

ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF UNIVERSITY BRANDING: A THEORY-GENERATING META- SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, due to the intensification of the movement of universities from the structure of government management to private management and the movement of the industry from static to dynamic and competitive, the importance of branding in Iranian universities has been noticed more than before. Therefore, as a result of the increase in the number of students in postgraduate education in the country, universities are trying to attract more students in order to benefit more from government and private benefits (Safavieh, 2013). Therefore, in order to remain competitive in the field of attracting students, professors, and researchers, as well as gaining access to new sources of foreign investment, universities need to create a distinctive brand for themselves (Palacio, Meneses, & Perez, 2002). Previous studies in the country have dealt with branding in different categories; But in the meantime, to date, no research has been done that provides a model for exploring the antecedents and consequences of branding in higher education with a practical approach, which can be used for branding in universities. In this way, the current research aims to design a model of the antecedents and consequences of university branding.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The current research was conducted using the theory-generating meta-synthesis qualitative method. The method of data collection is the review of previous studies. The theory-generating meta-synthesis approach is based on the six steps of Sandelowski & Barroso (2007) and is as follows:

- 1) Statement of the problem and formulation of research questions:** The current research aims to design a model of the antecedents and consequences of university branding, and its main question is; What are the antecedents and consequences of the university branding model?
- 2) Searching for references:** Examining databases: Magirran, Web of Science and Google Scholar. Comprehensive search results: 27 Persian articles and 308 English articles (335 research articles in total).
- 3) Quality assessment:** The method of selecting suitable articles for analysis was done with the algorithm of Figure 1.

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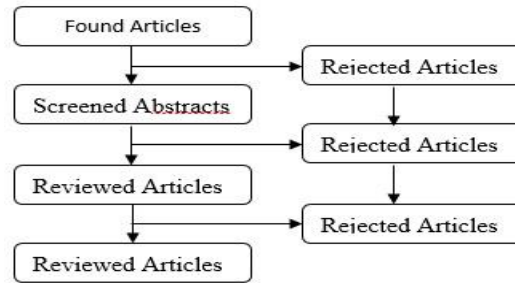


Figure 1) The method of selecting suitable articles for analysis

4) Analysis of studies: At this stage, the content of the selected articles was deeply and carefully examined and the primary data was identified.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5) Combination of findings: At this stage, the proposed model of the antecedents and consequences of university branding and Figure 2 display the network of themes related to the proposed model.

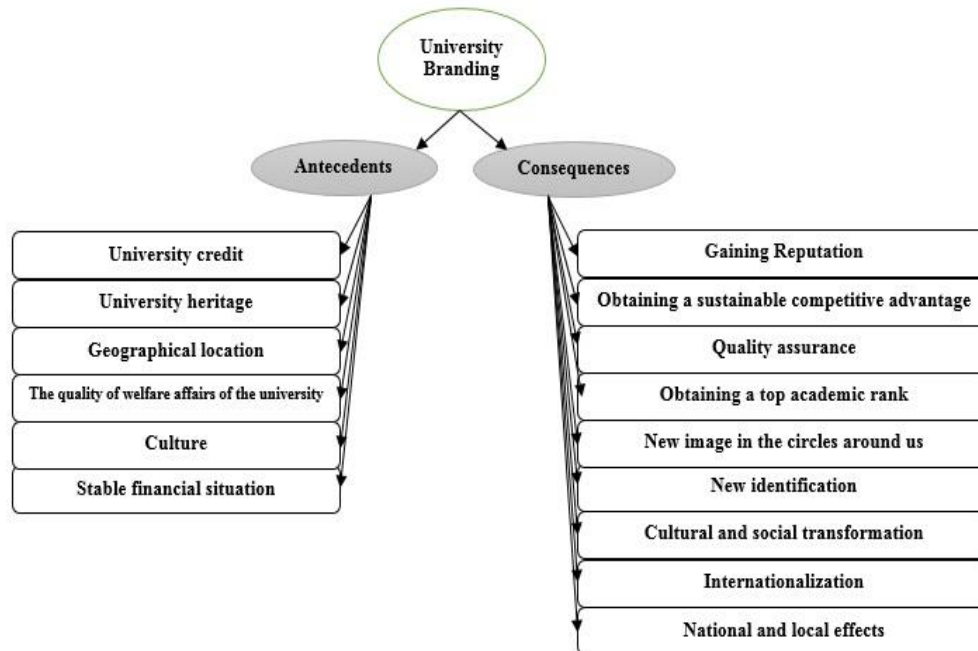


Figure 2) The themes network of antecedents and consequences of university branding

6) Validation of findings: Accreditation is briefly stated according to table number 1:

Table 1) Optimizing processes of meta-synthesis validity (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007)

Validation type	Descriptive	interpretative	theoretical	pragmatic
Communication with authors	*	*		
Consultation with the librarian	*			
Consultation with a metacombination specialist			*	
Consultation with a branding expert				*
Independent search of resources	*			
Independent evaluation of each report	*	*		

Weekly meetings of the research team in order to discuss the results of the searches	*			
Weekly meetings of the research team in order to discuss the results of the evaluations	*	*		
Weekly meetings of the research team in order to reaching a consensus.	*	*	*	
Documentation	*	*	*	*

4. CONCLUSION

It is expected that the findings of the study will be considered and used by university managers, especially the prominent universities of the country which are aiming for branding, and according to the findings of this study, the comprehensive program of "University Branding" will be considered. Considering the issue of universities internationalization, which is one of the new and important concerns in the country's higher education and one of the main consequences of this study, it can be considered as the most practical function and the most important consequence of university branding is named. Consequently the managers of the higher education system and presidents of the country's universities can use the model designed in this research for formulating a strategic plan centered on the branding of the universities, achieving global standards, increasing international reputation and providing the international interactions. In other words; one of the main strategies in the development of internationalization of universities is their branding.

The theoretical contribution of this study is in its methodology, and also for the first time in higher education studies conducted in the country, with a new classification, it has explored the antecedents and consequences of university branding with a theory-generating meta-synthesis research strategy.

The validation of the conceptual model presented in this research, also the evaluation of the antecedents and consequences of branding in the country's non-governmental universities from the perspective of faculty members are suggestions that can be presented for this research.

Keywords: University Branding, University, Higher Education, Theory-generating Meta-synthesis.

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