English medium (71.6%). The importance of decision factors getting highest score were safety and security, teaching quality, hygiene, religious value, and qualified teachers. The findings are important because they indicate that parental choice is a market indicator for the preschool business. Whereas the study by Dahari and Ya provided branding data, a larger sample size and longitudinal studies would be required for the regression analysis to be more authentic and improve preschool education services.

Burgess, Greaves, Vignoles, and Wilson (2014) noted that the academic quality of accessible schools influenced the preferences of parents toward school enrollment. Burgess et al. used conditional logic in the context of schools in England. Based on an econometric model estimating household preferences for multiple school attributes is one approach. Social factors influence the preferences for schools as against location and educational attainment (Burgess et al., 2014).

In an analytical and theoretical essay, Stovall (2013) presented the realities faced by low-income groups in Chicago, United States. Stovall discussed parents' choice of education and governmental rhetoric in the three-part essay on how groups of marginalized underresourced residents can develop critical hope. The study outlined the various forms of resistance to incorporating the true educational concerns. Stovall used several examples of public opposition and expression to arrive at feasible solutions but are only acceptable in the context of Chicago. Beneficial information is that Stovall sets off the thinking process across the globe on larger issues of public-private partnership in the field of education.

Ukpor, Ubi, and Okon (2012) used stratified random sampling to select 60 private secondary schools in Cross River State rural community of Nigeria. One finding from the study was the demand for high quality in the standard of school facilities. Parents seeking effective monitoring by school proprietors and students reaching a high level of achievement were other findings. The enumerated factors influencing the choice of parents fell into five categories (a) prompt attention given to students' needs, (b) effective teaching and learning, (c) cost effectiveness, (d) good results, and (e) pride of ownership (Ukpor et al., 2012). The reasons why parents did not patronize public secondary schools fell into three categories: (a) poor human and material facilities, (b) low standard of education, and (c) delay in attending to urgent needs of students. The findings were a pointer to the government to act promptly by bringing about reforms to raise the standard of public schools (Ukpor et al., 2012).

Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) discussed the parent-school engagement in which parents identify attitudes, communication, and leadership practices of school principals to be playing an important role. From a qualitative study of 22 focus groups of parents in Australian State of New South Wales, the findings suggested that a supportive, welcoming principal was more likely to engage parents than a disinterested one. For students to maximize their schooling potential, parent-school engagement and support are required. Six types of parental involvement are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Parents as important stakeholders are increasingly conscious of the power of their choice and voice; however, depending on socio-economic diversities parents may not play as complete a role as stipulated by the umbrella concept of parental engagement. Barr and Saltmarsh highlighted the areas of dissonance between expected and actual levels of partnership and trust between parents and school. The discussion with parents brings up points that principals have to be mindful of their roles as entrepreneurs, impression managers, and relationship builders in their communities.

Jaakkola and Alexander (2014) discussed how customer engagement helps in value co-creation in a multi-stakeholder public transport service system. The case study approach in the paper composed of the Scot Rail's program on *Adopt a station* by the local communities. Data collection was for over a period of 10 months for ten stations. Augmenting, co-developing, influencing, and mobilizing behaviors affected the value co-creation. Some measures were providing ideas, maintaining service stations, and resolving problems of cleanliness. Convincing other customers, word of mouth, or blogging, and social media posting were other measures leading to financial benefits. The study by Jaakkola and Alexander demonstrated that companies could enhance customer engagement behavior by appearing open, accessible, and adaptive to customer contributions. Further research of a longitudinal type that involves the customer, firms, and stakeholders with different degrees of participation and involvement may be interesting.

Wilkins (2012) discussed the visually oriented approach to school choice by parents who are consumer-citizens and go through a process of cognitive mapping of brochures and websites. Schools define themselves culturally, pedagogically, and historically and arrange material for visual consumption that affects school choice. Wilkins elaborated upon the strengths and limitations of visual methods and used the discourse analysis of the promotional material. The finding of this study by Wilkins was that the significance of visual material is context dependent. The method used in this study by Wilkins was subjective and difficult to replicate. The observation that visual and narrative imagery influences choice trends was nearly axiomatic.

Andrei and Zait (2014) argued that an effective branding process must focus on relationship building and develop an integrated view of the underlying consumer behavior. Based on an interdisciplinary literature review, Andrei and Zait exposed the need for customer loyalty and trust for the success of relationship marketing in the new customer-centric paradigm as opposed to the earlier product-centric approach. The research involved the plotting of warmth and competence on a four quadrant high-low relationship for most brands on a graph. Establishing high levels of both perceptions of warmth and competence is difficult, thus the debate about which comes first to ensure customer loyalty. Andrei and Zait invoked the third dimension of trust. Both emotional and rational trust is bound to exist in every commercial transaction. Consumer relationship with companies depends on trust and the positive emotions influence decisions to trust and sway the consumer more than rational trust.

Consumer’s intuition system, which acts in a fast, spontaneous, and effortless manner, influences behavior and engenders emotional trust. The rational trust would come from the reasoning system that is slow, controlled, rule-based, and effortful. Immediate emotions influence the decision to trust rather than rational expectations. Company leaders should establish warmth before competence to nurture trust and customer based relationships as carriers of their commercial transaction and sales (Andrei & Zait, 2014).

The purpose of the research paper by Dwivedi and Merrilees (2013) was to model the effect of brand extensions regarding parent brand equity in the Asian and Indian context. Dwivedi and Merrilees recommended that auditing of parent brand trust was necessary before the decision of brand extension. Brand extensions linked with successful parent brand receive quick customer appreciation. Dwivedi and Merrilees used the conceptual model of categorization theory to understand the consumer's perception of attributes and attitudes of a brand extension. The more the degree of perceived fit between a parent brand and its extension, the more direct the positive effect on parent brand equity. The study involves a hypothetical scenario of Amul launching its chain of restaurants. The study emphasized the relevance of developing trust in brands. The basis for designing strong brand extensions depends on fundamental principles of good branding such as brand vision, identity, values, personality, and alignment of individual brand elements to the brand concept (Dwivedi & Merrilees, 2013).

Metrics in Branding

Latif, Islam, Noor, Saaban, and Halim (2014) discussed the input of antecedents of brand image on consumer response as a strong brand creates a competitive edge in the marketplace. The framework composed of brand awareness, association, superiority, affection, resonance, and corporate social responsibility. Based on a case study of a hotel in Bangladesh, Latif et al. (2014) presented a conceptual model for strengthening brand image and discussed the managerial aspects of such a concept.

Competition increases successful brand marketing that depends on leveraging the customer impression of a brand and using the five blocks of the conceptual model identified to strengthen and evaluate the brand image (Latif et al., 2014). The conceptual paper based on the literature review helps in outlining the ways to improve brand value in the eyes of the consumer. Marketing techniques triggering the five forces are important. Branding has become a strategic component of management. Strandvik and Heinonen (2013) developed a new analytical tool for service firms to explore and map brand strength. Consumers gained positive and negative experiences regarding the brand relationships, and consequent attachment of thoughts, feelings, and actions form the basis of the model.

Strandvik & Heinonen (2013) developed a conceptual and methodological approach based on literature about branding and presented a diagnostic picture along with an illustrative empirical study. The four issues related to brand focused upon are positive versus negative connection with a brand, purchase behavior communication activity, and portfolios of brand relationships. Brand relationships are more holistic than a mere relationship between customer and brand. Noncustomers such as lost and potential customers also exert influence on the strength of the brand (Strandvik & Heinonen, 2013).

Mapping brand strength involves three steps: operationalizing brand connection and brand status using an ordinal scale, collecting data from a sample of customers, and developing brand strength maps for matrix analysis. Such maps can be of use for understanding customers' perception on a specific brand or competing brands or all brands in an industry or mapping changes in position over time. In the exploratory study by Strandvik and Heinonen (2013), customers' assessments from six service brands in four service industries led to 170 respondents and 2040 responses. Because service brand is a new tool, its applicability to different contexts, stakeholders, and industries are yet to be considered. The totality of brand strength is taking into account positive, negative, and indifferent aspects of customers' relationship (Strandvik & Heinonen, 2013).

Wilson, Bengtsson, and Curran (2014) explored the brand meaning gaps among internal and external stakeholder groups along with two external stakeholder groups. They identified four types of brand meaning gaps in which brands are beloved, on the cusp, hijacked, or facing disaster. Brand meaning is harmonious and positively valenced. How, where, and when consumers encounter the brand is important to serve as a mental link between names, images, and cognitions in the consumers' mind and evolves from brand knowledge. Brand knowledge and brand meaning creation indicate co-creative processes through a reflexive process for consumers. Wilson et al. (2014) provided a conceptual framework and extended the work of other researchers by exploring empirically the brand meaning gaps between the owner and the stakeholder. The researchers introduced a new concept of valence for such gaps which are the direction and intensity of messages. When the brand is beloved, the valence is positive and high, when it is neutral to mildly positive, it is on the cusp. Hijacked brands, where messages are appropriated to promote alternate agendas is dissonant, and when there is a catastrophe, valence is negative when the consumer perceives the brand as untrustworthy and doubletalk (Wilson et al., 2014).

While the study by Wilson et al. (2014) indicated taxonomy of brands, based on consumer perception and serves as a conceptual framework, the sample is small and calls for more cases. So also the nature of survey and coverage of respondents have to be more representative because brand perception may not be uniform. The case study was not adequate for generalization into theory. Whereas the concept of co-creation of value is legitimate, assessing it in different contexts calls for a more rigorous and wider study.

Supplee (2014) studied the requirement of a balanced financial strategy to meet the financial challenges of small tuition-dependent private colleges in the form of rising costs growing debts and falling credit ratings. Supplee used a multilevel model, and it indicates that increased student enrollment had a positive effect on financial health during some periods but no major correlation among graduate and nontraditional courses and financial health. Existing literature about the financial health of private colleges including Christian institutions highlights the role of endowment size as the best indicator of institutions' financial strength, despite the focus on enrollment strategies. A balanced financial strategy must not rely on excessive tuition discounting but monitor other aspects such as moderate student enrollment and increased focus on endowment and gift sources (Supplee, 2014).

Grebennikov and Shah (2012) focused on the first-year student attrition in a multi-campus university. Higher attrition rates have a negative effect on countries about intellectual capacity, skillful manpower, and levy significant financial penalties on the university. Student retention can be predicted using psychosocial, cognitive, and demographic factors as also poor academic preparation or performance, and inadequate access to program and career information. The predictors of student retention are previous academic performance, student level of awareness, university entry score, socioeconomic status, and type of on-campus housing. The case study university experienced high student attrition in 2006-2010. Students identified, among others, the following factors: (a) the course was not as per student expectations, (b) staff were difficult to access, and (c) inadequate teaching (Grebennikov & Shah, 2012). Examining attrition tendencies using opinions from exiting students can help to address issues and increasing student retention.

Singh and Srivastava (2014) validated a student engagement scale. The engagement scale measured three dimensions of student engagement namely sense of belonging, individual engagement, and collaborative engagement. Student engagement is linked to high-quality learning outcomes as he or she is connected with the institution and gains a sense of belonging, individual engagement, and collaborative engagement. The National Survey of Student Engagement derived five benchmarks to evaluate the effectiveness of an engaged campus. They are an academic challenge, students' interactions with faculty, active and collaborative learning, enriching experiences, and supportive campus environment. Professional students of management were part of this study by Singh and Srivastava, but other student segments can also become part of a similar study. Student engagement, learning outcomes, branding, and brand loyalty are all interrelated concepts and enhance one another.

Relevance of the Current Study

Review of the extant literature indicated the relevance of the current study by me on the focus of branding by private international schools in India from a strategic perspective. Branding, as seen in schools as well as in the higher education sector, indicates that branding as a strategy is required but not undertaken in a systematic, structured manner in the best of schools.

One can draw the following observations from the contributions in the field.

- Branding is an important marketing strategy in a competitive world.
- The FMCG sector and other industries use branding most often with limited application to the education sector.
- Even in the education sector, universities and higher education segments adopt a few practices and initiatives of branding, but the process of branding is not prevalent in the K-12 sector.
- Some efforts in private international schools to use branding as one among the various techniques of marketing does not give enough basis to conclude that there exists a structured approach.
- The concepts and building blocks of branding have evolved to focus on a range of stakeholders such as the consumer, the firm, and the employee.
- A brand audit is a necessary tool to assess the health of the brand.
- Various techniques exist to rework on the branding process once the health is assessed

Use of quantitative method, case study design, or geographic location may be different and all pinpointed to the gap that exists about branding in the private international school segment that my study aimed to fill.

Critique and Synthesis of the Literature Review

In this section, I presented an overarching critical analysis and synthesis of the literature referenced in this study. The presentation is from two perspectives: one on the technical approach and the other based on the findings. I reviewed some of the work relating to branding in the education sector, particularly in the higher education segment. While some used the quantitative method, most of the contributions worked on case studies from countries representing institutions across the globe. The common feature was that because the observations were contextual to the specific institutions, a generalization of the branding process for educational institutions was not possible. The advantage of basing my study on past research lies in familiarizing myself with the notion of branding in the education sector. It helped in the acceptance of the need for a structured approach to branding.

Whereas researchers focused on the need for enhancing the efficacy of marketing strategies for schools, there cannot be a uniform standardized approach for every school as the environment is unique. A targeted approach is required to formulate and implement the brand strategy. The private international schools studied displayed different marketing tactics and highlight an innovative curriculum and a high standard of quality and training in the faculty. As a contrast, the feature in a public school or government school provides a picture that is dramatically different. Parents prefer private schools over government schools whether in a developing country or a developed country. The reasons are more like the lack of attention and focus on the quality of academia. Access to resources forms an important aspect of the scenario as Hirvonen et al. (2013) also observed. Quite often resource limitations such as lack of budget, expertise, or lack of time prevent organizations from resorting to branding. Yoo (2014) identified certain limitations calling for further research on the very nature of the experimental design, stimuli, and subjects. Successful branding requires repeated exposure to keyword search ads, making repeatability an important variable in the design of experiments. Casidy (2013) provided a different and insightful angle into student perception of brands; several limitations exist in the sampling techniques adopted for the questionnaire. One limitation of the study by Kiriago (2013) was that the sample was small, and the recommendations were specific because it was a case study of a particular academy.

Khanna et al. (2014) considered that other influencing touchpoints apart from the few listed touchpoints of branding lie in the consumer's periphery. They could be industry perception of the Institute, the reputation of the leadership, and career development of the alumni. Chawla and Lenka (2015) discussed the scope as confined to Indian higher education institutes.The study sample using the survey method cannot be free from biases despite the personal touch with the respondents. Tas and Ergin (2012) dealt with students from different disciplines and from various public and private institutions making the discussion more contextual and less applicable to general situations. When the study is conceptual and nonempirical, the need for context arises (Barker, 2013). In Tawanda et al. (2013), I saw the smallness of the sample and the limited geography as limitations. The sample does not represent the views of all students or talks of only one product category as in Choy and Kim (2013). The government needs to act promptly to raise the standard of public schools through reforms (Ukpor, 2012).

In the section of branding and consumer, I saw the role of trust build effective brands and relationships with the consumer as emphasized by Andrei and Zait (2014). Many researchers have highlighted the importance of word of mouth. Also, the role of parent brand equity regarding brand extensions is evident (Dwivedi & Merrilees, 2013). A synergy exists regarding the range of contributions relating to branding in marketing and branding in education. Buil, Martinez, and Chernatony (2013) outlined brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty. Brand equity is the brand strength that is a conclusive measure of the effectiveness of the brand strategy adopted (Buil et al., 2013).

From the findings of the studies in the extant literature, brand development is conducted by the realignment of the vision, mission, and values (Hirvonen et al., 2013). When based on a historic approach or design, the brand gains a heritage, but brand buy-in depends on authenticity and leadership (Miller, 2014). In the case of a private international school brand acceptance is possible through the strengthening of teaching and offering a course content that can attract and retain parents' attention (Chen & Lin, 2013). Several studies show that low performance of branding is synonymous with ineffective leadership management, poor infrastructure and resources, less attraction, and poor promotion (Oei, 2015). School leaders need to concentrate on the quality of teaching as it affects the word of mouth leading to poor enrollment. Learning and teaching activity, fostering professional development, and family and community involvement affect the school culture thus affecting community perception (Oei, 2015).

The prolonged debate between private and government schools shows that students choose the former because of physical infrastructure standards, costs of schooling, and student performance (Gautam, 2011). Private schools have lower teacher salaries, lesser student-teacher ratio, and very little absenteeism as compared to government schools. While discussing private international schools, brand positioning assumes an important role to project a unique selling proposition (Urde & Koch, 2014). Strategic planning leads to image building and brand identity. Quite often segmentation of students is required to ensure student enrollment by creating a brand identity for the school (Bock et al., 2014). Leadership capabilities for strategic branding depend on emotional intelligence, dynamism, support to create goals, shared vision, teamwork, and capability to manage change proactively. Consumers, in this case, parents, benefit from brands as they signify quality, reduced search costs, and risks.

A relationship exists between branding and internal culture (Joseph et al., 2012). The school staff is an ambassador of the brand, and their communication medium is through websites and public relations. Designing advertisements and delivery affect students and their perception of brand reputation, ranking, and accreditation (Tas & Ergin, 2012). School leaders must maintain a good learning environment and devise methods to connect to the potential young minds emotionally. Branding on the Internet or i-branding is one of the new branding strategies (Popescu, 2012).

Transition

Section 1 was an introduction to the role of branding in the education sector. Research is available about how to improve branding in higher educational institutions.

However, there is very little research on enhancing branding for private international schools. I also looked into the conceptual framework based on the double vortex brand model. The exploratory and open-ended interview questions based on these concepts provided information regarding how private international school leaders formulate branding strategies.

In Section 2, I explain the role of the researcher and understanding of the participants related to the study. I also present the research method, and design along with data collection measures, data organizational procedures, and data analysis. I also discuss reliability and validity of qualitative research. Outcomes and conclusions of my study are the focus of Section 3.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore the branding strategies that private international K-12 school leaders in India use to enhance the school brand. The targeted population consisted of private international school leaders from one of the private international K-12 school in Chennai, a city in India. The secondary population consisted of faculty and parents from the same school in Chennai. I believe that this population was appropriate for my study because it enabled to understand the branding strategies that private international K-12 schools adopt. Study findings may help private international K-12 school leaders improve student enrollments, improve retention of teaching and nonteaching staff, reduce overall competition, and increase financial resources. Improved teaching staff availability may further lead to improved educational outcomes (e.g., writing skills, levels of subject matter knowledge, better college placements) for school students.

Role of the Researcher

For this qualitative case study, my role was to identify the branding strategies adopted by a private international K-12 school in Chennai, India. I conducted 15 face-to-face interviews with school leaders, parents, and employees. Palinkas et al. (2015) highlighted the role of purposive sampling in achieving qualitative research synthesis and data saturation. To enhance the investigation, I used purposive sampling to identify parents and several employees of the school. These interviews have supported to obtain perceptions of the parents and school staff regarding the school's brand strength. I have been working in the education sector for the past 2 decades. I am the director of a well-known conglomerate of educational institutions, which includes K-12 through professional colleges comprising 55 institutions, 42,000 students, and 2,200 staff members.

Greaney et al. (2012) assisted novice researchers in the research ethics application process and provided a systematic method using the three ethical principles of respect for people, beneficence, and justice, as explained in the Belmont Report. I used the Belmont report protocol as a guideline for ethical considerations while interviewing the participants. Qualitative research interviews presented challenges because my doctoral study and career experience were both from the field of education. Haahr, Norlyk, and Hall (2014) described that moments of openness and responsiveness will link to the ethical care and responsibility that researcher's role brings along with highlighting the need for sensibility and empathy for the researcher-participant relationship. I displayed continuous caution, ethical awareness, and concern for the participants.

I used standardized semistructured interview protocol and tools suggested by Jacob and Furgerson (2012) for students new to writing qualitative interview protocol and conducting interviews. Pannucci and Wilkins (2010) stated that researchers should try to transcend some of their biases with the aid of methods they use in the interview process. I audiotaped interviews, interpreted, and gave the interpretations to participants for review and confirmation, thereby enhancing the validity (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010). Collecting data from multiple categories of participants also helped me minimize bias. Continued consciousness on my part while interpreting data also helped to minimize bias. A deep purpose and objective lies as an underpinning to the procedure of data collection in qualitative research because it deals with the experiences of the participants (Xu & Storr, 2012). My personal lens is connected closely to private international schools. Thus, I believe that I had the necessary experience to understand the depth of data regarding such institutions.

Interview protocols include (a) informal, conversational interviews; (b) general interview guide approach; and (c) standardized semistructured interview with open-ended questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The Causal Network Elicitation Technique protocol is a semistructured personal interview method for travel decisions (Ceunynck, Kusumastuti, Hannes, Janssens, & Wets, 2013). I used the standardized semistructured interview method with open-ended questions to elicit detailed information from the participants. I designed 10 in-depth interview questions for each of the three categories of participants in my case study. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) suggest that researchers include follow-up questions when conducting semistructured interviews. I prepared a list of follow-up questions that allowed participants to express their viewpoint and experiences fully. I analyzed data from the interviews to develop the themes from the responses. In the process, an opportunity for comparison between responses and studying the pros and cons contextually also arose.

Participants

The participants for this case study were drawn purposefully from a private international school in Chennai, India. For confidentiality purposes, I have used the terms *study site* or *the school I studied* to refer to the school where I conducted my study. Based on the criteria for participant inclusion as discussed by Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013), I ensured that each participant is connected to the study site either as a school leader, parent, or faculty. The selection of the participants was through a purposive sampling technique. In using a purposive sampling technique, the researcher decides which participants to consider for the sample (Ritchie et. al., 2013). Researchers use multiple criteria for this decision making. One criterion was that the participants should have specialist knowledge of the research issue (Anyan, 2013; Ishak & Bakar, 2014; Robinson 2014). For this study, I sought names and contact information of the potential participants from the school leader whom I interviewed first.

I waited for approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before commencing the study. I initially contacted potential school leader participants and faculty participants in person. I contacted potential parent participants via email to invite them to be part of the research project. Researchers must make sure that participants know the purpose of the research to enable them to give informed consent before participating (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). I requested that participants sign a consent form that indicates their agreement to be considered for the research participation (see Appendix B). Consent form included a description of the study. The consent form also included a statement that participation was voluntary. I will use password protection and physically store all study documents under lock and key for 5 years after study completion.

It is important to have a comfortable association between the researcher and interviewees for the qualitative study to be successful (Swauger, 2011). To facilitate the process of data collection and assure credibility of the responses, I viewed it as necessary to establish rapport and a working relationship with participants (Brett, O'Neill, & O'Gorman, 2014; Given, 2008; Swauger, 2011). Effective data collection implies establishing rapport and building trust with research participants (Given, 2008). One method to establish rapport and build trust is to carry out interviews in a setting familiar to the participants. Given (2008) stated that researchers should strive for friendly, trusting, collaborative, reciprocal, and connected relationships with the participants. Because I belong to a private international school fraternity, I looked forward to a reciprocal relational ethic with the participant that is friendly, trusting, and collaborative. I did not use coercion and ensured that the interviewees were comfortable to withdraw from the research at any point in time. However, none of the participants chose to withdraw from my research study. I displayed responsibility and sense of care as described by Swauger (2011) by maintaining communication with the participants consistently through phone and emails. Face-to-face interviews with the participants also made me and participants become familiar and helped establish a meaningful working relationship.

Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) stated that the two main purposes of triangulation are to *confirm* data and to ensure data are *complet*e. Because the participants in my study belonged to School A, pursuing knowledge from multiple stakeholders supported triangulation. The open-ended interview questions aligned to the overarching research question. Because I used these questionnaires during the face-to-face interview with the participants, their responses aligned with the overarching research question.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Research method involves data collection, coding, analyzing, and interpreting responses in research studies. Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods are the three approaches used in research (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Zohrabi, 2013). Qualitative researchers explore the behavior of an individual in a descriptive manner to obtain insights into the individual's experience (Kramer-Kile, 2012). The data regarding respondent's perspectives are collected through participants' dialogue to focus on the meaning qualitatively (Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie, & Green, 2012). The viewpoint of the respondent is the aim of data collection in qualitative research projected through observations, dialogs, and interviews (Allwood, 2012). For this study, I used the qualitative method because data collection involved procedures related to interviewing questions. Qualitative method is an informed method to study how private international schools in India can adopt branding strategies to project their school brand. I aimed to explore branding interventions of private international schools in India. The objective was to explore the drivers that influence the stakeholders – school leaders, faculty, and parents. I conducted interviews using exploratory case study for better understanding of branding as it occurs.

Because qualitative and quantitative research are different, the appropriateness of the qualitative research for this study stands out markedly. The two research methods have different goals (Barnham, 2012). Formulation and testing of hypotheses using numerical data is the crux of quantitative research (Hoare & Hoe, 2012; Hoare & Hoe, 2013). Quantitative research involves the measurement of specific variables (Allwood, 2012). Quantitative deductive approach lacks capturing characteristics of real-life events (Staggers & Blaz, 2013; Yin, 2014). An individual researcher may not find it feasible to accept the challenge of collecting concurrent sequential data to apply mixed-methods to the study. Most researchers using the mixed method complement qualitative techniques with quantitative techniques (Hayes, Bonner, & Douglas, 2013). The appropriateness of the mixed method approach is valid when either quantitative or qualitative approaches are not sufficient to tackle the research topic (Wisdom et al., 2012). Quantitative data is an essential component of the mixed method (Wisdom et al., 2012). My objective was to comprehend the branding strategies used at private international schools in India. Thus, the qualitative research method aptly provided the necessary and sufficient tool for the data collection of this study, and neither quantitative nor mixed method approach were suitable.

Research Design

What and *how* questions are answered in qualitative research and the research question shapes the research design (Allwood, 2012). A deep understanding of processes governing society or organizations calls for the case study inquiry method (Moll, 2012). An in-depth analysis of case study research includes one or several cases (Pedrosa, Naslund, & Jasmand, 2012). Research design in business commonly includes the case study approach (Yin, 2014). In my doctoral study, the inquiry followed the case study approach.

Of the approaches that comprise qualitative research, the five designs are phenomenology approach, grounded theory, and ethnographic design apart from narrative and case study (Hunt, 2014). After debating upon the appropriateness of each design to explore the branding strategies used by leaders of private international schools in India, I identified the case study inquiry as the best fit for this study. When deciding upon a research method for my doctoral study, I considered the problem from the phenomenology point of view as that method enables the capturing of individual's perspectives and experiences (Tirgari, 2012). Researchers investigate lived experiences of participants through phenomenological research design (Hunt, 2014; Lewis, 2015). Through this study, I intended to provide an in-depth description of branding done by school leaders; therefore, the phenomenological design was not appropriate. While developing theory, researchers use the grounded theory approach (Lewis, 2015). Similarly, grounded theory was not suitable because the intention was not to develop a theory from the data collected based on multiple interactions with several people for grounding the theory (Zarif, 2012). The objective of my study was to understand the strategies of branding used by private international schools in India. Thus, grounded theory was unsuitable for this research. The ethnographical research deals with description and interpretation of groups sharing the same culture (Hallett & Barber, 2014). In ethnography study, ongoing observation of participants for data collection is required (Hallett & Barber, 2014). The ethnographic design was inappropriate for my study as I was not trying to study a phenomenon or the behaviors of a cultural group in their natural setting. I chose to use case study method with purposeful sampling to understand the school branding process.

In qualitative research, the purpose determines the sample size particularly when data saturation is concerned (Walker, 2012). A sample size is acceptable if it addresses the research question adequately without being too cumbersome for in-depth analysis (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). In a qualitative study, five to 50 participants represent a sufficient sample size (Dworkin, 2012). O'Reilly and Parker (2012) concluded that six interviews can also be enough to demonstrate data saturation in a qualitative study. Data saturation is defined as a state when there is enough information, and further investigation will not yield new codes or themes leading to data redundancy (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). I used a small sample. I collected data through face-to-face interviews with the school leaders, parents, and employees of a private international school in Chennai, India leading to 15 interviews. When I performed the first round of member checking process with the 15 participants, they reviewed my interpretation of their interview data. Participants approved the member checking report and confirmed that they did not have any more information to add. I reached data saturation after two rounds of interview with the 15 participants.

Population and Sampling

I used purposive sampling technique for my doctoral study. Purposive sampling technique is a nonrandom method of making certain that particular category of participants is selected for the research study (Hunt, 2014). This strategy is employed when certain people may have an exclusive, dissimilar, or valuable information about a research question, and their participation needs to be ensured (Robinson, 2014). An inherent bias exists in purposive sampling; however, this bias contributes to purposive sampling's efficiency, and this method has been found to be robust when tested against random probability sampling (Robinson, 2014). Purposive sampling method leads to a gathering of rich data because the informants chosen are competent. When the population is too small for the random sample, purposive sampling becomes a valid choice (Ishak & Bakar, 2014). I chose purposive sampling method because it provides an avenue to gain the best possible information from a sample that has the relevant information about the research question (Hunt, 2014; Ishak & Bakar, 2014; Robinson, 2014). Purposeful sampling method helped me gather rich data from the internal and external stakeholders of the school chosen for this doctoral study.

A sample size is acceptable if it addresses the research question adequately without being too cumbersome for in-depth analysis (Marshall et al., 2013). In a qualitative study, a range of five to 50 participants represents a sufficient sample size (Dworkin, 2012). Regarding the double vortex brand model, both internal and external stakeholders are involved in the branding process (Chernatony & Riley, 1998). Internal stakeholders create and implement the branding strategies. The external stakeholders, such as customers, are those who experience the brand. Based on the brand experiences consumers develop brand perceptions. For my doctoral study, I interviewed both the internal and the external stakeholders. I conducted interviews with five school leaders who shape the branding process, five parents of the children schooling there, and five faculty members who teach at the school and participate in the branding process. I conducted interviews with parents because they could tell me their perception of the brand based on their brand experience. This feedback from the parents helped me to understand whether the school branding strategies are meeting their desired goal of improving the brand experience. Another reason for conducting interviews with faculty and parents, besides the school leaders, was that data collected from them will help me achieve methodological triangulation. Marshall et al. (2013) addressed that qualitative single case studies should contain at least 15 to 30 interviews. Marshall et al. showed that focus should be more on achieving data saturation than worrying about the sample size; so I started with a sample size of 15 face-to-face interviews

In qualitative research, the purpose determines the sample size particularly when data saturation is concerned (Walker, 2012). O'Reilly and Parker (2012) concluded that six interviews can be enough to demonstrate data saturation in a qualitative study. Data saturation is the state in which there is enough information, and further investigation will not yield new information, codes, or themes (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). I began with a small sample and collected data through face-to-face interviews with the school leaders, parents, and employees of a private international school in Chennai, India leading to 15 interviews. I continued to conduct more interviews until I reached data saturation.

Ritchie et al. (2013) stated that to develop a detailed picture from a case study; researchers must choose participants from the same subculture. From the eligibility criteria point of view, I ensured that each participant had some connection to the study site either as part of school leadership, or as a parent, or as faculty. The other eligibility criteria for choosing participants was (a) willing and voluntary individuals, and (b) ability to express their experiences related to the research question. The selection of the participants was made using a purposive sampling technique and the school leader whom I interviewed first provided the names and contact information of the potential participants (i.e., school leaders, parents, and faculty). I contacted participants via phone, e-mail, and in-person before, during, and after the research interview process.

One recommendation is to interview the participant in a quiet and private place (Gagnon, Jacob, & McCabe, 2014). Conducting interview in a quiet and private place helps to ensure that the respondent feels comfortable, and the audio recording of the interview is free from background noise (Gagnon et al., 2014; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Mellor, Ingram, Abrahams, & Beedell, 2014). In my study, the three categories of participants are school leaders, faculty, and parents. For school leaders and faculty, I conducted interviews in the school to avoid wasting time because they have a busy schedule. I assumed that parents may not come to school for giving the interviews, but parents were happy to come to school to give the interview because they had high buy-in regarding the school’s philosophy. For parents, the interviews were held inside the school premises in a private place.

Ethical Research

Once participants agree to the interview, to minimize the risks, informed consent is a necessary step. According to the Nuremberg Code, participants must be free to participate voluntarily in the research (Seidman, 2013). Participants must be knowledgeable about the research to be able to consent willingly and proceed meaningfully (Seidman, 2013). The logic behind informed consent is meeting the ethical principles mentioned by the Nuremberg Code (Seidman, 2013). I approached the people willing to participate by obtaining their informed consent regarding their understanding of the detail and intent of the study through such an informed consent form (see Appendix B). The informed consent form was used to assure the participants about confidentiality. The informed consent form also described the objective of the study (Seidman, 2013). I did not face any language barriers in getting the informed consent form signed by the participants. All participants were very well versed in English.

I conveyed to the participants that they can withdraw from the research process at any time without any fear of penalty because the participation was voluntary (Schaefer & Wertheimer, 2010). Participants could have withdrawn at any time by informing me in person, over the phone, or via email. If any participant had withdrawn, I would not have used the data collected from them, and I would have also destroyed the data that I would have collected from them. None of the participants in my study chose to withdraw from the research process. I did not offer any incentive to the participants who took part in the study.

Integrity and trustworthiness of research depend on the ethical nature of research practices. It is necessary to assure participants about the ethics of the research in a qualitative study so that they cooperate and collaborate more easily (Allen, 2015; Nind, Wiles, Bengry-Howell, & Crow, 2013). I sought approval from Walden University IRB before starting data collection. After getting permission from IRB, I obtained the composition of the sample for the research from the main school leader. For confidentiality reasons, I have designated the school as school A. The sample composed a list of probable participants in school leader category, parents, and faculty members, all connected with School A. Barnhill and Barnhill (2015) stated that to maintain data security and participant confidentiality researchers avoid the use of personal identifiers. I applied alphanumeric codes to represent the three groups as SL1- SL5 (School Leader), P1- P5 (Parent), and F1- F5 (Faculty). To keep the confidentiality of the participants, I have not published their names, their demographic information like age and gender in this study. I have kept the consent forms, interview recordings, and transcribed data in a locked storage cabinet on a password-protected flash drive. I will store this data for at least 5 years. Researchers should ensure that the data collected should not fall into wrong hands and must take certain steps to dispose the data properly (Barnhill & Barnhill, 2015). Five years post the completion of my study; I will destroy consent forms by shredding, and interview recordings and transcribed data by erasing the password protected flash drive. During my research study, I adhered to the Belmont report principle of autonomy and protection of the research participants. I will adhere to the Belmont report principle of autonomy and protection of the research participants even after my research study (Greaney et al., 2012).

Data Collection Instruments

Because I chose a qualitative method for my study, I was the primary data collection instrument. Choice of data collection depends on the research question to be addressed (Anyan, 2013). Qualitative research mostly relies on the semistructured interview (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2012). I used semistructured interviews as the data collection instrument for my doctoral study.

Semistructured interview method relies on the development of dialogue between interviewer and participant (Zikmund et al., 2012). The skill of the interviewer can be used to collect a variety of data (Zikmund et al., 2012). Semistructured interview method is also suited for exploration and opinions of participants regarding a given subject (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Besides the interview, I explored school's policy manual and school website for the data collection process.

Researchers can conduct semistructured interviews either over the phone or face-to-face (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). For my doctoral study, I conducted face-to-face interviews. For an exploratory case study, questions should be open-ended, so that participants can respond in their words (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). I asked open-ended questions during the interview. The benefit of the face-to-face interview is that the interviewer can view and record both the verbal and nonverbal behavior during the interview (Zikmund et al., 2012). In qualitative research, interviews are considered as the most frequently used method because of their perception as *talking* which is natural (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). During the face-to-face interview, a researcher should start with easy questions followed by more difficult questions (Doody & Noonan, 2013). I followed this procedure while conducting the face-to-face interview. Because I am a novice researcher, I listened to the audio recording of the first round of interviews and transcribed the audio recording before conducting the second round of interviews. The listening process helped me to understand when I should have responded to the participants' answers and probed responses. Listening to the first set of interviews also helped me understand if any question was confusing to the respondents and whether the questions need to be corrected. I also conducted interviews at a time and place that was convenient to the participants. Doody and Noonan (2013) suggested that interviews should be carried out considering the time and place convenience of the interviewees.

Reliability and validity, when applied to qualitative research, refer to credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Houghton et al., 2013). The credibility of qualitative research can be improved with triangulation in which data is collected from multiple sources (Houghton et al., 2013; Polit & Beck, 2013; Yin, 2014). To improve credibility, I used methodological triangulation. Besides the interview, I used other data sources for collecting data. Methodological triangulation also occurred through a review of information obtained from multiple participants. Member checking allows participants to review interpretations of the data they provided during interviews (Houghton et al., 2013; Myers, 2013; Polit & Beck, 2013). To improve credibility, I used member checking. To ensure the validity of the data collection instrument I presented the draft of the interview questions (see Appendix C) to a brand consultant in Mumbai, India. This expert confirmed that the interview questions met the objective of the study.

Data Collection Technique

One data collection technique most widely used for qualitative research is face-to-face interviews (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Irvine et al., 2013; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I used the face-to-face interview method as the primary data collection technique for my study. *Yes* or *no* are the only two responses possible to answer a close-ended question because of which participant is unable to offer more information (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I asked open-ended questions during each interview. In qualitative research, interviews are considered as the most frequently used method (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Face-to-face interview method is synchronous communication method in time and place. An interviewer can take advantage of the nonverbal behavior during the interview. In this method of data collection technique, there is no significant time delay between the question and the answer. The interviewer and the interviewee can quickly react to what the other says or does. In this method, the interviewee does not have much time for extended reflection while giving the answers.

Face-to-face interviews can be audio recorded with the permission of the participant. Audio recording is an advantage when creating a transcribed report of the interview. The researcher may not take notes during the interview because of the audio recording, and not taking notes is a disadvantage. The interviewer should take notes during the interview even if the interview is audio-recorded (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The interviewer should take notes because if the audio output does not record as expected the interviewer will have to repeat the interview (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

The advantage of synchronous nature of this method is that the interviewer can choose a place and time that is comfortable to the interviewee, and this helps to conduct the interview smoothly. Another benefit of this method is that termination of the interview is easy as compared to other methods (Doody & Noonan, 2013). An interviewer can explicitly end the interview by thanking the interviewee for the cooperation.

The summary of advantages of face-to-face interview is: (a) accurate screening of the interviewees, (b) capturing of verbal and nonverbal cues, (c) the interviewer can maintain interviewee's focus on the interview, (d) the choice of interview place and time is as per the convenience of the interviewee, and (e) termination of the interview can be accomplished smoothly. The summary of disadvantages of the face-to-face interview is (a) high costs and (b) the quality of data collected depends on the interviewer (Doody & Noonan, 2013). I received permission from the Head of school I studied to allow me to use their school as a study site for my doctoral study (see Appendix D). After I had received the IRB approval (approval number 03-14-16-0478044), I conducted face-to-face interviews with five school leaders, five faculty members, and five parents. I conducted the interviews based on the initial sample size of 15.

To improve the credibility of my research, I used member checking (Houghton et al., 2013). I audio-recorded the interviews using a Sony ICD-UX560F digital recorder. After I had completed the interviews, I summarized the interviews and shared this summarized information with participants to confirm the accuracy and completeness (Harper & Cole, 2012). I ended the data collection process when the participants confirmed the accurateness and completeness of the data during the member checking process, and participants did not have any new information to report.

Data Organization Technique

In qualitative research credibility of the study depends on the procedures implemented and self-awareness of the researcher (Houghton et al., 2013). I maintained a reflective diary during my doctoral study research. The reflective diary provided the rationale for decisions made, instincts, and personal challenges that I experienced as a researcher during the research process. To maintain data security and participant confidentiality, researchers should avoid the use of personal identifiers (Barnhill & Barnhill, 2015). For confidentiality reasons, I masked the identity of participants by using alphanumeric codes. For school leader participants, I assigned codes SL1 to SL5, P1 to P5 codes for parent participants and codes F1 to F5 for school faculty. When the participants mentioned any sensitive information during the interviews like names of individuals, I replaced the same with appropriate aliases in the member checking report.

During the face-to-face interview, the researcher should use some digital recording machine and should take only brief notes so that the researcher can maintain eye contact with the interviewee (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I audiotaped the interviews with the consent of the participants. Houghton et al. (2013) stated that member checking enables interviewees to review interpretations of the data they provided during face-to-face interviews. I used member checking process to confirm that my interpretation of the participant interviews was correct. McLellan, MacQueen, and Neidig (2003) stated that computer-based systems are useful for monitoring the progress of transcripts and the storing of audio-recorded data. I used a computer-based system for monitoring the progress of member checking of each interview and for storage of audio tapes. Following is the labeling information that every member checking report had.

Participant ID:
Interview Location:
Date of Interview:
Interview number:
Interviewer:

The member checking information began one line after the labeling information. I completed the saving of each member checking file as Microsoft Word file. The files were assigned the participant ID followed by interview number as the file naming convention. I did storage of the informed consent forms, interview recordings, and member checking data in a password protected external hard drive. I intend to keep this external hard drive and the reflective diary in a locked storage cabinet for at least 5 years. Five years post the completion of my study; I will erase the data from the flash drive by formatting the external hard drive. I will shred the reflective diary 5 years post the study completion.

Data Analysis

To enhance the validity of my research, I collected data from multiple sources. Besides school leaders, I also conducted interviews with faculty and parents. Methodological triangulation refers to the procedure of collecting data from multiple sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Besides the face-to-face interview, I also collected secondary data from the participating school and their school website. After reviewing the interview data and secondary data, I found that the data collected using interviews contained all the key information present in the secondary data relevant for my doctoral study. Thus, secondary data was not part of the final data analysis. Thematic Analysis (TA) is a procedure for detecting, analyzing, and interpreting patterned meanings or *themes* in qualitative data (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). For data analysis of my doctoral study, I used thematic analysis method. The analysis is a creative process in which analysis is a result of engagement between the dataset and the researcher's interpretative and analytical skills. Thematic analysis is a method that specifies analytical procedures centered on coding and theme development (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Good TA requires reflexivity, questioning the assumptions made in coding, and analyzing data in particular ways (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Thematic analysis is a fluid and recursive process rather than strictly linear process. When studies relating to the phenomenon do not exist a priori, thematic analysis is used to derive coded categories from text data (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). I used the theoretical inductive approach of TA for my study. Please see appendix E for the protocol I used for analyzing the data collected.

The importance of a theme depends on whether it conveys the feature of the research question (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). While analyzing data, the themes I focused on were the components of the double vortex brand model. Borrego, Foster, and Froyd (2014) noted that the conceptual framework was the link which connected the literature, the research method, and results of the study. I did the reading and re-reading in stage one, keeping in mind the components of the conceptual framework (i.e., key themes) chosen for my study. The articulation that I did in stage two also happened to keep the components of the conceptual framework in mind. The components of the conceptual framework were also the focus of the work done in stage three and four. The important themes developed in stage seven were about my conceptual framework.

Reliability and Validity

The criteria that researchers use to establish the rigor of a qualitative study are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Houghton et al., 2013). To improve the credibility of my study, I used triangulation and member checking. In qualitative research, the different types of triangulation are investigator, data, theory, or methods triangulation (Morse, 2015). I used methodological triangulation for my research. I collected data from multiple sources. Besides interviewing school leaders, I also collected data from faculty and parents. I also collected secondary data from the participating school and their school website. To improve the credibility of my research, I used member checking. Member checking refers to showing the transcribed interview (interpretation only, not verbatim) to the participants and confirming from them that the interpretation of the interview matches with the information provided by the participants (Morse, 2015). Researchers can use a reflective journal to provide the rationale for decisions made, instincts, and personal challenges that the researcher experienced during research (Houghton et al., 2013). To improve the dependability and confirmability of my research, I used a reflexive journal. Reflexive journalling can help to prevent researcher bias (Cope, 2014). The tendency of the researcher to see what he or she anticipates is known as the *pink elephant* bias in qualitative research (Morse, 2015). To eliminate this bias, I entered the research setting in a *neutral stance* (Morse, 2015). To determine transferability, one must adequately describe the original context of the research so that judgments can be made (Houghton et al., 2013). To ensure the transferability of my research, I provided rich and thick descriptions. I provided detailed descriptions of the findings. I included accounts of the context, the research methods, and raw data in the final report. Data saturation is defined as a state when there is enough information, and further investigation will not yield new information, codes, or themes (Harper & Cole, 2012). I continued with the interviews until there was no new information, codes or themes in the data provided by participants.

Transition and Summary

The intent of this qualitative exploratory case study was to understand the branding strategies of private international schools in India. I used semistructured, audiotaped interviews to collect data. I collected data from multiple sources to achieve methodological triangulation. I used a purposeful sampling technique to choose participants. I obtained IRB approval before commencing data collection. I primarily collected data using face-to-face interviews. I used NVivo 11 for data management and coding.

In Section 2, I discussed the research method, purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, sample size, research method and design, data collection, and analysis. I also discussed how I ensured the reliability and validity of my research. In Section 3, I cover presentation of findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for future research, reflections, and conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore the strategies that private international school leaders in India use to enhance their school brand. At the school I studied, there is a true brand-based culture where leaders emphasize the school's philosophy of a caring atmosphere. The school leaders who have a common motto of treating each child as unique have built the brand (SL1, SL2, & SL3, personal communication, March 16, 2016). The organization resonates with the school's brand promise reflecting the commitment and participation of the faculty who are passionate brand ambassadors and are aware of their role in the delivery of the brand promise. Over time, with the growth of the school, this brand understanding has led to the establishment of trust and credibility in the school by the community.

I found at the study site that effective external branding is a result of successful internal branding. There is high buy-in by faculty and parents in the school's philosophy of inclusion, children's freedom to study at their pace, and mainstreaming children with special needs. The findings indicate that a transparent vision, mission, and shared values result in the positive brand image when employees readily accept the organization's culture (Tybout & Calkins, 2005). Alignment of founder's purpose with activities through clear direction and focus is the hallmark of a successful branding process (Tybout & Calkins, 2005).The school leaders miss no opportunity to convey how the school is different from other schools. At the study site, committed faculty, loyal parents, and talented students are happy to continue with the school, and this demonstrates that the right people are creating brand value. The components in the double vortex brand model and the features of the school studied converge mutually supporting the findings of the study.

Presentation of the Findings

The central research question of my study was: What branding strategies do private international school leaders in India use to enhance the school brand? I identified five themes based on data analysis, and these were: (a) vision, mission, values, and organization culture; (b) naming policy; (c) functional capabilities; (d) crisp communicator; and (e) emotional benefits. These themes stand out as the elements in the double vortex brand model framework providing structure for branding strategies.

Theme 1: Vision, Mission, Values, and Culture

The vision, mission, and values of the school studied were arrived collectively by the faculty and the senior management based on a 3-day brainstorming exercise where all the wishes were aligned (SL1, personal communication, March 16, 2016). The vision and mission of the school studied emphasized the need for creating change makers by giving freedom to children to learn and faculty to teach in an inclusive atmosphere. At the study site, in the academic year 2015-2016, 20% of student population comprised of students with special needs. The school educates them with the goal of mainstreaming them (SL2, personal communication, March 16, 2016). The school leadership which has a core competency in the field of education ranging over several decades draws from its philosophical underpinnings to create a culture of strong values (SL3, personal communication, March 16, 2016). Holistic development of students takes place by focusing on academic excellence and by providing students with skills to live their life to their full potential in the external world (SL1, personal communication, March 16, 2016). Leaders at the school studied do not subscribe to competitive pressure on children from examination point of view. Teachers have the freedom to present lesson plans in their way and work closely with parents to achieve the end purpose of learning by the child (F1, personal communication, March 17, 2016).

At the school studied school leaders practice an open door policy. Stakeholders or community members can meet them during school hours. The family-like atmosphere at the school helps to make the child comfortable and welcome without any fear of punishment except in extreme cases (SL3, personal communication, March 16, 2016). The school's motto is *every child is unique* (SL3, personal communication, March 16, 2016). The school leaders believe in continuous innovation, experimentation, and faculty is encouraged to adopt innovative teaching methods (SL1 & SL2, personal communication, March 16, 2016). To inculcate environmental consciousness in students at my study site, school leaders led a campaign for banning the use of plastics in the school premises. The school is recognized internationally as a change maker school, because of continuous innovative approach (SL1, personal communication, March 16, 2016). The school studied has a culture whereby it emphasizes that besides intellect building, empathy building is also important. "We are an inclusive school and accepting everyone in society is a key element of our DNA. We believe empathy building is more important than intellect building" (SL1, personal communication, March 16, 2016). The school which I studied imparts international curriculum through innovative pedagogic techniques to nurture students to become inquiring, knowledgeable, and more importantly caring individuals.

Theme 2: Name and Logo

Initially, the school studied was operating up to preprimary level only; and had gained a considerable reputation in Chennai. In 2004, when the school was expanding from a preprimary school to a full-fledged international curriculum K-12 day school, the school leaders conducted market research. Based on this market research finding, school leaders took parents' perspective into consideration to extend the then-existing name by adding the word *international* to it. The school did so because it was endeavoring to bring the value of an international education system and curriculum (SL1, personal communication, March 16, 2016). Also, the school redesigned the then school logo to result in an improved digital logo (SL2, personal communication, March 16, 2016). The people of Chennai and international educational organizations of repute from outside Chennai recognize this logo and its meaning. Naming policy is an important element of the left vortex of the double vortex brand model.

Theme 3: Functional Capability

At the school studied, three teachers are available in each preprimary and primary class. Most international schools in India have a maximum of two teachers in each class (P1, personal communication, March 18, 2016). The third teacher at the study site helps to implement the school's commitment to inclusion by taking care of students with special needs. Toward this, the school leaders have built a research center at the school for training and to facilitate innovations in pedagogy (SL3, personal communication, March 16, 2016). One activity of this research center is to help other schools to become inclusive schools (SL1, personal communication, March 16, 2016).

Because of their belief in continuous innovation in the area of student development, school leaders at the study site have started the following initiatives:

- Initiative 1 is to build skills in students other than intellect like skills in the social domain, personal domain, moral domain, physical domain, aesthetic domain, and emotional domain.This initiative is known as the blue printing program.
- Initiative 2 is to develop communicative skills and to teach students to work in groups.
- Initiative 3 is to make students aware of social problems. As part of this initiative students of grade 6 onwards have to find a social problem and design a solution for it with the help of experts. Students spend at least 65 hours in a given academic year toward understanding and designing a solution for the social problem that they identify.
- Initiative 4 is to spread awareness in other schools about empathy building, inclusion, and sensitivity toward the environment. “This school takes special efforts to make students aware of social problems and also sensitize them to environmental issues. In 2014, the school started a special project called *Design for Change* and in this project introduced the concept of *Zero Environmental Impact*. School leaders have completely banned the use of plastic at the school. In 2014, students of the school made paper bags and went to other schools and malls to make people aware of how plastic products like bags and bottles were creating

environmental issues. Students requested people to use paper bags instead of plastic bags" (P2, personal communication, March 18, 2016).

- As per initiative 5 the school leaders are working on building a tool for online assessment of cognitive skills.
- School leaders use information technology (IT) to send personalized email messages to parents and students.
- As part of initiative 7, school leaders have started a program known as 7I. 7I refers to the seven characteristics of human greatness which are integrity, interaction, intuition, initiative, inquiry, imagination, and identity. This initiative is an extension of initiative 1 which is essentially building capacity toward child development (SL1, personal communication, March 16, 2016).
- As part of initiative 8, school leaders facilitate programs where senior students help junior students.

School leaders at my study site regularly depute teachers to academic workshops nationally and internationally (F1, personal communication, March 17, 2016). School leaders facilitate an annual 2-day leadership-training program for teachers (F4, personal communication, March 17, 2016). To make students bold and confident, all students participate in the annual day and various exhibitions. In school annual day celebrations for the academic year 2014-15 much of the initiative for the program was student led (SL2, personal communication, March 16, 2016). School leaders also facilitate remedial sessions for academically weak students. Sufficient evidence of functional capability which is an important element of the left vortex of the double vortex brand model is highlighted here.

Theme 4: Crisp Communicator

A powerful, unique exercise in brand building adopted by school leaders of the school studied is to use social media to gain parents' and community attention and inform them about the unique student-led curricular and cocurricular activities at school. Some of the social media tools used by leaders and faculty at the study site are Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (SL1, personal communication, March 16, 2016). Word of mouth seems to be the most powerful tool which has served them for the past two decades (SL4, personal communication, March 16, 2016). School leaders at the study site use social media to highlight the work completed by students, spread awareness of the school's philosophy, and build social capital with stakeholders. The teachers at the school studied often showcase students, not so much for their individual academic achievement but for their collaborative activities (SL2, personal communication, March 16, 2016). In the *All in a day* initiative teachers capture classroom activities on their phone camera and put it on school leaders' WhatsApp group. The school leaders then post the pictures on Facebook highlighting the uniqueness of the school.

Before the construction of the school building, SL1 and SL2 requested the architect to conduct a survey to understand what type of school building parents prefer. Based on the feedback and based on the school's philosophy the architect implemented the following: Few of the school walls have artwork done by students. The ceilings of the school do not have any color because the school leaders want to convey a message that the school leaders accept all types of children irrespective of their abilities. Certain sections of the school building have tiles laid in the reverse fashion (i.e. the plain side is stuck to the school wall, and the rough surface is facing the outside) to convey the message that school is an inclusive school (SL1, personal communication, March 16, 2016). The students planted all the trees in the school premises. School leaders have named the four groups of school students after the four endangered animal species to make the students sensitive toward endangered species (SL5, personal communication, March 16, 2016). Student docents give school tours to prospective parents to communicate the school's philosophy.

"If prospective parents or other visitors want a tour of the school we have only students taking them around the school because we want the students to learn more about the school's philosophy. Even if they say things incorrectly, that's fine. We want them to internalize the philosophy of inclusion, about what are the reasons for building a school of this kind, why is the tile put in a certain way" (SL1, personal communication, March 16, 2016). For internal branding, besides newsletters, school conducts monthly Saturday meetings between the school leadership and faculty. The school has devised a unique initiative called *Thursdays at school* for parents. As per this initiative, school leaders allow parents to spend an entire day at the school with the students. "As part of the initiative called *Thursdays at School,* parents are allowed to attend the preprimary and primary class. The student council also meets on Thursdays and parents can attend these too. Parents can also attend the 7I meeting or the blue printing meeting. All this helps parents to understand the school's philosophy and culture" (SL2, personal communication, March 16, 2016). The numerous communications methods and tools adopted at the study site strengthen the aspect of crisp communication delineated in left vortex of the double vortex brand model.

Theme 5: Emotional Benefits

The school which I studied ensures high-quality service to the parents and students through effective communication of the brand purpose to the employees (teaching and nonteaching staff). In the interviews with parents at the school, the integration of brand promise with the brand perception was evident.The alignment of brand promise with brand experience was evident when parents expressed that they believed their children had a secure atmosphere at the school. “My child feels so happy coming to the school that one day she wanted to go to school even on a Sunday. I managed to calm her down only after calling the school and requesting them to talk to her and let her know that school is closed, and thus she cannot go to school on that day” (P3 personal communication, March 18, 2016). Multiple mechanisms of brand projection have been effective in getting a high buy-in from the parents on the school’s philosophy to the extent that many of the parents are also teachers and volunteers at the school (SL2, personal communication, March 16, 2016). One USP of the school is the atmosphere of creative freedom enjoyed by the teachers and students.

> “The school is inclusive not only for students with special needs but also for other students. My daughter does not like to wear shoes. She says she wants to remain connected with the earth. She does not like to put a layer between her feet and earth by wearing shoes. She also does not like to use animal products. The school

> understood my daughter's point and allowed my daughter to come to school without wearing the shoes" (P2, personal communication, March 18, 2016).

School leaders have given her that freedom because the school understands that every child is unique. All brand activities of the school converge in the direction of creative efforts to elicit a cognitive response in a positive manner as seen in the easy approachability to the school leadership and faculty by parents. "A strong recommendation from leading preschools in Chennai is resulting in many people knowing that this school is a champion for special needs students, and many parents are moving closer to our school" (SL1, personal communication, March 16, 2016). Affordable pricing, the aura of freedom and security, and pervasive awareness campaigns influence powerfully and persuasively the brand experience leaving a lasting impression in the minds of students and parents. Emotional benefits derived by the students and parents confirm the alignment of the brand promise with the brand experience which is the hallmark of the right vortex of the double vortex brand model.

Linking the findings to the literature review, I find that brand-oriented organizations have an internal approach to developing their brand based on vision, mission, and values. Brand value and brand heritage are the basis for brand building activities. Brand orientation and brand strategy implementation are also important. The school should strengthen its characteristics regarding teaching, course content, and attract and retain parent's attention. As education is an invisible product, internal branding in the form of special teaching modules and external branding to win the trust of parents is required as seen in the school I studied.

External communications have an effect on the image of the school. Word of mouth is a potent and important medium of influence. Student enrollment in private schools is enhanced by the school's image and publicity, public relations, advertisement, and school appearance leading to a positive effect on school enrollment. Inspiration by top leadership, implementation by faculty, education, and communication turn out to be the four pillars of effective branding. The touchpoints during the education journey of a student are prepurchase, use, and postpurchase experiences. Preadmission touchpoint can help to enhance the education brand. The reputation of the leadership along with alumni achievement can enhance effective communication at the social media level. Accreditations through local and global agencies are preferred to enhance the school's brand image. Leaders and employees can communicate through elements like faculty, placement, accreditation, target audience, and the brand identity they have created through their philosophy and values. Just as in the literature review websites revealed that best institutions focus on branding through projecting a positive image of the school, school leaders at my study site also substantiate this view of using websites. Institutions that innovate end up with a positive brand image as confirmed by the school which I studied.

Developing and cocreating branding with the help of internal stakeholders like academic administrators and faculty members is an important ingredient. Other techniques to project the brand are: to fit a particular demand, establish a distinction from rivals, and create value and identity of the brand. Price, promotion, innovative curriculum, and quality faculty are important features that bring long-term benefits and a competitive edge. Promotional activities such as open houses and brochures are mechanisms of visual branding which bring out the core characteristic representing the DNA or USP. Heritage based corporate identities and brands provide a basis for differentiation and distinctiveness leading to brand strategies which establish trust and stability. Factors influencing the choice of parents fall into five categories: (a) prompt attention given to students' needs, (b) effective teaching and learning, (c) cost effectiveness, (d) good results, and (e) pride of ownership as confirmed by the study site. According to parents, attitudes, communication, and leadership practices of the school principal play a significant role in the parent-school engagement. Principals need to be mindful of their roles as entrepreneurs, impression managers, and relationship builders in their communities.

Effective branding process must focus on relationship building and develop an integrated view of the underlying consumer behavior. Consumer relationship with companies depends on trust, and positive emotions have a greater influence on building this trust in consumers. The school should establish warmth and competence to nurture trust and customer-based relationships. School leaders need to concentrate on the quality of teaching as it affects word of mouth publicity which in turn affects enrollment. Learning and teaching activity, fostering professional development, and family and community involvement help shape the school culture.

My case study revealed convergence to the various brand elements identified in the conceptual model. Further, the brand vision, philosophy, mission, and values are integrated into the school I studied, as represented in the left side vortex of the double vortex brand model. All the themes and initiatives delineate the mechanism of implementation that leads to emotional benefits to the parents and displays the brand inside the consumer's mind. Emotional benefits to parents are particularly relevant while highlighting the gap that may prevail between brand promise and brand performance. Data collected indicated that there were high commitment and buy-in into the school's philosophy, which has led to the alignment between the brand promise and brand experience. My study findings also confirm the components that are part of the right side vortex in the double vortex brand model. The dynamic nature of the model provides guidelines of how an organization, like the school which I studied, may continuously innovate regarding each of the thematic initiatives to strengthen parent loyalty, quality of service, and brand distinctiveness. Crisp communication is an element in the conceptual model which emerged as a theme in my case study and showed how various IT tools including social media can help to devise personalized communication channels to tell the school's story to the stakeholders. Numerous techniques for internal branding found at the study site such as training of faculty and shadow teaching by inductees, project and confirm branding inside the firm as depicted in the double vortex brand model.

Another finding of the school which I studied is functional capability as seen in the numerous initiatives adopted to improve pedagogy and assessment toward holistic development of students. Another aspect of branding is the reputation of the brand along with the naming policy and logo. In my case study, I found that leadership took special efforts to derive a naming policy which helped maintain continuity with parents and society. A strategic move on the part of the school was to retain the earlier name and extend it further along with an improved version of the logo to maintain brand recall, which is a shorthand device to take advantage of the brand inside the consumer's mind. The importance of this recall value also has parallels in the literature review.

A brand name or logo is an external manifestation and a method for branding through the emotional bond. Aligned values are important to make an emotional connection as seen in my case study. From the output perspective, a brand exists in the consumer's mind, is an image, and adds value as well as builds a relationship or bond. The evolutionary perspective demonstrates how brands evolve from input to an output perspective in a dynamic manner in the context of flux between the organization and the stakeholders. The services are delivered to fulfill brand related promises to transform into an emotional and functional element.

The business dimension of my doctoral study deals with implementing branding as a strategy in international schools which may consequently lead to an increase in student enrollment, enhancement of brand, growth in reputation, and sustainability. The aspects seen in the school studied confirm the findings that lack of resources can hinder the process of branding by effecting the provision of infrastructure. Davis and Dunn (2002) identified touchpoints and influencing factors wherein learning resources, knowledge enhancement, innovativeness, and stakeholder perception help to enhance the education brand. SL1 confirmed these points in my case study.

Khanna et al. (2014) and Chawla and Lenka (2015) spoke of resonant leadership, use of social media for communication, total quality management, and strong employer branding as important aspects. They echo the thoughts of school studied while talking of achieving sustained competitive advantage, through continuous learning, creativity, and innovation. The leadership role delineated by Chawla and Lenka (2015) is also visible in the school I studied, and the school leaders give importance to shared vision, managing change through teamwork, training, and development leading to a strong employer brand. Joseph et al. (2012) focused on developing and co-creating branding with the help of internal stakeholders which is also an important ingredient found at my study site. Williams and Omar (2014b) discussed the role of renaming and rebranding of a university to generate positive brand association. Popescu (2012) talked of brand renaming in the context of cities possessing a strong brand image. These studies mirror the problems of naming policy as an important element seen in the conceptual model as well as my case study. Using Simkin's model, Keller (2014) discussed leadership challenges from the structural, human resources, political, and symbolic point of view where the leader plays the role of a social architect in promoting a cohesive culture. At the school which I studied, there are parallel efforts to evolve new paradigms and societal approaches to achieve effective commitment and loyalty on the part of stakeholders.

Applications to Professional Practice

Lee et al. (2012) identified competitive pressure for student intake, human resource issues of recruitment, community involvement and leadership training, management practices, and managing parental expectations as major issues of international schools. The findings confirm that resonant leadership and periodic structured training practices would help with professional development and guide with tackling of complexities in the organization. Effective brand performance can lead to an alignment between school brand promise and parental expectations of the brand.

One of the findings of my study indicates the importance of periodic meetings between teachers, coordinators, and leadership. Such periodic meetings lead to beneficial strategic development and cohesion in the preparation and implementation of plans. Successful branding leverages the customer impression of the brand (Latif et al., 2014). A strong brand creates a competitive edge in the marketplace (Latif et al., 2014).Based on the findings my research reconfirms that a strong brand helps create a competitive edge in the marketplace. Good educational branding practices go beyond mere simplistic selling as they provide high-quality material for satisfying the needs of current and potential students.

Where competition is fierce ensuring student enrollment calls for creating an identity through branding (Bock et al., 2014). In the case of the school studied, the value of inclusion adds to their brand identity to target new market segments and emotional bonding. Talbert (2012) confirmed the importance of reaching out to specific segments of society by providing special attention to developing strategies for programs that increase enrollment and retention among students. The rapid growth in enrollment at the school studied indicates this because of its philosophy of being an inclusive school.

For the child's engagement and schooling point of view, it is important that school leaders treat parents as partners in the education equation (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014). Teachers need to work effectively with parents, but more importantly, principals are impression managers and relationship builders who should encourage and support parental engagement. Leaders at the school studied believe in transparency and open door policy. Parents find school leaders and faculty of the school studied easily approachable (P1 &P2, personal communication, March 18, 2016).

To remain competitive and meet marketplace demands, school administrators need to adopt social media (Cox & Mcleod, 2014). Use of social media by schools can help to improve communication and public relations between school principals and the local stakeholders (Cox & Mcleod, 2014). School leadership should work with a mentor or agency to develop a comprehensive communication strategy. A mentor or agency can help school leaders to develop an engaging social media strategy using Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Networking with internal and external stakeholders would lead to success and satisfaction for all concerned. While social media tools are useful, brochures and websites are equally important as identification and juxtaposition material which helps to bolster and self-promote the image of the brand to persuade parents to choose favorably. The study findings indicate that social media tools, websites, and brochures influence parents positively (P1, personal communication, March 18, 2016; SL1, personal communication, March 16, 2016).

Implications for Social Change

Commoditization and commercialization of education can be a result of glamorous brochures arranged for parent consumption to influence school choice (Wilkins, 2012). In the case of international schools, another dimension added is about developing international mindedness among students who may alienate them from their roots. School leaders can tackle such criticisms by looking at the social dimension of branding international schools which aim at achieving balanced growth regarding student enrollment, resource availability, improved student learning outcomes, and desirable relationships between school and parents. Better educational outcomes may further lead to an educated workforce in future, lower adult mortality rates and lower rates of crime (Lleras-Muney, 2005; Lochner & Moretti, 2004).

Several strategies are available to improve enrollment, retention, and graduation rates among students via peer interactions to develop students' cognition, self-confidence, and motivation as also new student orientation programs that encourage diversity and student inclusiveness (Talbert, 2012). Tutoring, academic advising, personal and career counseling, and guidance toward academic success lead to the most desirable student outcomes. My findings from the school studied show how the platform of inclusion and mainstreaming of special needs children can create a distinctive brand for the school and attract parents and society. Creating a distinctive brand for the school also serves as an internal binding force.

Schools can achieve empathy building by providing students an occasion to reflect on the incident, the person affected, the person responsible, how students could manage situations differently, and the willingness to resolve conflicts in a positive manner (Martin, 2015). A similar finding from the study site was the role of empathy which has its roots in the trust and positive relationship built by the school. The school leaders consciously develop social awareness so that the children shed fear and develop strong awareness for social problems. Instead of developing a punitive approach to students, the school leaders achieve behavior management through the school's policy of restorative approach to discipline. School leaders at the study site develop empathy and do not use the punishing rod. Such a practice brings about social change and reform by showcasing the school as a role model in branding and lifestyle behavior change.

An international school leader is a facilitator who has to communicate effectively calling for an openness of mind (Hill, 2014). The transformational leadership style at the study site is caring, encouraging, and sensitive to the needs of teachers and students. Because of intensive internal branding approaches at the study site through a continuous emphasis on the school's philosophy and actions; the faculty and other staff at the study site have developed a strong belief in the school's brand. Internal branding has also helped the school to retain the faculty and other staff. A high buy-in into the school's philosophy by parents has led to a harmonious relationship between the school, the teachers, and the parents.

Recommendations for Action

International school leaders from India can benefit from the finding of my doctoral study to improve their school brand. An important aspect that international school leaders need to focus on is how to use social media and other IT tools to tell their school's story. The preliminary step of using social media is to question oneself whether the brand promise matches the brand experience. If the process of consistent communication between the school, the teachers, and the parents has to be continuous, the school must share daily the challenges and successes of the children. Sharing learning and teaching experiences by email, Facebook, Twitter, or blog post with the community is important to create social capital. When the community identifies with the school's brand, community promotes the school through word of mouth advertising. When the school, the community, and the family become connected, a secure atmosphere is created. A weekly newsletter may help to create a sustainable brand, and the newsletter readers discuss, nurture, and enhance the brand. A strong vision, mission, and values are the core of a branding strategy. The school I studied projects its vision, mission, and values passionately through every avenue at every touch-point. While the school leaders give families insight into school activities, the school leaders also focus on family involvement and engagement to arrive at a partnership with parents. External brand development must go together with the strengthening of internal brand identity.

I plan to present the findings of my study at K-12 educational organizations. After ProQuest publishes my doctoral study, a wider audience will benefit from the findings. I will present the findings of my study at international educational conferences. I will copublish with my Chair to convert my dissertation into a peer-reviewed journal article to reach a wider audience.

Recommendations for Further Research

My doctoral study comprised of a case study of only one international school. One can expand the scope of the research with additional case studies dealing with a geographic spread of international schools in India comprising of cities like Mumbai, Bangalore, and New Delhi. Historically, in India, there are numerous examples of residential schools that impart international curriculum. An interesting topic of study would be how such residential schools shape their branding strategies to enhance their brand? From my study, I have found that leadership style has an effect on school branding process. Further research on various leadership styles and how they affect the branding of international schools in India could be enlightening.

Reflections

The doctoral research process was an eye-opener as I evolved and began looking for deeper insights. The Doctor of Business Administration experience at Walden University also broadened my horizons and helped me to look at issues objectively. The structured and rigorous nature of the research design and method improved my communication skills. The continuous peer and faculty interaction was a learning opportunity that made me more analytical. During the process of data collection, using face-to-face interviews, I was cautious about not influencing the study participants in any way. To avoid the pink elephant bias I entered the research setting in a neutral stance. During data collection, the interviewees shared information about strategies geared toward differentiating their school from other schools, making it noteworthy.

Conclusion

In this doctoral study, I explored the branding strategies that leaders of one private international school in India used to enhance the school brand. Fifteen participants from the study site in Chennai participated in face-to-face interviews. The emerging themes from the data analysis focused on the need for commitment to a core philosophy regarding vision, mission, and values. Leadership style plays an important role in strengthening internal branding providing functional capability and emotional benefits for internal stakeholders. From a branding perspective, besides giving importance to academic excellence, the school I studied also focused on imparting life skills. Inquiry-based learning and teaching using technology have helped the school to enrich the students' experience. To sustain the brand school leaders need to recruit, and retain trained faculty and provide infrastructure facilities. The school has a demonstrative effect of using social media for continuous communication toward strategic brand enhancement. The school creates a magical impression in the minds of its students so that they continue building the school brand and telling their school's story.

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Appendix A: Permission Letter

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Appendix B: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study to understand what branding strategies do private international school leaders in India use to enhance the school brand. The researcher is inviting competent school leaders who take part in the framing of the branding strategy for school or parents of students enrolled in the school or teaching faculty working at the school to take part in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand my study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Balasubramanian Varadarajan, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of my study research is to explore the branding strategies that private international school leaders in India use to enhance their school brand.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Volunteer for a one to one interview lasting 60 minutes.
- Agree to the audio recording of your responses for the accuracy of data retention.
- Give responses to 10 major interview questions.
- Review summary of data collected from you (also called member checking) for accurate representation of your responses. Each review of the interpretation of the data collected will take around 20 minutes.
- A summary of the research findings will be shared with you for your information after the data analysis is completed.

Here are some sample questions:

For school leaders:

1. How is your branding strategy aligned to the vision, mission, values, and culture of the organization?
2. What market research did the school conduct before deciding a brand strategy?

For faculty:

1. What type of systems and procedures are implemented for employees to carry out their roles and responsibilities in line with the brand promise?
2. What other initiatives does the organization use other than the systems and procedures to help improve service quality in the delivery of the brand promise?

For parents:

1. Which components of the school brand attracted you to admit your child to this school?
2. How does the organization communicate with you about its vision, mission, values, and culture?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at the school will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Your participation in this research does not pose a risk to your safety and comfort. By playing a role in this research you may help to improve the branding strategies used at school A.

Payment:
There is no payment for taking part in this study.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by saving it on a password protected flash drive. Data will be kept for at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at XXXXXXXXXX or via email at XXXXX.XXXXX@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. XXXXX XXXXX at XXX-XXX-XXX-XXXX. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. You may also write to Walden IRB department at XXXX@waldenu.edu. Walden University's approval number for my study is **03-14-16-0478044**, and it expires on **March 13, 2017**.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the information in this consent form, and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing on this consent form, I understand that I agree to the terms described in this form.

Printed Name of Participant ________________________________

Date of consent ________________________________

Participant's signature ________________________________

Researcher's signature ________________________________

Appendix C: Interview Questions

I posed the following interview questions to senior management of my study school:

1. How is your branding strategy aligned to the vision, mission, values, and culture of the organization?
2. What market research did the school conduct before deciding a brand strategy?
3. What are the critical factors you used to plan branding strategy for your school? Please elaborate.
4. What are your ongoing brand strategies?
5. How do you promote internal branding?
6. What strategies do you use to enhance the functional capability of your brand?
7. What are the functional benefits that your brand delivers to your customers?
8. What are the emotional benefits that your brand delivers to your customers?
9. How does your brand promise match with the customer's perception of your brand? Please elaborate.
10. What digital and social media resources does your school use for brand communication?

Add-on Questions.

1. What systems and procedures are in place for employees to carry out their roles and responsibilities in line with the brand?
2. What processes have you put in place to ensure that the brand is carefully managed?

3. What initiatives do you use other than systems and procedures to help improve service quality in the delivery of the brand promise?
4. How do you share customer knowledge and insights with your employees?
5. How does your organization motivate employees to use their initiative?

I posed the following interview questions to the faculty of my study school:

1. What type of systems and procedures are implemented for employees to carry out their roles and responsibilities in line with the brand promise?
2. What other initiatives does the organization use other than the systems and procedures to help improve service quality in the delivery of the brand promise?
3. In what manner does the organization share customer knowledge and insights with its employees?
4. How does the organization encourage employees to take the extra step and use their initiative? Give examples.
5. What are the methods of internal communication used by senior management with faculty to help them deliver the desired service quality?
6. What is your experience with your school brand?
7. How is your feedback about your organization used by school leaders?
8. What is the difference between your and customer's perception of your school brand?
9. How is your job aligned with the vision, mission, values, and culture of the organization?
10. How do you differentiate your school brand from your competitors?

Add-on Questions.

1. Are you aware of any market research the school conducted to understand its brand positioning?

I posed the following interview questions to the parents (external stakeholders) of my study school:

1. Which components of the school brand attracted you to admit your child to this school?
2. How does the organization communicate with you about its vision, mission, values, and culture?
3. What is your perception of the school brand? Please elaborate.
4. What are your views about the matching of brand experience with the brand promise the organization made?
5. What internet or social media tools does the organization use to communicate the brand with the parents?
6. How has the school brand evolved?
7. Why would you recommend or not recommend this school to your family and friends?
8. Why is this school different from other schools in the neighborhood?
9. What changes should the school leaders make to improve your perception of the school brand?
10. What market research did the school conduct to understand its brand positioning?

Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation from Research Partner

XXXXXX International School,

Chennai, India.

27 January 2016

Dear Balasubramanian V,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled *Branding Strategies at Private International Schools in India* within School A, Chennai, India. As part of this study, I authorize you to collect data through face-to-face interviews and secondary sources like the school website and other school documents about school's branding strategies. Individuals' participation in your research study will be voluntary and at their discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include providing names of the probable participants and access to them. We will also provide you access to school documents about school's branding strategies. We understand that you plan to conduct face-to-face interviews with five school leaders, five faculty members and five parents from our school. We understand you will not be collecting data through observations. We also understand you will not be collecting data from our students. We understand that as part of member checking you will be confirming with the participants your understanding of the data shared by them during the face-to-face interviews. We understand that after the completion of your data analysis you will share the results with us for our information. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of your supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXX International School

Email: XXXX@XXXXXX.edu

Appendix E: Protocol for Analyzing Data

For my research, data analysis consisted of two parts (a) a thorough preparation of the coding process and (b) the actual coding process using Nvivo 11 software. The first part of the coding process was done using paper and pencil (Casterle, Gastmans, Bryon, & Denier, 2012).

Stage 1: Thorough (re)reading of the interviews.

The data collected was thoroughly read different times to become familiar with the data and to get a sense of the interview as a whole. During this reading process, I underlined key phrases. In this stage, a rudimentary type of analysis began.

Stage 2: Narrative interview report.

In this stage, I tried to articulate the interviewee's feedback in answer to the research question. I wrote a brief abstract of the key information including a summary of the characteristics of the interview.

Stage 3: Conceptual interview scheme.

Here I filtered the most important data and clustered them in concepts. This stage facilitated the transition from raw data to manageable concepts. The concepts were further developed and refined as I got more insight into the research phenomenon. Every interview had its conceptual interview scheme.

Stage 4: Fitting-test of the conceptual interview scheme.

I reread the interview with the conceptual interview scheme in mind.

Stage 5: Constant comparison process.

The conceptual interview schemes from one interview were compared with the schemes from other interviews. This process allowed me to find common themes. This stage also allowed me to get increasing conceptual understanding of the research data as a whole.

Part 2: The actual coding process (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

Stage 6: Preliminary coding.

Based on the conceptual interview schemes a list of concepts was drawn up. This list was introduced as preliminary codes in NVivo. Assigning a descriptive or conceptual label to excerpts of raw data is known as Code (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015).

Stage 7: Searching for themes.

In this stage, codes were collated into potential themes. I gathered all data relevant to each potential theme. A theme identifies a broader level of meaning than a code.

Stage 8: Reviewing themes.

In stage 8, a thematic map was generated to check if themes work about the coded extracts and the overall data.

Stage 9: Defining and naming themes.

In this stage, I carried out a detailed analysis of data for each theme. I also defined each theme at this stage.

Stage 10: Description of the results.

Here I described the essential findings in answer to the research question. To manage and organize the data for coding process and theme creation I used NVivo 11. I imported interview data in NVivo. In NVivo, coding is done with the help of structures known as *nodes* (Houghton et al., 2015). Nodes provide a location for gathering all related data in one place to look for emerging patterns and ideas. Common codes were grouped together in NVivo to form a parent node. In NVivo, child nodes are all the nodes related to this parent node.