

Influence of Service Brand Communication on Behavioral Intention Special Reference to the Private Professional Educational Institutes in Batticaloa District

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author VRR contributed for the overall development of the study and supervised the study. Author SK designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Service brand communication plays a crucial role in determining the Behavioral Intention towards the brands, which is useful for business. It provides the values to consumers as well. This study examined whether service brand communication has an influence on Behavioral Intention in Private Professional Educational Institutes as a research problem. This research was carried out with an objective to examine the influence of service brand communication on behavioural Intention in Private professional Educational Institutes in Batticaloa district. Personal interactive communication and marketing mix communication are considered as the measurement variables of service brand communication and Behavioral Intention is considered as the dependent variable. 200 students from

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07 Private Professional Educational Institutes in Batticaloa district have been selected as a sample base on the stratified proportionate random sampling method for this study. Data were analyzed and evaluated by Descriptive statistic, Correlation and multiple regressions analysis. Findings have shown the service brand communication and Behavioral Intention is at a high level. Moreover, it also found that there is a strong positive relationship between service brand communication and behavioral intention. Service brand communication significantly influences the behavioral intention of private professional educational institutes. Results of this study suggest that the service brand communication is important to examine the dispositional source of behavioral intention.

Keywords: Service brand communication; behavioral intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

In the marketing field, the discussion about communication began in the early 1990s. Though there are different opinions, most scholars view marketing communication as service brand communication rather than marketing mix communication of single product or activity. For Schultz [1], brands are central to this integrated marketing. For Keller [2], marketing communications represent the voice of a brand. As branding increases in importance, it appears that brands play a particularly crucial role in the marketing of services. Turley and Moore [3] advocate that due to the difficulty in-service evaluation, the service brand name becomes a crucial component of the brand an important source of information to the consumer.

Schiffman and Kanuk [4] said that Consumer's Psychology consists of a basic concept of psychology which decides an individual's behaviour and influencing consumption's behaviour. According to psychologist Watson [5] perspective, everything is considered a behaviour. So, all of our thoughts, actions, and feelings are behaviours, and they're caused by external stimuli. The first perspective used in consumer psychology is behaviourism.

In today's higher education landscape, college and university leaders may well consider principles of brand management to assure their positions regarding their competitors. Higher education leaders may derive guidance to manage effectively what may be the most important intangible asset a college or university owns its long-term image and bundle of core meaning. Grace and O'Cass [6] said students brand attitudes encapsulate the meaning that they attach to brands, which in turn affects their purchasing behaviour. Therefore, positive brand

attitudes are vital to the long-term success and sustainability of service brands of educational institutes. As such, astute educational institutes expend considerable effort on creating and maintaining positive attitudes towards their brands and this is usually achieved through the Brand's Communications. However, most of the research studies were focused on product rather than a service brand. For the private educational institute, it is important to understand the impact of service brand communication on Behavioral Intention and thus, this paper concentrates the influence of service brand communication on Behavioral Intention [7].

1.2 Research Problem

It is necessary for marketers to determine as to whether service brand communication influences Behavioral Intention in their business. A few works have been conducted so far in Sri Lanka to examine whether service brand communication leads to Behavioral Intention with special reference to Private professional educational institutes. Thus, there exists a clear knowledge gap. Hence, this inconsistent knowledge will lead the marketers as ambiguity in the side of making a decision towards the setting of appropriate brand communication to influence the behavioural intention of customers. This knowledge gap becomes a problem for marketers in acquiring consumers. The absence of such knowledge leads the Marketers unclear in satisfying the expectations of their customers. Therefore, the researcher examines this problem in this study and attempts to fill this knowledge gap. Hence, the following research problem is advanced in this study.

“Does Service Brand Communication influence the Behavioral Intention with special reference to Private Professional Educational Institutes in Batticaloa District?”

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions are advanced in this study.

1. What is the level of service brand communication in Private Professional Educational Institutes?
2. What is the relationship between service brand communication and Behavioral Intention?
3. Does service brand communication influence on Behavioral Intention in Private Professional Educational Institutes?

1.4 The Objective of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are given below. These objectives have been derived from the research questions and purpose of the study.

1. To identify the level of service brand communication in Private Professional Educational Institutes.
2. To find out the relationship between service brand communication and Behavioral Intention in Private Professional Educational Institutes.
3. To investigate the influence of service brand communication on Behavioral Intention in Private Professional Educational Institutes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept of Service Brand Communication

Kempf and Smith, [8] said brand communication should aim to enhance brand loyalty by making the consumer more attached to the brand in order to strengthen the consumer's brand relationship over time. It is the most important factor for successfully launching a new service. Brand communication is the main integrative element in managing brand relationships with customers and causes customers' evaluation of brand and creates attitude toward the brand in the customer's mind [9]. Consumers attach to brands which impact on their purchasing behaviour. Positive brand attitudes like brand trust and loyalty are critical for the long-term success of brands. As such, marketers spend considerable effort on creating and maintaining a positive attitude toward the brand [10].

Turley and Moore, [3] indicated that brand names should not be overlooked as a valid and useful avenue of communication in the creation of brand attitudes. As competition amongst service brands is increasing, service providers, as well as service designers are starting to realize the importance of having a strong corporate brand.

Strong service brands allow customers to better visualize and understand intangible services. They also reduce the customer's perceived risk of buying services, which are difficult to evaluate prior to purchasing the service [11]. However, many service companies fail to consider all the touch points where customers interact with the service brand.

In fact, as pointed out by Stern [12], "a good brand name can save millions of dollars over the product's life because it carries its own meaning, describes the product's advantages, is instantly recognized and serves to differentiate the product significantly from other competitors".

In addition, in the context of services, brand names are argued to be a crucial component of the brand an important source of information to the consumer because, in many cases, service attributes are difficult to communicate via other means [3]. Different from product brand communication, service brand communication pays more attention to direct employee contribution. While product brand interacts with consumers through an indirect employee contribution, such as advertising, publicities and even products themselves, service brand provides a more direct way, a face to face communication between consumers and employees in service process [13,14,15]. Johnson et al. [16] pointed out interpersonal interaction in service having more functions: informing, assisting and advising. Groomroos [17] points out if the effect of customer-facing employees is ignored, the coordination of brand message cannot be consistent with the service brand image. Thus, there might in practice exist two parts of service brand communication: employee-involved and non-employee-involved communication [17,14]. The former includes customer-facing employees' attitude, skills and behaviours in the service process, and the latter includes advertising, publicity, service facilities.

2.2 Areas of Service Brand Communication

According to Katrandjiev [18] marketing communication is a circular, not a linear process. There is no doubt that attitude influence behaviour, but it's also true that behaviour influences attitudes. If a consumer has a good experience with a brand, this experience either reinforces the positive network that existed before it or it caused the consumer to change the previous network and attitude.

2.2.1 Personal interactive communication

A consumer's process of information acquisition relies on both external and internal information sources that together influence his or her overall brand equity judgments and brand choices. A traditional theoretical foundation of the relationship between communication and brand attitude, directly affect the brand equity and brand attitude. The framework illustrates that consumers compare communication stimuli with their stored knowledge of comparable communication activities. Brand communication positively affects brand attitude as long as the message creates a satisfactory customer reaction to the product in question compared to a similar non-branded product [19]. Moreover, communication stimuli cause a positive effect on the consumer as a recipient; therefore, the perception of communication positively affects an individual's awareness of brands.

2.2.2 Marketing mix communication

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is one of the most controversial areas of research, the concept marking constant progress from the

simple coordinating of promotional tools to a complex strategic process. Identifying the communication pathways which influence consumer behaviour is an essential marketing communications activity, the ultimate goal being the creation of marketing messages to reach target audiences through the most appropriate channels. Adopting the approach according with IMC is not part of the marketing mix, but a holistic concept using marketing mix elements to create and strengthen relationships with consumers and to send a unified message, this paper aims to clarify some aspects of the mechanism of IMC influence on consumer behaviour, reflected also in the buying decision process.

2.3 The Concept of Behavioural Intention

The affective component of attitude refers to emotions and drives engendered by the prospect of performing a behaviour. This is in contrast to the instrumental component of attitude, which refers to a more cognitive consideration of the extent to which performing a behaviour would be advantageous [20].

One response to these observations has been to include measures of anticipated effect (i.e., what respondents would expect to feel about the consequences of behaviour) as predictors of intention [21,22,23]. Generally, these measures have improved the prediction of intention beyond that of standard variables [24].

An alternative approach is to examine anticipatory effect (i.e., how respondents feel about performing the behaviour, not how they feel about the likely consequences of that behavior [25].

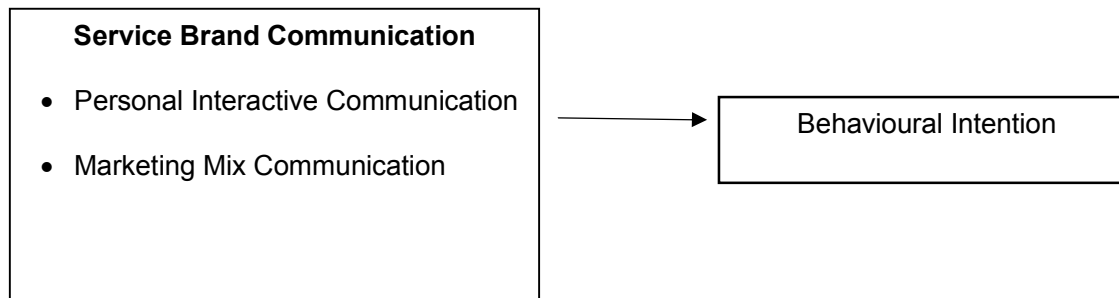


Fig. 1. Figure conceptual model

(Source: Qiu Wei,[7])

Table 1. Sampling framework

No	Registered private professional educational institutes	Number of students	Proportion	Number of samples selected
1	BCAS institute	160	16%	32
2	E Soft College	210	20%	40
3	IVL Campus	200	19%	38
4	Headway College	150	14%	28
5	ICBT Campus	90	9%	18
6	HBS College	100	10%	20
7	Oxford College	120	12%	24
Overall		1030	100%	200

Source- Formed for this research

Table 2. Decision rule for univariate analysis

Range	Decision attributes
$1 \leq X_i \leq 2.5$	Low level
$2.5 < X_i \leq 3.5$	Moderate level
$3.5 < X_i \leq 5.0$	High level

(Source- Adopted from Kishor Kumar R [26])

The literature on brand extensions alone has amassed more than a hundred studies in leading journals and has identified numerous factors that affect how consumers feel toward a given brand extension. These factors have included: overall fit [27,28,29]; type of brand (e.g., prestige or functional) [30]; brand knowledge [31]; positive affect [32]; brand attachment [33]; mood [34]; and involvement [35].

Low and Lamb [36] defined word of mouth and publicity in the services domain, the study investigates the effect of communications on service consumers' aroused feelings and attitudes towards service brands they use. According to Low and Lamb [36] "the consumer's overall evaluation of a brand – whether good or bad", it refers the brand attitudes encapsulate the meaning that consumers attach to brands, which in turn affects their purchasing behaviour.

Although controlled communications and brand name showed positive relationships with brand re-use intentions, uncontrolled communications showed a negative relationship. This suggests that when the time comes for consumers to act, or think about future actions towards the brand, information derived from all communication sources is used to determine future behavioural intentions.

3. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND METHODOLOGY

Based on the literature survey following the conceptual framework was developed. This conceptual framework establishes a link between service brand communication and consumer's psychology.

The figure depicts the relationship between service brand communication and Behavioral Intention. According to the figure, service brand communication and Behavioral Intention are the constructs. Brand Communication can be measured in terms of two variables that are Personal Interactive Communication and Marketing Mix Communication as recommended by Zeithaml & Bitner [14]. Therefore, Personal Interactive Communication and Marketing Mix Communication are considered as independent variables. Meanwhile, Behavioral Intention can be considered as a dependent variable. Hence above conceptual framework establishes links between the variables of Brand Communication and with the Behavioral Intention.

3.1 Methodology

The researcher applied a quantitative methodology for this study. Thus, the survey method has been adopted.

3.2 Sample Selection

Sri Lankan academic sector comprises of 2 major categories, namely Government Institute and Private Institute. As at June 2016, there were 07 registered Private Professional Educational Institutes in Batticaloa District. This research is limited to the Private Professional Educational Institutes in Batticaloa District, thus 200 students from those 07 institutes were

considered as the sample based on stratified researcher distributed a questionnaire to proportionate random sampling method. Hence students of those institutes.

Table 3. Response rate

No	Registered private professional educational institutes	Number of Students	Proportion	Number of samples selected	Number of respondents	Response rate
1	BCAS institute	165	16%	32	27	84%
2	E Soft College	210	20%	40	37	93%
3	IVL Campus	200	19%	38	35	92%
4	Headway College	145	14%	28	17	61%
5	ICBT Campus	90	9%	18	17	94%
6	HBS College	100	10%	20	18	90%
7	Oxford College	120	12%	24	21	88%
Overall		1030	100%	200	172	86%

Source-Data analysis

Table 4. Summary of the findings on service brand communication

Dimensions of SBC	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal interactive communication	4.19	0.59
Marketing mix communication	4.04	0.65
Service brand communication	4.11	0.55

Source-Data analysis

Table 5. Mean values and standard deviation of the statements of personal interactive communication

Statements of personal interactive communication (PIC)	Mean	S.D
Deliver enough enthusiasm and warmth (PIC-1)	4.18	0.800
Always care about during the service process (PIC-2)	4.23	0.728
Actively provide relative product/service information (PIC-3)	4.12	0.789
Have lots of experience while servicing (PIC-4)	4.06	0.781
When asking a question, employee could give a satisfied reply (PIC-5)	4.37	1.552
Over All Personal Interactive Communication	4.19	0.59

(Source-Survey Data)

Table 6. Mean values and standard deviation of the statements of marketing mix communication

Statements of marketing mix communication (MMC)	Mean	S.D
Always contact the advertisements and publicities (MMC-1)	3.97	0.917
The advertising and publicities can show a good image (MMC-2)	4.09	0.825
The uniforms are clear and decent (MMC-3)	4.06	1.080
The service environment, containing the layout of the venue and the corresponding facilities, for instance, can reflect a good brand image (MMC-4)	4.03	0.854
Over All Marketing Mix Communication	4.04	0.65

(Source-Survey Data)

Table 7. Mean and standard deviation for the statements of behavioral intention

Statements of behavioral intention (BI)	Mean	S.D
Compared with another brand, more willing to buy the products of this brand (BI-1)	4.09	0.756
Willing to continue using the product of this brand (BI-2)	4.08	0.772
If needed, would purchase other service products of this brand. (BI-3)	4.05	0.880
Willing to recommend this brand to your friends and relatives. (BI-4)	4.32	0.747
Over All Behavioral Intention	4.13	0.61

Source-Survey data

Table 8. Correlation between the variables of service brand communication and behavioral intention

Variables	Correlation with Behavioral Intention
Personal Interactive Communication	0.508**
Marketing Mix Communication	0.644**
Service brand communication	0.656**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 9. Influence of service brand communication on behavioral intention

Model	B	Sig
1 (Constant)	1.248	.000
Personal Interactive Communication(PIC)	0.221	.002
Marketing Mix Communication(MMC)	0.485	.000

Adjusted R Square value 0.440; F statistic 68.179

3.3 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

This study was carried out based on primary data. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The Questionnaire comprised of statements on the dependent and independent variable. The scale was adopted from Qiu Wei [7]. The questioner was given to the 200 students of seven educational institutes in Batticaloa District.

The likert scale of 1-5 which ranges from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" were applied in the questionnaire to identify responses. The numerical values were given for the purpose of quantification of the quantitative variable as follows:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

3.4 Data Presentation, Analysis and Evaluation

Data has been presented using tables. Meanwhile, descriptive analysis was used for data analysis. Hence under the descriptive analysis, mean and standard deviation were derived from the analysis of 172 responses. In the inferential analysis, correlation and multiple linear regressions have been applied. Statistical package of SPSS 16.0 has been used for this purpose. Furthermore, the criteria shown in the table were adopted to evaluate mean values. This was established to determine the degree of service brand communication.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Sample Profile

The researcher selected 07 registered private professional educational institutes in Batticaloa district, which consist of 200 students from those 07 institutes were considered as the sample based on stratifies proportionate random sampling method. 172 students responded to the questionnaires and the distribution of responded institutions have been presented in Table 3.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Univariate analysis was carried out for evaluating the attributes of variables individually based on the responses. Here, the frequency, mean values and standard deviation of variables were considered. Mean values have been distributed based on Liket's scale of between 1-5 which represent "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Meanwhile, mean values were evaluated based on already established evaluative criteria which range from "Low level" to "High level".

Findings and discussion of service brand communication in Private professional educational institutes in Batticaloa District

This section provides findings and discussion on service brand communication in private professional educational institutes in Batticaloa district in order to meet the first objective of this study which is the examination of the service brand communication.

As presented in Table 4, all Service brand communication variables have taken mean values of more than 3.5 which fall under the evaluative category of high level. From the

analysis of the survey, it has the Mean level of 4.11 and standard deviation as 0.55. In addition, most of the respondents expressed the common opinion regarding the service brand communication (SD = 0.55).

This was to explore the level of each service brand communication dimension (Personal Interactive Communication and Marketing Mix Communication) Private professional educational institutes in Batticaloa District. Univariate analysis was performed to find out the results.

Findings confirmed that Personal Interactive Communication has a mean of 4.19 and Marketing Mix Communication with a mean value of 4.04. Private professional educational institutes in Batticaloa District are having a high level of service brand communication since the mean value of service brand communication construct is 4.11. It clearly shows that the Private professional educational institutes use its Brand Communication at a high level to attract and retain the students towards their Institutes.

Table 5 shows the mean values for each statement in the Dimensions of Personal Interactive Communication fall in the category of high level. Statement 5 has the highest mean (4.37), which mean when students ask a question, the employee could give a satisfied reply to them. All other indicators have the mean level more than 3.5 which fall under the evaluative category of high level. It shows the overall mean of the Personal Interactive Communication as 4.19 with a standard deviation of 0.59. Therefore, it reveals that the Professional Educational Institute has high-level Personal Interactive communication in concern of service brand communication.

Table 6 shows the mean values for statements in the Dimensions of Marketing Mix Communication fall in the category of high level. Statement 2 has the highest mean (4.04), which mean the advertising and publicities can show a good image of this educational institution brand. All other indicators have the mean level more than 3.5 which fall under the evaluative category of high level. It shows the overall mean of the Marketing Mix Communication as 4.04 with a standard deviation of 0.65. Therefore, it reveals that the Professional Educational Institute has high-level Marketing Mix Communication in concern of service brand communication.

Table 7 shows the mean values for statements of behavioral intension fall in the category of high level. Statement 4 has the highest mean (4.32) and standard deviation of 0.747, which mean students are willing to recommend this education institution brand to their friends and relatives. All other Statements have the mean level more than 3.5 which fall under the evaluative category of high level. It shows the overall mean of the Behavioral Intention as 4.13 with the standard deviation of 0.61 this mean value falls into the scale of higher level, therefore it reveals that students have high-level Behavioral Intension.

4.3 The Relationship between Service Brand Communication and Behavioral Intention

Correlation values were found to determine the relationship between variables of service brand communication and Behavioral Intention. It has been presented in the table.

As shown in Table 8, all correlation values are positive and these values have been highly significant at 5% significant level ($P < 0.05$). This reveals the all service brand communication variables are strongly positively correlated with Behavioral Intention. Hence there is a strong positive relationship between service brand communication and Behavioral Intention.

4.4 Analysis of the Influence of Service Brand Communication on Behavioral Intention

This section analyses the influence of service brand communication on behavioral intention. In this study, the outcome or value of the dependent variable (Behavioral Intention.) depends on more than one independent variable (Personal Interactive Communication and Marketing Mix Communication). Therefore, to quantify the effect of different independent variables on the behaviour of a dependent variable, it is necessary to apply the technique of multiple regressions [37,38].

In multiple linear regression analysis adjusted r square statistics as well as regression coefficient are considered to be important for analysis and interpretation. Adjusted r square represents the amount of variance in the dependent variable that can be attributed to the independent variable [37]. Meanwhile, the regression coefficient (value of b) implies the change in the outcome (dependent variable) resulting from a

unit change in the independent variable [37]. Hence Behavioral Intention can be analyzed using the multiple regressions.

The coefficient table provides significant value for all the variables and these values indicate that Personal Interactive Communication and Marketing Mix Communication have significantly contributed to the behavioural intention. These predictions have been significant at p -value of 5% ($p < 0.05$). As revealed by the Adjusted R Square statistic, 44% variance in behavioural intention can be explained by service brand communication.

Hence, the equation for behavioural intention can be written as follows:

$$\text{Behavioral Intention} = 1.248 + 0.221 (\text{PIC}) + 0.485 (\text{MMC})$$

F value statistics is 68.179 which indicate that this model can be accepted. Hence it can be derived that service brand communication significantly influences on behavioral intention.

4.5 Theoretical Contribution

This research has proven that service brand communication significantly influences the Behavioral Intention of the Private professional educational institutes in Batticaloa district. It has been further found that components of service brand communication (Personal Interactive Communication and Marketing Mix Communication) also have a significant impact on Behavioral Intention. Thus, Personal Interactive Communication and Marketing Mix Communication determine the Behavioral Intention of the Private professional educational institutes in Batticaloa district. Hence this study has provided findings to fill the knowledge gap.

In addition to the theoretical contribution, this study has also measured the degree of service brand communication as well as the extent of Behavioral Intention of the Private professional educational institutes in Batticaloa district. These findings will be useful to the Directors and Managers of the professional educational institutes to develop their brand among the students who are willing to follow the professional course in future.

5. CONCLUSION

Communication is essential for any institutions and the institutions can't achieve its objective without a certain level of enthusiasm,

experience, advertisings and publicities. Based on the findings of this study, the service brand communications are at a high level in Private professional educational institutes in Batticaloa district. Which reveals that the Private educational institutions are maintaining good service brand communications to attract and retain the students. Furthermore, the finding among the service brand communications dimensions, the Private professional educational institutes are having high Personnel Interactive Communication with students, which confirm that the educational institutes highly interact with their students in communicating their brands. Understanding of consumer is critical to institutional success. The findings of this study indicate that the behavioural intention of students toward service brand is at a high level. It reveals that, if the students psychologically satisfied with a particular brand, then they would buy and use their offerings continuously and also, they would recommend that educational institution brand to their friends and relatives. Furthermore, the ultimate research objective of this study is to identify the influence of service brand communication on behavioural intention. This objective has been achieved through the findings. It was implied that service brand communication has a significant influence on the behavioural intention of students.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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