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**BRAND MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Branding technically means anything or any object by which an impression is made. Like any other Business organization even the Private schools need a Branding to increase enrolment, retain staff, students & gain profit out of the Business they are into. Ethically it would be wrong to categorize Education in the field of Profit making organization, but with the change in time & the growing competition, FDI's entering the field of education so much money is involved that it has become an industry where all corporate formulas are applied to make things work. This paper tries to underline the factors, which create an effective way to create a Brand for the school. The paper looks into the reputation of the school from the Perspective of the teachers & the parents. Branding gives particular information about the organization, goods or service, differentiating it from others in marketplace. Brand carries an assurance about the characteristics that make the product or service unique. A strong brand is a means of making people aware of what the company or organization represents and what are its offerings.*

**KEYWORDS**

brand management, crisis management, quality of teachers, reputation of school.

**INTRODUCTION**

The process of maintaining, improving, and upholding a brand so that the name is associated with positive results. Brand management involves a number of important aspects such as cost, customer satisfaction, in-store presentation, and competition. Brand management is built on a marketing foundation, but focuses directly on the brand and how that brand can remain favorable to customers. To build a reputation of any organization or Institute an Efficient PR (Public Relation) has to be created. For schools especially the reputation is made either by word of mouth or by massive advertising to create an awareness about the school. The first thing that the Parents need to know is the existence of the school. Research shows a good number of Parents especially in the urban areas do lot of research before choosing a school for their child. They get to know about the school through:

- Websites.
- Advertisement-Hoardings, Newspaper, Magazines, Pamphlets, Cable T.V. etc.
- By word of Mouth-Friends, Relatives, Students already going to school.
- Sponsorship of Events.

Every Parent have different criteria while choosing the school for their child some would be looking for academics & some would prefer an all-round development of their child. Similarly, for the teachers while seeking a job to teach they also have various concerns regarding which school they would like to teach in, what are the features they are looking into before applying for a job. The school Management engages in many promotional techniques to create an awareness of their school. It is very important for the schools to have an attractive website which is easily accessible to the Parents. A well designed website with the required information appeals to the Parents. Care should be taken for the regular updating of the website as well as monitoring the functioning of the same. Sponsoring events also builds up the Brand of the school. Many people come to know about the existence of the school. Sponsoring sports competition, Health awareness camps, painting competitions etc. are a source of productive advertisement. The school Management has to adopt various approaches to create a Brand of their institute:

**The Economical Approach**-how much they are willing to spend on the promotion.

**The Consumer Approach**-what the parents are expecting from the school.

**The Community Approach**-How the society perceives the functioning of the school.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Not much Research has been done in the field of Brand Management of the school but whatever little has been done throws light on how the internal relationship in an organization or Institute builds up the reputation of the school. The focus is on the teacher-teacher relationship or the Teacher-Parent relationship. However, it cannot be ignored that the external factors too affect the reputation of the school.

A paper titled: Identifying School Reputation by Mahmud Sagir, Izzet Dos and Remzi B. Cetin aims to investigate whether schools have a particular type of reputation the literature reveals that the precise nature of the relationships that exist between reputation and image and the understanding of their effect on customer behaviour remains a key challenge for both academia and management alike (Nguyen and Leblanc, 2001). Another factor which affects the level school reputation is the location of the school because of the fact that local environment plays a great role on students and their parents' socio-economic situation which also shapes expectations and satisfaction level. Reputation mediates students and teacher's preferences. Building Trusting Relationship for school improvement: Implications for Teachers & Principal by Cori Brewster This paper examines the issue of trust within the context of school improvement, looking specifically at teacher- teacher and teacher-principal relationships. Relationships among teachers and principals, in particular, are being held out as important indicators of a school's or district's readiness for reform and ability to sustain it.

Not much research has been carried out with regards to the external factors which form an opinion about the school. This paper will try to fill in the gaps & also try to find out the requirements of the teachers & parents from the school.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. To find out from the Parents of school going children what are the features they look for in a school before admitting their child.
2. To find out from the teachers what the features are they look for in a school before applying for a job.

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

The primary data has been collected in the year 2015 from 76 Parents & 86 teachers in Secondary & senior secondary level schools both in the NCR & a Government aided school in Kanpur which is a two tier city. A self-made structured questionnaire was used by considering different anxiety dimension like economic background, educational background, nature of curriculum and teaching strategy.

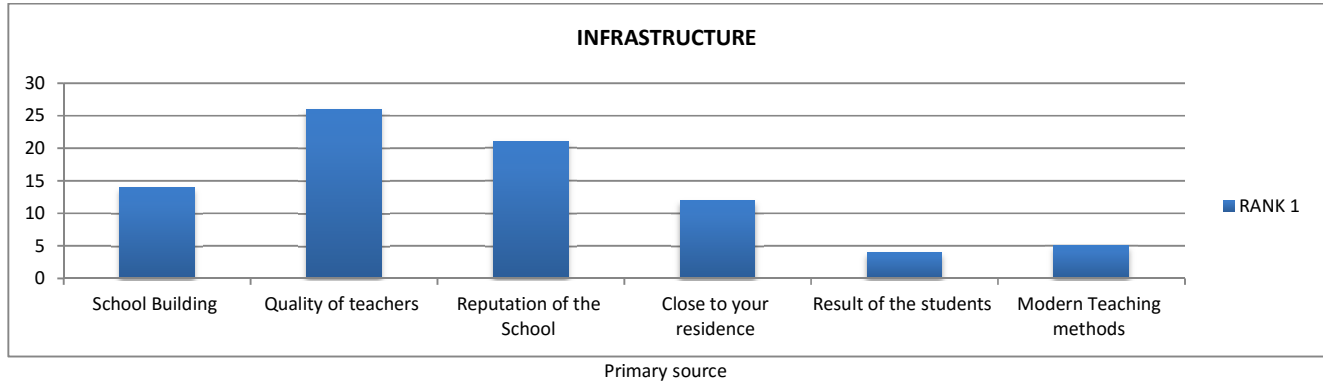


**DATA ANALYSIS/RESULT**

1. In the first question the parents were asked what are the facilities that they look for in a school while admitting their child? They were asked to rank their preferences from 1-6. The options given to them were:

- School Building
- Quality of Teachers
- Reputation of the School
- Close to your residence
- Merit/Result of the students
- Modern Teaching methods

**FIGURE 1: PREFERENCE OF THE PARENTS**



Maximum number of Parents chose **Quality of Teachers** as their preferred first choice while admitting their child in a school. Indeed, it is very important for any school to have trained & qualified teachers. The basic idea of sending a child to school is to train him to perform better in life not only in studies but also all round growth & grooming of the child is a must. In a school there is a direct interaction between the students & teachers. The teachers and their way of teaching influence the students. They look up to their teachers with a feeling of trust & respect. It is therefore very important for the school Management to have efficient & competent teachers in the school, as this is the very base to have admissions in their school.

The second rank was given to **The Reputation of The school**. A reputation of any school is built on various features; it depends on the quality of students, quality of teachers, Management, Board being followed, Infrastructure, The result or sports performance of the students, Popularity of the school etc. It is through word of mouth or through advertisement the parents come to know about a school. They definitely keep in mind these factors before admitting their child in any school. It takes years to build up the Brand of the school, the Management along with its staff have to really work hard in this direction. During admissions this is the factor, which Parents look forward to and form an opinion about the school.

The third rank was given to **School Building**: Building forms the Infrastructure of the school. Some Parents do go in for the looks of the school. Whether the school has huge playgrounds, well-equipped modern classroom. In today's digital world the Parents expect the classrooms to be modern with sufficient audio-visual aids. In some special cases the Parents also look whether the school is handicap friendly or not. This is a feature, which has been introduced in the New Education policy where the schools are directed to provide facilities to the disabled/differently abled students.

Under the concept of Inclusive Education, the government has directed the schools to give equal opportunities & facilities to all students. No student can be denied admission on the grounds of disability.

The school should also be well prepared in case of any disaster, like Earth Quake or fire. Remedial provisions should be available in the school for the safety of the students. The government has also prepared guidelines for the school Management for the security of the children after fulfilling certain formalities regarding safety they are given the No Objection Certificate (NOC) to run the school.

The fourth rank was given to the option **Close to your Residence**: It is an important feature which the Parents neglect. They go in for the reputation of the school rather than the nearness of the school to their residence. All schools as well as the government promotes the idea of admitting the child in the school which is near to their house. It spares the child from the hassle of long commuting hours. But some Parents are very conscious about their own standard & status, they desire to provide their best to their child. This forces them to look out for a school with a better reputation rather than choosing the one, which is near to their house. Most of the schools also encourage the Parents to admit their child in the school near to their house. Special reservations are made for the students living in the vicinity of the school. The schools as well as the Government promotes the idea of admitting the children in a nearby school.

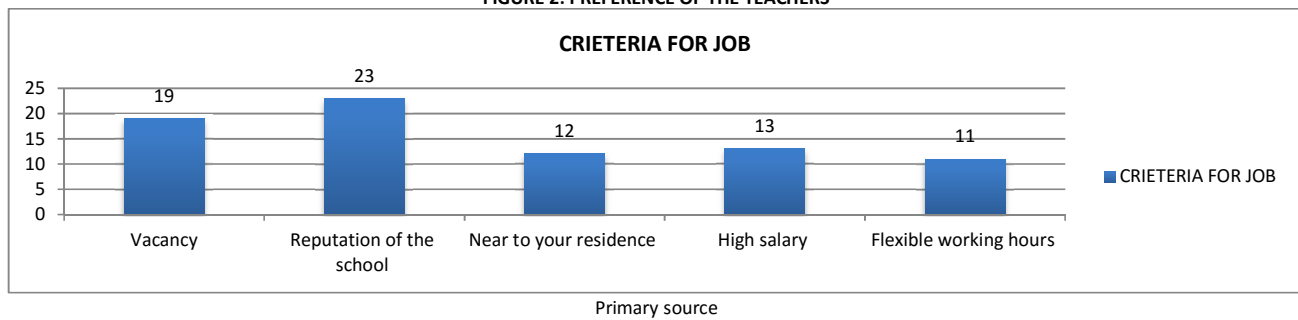
The fifth rank was given to **Modern Teaching Methods**: It can be assumed that the Parents were not aware of the modern teaching methods with the use of modern tools & a more Digitized format of teaching. Therefore, a very low rank was given to this option. Parents are not directly affected by the teaching methods, as it is the students who are in direct contact with the teachers and their method of teaching. Parents are more concerned about the result & performance of the child.

Lastly the sixth rank was given to **The Merit/Result of the students**: This again came as a surprise and it can be assumed that the Parents believed in the individual performance of the students. No comparisons were made between the students. The reputation or name of any school is built by its result & the performance. But the response of the Parents came as a surprise as they ranked the Result as the lowest criteria in a school while admitting a child. It definitely shows that what matters to the Parents is the overall development of the child. The Parents are interested in making their children street smart & worldly wise along with good academic performance.

2. In the second question the teachers were asked to rank their criteria of choosing a school for job. The options given to them were:

- Vacancy
- Reputation of the school
- Near to your residence
- High salary
- Flexible working hours

FIGURE 2: PREFERENCE OF THE TEACHERS



**Reputation of the school:** This was ranked as the top criteria of choosing the school for job. It is indeed important to work in a reputed school as it makes the job more interesting and satisfying. Reputation is a mix of good administration, good Management, Better standard of students, efficient teachers, better pay packages, attractive infrastructure etc. The teachers definitely keep these factors in mind before applying for a job in any school.

**Vacancy:** A teacher applies for a job in the school in case there is a vacancy. This was ranked as the second option in the criteria for applying for a job. Teachers come to know about the job requirements through advertisement or through word of mouth. The first step they take towards teaching is applying for a job in case of a vacancy.

**High Salary:** This was also a criteria presented to the teachers but not many chose this option it ranked third in the list. Teaching is a passion driven profession one can become a good teacher only if he/she has the drive to teach, it is called a noble & respectful profession. Though high pay packages both in government as well as public schools are welcomed but it cannot be considered as the barometer for better teaching by the teachers.

**Near to your Residence:** Though not many teachers chose this option as they were not very concerned about the distance to their work place from their residence. To some it would matter as they would consider the prospect of a nearby working place which saves them time. In other cases the provision of school transport makes it convenient for the teachers to commute therefore distance does not matter to them.

**Flexible working Hours:** This was ranked as the least important criteria for choosing a school to work. Working hours in almost all the schools are same until & unless it is a Day Boarding or a Long Hour Boarding school. The teachers are well aware of the school timings therefore they did not give much emphasis to the working hours of the school.

**RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS**

From the above survey it can be clearly analyzed that it is the Quality of teachers which is the priority of the parents while admitting their child in the school & it is the reputation of the school which makes a teacher decide on the job selection in a school. The Parents being the customers have to be fully satisfied with the services they are expecting out of the school.

**1. Creating a PR (Public Relation) Team:** Like any other corporate organizations the schools are hiring/recruiting PR teams to promote their schools. Much importance is given to highlight the features & Infrastructure of the schools. Recent years have seen the affiliation of foreign educational institutes, which attracts the Parents & something unique is expected out of it. The PR team works on this theme & works towards Brand Building of the organization. The other factors which contribute to the Brand building of the school are:

- School logo
- School Moto
- School Uniform
- School Transport—School Buses with the School name.
- School Stationary

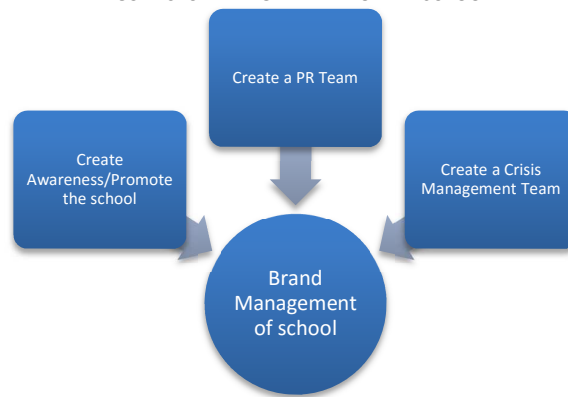
**2. Crisis Management Team:** It takes years to build Reputation of any organization or school but it can take few minutes or one incident that can kill the reputation of the school. The incidents can be:

- Natural-Earthquake, Flood
- Accidental-Injury to a student, School Bus Accident, Fire etc.
- Terrorist attack
- Misbehavior of any Teacher towards the students or Parents
- Internal Politics or fight between the staff members.

The main expectation of the parents from the school is to ensure the safety & security of their child. Not much can be done about the natural disasters except be prepared for the aftermaths, proper first aid facilities, managing the casualties etc. are required. A restoration plan makes it handy to deal with the casualties & the panic stage can be avoided. With the growing incidences of terrorist attacks, special training should be given to the staff & students to protect themselves in such a case. Appropriate measures to handle such situation should be there. The crisis management team should be ready for handling such a situation. The students should be prepared to react in such a situation. Mock drills should be conducted in the school to prepare the students to save themselves in such a situation. An exit plan/route should be explained to the students to make themselves secure. Accidents occurring due to the negligence of the school authorities are the hardest one which can really affect the reputation of the school. With the media being so agile & active the school can really get a bad name in certain cases. The Crisis Management team should be efficient enough to handle such situations & not let the Brand of the school be destroyed. Under such a situation:

- Transparency about the incident should be maintained by the school Management.
- Accept if guilty
- Take time to present facts before the media.
- Not to avoid the media
- Primary concern should be the safety of the victim.

FIGURE 3: CREATING A BRAND OF THE SCHOOL



**Mentoring of the Government schools by the Private schools** falling within the radius of 5 KM. This can include exchange programs of the students as well as the teachers. This could also raise the bar of social equality in education. The Private School Management could guide the Government schools in restructuring their institute. Give tips for better Management. The teachers could hold a workshop for the Government school teachers and update them with the latest technologies. Some private schools can also arrange for funds for the school equipment in the labs, libraries, sports kit etc. The exchange program could also include sports matches between these schools. This would definitely narrow the gap between the different categories of school. The burden on the government would also lessen. They would be well informed about what is lacking & what are the areas of concern in the Government schools & they can work on improving them. This is also an important tool for the School Management to promote their Brand by doing some philanthropy work they can gain reputation as well as do something beneficial for the schools not performing well. In fact, it can be made mandatory for the Private schools to adopt government schools which are not performing well.

## CONCLUSION

All the above-mentioned points in some way or the other are useful to the school Management to create a Brand for itself. Applying the above-mentioned points can create a successful model of a school. Age old techniques of teaching, Management, Learning would not work in the current scenario. Methods have to change, new technology has to be implemented. Effective Marketing highlighting the features the parents are looking for in a school increases admissions in the school. Ethical ways during the admission process as well as while recruiting teachers shows positive result in the future. Proper utilization of Government policies & explaining them to the parents, Teachers & students causes less confusion. The government policies too should be firm & transparent. There should be no scope of corruption in this field. Care should be taken that the new policies are for the benefit of the students, the views of school, Parents & teachers should also be considered before announcing any new reform. Frequent changes in policies should be avoided. Special care should be taken towards Inclusive Education. The schools should follow the guidelines laid by the Ministry in this context & it becomes the duty of the Government personnel to keep a vigilance of whether the policies are being implemented or not.

Digitization in Education is growing at a fast pace. Most of the schools are almost completely Digital in their working but majority of them are far from the target. Special reforms have to be brought in the Government schools & the schools in the Rural areas. With proper Infrastructure this target too can be achieved & equality in education for all can be reached.

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