



# Research on Brand Enhancement Strategies for Private Universities Based on the Consumer-Based Brand Equity Model: A Case Study of a Private University in Sichuan

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**Abstract.** Currently, China's higher education system has transitioned from elitism and massification to universalization. As a crucial component of the higher education landscape, private universities confront urgent needs to elevate educational quality, bolster social recognition, and foster sustainable development. The brand building stands as a pivotal approach to enhancing a university's core competitiveness and social influence, thereby wielding a significant role in achieving high-quality development for private universities. This paper, taking a private university in Sichuan as a case study, integrates the Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model to comprehensively analyze the current status of its brand building through interviews and questionnaires. It uncovers the existing issues and proposes targeted brand enhancement strategies accordingly.

**Keywords:** Brand Equity, CBBE Model, Private Universities

## 1 Introduction

With the swift evolution of China's higher education landscape, private universities, as a pivotal segment of the system, bear substantial responsibilities encompassing talent cultivation, scientific research innovation, and societal development. Brand building, a fundamental competitive edge, presents unique and intricate challenges in private universities, necessitating the preservation of traditional imagery, the embodiment of campus culture, and educational philosophies, and the assurance of academic quality. In pursuing high-quality higher education, the enhancement of private universities' brand images and the augmentation of their brand recognition and reputation have emerged as pivotal development issues. The Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, a renowned framework within a brand-building theory, underscores the incremental deepening of brand perception, emotional engagement, and loyalty to foster consumer-brand identification, ultimately elevating brand value. Consequently, this paper examines a private university in Sichuan as a case study, utilizing the CBBE model to analyze and evaluate its current brand-building status through interviews and questionnaires. It

dives into strategies for bolstering private universities' brands, offering valuable insights and guidance for this university and other comparable private institutions in their brand-building endeavors. Ultimately, this research endeavors to contribute to the advancement of higher-quality and more sustainable private higher education in China, thereby enhancing its market competitiveness and influence.

## 2 Research Status and Theoretical Analysis

### 2.1 Brand Management in Universities

**Definition and value of university brands.** The academic discussion on university brands is categorized into narrow and broad perspectives based on differing viewpoints. The narrow perspective focuses on symbolic elements of the institution, such as the university name and emblem. Conversely, the wide perspective encompasses the institution's comprehensive strength and social evaluations accumulated over time, involving core elements like educational quality, discipline development, and faculty and student capabilities. Yan (2008) wrapped up relevant research on university brand building from both domestic and international perspectives, culminating in a view that a university brand is not merely a carrier of identification symbols and cultural heritage but also requires public recognition, highlighting the people-oriented nature of educational branding <sup>[1]</sup>. The value of a university brand reflects the competitiveness of higher education institutions in the educational market. It not only concerns the institution's enrollment, reputation, and resource acquisition capabilities but also serves as a key factor driving sustainable development. Zhang (2005) argued that university brands are intertwined with competitive advantages, resource integration, and information dissemination <sup>[2]</sup>. Xue (2007) provided a detailed breakdown of the specific manifestations of university brand value, including the quality of faculty, research strength, and teaching facilities <sup>[3]</sup>. Tian (2015) underscored the guiding role and strategic value of university brand value in competition <sup>[4]</sup>. With the rapid development of economy and society, there is an inevitable relationship between the development of universities and the development of society. Zhang (2023) argued that the university brand has become an important means of cultural construction and soft power competition in the development of universities, and even can be regarded as a strategic choice for university development like a commercial brand <sup>[5]</sup>. Xu (2024) pointed out that the brand of a university is crucial to enhancing the visibility and influence of a university <sup>[6]</sup>. Different from famous universities with a long history and significant development advantages, private universities have a short accumulation time, and their brands are still in the initial stage of development. Therefore, Zhang (2024) argued that actively building university brands has become an important strategic task for university image construction <sup>[7]</sup>.

**University brand building.** University brand building constitutes a pivotal strategy for higher education institutions, enabling them to achieve differentiated competition, augment educational appeal, and bolster their influence. This process primarily encompasses four facets: establishment, positioning, shaping, and communication. Sevier

(2001) elaborated on the university brand establishment process, which involves demand identification, cognitive assessment, gap analysis, strategy formulation, and implementation optimization<sup>[8]</sup>. Cao and Zhang (2017) integrated the University Identity System (UIS) theory to propose a three-step framework for university brand strategic management: strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation<sup>[9]</sup>. Li (2018) summarized university brand building as the establishment and reinforcement of a brand management mechanism, which integrates brand building with asset management and operations, with brand development being the core focus<sup>[10]</sup>. Brand positioning serves as the initial step in university brand building. Zhang (2014) proposed various strategies through comparative studies, including distinctive positioning, niche positioning, industry positioning, and concept positioning<sup>[11]</sup>. Research conducted by Rutter et al. (2016) revealed significant variations in the positioning choices of university brand personalities among different institutions, with “sincerity” emerging as a universal trait. Brand shaping strategies primarily concentrate on the construction and dissemination of university brand concepts<sup>[12]</sup>. Lu and Xia (2004) introduced the UIS strategy for universities, grounded in corporate identity system theory, and applied it as a novel management model at Jinan University to enhance brand competitiveness<sup>[13]</sup>. Guo and Xue (2012), drawing upon their research on Australian university image building, expanded the UIS theory to encompass a comprehensive construction of five identification systems: concept, system, behavior, vision, and geography. Brand communication plays a crucial role in university brand building<sup>[14]</sup>. Lim et al. (2018) introduced the concept of “strategic brand management” to investigate how higher education institutions can implement strategic brand management for graduate degree programs through the marketing mix (7Ps, namely, product, price, place, promotion, participant, physical evidence, and process management)<sup>[15]</sup>. Pharr (2019) emphasized digital content marketing as a vital means of brand building for higher education institutions, highlighting that content-rich brand promotion strategies are more apt for students in the digital age<sup>[16]</sup>. To sum up, university brand building is a huge and scientific systematic project. Zheng (2022) argued that it can not only improve the main function of universities - talent training but also help universities to play scientific research, social services and other subsidiary functions<sup>[17]</sup>. Li (2022) argued that university brand building not only requires university leaders to have awareness of university brand role, ethics, promotion, maintenance, and innovation but also requires leaders to implement this brand awareness into university brand-building actions<sup>[18]</sup>. Xu (2024) argued that university brand building is a process of building a brand and spreading it through various channels to make the target audience understand and have a positive attitude and behavior toward universities<sup>[19]</sup>.

## 2.2 CBBE Model

During the 1990s, with the emergence of the customer-centric philosophy, modern marketing thought underwent a significant transformation. In 1993, American scholar Keller published “Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity”<sup>[20]</sup>, in which he pioneered the introduction of the CBBE model. This model encompasses two dimensions: brand awareness and brand image. As research on brand

equity theory has deepened, Keller (2001) further expanded upon this foundation by proposing four steps for building brand equity: establishing brand identity, creating brand meaning, eliciting positive, accessible brand responses, and forging brand relationships with customers. These steps collectively form the foundation of the CBBE model <sup>[21]</sup>, with specific levels and dimensions outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Content of the CBBE model across four levels and six dimensions

Level	Dimension	Content
Brand identity	Brand salience	It refers to the ease and frequency of a brand being recalled or identified by consumers across various contexts. This includes brand awareness and the degree to which consumers associate the brand name, logo, and other identifiers with their memories.
	Brand performance	It denotes the extent to which a brand's products or services meet consumers' functional needs. This includes attributes such as product reliability and efficiency.
Brand meaning	Brand imagery	It pertains to the extrinsic attributes of a brand's products or services, reflecting consumers' associations and expectations of the brand in terms of fulfilling their psychological or social needs and other intangible values.
	Brand judgments	It encompasses consumers' personal opinions and evaluations of a brand, spanning various aspects. These primarily include assessments of brand quality, brand credibility, brand consideration, and brand dominance.
Brand responses	Brand feelings	It represents consumers' emotional reactions to a brand, often related to the social perceptions and evaluations evoked by the brand. They primarily include warmth, fun, excitement, security, social identity, and self-esteem.
	Brand resonance	It reflects the ultimate relationship status and identification level between consumers and a brand, encompassing the nature of the relationship and the degree to which consumers perceive themselves as "in sync" with the brand. It primarily includes behavioral loyalty, attitudinal attachment, a sense of belonging, and active engagement.

This paper employs the CBBE model to investigate and analyze the current status of brand equity for a private university in Sichuan. Using the CBBE model as a framework, targeted brand enhancement strategies are proposed, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for brand equity building and value enhancement for this private university and other private universities alike, thereby promoting their high-quality and sustainable development.

### 3 Research Design

This paper capitalizes on a sample population comprising faculty and students from a private university in Sichuan, leveraging a combination of interview surveys (qualitative) and questionnaire surveys (quantitative) to proceed with a comprehensive analysis of the university's brand status. The interview surveys zero in on relevant themes related to the university's brand equity, providing a qualitative assessment of its current state. The questionnaire surveys, targeting faculty and students, quantify their perceptions and evaluations of the university's brand.

#### 3.1 Interview Surveys

**Interview outline and process.** To comprehensively evaluate the brand of the private university, the interview outline covers the overall perception of the university brand, participants' preferences in choosing a university, information acquisition channels, and evaluations of the university's development. To ensure that the outline is comprehensive, accurate, and objective, it has been reviewed by five industry experts (including senior managers at the dean level and above and scholars with titles of associate professor and above). 42 respondents were randomly selected through the official channels of the school and interviewed face-to-face for two weeks. To ensure the comprehensiveness of the interviews, the 42 respondents included 19 students (covering all colleges of the university), 6 school-level leaders, 12 faculty members (covering different positions and different years of work experience at the university), 3 alumni, and 2 heads of employers, etc. The ratio of male to female interviewees was 1:1.

**Analysis of interview results.** In terms of brand perception and evaluation, the interviewees believed that the school brand was highly correlated with the parent university and professional characteristics; the university's brand awareness was higher in the province than outside the province. And the interviewees all showed a strong sense of belonging and loyalty. In terms of school selection preferences and needs, geographical location is the primary decision-making factor for teachers and students to choose a university, followed by grade matching, career development prospects, etc. In terms of brand communication media and paths, the "College Entrance Examination Application Guide" and recruitment websites are the main sources of information for teachers and students to first understand the university. The university's WeChat public account is the main platform for teachers and students to obtain information; they all believe that the utilization rate of the university's official website is low. In terms of a comprehensive evaluation of university construction, the interview results show that there are problems with the university's hardware facilities and professional construction.

In addition, through horizontal comparison with other universities, the results reveal the university's advantages in personalized development and interest-oriented education, as well as its shortcomings in characteristic professional positioning, differentiated competitiveness, and practical training ability training. These results also provide a basis for university brand enhancement strategies.

### 3.2 Questionnaire Design and Pre-Survey

**Questionnaire design.** The rationality and accuracy of questionnaire content are prerequisites for ensuring the precision of research. This study designs the research questionnaire based on theoretical analysis. Considering that the research subjects are faculty and students at a private university, the questionnaire is categorized into two sections: one for students and the other for staff. The research questionnaire consists of three parts: The first part collects basic demographic information from the respondents, including gender, department, major, and educational background. The second part measures brand equity. To accurately identify the problems existing in the brand building of the private university, this article mainly refers to the established scale by Stukalina (2021) <sup>[22]</sup>, integrates the four levels and six dimensions of the CBBE model into the Likert five-point scale, and appropriately revise and improve the scale based on with the research context and semantics. The third part collects suggestions for brand enhancement.

**Pre-survey and data collection.** Ahead of initiating the formal questionnaire survey, a team of experts in relevant fields was assembled to conduct multiple rounds of review and revision on the questionnaire's content, structural logic, and language expression, thereby enhancing its academic rigor and practicality. Subsequently, a pre-survey questionnaire was distributed to a randomly selected sample of 144 faculty and students within the university to test the questionnaire's applicability. The pre-survey results indicated that the questionnaire could effectively support the research objectives. Ultimately, in order to ensure broad coverage of the target group, questionnaire samples were randomly selected from multiple channels such as classrooms, clubs, and work groups, and electronic questionnaires were used. A total of 1,800 questionnaires were distributed, and 1,614 valid questionnaires were collected, with an effective response rate of 89.67%.

## 4 Statistical Analysis of Survey Data

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The survey sample encompasses faculty and students at the target private university, with students accounting for 93.68% and teachers comprising 6.32% of the respondents. The male-to-female ratio stands at 51.73%, aligning closely with the gender distribution of the university's faculty and student body. The proportion of respondents from each grade level—freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior—is 35.32%, 30.29%, 22.35%, and 12.04%, respectively, which reflects the uneven grade distribution resulting from the random sampling strategy employed. In terms of students' hometowns, 63.51% hail from within the province, mirroring the university's admission ratio for in-province applicants. Statistical analysis reveals that faculty and students perceive various aspects of the university (including salience, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings, and resonance) at an above-average level. Detailed descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistical analysis

Variable		Number of samples	Proportion (%)	Mean	Variance	Standard deviation		
Students (1512)	Grade	Freshman	534	35.32%	-	-	-	
		Sophomore	458	30.29%	-	-	-	
		Junior	338	22.35%	-	-	-	
		Senior	182	12.04%	-	-	-	
	Hometown	Within the province	1025	67.79%	-	-	-	
		Outside the province	487	32.21%	-	-	-	
	Gender	Male	797	52.71%	-	-	-	
		Female	715	47.29%	-	-	-	
	Faculty (102)	Gender	Male	38	37.25%	-	-	-
			Female	64	62.75%	-	-	-
Age		Under 30	26	25.49%	-	-	-	
		31–40	52	50.98%	-	-	-	
		41–50	24	23.53%	-	-	-	
Education level		Bachelor's degree	36	35.29%	-	-	-	
		Master's degree or higher	66	64.71%	-	-	-	
Alma mater		Non-teacher education	84	82.35%	-	-	-	
		Teacher education	18	17.65%	-	-	-	
		Teaching assistant	32	31.37%	-	-	-	
Title		Lecturer	46	45.10%	-	-	-	
		Associate professor	18	17.65%	-	-	-	
		Professor	6	5.88%	-	-	-	
Years of work experience		Less than 1 year	8	7.84%	-	-	-	
		1–3 years	18	17.65%	-	-	-	
	3–5 years	18	17.65%	-	-	-		
	More than 5 years	58	56.86%	-	-	-		
Six dimensions of the CBBE model	Brand salience			-	3.185	0.954	0.977	
	Brand performance			-	3.255	0.847	0.92	
	Brand imagery		1614	-	3.142	0.886	0.941	
	Brand judgments			-	3.412	0.761	0.872	
	Brand feelings			-	3.343	0.864	0.93	
	Brand resonance			-	3.404	0.733	0.856	

## 4.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Reliability serves as a crucial indicator for assessing the dependability of measurement instruments, reflecting the stability and consistency of results obtained from multiple measurements of the same object. In this study, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient and Composite Reliability (CR) were employed to evaluate reliability, with higher values indicating greater reliability. The results revealed that both Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and CR values for the six dimensions, including brand prominence, in the second part of the questionnaire, were significantly higher than the benchmark value of 0.7 (Parasuraman, 2005) <sup>[23]</sup>, suggesting excellent reliability of the scale. Validity, on the other hand, pertains to the accuracy of a measurement instrument in reflecting the intended content being measured. Factor Loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were utilized in this study to assess validity, with higher values signifying higher validity. The findings demonstrated that the factor loading values for all six dimensions, such as brand prominence, exceeded 0.85, and the AVE values were significantly higher than the standard threshold of 0.5 (Wu, 2010) <sup>[24]</sup>, substantiating the superiority of the scale in terms of validity.

## 4.3 Analysis of Survey Results

**Analysis of current situations.** Drawing from the questionnaire survey results, this section presents an in-depth analysis of the private university's brand perception and communication avenues among its faculty and students.

*University brand perception.* The findings revealed that 51.8% of respondents primarily associate the university with its "parent institution," highlighting a relative weakness in the private university's independent brand strength. In areas such as talent nurturing, admissions, and career placement, the university heavily leans on its parent institution. Consequently, there is a pressing need for the private university to bolster its brand development. Additionally, the survey results indicated that the university's brand perception was less tied to factors closely linked to educational excellence, such as faculty expertise, career prospects, and distinctive academic programs. This underscores the necessity for the private university to augment its internal advancements.

*Brand communication avenues.* The results show that the brand communication channels of this private university are relatively single. Before entering the university, teachers and students mainly rely on traditional forms such as application books and recruitment websites to learn about the university for the first time. It is worth noting that fewer people recommend the university through word of mouth (friends and classmates), which shows that the university brand penetration is weak or has not been highly recognized by society. In addition, the results show that the most commonly used information media for teachers and students of this private university are social/office network platforms such as WeChat, DingTalk, and Weibo. However, the primary source for receiving information about the university remains its official website.

*Key factors in university selection.* For teachers and students of this private university, when choosing a university, professional settings and advantages, teaching quality



and faculty, food and accommodation environment, and services become the key factors that students consider; salary, geographical location and surrounding environment, university brand and social reputation are the primary considerations for teachers.

*Faculty and student satisfaction.* In terms of satisfaction with the private university's brand among faculty and students, students express the highest satisfaction with the university's program offerings and benefits, followed by instructional quality/faculty expertise and living and service environments. Relatively, students have lower satisfaction with international exchanges and collaborations, postgraduate entrance exam tutoring, and competition-related endeavors. Teachers, on the other hand, are most satisfied with the work culture and job autonomy at the private university but have lesser satisfaction with equitable compensation and advancement opportunities.

*Factors for enhancing brand influence.* Regarding suggestions for executing a brand enhancement strategy, students most desire that the private university improves its instructional facilities and campus ambiance, followed by living and service environments and hardware facilities. Teachers, however, prioritize enhancements in instructional quality/faculty expertise, hardware facilities, instructional facilities, and campus ambiance.

**Heterogeneity analysis.** To further analyze the differences among various groups of faculty and students across dimensions and levels of university brand-building status, this study employs two methods for variance analysis: the independent-samples T-test and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Specifically, gender, being a dichotomous variable, is analyzed using the independent-samples T-test, whereas school, grade, and faculty title, being multicategorical variables, are examined using one-way ANOVA.

*Gender.* To examine whether there are differences in the perceptions of faculty and students of different genders across dimensions and levels of university brand building, this study leverages the independent-samples T-test. The results indicate significant differences between genders in terms of brand salience, brand performance, brand imagery, brand feelings, and brand resonance across six dimensions. Similarly, significant differences are observed in brand identity and brand meaning across four levels. By comparing the mean values, it is found that male faculty and students perceive various dimensions of the university's brand status more favorably than female ones, suggesting that the latter's perceptions across these dimensions need improvement. A possible reason for this is that this private university, with engineering and science as its primary specializations, is possibly more male-dominated in terms of academic characteristics, hardware and software facilities, and campus cultural activities. Therefore, there is a need to further address the work and study needs of female faculty and students, improve facilities tailored to them, and create a favorable work and study atmosphere and conditions.

*School.* This study utilizes one-way ANOVA to analyze the differences in perceptions of faculty and students from different schools across dimensions and levels of university brand building. The results reveal significant differences among schools in terms of brand salience, brand performance, and brand imagery across six dimensions. Similarly, prominent differences are observed in brand identity and brand meaning

across four levels. A comparison of the mean values unveiled that the School of Aeronautics scores highest in the dimensions and levels with significant differences, followed by the School of Arts and Sciences. Possible reasons for this include the School of Aeronautics's production of numerous outstanding graduates, such as the heroic crew of Flight 3U8633, which has fostered a strong sense of honor and pride among its faculty and students. Meanwhile, the School of Arts and Sciences's e-sports program has won national championships, and its golf majors boast high employment quality and initial salaries, contributing to high satisfaction among its faculty and students.

*Grade.* This study employs the one-way ANOVA method to elucidate the differences exhibited by students of various grades across various dimensions and levels of university brand building. The analysis of the results reveals significant differences among students of different grades across all six dimensions and four levels. By comparing the mean values, it is evident that freshmen demonstrate significant differences from students of other grades across all dimensions, whereas the differences between junior and senior students are not statistically significant. A plausible explanation for this could be that freshmen, due to their recent enrollment, have a first impression of the university's brand building, which gradually evolves into a deeper understanding as they progress through higher grades.

*Faculty titles.* Furthermore, this study also utilizes the one-way ANOVA method to analyze the differences exhibited by faculty titles across distinct dimensions and levels of university brand building. The analysis of the results indicates that among the six dimensions, teachers of different professional titles exhibit significant differences in brand salience, brand imagery, brand judgments, and brand feelings. Across the four levels, teachers and students of different genders show substantial differences in brand identity, brand meaning, and brand responses. By comparing the mean values, it is apparent that teachers with the title of teaching assistant score higher in brand salience, brand performance, brand judgments, and brand feelings. Teachers with the title of professor score highest in brand resonance, while those with the title of associate professor score lowest across all dimensions of the private university's brand status.

Building upon the aforementioned data analysis, it can be concluded that the faculty and students of this private institution hold a generally positive perception of the college's brand status. The scores for brand salience, brand performance, brand imagery, brand judgments, brand feelings, and brand resonance demonstrate a steady upward trend. Nonetheless, notable disparities are observable in the perceptions of various groups with distinct characteristics across the varying dimensions of the private university's brand status.

## **5 Issues in Brand Building for the Private University**

According to the analysis of the survey results of the brand status of this private university, and based on the four core dimensions of brand identity, brand meaning, brand responses, and brand relationships of the CBBE model, a systematic analysis of the brand status of this university was conducted to reveal its potential problems.

### **5.1 Issues with Brand Identity**

The private university's brand embraces overall good salience, yet it grapples with issues such as strong associations with its parent institution. Firstly, there is over-reliance on the parent institution's brand. Faculty and students frequently associate the university's brand with its parent institution, indicating that brand identity has not fully detached from the parent's influence. Amid the transition phase towards becoming an autonomous institution, this intimate association could impede the brand's independent evolution. Secondly, the university's reputation beyond its provincial borders requires enhancement. As an applied university aiming to "serve the region and face the nation," while it enjoys a positive reputation and word-of-mouth within the province, its recognition outside the province is notably inadequate, limiting its national footprint. To effectively elevate its recognition and appeal outside the province, diversified and targeted brand communication strategies are imperative. Thirdly, the university's brand promotion is ineffective. The current communication avenues are restricted, predominantly relying on entrance examination materials, provincial enrollment information websites for students, and recruitment platforms for teachers. Notwithstanding significant annual investments in enrollment promotion, the results are disappointing, with low conversion rates, highlighting limitations in the university's marketing approach.

### **5.2 Issues with Brand Meaning**

The private university's overall brand meaning is commendable, yet there are notable shortcomings in brand differentiation and positioning. Initially, there is an absence of distinctive and differentiated brand positioning. Albeit with clear objectives for discipline development and talent nurturing, these have failed to permeate effectively among faculty and students. Consequently, their initial perception of the university leans predominantly towards a science and engineering institution, with minimal awareness of its educational distinctions, rendering differentiation unapparent. Furthermore, the university's geographical location advantage remains underutilized and unincorporated into its brand positioning. Secondly, an integrated marketing strategy is absent. Brand promotion efforts are primarily disjointed, with various functional departments engaging in promotional activities based on their circumstances, devoid of cohesive and systematic planning. As the primary conduit for information dissemination, the university's official website design and information presentation lag behind contemporary standards, thereby compromising the brand's modernity and allure.

### **5.3 Issues with Brand Responses**

The private university's overall brand responses are commendable, but enhancements are required in teaching quality, software and hardware amenities, and faculty and student satisfaction. Firstly, teaching quality necessitates improvement. Interviews reveal that most faculty and students perceive the university's teaching quality and faculty prowess as subpar when juxtaposed with national assessment benchmarks, with teachers' and administrators' innovative and learning capabilities in need of augmentation.

Secondly, satisfaction with software and hardware infrastructure is low. Survey outcomes indicate that faculty and students express dissatisfaction with the older campus's ambiance, accommodation, and instructional facilities. Thirdly, faculty and student satisfaction levels are relatively low. Students hold favorable views regarding teachers' attitudes and personalized attention but express dissatisfaction with practical teaching, internships, career counseling, and postgraduate entrance exam tutoring. Teachers, while content with the work atmosphere and autonomy, express dissatisfaction with campus culture, development planning, curriculum design, and compensation and advancement opportunities.

#### **5.4 Issues with Brand Relationships**

While the private university enjoys an overall high level of brand resonance, significant disparities exist among various constituent groups. Firstly, student brand resonance negatively correlates with grade level, declining from freshman to senior year. This phenomenon is attributed to escalating expectations for educational quality and facilities, necessitating intensified brand identity education and enhancements in teaching quality and infrastructure. Secondly, brand resonance is weaker in non-premier colleges. For instance, the School of Business and the School of Arts do not constitute the university's strong disciplines, with relatively weaker faculty and teaching management, resulting in lower brand resonance scores. Thirdly, teacher brand resonance varies by professional titles. Teachers with intermediate titles (lecturers and associate professors) exhibit lower resonance, potentially linked to stage-specific characteristics of professional identity and belonging, highlighting the need to bolster loyalty among this middle tier. Fourthly, female faculty and students hold lower perceptions of the university's brand status. With a heavy emphasis on science and engineering, the male student population significantly outnumbers female students, and the curriculum emphasizes subjects such as mathematics, mechanical engineering, computer software, data mining, and big data, objectively posing greater challenges for female students than their male counterparts. Consequently, female students exhibit lower brand perceptions.

## **6 Brand Enhancement Strategies for Private Universities**

Capitalizing on the theoretical frameworks of the CBBE model and Keller's strategic brand management process, alongside insights derived from a comprehensive brand status analysis, this paper proposes tailored brand enhancement strategies for private universities, encompassing brand identity, brand meaning, brand responses, and brand relationships.

### **6.1 Brand Identity**

As a reflection of the brand value of universities, the university's name is crucial to guiding stakeholders to form brand awareness, and brand response and achieve brand

resonance. When devising a new name following a transition, it is imperative to meticulously factor in its link to the original name, academic prowess, geographical locale, and educational distinctiveness. During the transitional phase, the university should harness the brand equity of its parent institution while actively cultivating the unique brand identity of the new name, emphasizing its distinctive educational attributes and advantages. In addition, Resources of private university organizers in the fields of electronic information, national defense and military industry, park operations, etc. are used to promote the construction of an industry-education ecosystem, cooperate with leading enterprises, create an industry-education cooperation brand, and enhance brand influence. Furthermore, actively participating in industry associations pertinent to the majors offered can elevate the university's brand awareness nationwide and within its professional sphere.

## **6.2 Brand Meaning**

In the fiercely competitive field of higher education, the strategic positioning of private universities emerges as a pivotal focus for development. Private universities must hone a distinct and unambiguous brand positioning, and explore various differentiated paths in fostering secondary colleges and professional brands to enhance brand influence. At the same time, universities optimize industry reputation and reinforce credibility through official educational mediums. It should capitalize on the university's proprietary media platforms and combine free and paid channels to increase exposure. By establishing campus interactive platforms, the universities can broaden interaction avenues and enhance brand preference. In addition, private universities must articulate their educational philosophy, construct a sustainable management framework, and diversify training modalities to promote academic and managerial innovation. Private universities should combine school characteristics with campus culture, and perpetuate and disseminate its cultural depths through activities such as shooting micro-films and developing cultural and creative products, cultivating a unique humanistic environment, and strengthening brand connotation in multiple dimensions.

## **6.3 Brand Responses**

To elevate overall educational competencies, the universities ought to promptly modernize teaching facilities, cooperate with affiliated institutions, bolster the development of laboratories for prominent disciplines, execute talent acquisition plans, and explore the establishment of distinctive interdisciplinary research labs. The university must articulate its training objectives, deepen professional construction, strengthen practical teaching, and focus on the training of applied talents. Secondly, the universities improve talent-related policies, optimize the assessment and evaluation system, strengthen the teaching staff, and cultivate "double-teacher and double-capable" teachers. Thirdly, the universities should enhance information infrastructure and smart campus management services, provide comprehensive information services, and unify the planning of living spaces. To ensure the university's brand building achieves anticipated outcomes, the universities should implement a dynamic brand evaluation system to grasp the

changes in the school environment and adjust the brand strategy promptly. Ultimately, The universities have built a complete brand management and maintenance system by improving brand strategy planning, management systems, and incentive mechanisms, thereby promoting the implementation of brand strategy and preventing brand crises.

#### **6.4 Brand Relationships**

The universities should formulate multi-dimensional strategies such as establishing a teacher career development center and creating various student clubs tailored for different groups of teachers and students, to enhance the sense of belonging of teachers and students and promote the development of campus culture. At the same time, school-fellow engagement plays a pivotal role in advancing the university's brand communication and building. The universities should increase investment in alumni activities, publicize outstanding alumni deeds, establish in-depth cooperation with alumni, and guide them to contribute to the university's high-quality development.

### **7 Conclusion**

This paper focuses on a representative private university as the core object of the case study. Based on the CBBE model, through qualitative and quantitative analysis, it deeply analyzes the problems in its brand building and proposes targeted strategies. The strategic suggestions proposed in this paper involve many aspects of university development, such as industry-education integration, campus culture construction, teacher training, and information construction. These suggestions are generalizable and generally applicable and can be extended to other private universities in China. The research results of this paper not only enrich the theoretical research on brand management of private universities, but also provide practical guidance for the brand building of private universities. This study is not only an in-depth exploration of the practical experience of a single private university but also a comprehensive exploration of the sustainable development path and quality improvement mechanism of private higher education in China, contributing to the development of China's private higher education. In light of the swift evolution of private higher education, this paper advocates that universities proactively adapt to shifts in educational policies, continuously innovate their educational paradigms, craft differentiated brand strategies aligned with their unique attributes, and fortify the systematic and dynamic facets of brand management.

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