Human Capital as a Branding Driver: An Empirical Analysis of Faculty Attributes in HEIs

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Abstract

In the evolving landscape of higher education, institutional branding has become a decisive factor influencing student enrollment, stakeholder trust, and institutional reputation. This study investigates the role of human capital—specifically faculty teaching experience and academic qualifications—in shaping the brand image of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India. Drawing on the SERVQUAL model's assurance dimension, the research explores how faculty attributes contribute to perceived service quality and institutional credibility. Using empirical data collected from 412 respondents and analyzed through correlation and regression techniques, the findings reveal that both teaching experience (A3) and academic qualifications (A4) significantly influence HEI branding (B6), with teaching experience emerging as the stronger predictor. Although the explained variance (R² = 0.056) is modest, the results underscore the importance of faculty competence as a strategic branding asset. The study concludes that faculty quality directly affects students' perceptions of trust, assurance, and academic excellence—key components of institutional branding. It further suggests that HEIs should prioritize faculty development, recruitment based on qualifications and experience, and the strategic communication of faculty achievements in marketing campaigns to strengthen brand differentiation and stakeholder confidence.

Keywords

Assurance dimension, brand perception, faculty qualifications, higher education branding, Human capital, institutional image, SERVQUAL, teaching experience.

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive educational landscape, branding in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has emerged as a critical determinant of institutional success, influencing student enrollment, stakeholder trust, and institutional ranking. With the proliferation of academic institutions, especially in developing countries like India, the need for HEIs to differentiate themselves has intensified. Effective branding goes beyond promotional campaigns and encompasses the perceived value and quality delivered by the institution. Among the various dimensions contributing to this perception, service quality factors—particularly assurance-related aspects like faculty teaching experience and academic qualifications—play a pivotal role.

The assurance dimension, as outlined in the SERVQUAL model, pertains to the knowledge, courtesy, and competence of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. In the context of higher education, faculty members are the most visible and consistent representatives of an institution's academic integrity and service quality. Their teaching experience and academic credentials are key indicators that shape students' and stakeholders' perceptions of the institution. When students perceive that the faculty is experienced and well-qualified, they are more likely to associate the institution with academic excellence, credibility, and long-term value—essential attributes of a strong institutional brand.

Despite widespread acknowledgment of faculty importance, empirical evidence linking faculty-related assurance factors to institutional branding remains limited. This research seeks to address this gap by investigating the influence of two key assurance components—teaching experience (A3) and academic qualifications (A4) of faculty—on the branding of HEIs (B6). Using statistical tools such as correlation and regression analysis, the study explores whether these human capital attributes significantly contribute to brand perception among students and other stakeholders.

Understanding these relationships can offer valuable insights to academic administrators, policymakers, and educational marketers. By identifying the extent to which faculty characteristics affect institutional branding, HEIs can better align their recruitment, development, and promotional strategies to enhance their competitive positioning. This study is particularly relevant in an era where students are not only consumers of education but also brand ambassadors and influencers whose perceptions can shape public opinion and institutional reputation.

Thus, the primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of faculty teaching experience and qualifications on HEI branding, providing both theoretical and practical insights into how human capital acts as a strategic asset in the higher education sector.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Branding in higher education has become increasingly significant as institutions face heightened global competition, greater accountability, and evolving student expectations. A strong institutional brand can influence student enrollment decisions, partnerships, and overall reputation [1]. According to [2], institutional image and perceived academic quality play a vital role in students' choice of university, highlighting the importance of factors that shape that image.

The **faculty** of an institution, often seen as the intellectual capital and front-line representatives, are integral to shaping brand perception. Faculty credentials, including **teaching experience** and **academic qualifications**, are considered assurance dimensions under the SERVQUAL model, which represents the ability of service providers to instill trust and confidence [3]. These assurance-related factors are central to student trust and are often used as cues for assessing the quality of academic delivery.

Emphasize that qualified faculty enhance institutional credibility and legitimacy [4]. The **academic qualifications** of faculty, especially doctoral degrees, not only reflect academic depth but also influence research output and institutional prestige [5]. Meanwhile, **teaching experience** contributes to classroom effectiveness, student engagement, and retention, all of which indirectly strengthen the brand image [6].

Moreover, faculty experience contributes to shaping student outcomes and satisfaction, both of which are critical to brand loyalty and word-of-mouth promotion [7]. Faculty with long-standing teaching experience are more adept at managing diverse learning needs and delivering consistent quality, further contributing to a positive institutional identity.

The linkage between **faculty excellence** and **institutional branding** has also been supported by organizational behavior theories, which suggest that internal competencies reflect externally as competitive advantage [8]. Therefore, an institution's ability to attract, retain, and showcase experienced and highly qualified faculty can serve as a strategic brand asset.

In the context of developing nations, where many private HEIs struggle to differentiate themselves, branding through faculty competence becomes even more crucial. According to [9], prospective students and parents in India heavily weigh faculty qualifications and experience when selecting institutions, associating them with credibility and future success.

OBJECTIVE

To analyze the impact of faculty teaching experience and academic qualifications on the branding of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

ANALYSIS

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
A3	4.39	.722	412
A4	4.30	.835	412
A5	3.88	.944	412
B6	4.06	1.047	412

Source: SPSS Analysis

The descriptive statistics indicate that item A3 has the highest mean score (M = 4.39), followed by A4 (M = 4.30), while A5 has a slightly lower average (M = 3.88). The dependent variable B6 has a mean of 4.06. This suggests that respondents rated the aspects represented by A3 and A4 more positively. Standard deviations are moderate to high, indicating some variability in responses. The sample size (N = 412) across all variables provides strong statistical power.

Table 2. Correlations

		A3	A4	A5	B6
A3	Pearson Correlation	1	.479**	.334**	.214**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	214.301	118.636	93.660	66.563
	Covariance	.521	.289	.228	.162
	N	412	412	412	412
A4	Pearson Correlation	.479**	1	.346**	.189**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	118.636	286.279	111.927	67.835
	Covariance	.289	.697	.272	.165
	N	412	412	412	412
A5	Pearson Correlation	.334**	.346**	1	.160**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.001
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	93.660	111.927	365.932	64.913

		A3	A4	A5	B6
	Covariance	.228	.272	.890	.158
	N	412	412	412	412
	Pearson Correlation	.214**	.189**	.160**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	
B6	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	66.563	67.835	64.913	450.602
	Covariance	.162	.165	.158	1.096
	N	412	412	412	412

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

Source: SPSS Analysis

The Pearson correlation matrix reveals significant positive relationships among all variables at the 0.01 level. A3 and A4 show a moderately strong correlation (r = .479), indicating a strong linear association. The correlations between B6 and the independent variables (A3 = .214, A4 = .189, A5 = .160) are positive but relatively weaker, suggesting that while there is a relationship, it is not very strong. Nonetheless, all associations are statistically significant (p < .01), indicating that these variables move together meaningfully.

Table 3. Correlations

			A3	A4	A5	B6
Spearman's rho	A3	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.502**	.365**	.263**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	412	412	412	412
	A4	Correlation Coefficient	.502**	1.000	.368**	.231**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	412	412	412	412
	A5	Correlation Coefficient	.365**	.368**	1.000	.182**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	412	412	412	412
	B6	Correlation Coefficient	.263**	.231**	.182**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	412	412	412	412

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

Source: SPSS Analysis

Spearman's rho results confirm the findings from Pearson's correlation with slightly stronger coefficients. A3 and A4 show a high correlation (ρ = .502), and A3 is positively associated with B6 (ρ = .263). This implies that even in the presence of non-linear or ordinal data, the rankings of variables maintain consistent relationships. These findings further validate the robustness of the linear relationships between the variables.

Table 4. Correlations

		B6	A3	A4	A5
Pearson Correlation	B6	1.000	.214	.189	.160
	A3	.214	1.000	.479	.334
	A4	.189	.479	1.000	.346
	A5	.160	.334	.346	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	B6	.	.000	.000	.001
	A3	.000	.	.000	.000

		B6	A3	A4	A5
	A4	.000	.000	.	.000
	A5	.001	.000	.000	.
N	B6	412	412	412	412
	A3	412	412	412	412
	A4	412	412	412	412
	A5	412	412	412	412

Source: SPSS Analysis

This table reiterates the Pearson correlations, but now interpreted with 1-tailed significance values. The correlations between B6 and A3 (.214), A4 (.189), and A5 (.160) are all statistically significant at $p < .05$ level (1-tailed), indicating directional hypotheses can be supported. It confirms the potential for A3 and A4 to predict B6 in a regression context.

Table 5. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.214[a]	.046	.044	1.024	.046	19.717	1	410	.000	
2	.236[b]	.056	.051	1.020	.010	4.183	1	409	.041	1.832

a. Predictors: (Constant), A3
b. Predictors: (Constant), A3, A4
c. Dependent Variable: B6

Source: SPSS Analysis

The **Model Summary** table provides insights into the strength and explanatory power of the regression models. In Model 1, which includes only predictor A3, the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.214, indicating a weak positive linear relationship with the dependent variable B6. The R Square value of 0.046 suggests that only 4.6% of the variance in B6 is explained by A3. When A4 is added in Model 2, R increases to 0.236, and R Square rises to 0.056, showing a slight improvement, with the model now explaining 5.6% of the variance. The change in R Square (0.010) is statistically significant ($p = 0.041$), indicating that A4 contributes meaningfully to the model. The standard error of the estimate decreases slightly from 1.024 to 1.020, showing improved prediction accuracy. The Durbin-Watson value of 1.832 suggests that there is no serious autocorrelation in the residuals, indicating independence of errors and thereby supporting the model's validity.

Table 6. ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.675	1	20.675	19.717	.000[b]
	Residual	429.927	410	1.049		
	Total	450.602	411			
2	Regression	25.027	2	12.514	12.026	.000[c]
	Residual	425.575	409	1.041		
	Total	450.602	411			

a. Dependent Variable: B6
b. Predictors: (Constant), A3
c. Predictors: (Constant), A3, A4

Source: SPSS Analysis

The ANOVA results support the regression models' significance. For Model 1, $F(1, 410) = 19.717$, $p < .001$, and for Model 2, $F(2, 409) = 12.026$, $p < .001$. This means that both regression models significantly predict the dependent variable B6, and the inclusion of A4 improves the model fit compared to Model 1.

Table 7. Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.694	.311		8.650	.000
	A3	.311	.070	.214	4.440	.000
2	(Constant)	2.432	.336		7.244	.000
	A3	.233	.079	.161	2.933	.004
	A4	.140	.069	.112	2.045	.041

a. Dependent Variable: B6

Source: SPSS Analysis

The coefficients table shows that in Model 1, A3 significantly predicts B6 (B = 0.311, p < .001). In Model 2, both A3 (B = 0.233, p = .004) and A4 (B = 0.140, p = .041) remain significant, though the standardized coefficients suggest A3 is a stronger predictor than A4. These results indicate that higher values of A3 and A4 are associated with increases in B6, supporting their roles as positive influencers.

Table 8. Residuals Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	3.09	4.30	4.06	.247	412
Residual	-3.298	1.914	.000	1.018	412
Std. Predicted Value	-3.941	.972	.000	1.000	412
Std. Residual	-3.233	1.877	.000	.998	412

a. Dependent Variable: B6

Source: SPSS Analysis

The residuals statistics reveal that the residuals are roughly symmetrically distributed around a mean of zero with a standard deviation of 1.018, supporting model adequacy. Predicted values range from 3.09 to 4.30, suggesting that the model provides plausible estimates within a reasonable range of the observed B6 values. No extreme outliers or major violations of normality are evident.

distribution appears slightly skewed and not perfectly normal, as evident from the asymmetry and uneven peaks. Although the normal curve is superimposed, the data does not align perfectly with it, suggesting some deviation from normality. Still, there are no extreme outliers, and most residuals fall within the -3 to +2 range, which indicates that the model residuals are relatively controlled and do not show major violations.
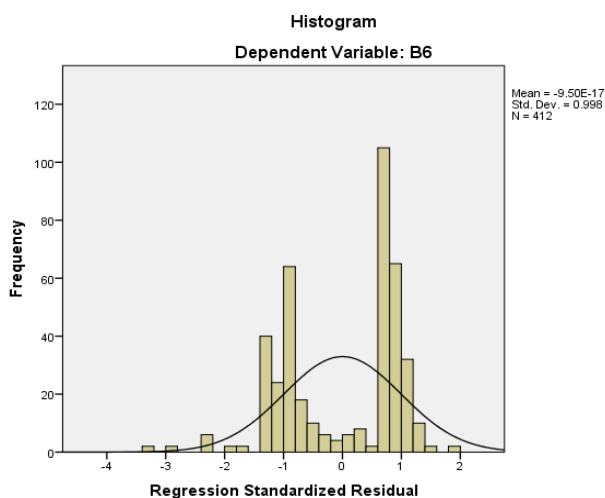

Figure 1. Histogram
Source: SPSS Analysis

The histogram displays the distribution of standardized residuals for the dependent variable B6. The residuals are roughly centered around zero, which is ideal. However, the
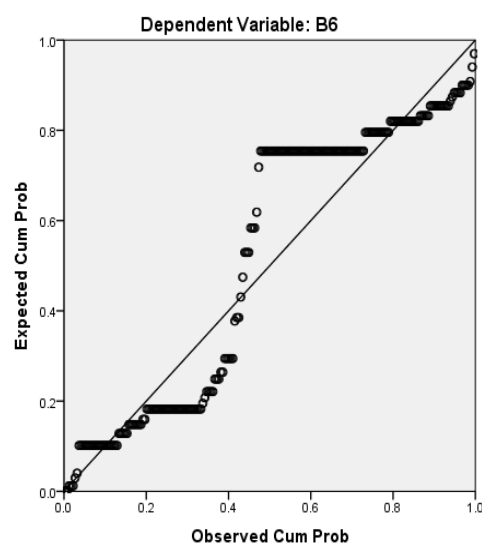

Figure 2. P-P Plot
Source: SPSS Analysis

The P-P plot assesses the normality of residuals. The points in this plot mostly follow the diagonal reference line, indicating that the residuals are **approximately normally distributed**. However, there is some **deviation at the tails** (especially at the lower end), which suggests slight non-normality. Despite this, the plot supports the assumption of **normality to a reasonable extent**, and the model can still be considered statistically acceptable for linear regression.

FINDINGS

The present study aimed to examine the influence of assurance-related factors specifically, the **teaching experience (A3)** and **academic qualifications (A4)** of faculty—on the **branding of Higher Education Institutions (B6)**. Descriptive statistics revealed high mean values for both A3 (M = 4.39) and A4 (M = 4.30), indicating that students or stakeholders perceive faculty experience and qualifications positively. Correlation analysis showed significant positive relationships between A3, A4, and B6, suggesting that these factors are moderately associated with institutional branding.

Regression analysis confirmed that both A3 ($\beta = 0.161$, $p = .004$) and A4 ($\beta = 0.112$, $p = .041$) significantly predict B6, though the explained variance is modest ($R^2 = 0.056$). Among the two, teaching experience had a slightly stronger impact, highlighting its importance in shaping brand perception. Diagnostic plots, including the histogram and P–P plot of residuals, confirmed that the regression assumptions were largely satisfied, indicating a valid and reliable model.

CONCLUSION

The study establishes that **faculty-related assurance factors significantly influence the branding of HEIs**. Although the variance explained is limited, the statistical significance reinforces the strategic role of human capital in higher education branding. Institutions looking to build or strengthen their brand image must invest in enhancing faculty credentials and leveraging their experience as a key branding asset.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Recruitment Strategy Focused on Experience and Qualifications: HEIs should prioritize hiring faculty with both strong academic backgrounds and substantial teaching experience to strengthen their institutional brand.

Faculty Development and Retention: Invest in continuous professional development and higher qualifications (e.g., PhDs, certifications), which reinforce brand credibility.

Marketing & Communication: Institutions should prominently feature faculty credentials and teaching achievements in branding campaigns, showcasing them as assurance signals to prospective students and stakeholders.

Accreditation and Rankings Impact: Since faculty qualifications and experience influence branding, these metrics should be aligned with national/international accreditation standards to boost institutional reputation.

Strategic Differentiation: Institutions can differentiate themselves in competitive educational markets by positioning themselves as centers of faculty excellence, reinforcing trust and academic quality.

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