INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES
Vol 16, Issue 2, (2026) E-ISSN: 2222-6990

Brand Equity Development in Higher Education (2011-2024): A Systematic Scoping Review of Strategies and Contextual Determinants

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DOI Link: http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v16-i2/27745

Published Date: 26 February 2026

Abstract

Higher education institutions face intensifying competitive pressures driven by marketization, demographic transitions, and technological disruptions, elevating brand equity from peripheral marketing consideration to a core strategic asset, yet systematic evidence synthesis examining development strategies remains substantially underdeveloped. This systematic scoping review followed Arksey and O'Malley's six-stage framework, enhanced by PRISMA-ScR guidelines, and conducted comprehensive searches across established academic databases to identify brand equity development strategies in higher education literature published between 2014 and 2024. Of the 243 initial records, 15 studies from 10 countries met the inclusion criteria, with 80% employing quantitative methodologies and consistently adopting foundational brand equity models. Analysis revealed four distinct development strategy categories: Brand Image and Institutional Reputation, Strategic Brand Communication and Marketing, Service Quality and Student Satisfaction Pathways, and Stakeholder Engagement and Experience Design, with brand equity demonstrating multidimensional characteristics where awareness serves as foundational prerequisite, student satisfaction emerged as critical mediator between service quality improvements and brand loyalty outcomes, and social media marketing demonstrated significant effectiveness

when mediated through brand credibility development. These findings provide an evidence-based framework for higher education administrators requiring comprehensive, multidimensional approaches integrating marketing communications with substantive service quality improvements and stakeholder engagement strategies while considering contextual factors, including institutional type, cultural context, and market maturity, for sustainable competitive positioning within increasingly complex educational markets.
Keywords: Brand Equity, Higher Education Branding, Systematic Scoping Review, Brand Development Strategies, Institutional Branding

Introduction

Contemporary higher education is navigating a landscape marked by heightened competition, driven by factors such as market pressures, demographic shifts, technological advancements, and shifting expectations from stakeholders (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). This shift is particularly pronounced in emerging economies, where the rapid growth of higher education sectors within a short timeframe has led to increased competition among institutions. As a result, there is a pressing need for these institutions to implement more sophisticated brand management strategies to remain relevant and effective in this evolving environment (Perera et al., 2023; Tan et al., 2022).

The increasing competition within the educational sector has transformed brand equity from a peripheral marketing consideration into a vital strategic asset necessary for the sustainability and competitive differentiation of institutions. Today, universities and other post-secondary educational institutions understand that branding is crucial for creating unique identities that effectively showcase their strengths (Thu & Binh, 2023; Pinar et al., 2014). This shift emphasizes moving away from traditional promotional techniques toward more comprehensive strategies for building brand equity, thereby gaining sustainable competitive advantages for these institutions (Pinar et al., 2014; Mourad et al., 2011).

The landscape of global higher education is currently shaped by several key factors. These include demographic shifts affecting traditional student populations, changing employer expectations of graduate skills, the disruptive impact of technology on how education is delivered, and an increasing sophistication among consumers in their education decision-making (Tiwari, 2024). Research shows that universities are increasingly recognizing the importance of building a strong brand identity and are often adopting a customer-focused approach in their engagement with students (Mourad et al., 2020). As a result of these pressures, institutions are recognizing the need for evidence-based brand management strategies that can create sustainable competitive advantages while maintaining commitments to educational quality and accessibility.

There is growing recognition of the strategic importance of brand equity in higher education. However, a systematic synthesis of evidence on effective development strategies and the factors influencing them is still lacking. Although research in this area has shown that brand equity is mainly studied within the consumer goods and commercial sectors, there is still a lack of studies specifically addressing higher education (Tiwari, 2024). This gap creates significant challenges for practitioners seeking evidence-based methods for institutional development. Most current research on brand equity tends to focus on measurement techniques rather than practical development strategies. Consequently, there is limited synthesis of the different intervention pathways and implementation considerations (Pinar et al., 2014; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007).

This study aims to systematically identify, categorize, and analyze brand equity development strategies and determinants documented in higher education literature, with particular emphasis on evidence-based pathways for brand equity enhancement and their implementation considerations within diverse institutional contexts.

Literature Review

Brand equity theory within higher education is heavily influenced by established frameworks tailored for educational service delivery. Aaker's multidimensional brand equity model characterizes brand equity as a compilation of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand's identity and symbol, which can significantly influence the perceived value of a product or service for both the institution and its stakeholders (Aaker, 1991). Empirical validation of this framework across diverse higher education environments confirms that university brand equity is an aggregate of constructs including perceived quality, brand trust, brand loyalty, brand awareness, and brand associations (Pinar et al., 2014).

Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity framework emphasizes the psychological and behavioral outcomes associated with consumer brand knowledge, defined as the differential impact of brand knowledge on consumers' responses to marketing efforts (Keller, 1993). The customer-based brand equity framework suggests that it develops when consumers have high levels of brand awareness and familiarity, along with strong, positive, and unique brand associations stored in their minds (Pinar et al., 2014). This idea is especially relevant in higher education settings, which involve high-involvement decision-making, long-term consumption, mostly intangible service results, and interactive co-creation processes, where student engagement plays a key role in shaping perceived service quality.

Recent empirical research has confirmed the relevance of foundational models in educational settings and highlighted the need for contextual adjustments. Cross-cultural studies have shown that higher education brand equity is multidimensional, encompassing social image, performance, attachment, trustworthiness, and value, which are particularly significant in educational contexts (Perera et al., 2023). Brand credibility plays a pivotal role in brand equity. Current research indicates that neither user-generated content nor firm-generated content has a direct impact on brand equity. Instead, their influence is mediated by brand credibility (Perera et al., 2023).

Higher education institutions operate within unique service environments that face specific challenges and strategic opportunities for building brand equity. In contrast to conventional consumer goods, higher education operates within multifaceted service sectors characterized by elevated perceived risk. This complexity largely stems from the intangible nature of educational outcomes, coupled with the substantial financial investment and time commitment required from students (Mourad et al., 2011). Research indicates that higher education is frequently perceived as a service, warranting the application of service marketing principles. However, it is essential to recognize that higher education differs markedly from conventional service categories, positioning it as a credence service. In this framework, students often face challenges in assessing the quality of the educational experience until well after they have engaged with it (Tiwari, 2024). This delayed evaluation arises from the inherent complexities and intangible nature of educational outcomes, which complicate pre-consumption assessments and necessitate a nuanced understanding of service quality in this sector.

Methodology

This systematic scoping review was conducted following established methodological frameworks and current reporting standards. We utilized Arksey and O'Malley's six-stage scoping review framework, including methodological improvements, along with the PRISMA-ScR reporting guidelines to ensure rigor and transparency (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Tricco et al., 2018). The scoping review approach was chosen because it effectively enables comprehensive literature mapping across multidisciplinary areas and accommodates diverse evidence and methodological types (Peters et al., 2020).

Search Strategy and Information Sources

Considering the interdisciplinary nature of higher education branding research, which intersects the fields of education, marketing, management, and organizational behavior, we employed comprehensive, multi-faceted search strategies across various academic databases. In the domain of education, we utilized specialized resources such as ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), Education Source, and Education Research Complete. For insights into business and marketing, the search extended to platforms such as Business Source Premier, ABI/INFORM Global, and Emerald Insight. Additionally, we used various academic databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, and Academic Search Premier, to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant literature.

Search strategies were developed through an iterative process, with initial exploratory searches followed by systematic refinements, consistent with recognized methodologies for scoping studies (Levac et al., 2010). The key term categories identified included: brand equity constructs (e.g., "brand equity," "brand value," "brand strength," "customer-based brand equity," "CBBE"); terms related to higher education ("higher education," "university," "college," "tertiary education," "post-secondary education"); development-related terminology ("development," "strategy," "enhancement," "building," "management"); and metrics associated with measurement ("measurement," "assessment," "evaluation," "determinants").

Boolean search strategies combined controlled vocabulary terms and free-text keywords, using the AND/OR operators tailored to each database's specific search capabilities. For example, a search string might be structured as: ("brand equity" OR "brand value" OR "CBBE") AND ("higher education" OR "university" OR "college") AND ("development" OR "strategy" OR "enhancement" OR "determinants"). This approach ensures comprehensive retrieval of relevant literature by effectively combining concepts across multiple fields.

Eligibility Criteria and Study Selection

The inclusion criteria included studies that examined brand equity, branding, brand management, or related concepts in higher education settings. This covers research on development strategies, determinants, pathways, or measurement methods for brand equity. Empirical studies using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods with well-defined

approaches were included. The criteria also covered theoretical frameworks, conceptual models, and systematic reviews that add to foundational knowledge. Studies from different types of institutions that provide relevant insights into brand equity development were considered. Priority was given to publications
demonstrating methodological rigor and meeting scholarly standards, especially peer-reviewed articles in English. Additionally, studies published from 2014 to 2024 were eligible.

Exclusion criteria comprised studies focused solely on primary or secondary education, research on corporate branding or marketing lacking educational relevance, opinion pieces, editorials, or commentaries with limited empirical or theoretical rigor, investigations without clear operational definitions for brand equity, conference abstracts or preliminary reports missing methodological details, and studies with major methodological flaws undermining reliability or validity.

Selection Process

The study selection process utilized a rigorous multi-stage screening method, characterized by independent reviewer assessments and systematic resolution of discrepancies. Two independent reviewers evaluated titles and abstracts using structured screening forms that outlined the inclusion and exclusion criteria. A comprehensive search across multiple databases resulted in 243 initial records. After removing duplicates, 167 records were screened based on titles and abstracts. Following a full-text assessment of 59 articles, 15 studies met the predetermined inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis (Figure 1).

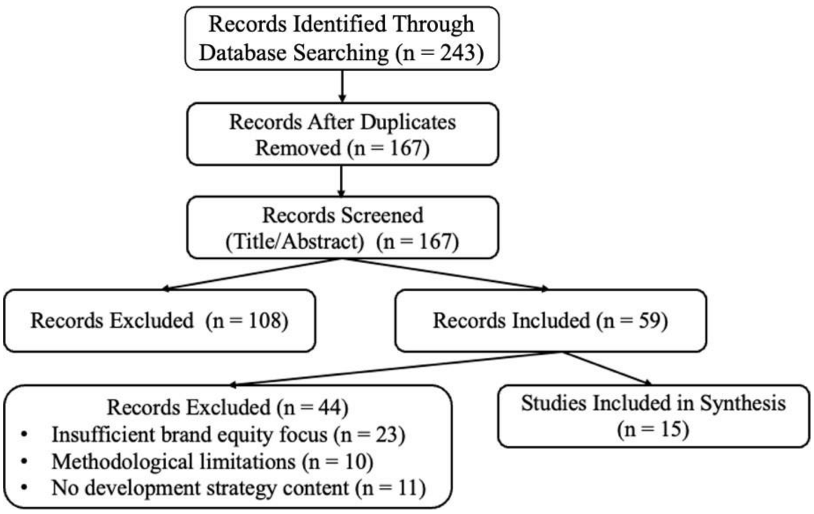

Figure 1: PRISMA-ScR Flow Diagram

Data Analysis and Synthesis

The analysis consisted of three separate phases, following scoping review frameworks (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Phase 1 involved a descriptive analysis that provided a comprehensive characterization of the included studies, encompassing geographic distribution, methodological approaches, institutional contexts, and conceptualizations of brand equity. Phase 2 employed thematic synthesis to systematically examine the development strategies and determinants of brand equity. This phase included line-by-line coding of study findings to identify specific strategies, pathways, and determinants. Furthermore, it involved developing descriptive themes that organized the coded material into conceptual categories and generating analytical themes that offered interpretive insights extending beyond individual study findings. Finally, Phase 3 focused on evidence integration, synthesizing the findings to identify patterns, theoretical mechanisms, and implementation considerations, utilizing narrative synthesis techniques.

Results and Discussion

Study Selections and Characteristics

The 15 included studies represented research from 10 countries across four continental regions, reflecting the global nature of higher education competition while demonstrating geographic concentration in regions experiencing rapid higher education expansion as presented in Table 1 below. The Asia-Pacific region contributed 6 studies (40%) with notable contributions from Vietnam (2), Indonesia (1), Nepal (1), India (1) and Malaysia (1), reflecting the rapid higher education sector development and intensified competition in these emerging markets. Europe contributed 4 studies (26.7%) with United Kingdom (3) and Germany (1), North America contributed 3 studies (20.0%) from United States (3), and other regions contributed 2 studies (13.3%) from Egypt (1) and Ecuador (1).

The methodological distribution demonstrated predominance of quantitative approaches reflecting the measurement-focused nature of brand equity research. Quantitative studies employing survey methodology and structural equation modelling comprised 12 studies (80.0%), while theoretical studies comprised 3 studies (20.0%). Mixed methods and qualitative studies were not represented in the sample.

Table 1
Geographic and Methodological Distribution of Included Studies

Region	**Country**	**Number of Studies**	**Total Percentage (%)**	**ethodological Approach**	**No. of Studies**	**Total Percentage (%)**
Asia-Pacific (6)	Vietnam (2), Indonesia (1), Nepal (1), India (1), Malaysia (1)	6	40.0	Quantitative (Survey/SEM)	12	80.0
Europe (4)	United Kingdom (3), Germany (1)	4	26.7	Theoretical	3	20.0
North America (3)	United States (3)	3	20.0	Mixed Methods	0	0.0
Other Regions (2)	Egypt (1), Ecuador (1)	2	13.3	Qualitative	0	0.0
Total	10 countries across 4 regions	**15**	**100.0**	**Total**	**15**	**100.0**

Theoretical Foundations

The systematic analysis identified a consistent application of foundational brand equity models, alongside context-specific adaptations tailored to the higher education sector as presented in Table 2. Aaker's Brand Equity Model (Aaker, 1991) was used in 7 studies (46.7%), with modifications that reflect the unique characteristics of educational services. Keller's Customer- Based Brand Equity Framework (Keller, 1993) appeared in 5 studies (33.3%), while 3 studies (20.0%) employed integrated models that combined multiple theoretical approaches.

Brand equity is recognized as a multidimensional construct consisting of four main components, validated across different cultural contexts. Brand awareness includes recognition, recall, and familiarity among key stakeholders (Roskosa & Stukalina, 2022). Brand associations involve unique, positive, and strong memory links that connect institutions to specific attributes, benefits, or experiences (Mourad et al., 2011). Perceived quality relates to overall judgments of excellence regarding educational services, faculty, facilities, and student support systems (Menon & Barani, 2016). Brand loyalty signifies sustained commitment, advocacy behaviors, and positive word-of- mouth among students, alumni, and other stakeholders (Tran et al., 2020).

Research has consistently demonstrated hierarchical relationships among the dimensions of brand equity. In this framework, brand awareness is recognized as a key foundational element that enables the development of brand associations. Previous studies have demonstrated that higher brand awareness significantly and positively influences the formation of brand associations (Tiwari, 2024), while brand associations significantly influence brand loyalty (Wong & Ling, 2019).

Table 2
Conceptual and Theoretical Characteristics of Included Studies

Aspect	**Description**	**umber of Studies**	**ercentage of Total (%)**
Adopted Brand Equity Models	Aaker's Brand Equity Model (Aaker, 1991)	7	46.7
	Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Framework (Keller, 1993)	5	33.3
	Integrated/Hybrid Models (Multiple Theoretical Approaches)	3	20.0
Common Brand Equity Dimensions Identified Across Studies	**Definition / Key Focus**		
Brand Awareness	Institutional recognition, recall, and familiarity among stakeholders (Roskosa & Stukalina, 2022)		
Brand Associations	Unique, favorable, and strong memory links between the institution and its attributes or experiences (Mourad et al., 2011)		
Perceived Quality	Stakeholder evaluations of excellence in education services, faculty, and facilities (Menon & Barani, 2016)		
Brand Loyalty	Sustained commitment, advocacy, and positive word-of-mouth among students and alumni (Tran et al., 2020)		
Interrelationships Among Dimensions	Brand awareness significantly influences brand association (Tiwari, 2024); brand association significantly influences brand loyalty (Wong & Ling, 2019)		

Brand Equity Development Strategy Categories

A systematic thematic synthesis identified four main categories of development strategies, each with unique characteristics and effective patterns. These categories included: Brand Image and Institutional Reputation, represented by 2 studies (13.3%); Strategic Brand Communication and Marketing Strategies, which covered 6 studies (40.0%); Service Quality and Student Satisfaction Pathways, involving 3 studies (20.0%); and Stakeholder Engagement and Experience Design, consisting of 4 studies (26.7%) as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Thematic Categories of Brand Equity Development Strategies in Higher Education

Category	**Core Focus**	**Key Findings / Implementation Features**	**Representative Studies**	**No. of Studies**
Brand Image & Institutional Reputation	Institutional prestige, perceived quality, and symbolic identity	Emphasizes historical legacy, perceived prestige, and institutional personality as differentiators. Strong institutional image correlates with higher brand equity.	Menon & Barani (2016); Bajaña-Villagomez & Camacho Villagómez (2024); Mourad et al. (2011)	2 (13.3%)
Strategic Brand Communication and Marketing Strategies	Integrated and digital marketing approaches	Social media marketing and integrated communication strengthen brand credibility and awareness. Effectiveness mediated by brand credibility and UGC/FGC. Coordinated multi-channel communication shown most effective.	Hasri (2021); Ruangkanjanases et al. (2022); Perera et al. (2023); Mandagie & Rana (2023); Sagynbekova et al. (2021); Thu & Binh (2023); Momen & Sultana (2020); Tiwari (2024)	6 (40.0%)
Service Quality and Student Satisfaction Pathways	Core and supplementary service excellence as brand drivers	Service quality significantly impacts student satisfaction, which mediates brand loyalty. Faculty quality, curriculum relevance, responsiveness, and facilities key determinants.	Le Na et al. (2025); Tiwari (2024); Roskosa & Stukalina (2022); Menon & Barani (2016); Bajaña-Villagomez & Camacho Villagómez (2024); Nguyen et al. (2024)	3 (20.0%)
Stakeholder Engagement and Experience Design	Student, alumni, and community engagement	Student and alumni engagement enhance loyalty and advocacy. Emotional connection through academic, extracurricular, and community involvement fosters long-term brand attachment. Alumni networks underutilized but have strong potential.	Pinar et al. (2014); Le Na et al. (2025); Thu & Binh (2023); Tran et al. (2020)	4 (26.7%)

Brand Image and Institutional Reputation

This category covers the overall perception and symbolic importance that stakeholders associate with an institution. The analysis showed that brand image in higher education is complex, consisting of several key areas of focus. The institution's historical legacy and perceived prestige are core parts of its image (Menon & Barani, 2016). These elements are described as mental perceptions gained through the senses, representing both presence and character (Bajaña- Villagomez & Camacho Villagómez, 2024), which indicates that a strong institutional image is a vital factor that sets an institution apart in the competitive higher education market.

Empirical research has established that a positive brand image and a robust reputation are directly associated with increased brand equity (Bajaña-Villagomez & Camacho Villagómez, 2024; Mourad et al., 2011). For example, universities intentionally employ marketing strategies to distinguish their images in order to attract prospective students and potential employers (Menon & Barani, 2016). The synthesis indicated that elements including relevance, personality, performance, relationships, and identity collectively play a role in shaping the university's brand image.

Strategic Brand Communication and Marketing Strategies

Communication and marketing strategies focus on systematic approaches to building brand awareness and developing favorable brand associations among target audiences. Contemporary digital marketing approaches have demonstrated a significant impact on brand equity through systematic platform utilization and content strategy development (Hasri, 2021).

Social media marketing has proven to be particularly effective in enhancing the brand equity of higher education institutions. Research has demonstrated that activities related to social media marketing exert a positive and statistically significant influence on brand equity, with effect sizes indicating considerable practical importance (Ruangkanjanases et al., 2022). The efficacy of social media strategies is mediated through brand credibility, with studies revealing that the impact of User-Generated Content and Firm-Generated Content on brand equity, mediated by brand credibility, is significant (Perera et al., 2023). Additionally, interactive digital communication has become an essential component for cultivating brand awareness and fostering relationships with stakeholders. Research indicates that effective digital engagement strategies profoundly influence prospective students' choices regarding institutions (Mandagie & Rana, 2023; Sagynbekova et al., 2021).

Integrated marketing communication approaches demonstrated superior effectiveness compared to single-channel strategies. Research indicated that institutions achieving substantial brand equity implemented coordinated messaging across multiple touchpoints, including university websites, social media platforms, promotional materials, and direct engagement activities (Thu & Binh, 2023; Momen & Sultana, 2020). The integration of controlled communication (advertising, marketing materials) and uncontrolled communication (word-of-mouth, publicity) was critical. However, studies revealed mixed results regarding the effectiveness of uncontrolled communication in specific contexts (Tiwari, 2024).

Service Quality and Student Satisfaction Pathways

Service quality enhancement emerged as a critical foundation for sustainable brand equity development, with student satisfaction serving as a key mediating variable between service quality improvements and brand loyalty outcomes. Research consistently demonstrates that student satisfaction significantly impacts brand loyalty (Tiwari, 2024), establishing satisfaction optimization as an essential component of strategy.

Core educational service quality represented the most impactful domain for brand equity development. Studies indicated that core educational services had a positive and significant impact on student satisfaction (Le Na et al., 2025; Tiwari, 2024), with faculty quality, curriculum relevance, and teaching effectiveness emerging as primary determinants. Research from multiple contexts confirmed that responsiveness to students' needs and expectations was most critical to brand equity development through service quality pathways (Roskosa & Stukalina, 2022).

Supplementary services also demonstrated a significant impact on student satisfaction and subsequent brand equity development. Research indicated that supplementary education services had a positive and significant impact on student satisfaction (Tiwari, 2024), with library services, career development support, and campus facilities representing key areas for investment for institutions seeking to enhance brand equity.

Also, studies conducted across different geographical contexts consistently confirm the strong relationship between perceived quality and brand equity. Research in India (Menon & Barani, 2016), Ecuador (Bajaña-Villagomez & Camacho Villagómez, 2024), and Vietnam (Nguyen et al., 2024) all identified perceived quality as a driver of brand equity evaluation in HEIs.

Stakeholder Engagement and Experience Design

Stakeholder engagement strategies focused on creating meaningful connections and experiences that foster long-term brand loyalty and advocacy behaviors. Research has demonstrated that practical engagement approaches require an understanding of diverse stakeholder needs and systematic relationship-building over extended timeframes (Pinar et al., 2014).

Student engagement emerged as particularly critical for brand equity development, with studies indicating that it plays a crucial role in academic outcomes and contributes significantly to brand loyalty (Le Na et al., 2025; Thu & Binh, 2023). Effective engagement strategies encompass academic involvement, extracurricular participation, and community-building activities that create emotional connections with institutional brands.

It was also noted that the broader relationship between the institution and its community, including alumni networks and industry partnerships, contributes significantly to the development of brand equity (Tran et al., 2020). Alumni engagement represented another critical pathway for brand equity development, though this area received limited attention in existing research. Studies suggested that alumni networks could serve as influential brand ambassadors, with research indicating that recommendations from students who pursue their studies at a specific university are beneficial to that university's brand equity (Tran et al., 2020). However, systematic approaches to alumni engagement for brand equity purposes remain underdeveloped in the literature.

Contextual Factors

The analysis revealed several critical contextual factors influencing the effectiveness of brand equity development strategies across different institutional and cultural environments as shown in Table 4. Research demonstrated significant cultural variations in the conceptualization and development of brand equity. Studies from Asian contexts emphasized collective values and social reputation, with research indicating that social image constitutes a critical dimension of brand equity in collectivist cultures (Perera et al., 2023). Public and private institutions exhibited distinct patterns in brand equity development and strategic priorities. Research indicates that public institutions must operate with limited resources relative to private institutions (Tan et al., 2022), necessitating more targeted, cost-effective approaches to brand equity development. Emerging higher education markets demonstrated different competitive dynamics and strategic requirements compared to established markets. Research from rapidly expanding higher education sectors indicates that HE has seen phenomenal growth in a short period and is mainly private and highly competitive (Tiwari, 2024), creating unique challenges and opportunities for brand equity development.

Table 4
Contextual Factors Influencing Brand Equity Development Effectiveness in Higher Education

ontextual Factor	Key Insights	tions for Brand Equity Development
Cultural Context	Brand equity conceptualization and strategy effectiveness vary across cultural settings. In collectivist societies, social reputation and perceived social image are critical brand equity components.	Institutions in collectivist cultures should emphasize social credibility, community reputation, and relational trust in branding strategies.
Institutional Type (Public vs. Private)	Public HEIs operate under greater resource constraints than private HEIs, leading to different strategic orientations. Public institutions prioritize efficiency and reputation, while private ones emphasize differentiation and market responsiveness.	Public HEIs require targeted, cost-effective strategies such as leveraging digital media and partnerships to strengthen brand equity.
Market Maturity & Sectoral Development	Emerging higher education markets (e.g., Asia, Latin America) experience rapid expansion and high competition, unlike established Western markets.	Institutions in emerging markets must focus on credibility building, quality assurance, and visibility to compete effectively in saturated environments.

Discussions

This systematic scoping review offers a comprehensive synthesis of strategies and factors influencing brand equity development within higher education literature, identifying four distinct categories of strategies, each with unique patterns and implementation needs. This categorization is particularly crucial for higher education institutions aiming to enhance their brand equity when determining the necessary interventions. The identification of these strategies is significant in today's competitive higher education landscape, where institutions face pressure to differentiate themselves and attract students, faculty, and funding.

Practical Implications
The findings provide evidence-based guidance for higher education administrators developing institutional branding strategies within resource-constrained environments. For institutions with limited brand awareness, the evidence suggests prioritizing integrated communication strategies that build recognition and familiarity among target audiences. The effectiveness of social media marketing, mediated by brand credibility development, indicates that institutions can achieve significant improvements in brand equity through systematic digital platform utilization and content strategy development.

For institutions with established awareness but seeking to enhance loyalty, the evidence supports investing in service-quality improvement programs that target core educational services and supplementary support systems. The critical importance of faculty quality, curriculum relevance, and student support services suggests that internal capability development should receive priority over external promotional activities.

Contextual Adaptations
The contextual factors identified in this review underscore the importance of strategy adaptation to institutional type, cultural context, and market characteristics. Public institutions operating under resource constraints may benefit from leveraging community relationships and social mission alignment, while private institutions may focus on service differentiation and messaging emphasizing performance excellence.

Research Gaps and Future Directions
Despite growing interest in higher education brand equity, several critical research gaps limit current understanding and practical application. Longitudinal research examining brand equity development trajectories and the sustainability of strategies over time remains substantially underdeveloped. Most studies employ cross-sectional designs that provide limited insight into temporal dynamics and long-term effectiveness patterns essential for strategic planning. Implementation research examining specific strategy deployment approaches, resource requirements, and barrier mitigation strategies represents another critical gap. While this review identified effective strategy categories, detailed guidance regarding implementation processes, timeline considerations, and success factors remains limited. Future research should employ action research and case study methodologies to provide practical guidance on implementation for institutional leaders.

Stakeholder perspective research represents another important gap, with most existing studies focusing exclusively on student perspectives while neglecting other critical stakeholders, including faculty, staff, alumni, employers, and community members. Understanding multi- stakeholder brand equity conceptualizations and development pathways would provide more comprehensive guidance for institutional strategy development.

Limitations
This systematic scoping review has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting findings and implications. The geographic concentration of research in the Asia-Pacific regions may limit generalizability to other cultural and institutional contexts. While this concentration reflects regional patterns of higher education development, systematic

research across diverse global contexts would strengthen the robustness of the evidence and its cross-cultural validity. The predominance of cross-sectional research designs limits understanding of brand equity development processes and the effectiveness of strategies over time. Language restrictions on English-language publications may have excluded relevant research from non- English-speaking contexts, potentially limiting cultural diversity and theoretical perspectives within the evidence synthesis.

Conclusions

This systematic scoping review synthesizes strategies for developing brand equity in higher education. The analysis reveals brand equity as a multidimensional construct comprising brand awareness, associations, perceived quality, and loyalty. Four key strategy categories emerged: brand image and reputation, integrated communication, service quality and student satisfaction, and stakeholder engagement, forming a pathway for institutional differentiation. The review shows that brand equity development requires coherent storytelling, integrated marketing, investments in service quality, and sustained stakeholder relationships. It demonstrates that institutional type, cultural values, market maturity, and resource constraints moderate strategic effectiveness, emphasizing the need for tailored branding approaches.

The findings extend consumer-based brand equity models by integrating service-dominant logic, which recognizes co-creation and stakeholder engagement as drivers of brand value. By mapping strategies to brand equity dimensions within a contingency framework, the study provides an evidence-based model for research and practice. For practitioners, the synthesis offers clear guidance. Institutions building awareness should focus on integrated marketing and digital engagement. Those strengthening loyalty must invest in service quality and stakeholder engagement, with student satisfaction mediating the relationship between these factors and loyalty outcomes. Strategic alignment between goals, stakeholder expectations, and resources is crucial for effectiveness.

Future research should examine development trajectories through longitudinal studies, implementation guidance, and multi-stakeholder perspectives. This review advances higher education branding from promotional tactics to a comprehensive strategy that balances visibility with quality. It provides an integrated framework while identifying research gaps, particularly in understanding branding trajectories across different institutional contexts.

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