

Original Article (Qualitative)

# Identifying and prioritizing factors affecting the brand value of Internet companies active in the field of education, content production and virtual teaching

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**Abstract**

The aim of this study is to identify and prioritize factors affecting the brand value of online companies active in online education. This study is qualitative in terms of method, and applicable in terms of purpose. The statistical population of this study is 10 university professors and experts specializing in the field of e-learning. Data were collected using a questionnaire, and the importance and ranking of each indicator were obtained with the help of the AHP technique and the fuzzy TOPSIS method. The findings show that the most important factors affecting the brand value of online education companies include, respectively, the educational content of courses, instructors, marketing communications, customer service, brand awareness, perceived quality, technical structure of the educational system, interactions, brand associations, and brand loyalty.

**Keywords:**

Brand Value,  
Business,  
Virtual Education

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## Extended abstract

### Introduction

In the digital age, online education is growing rapidly, and internet companies are facing fierce competition in this field. Brand value, as a key competitive advantage, plays an important role in attracting and retaining customers (Lockee, 2021). Brand value is a set of features, benefits, and perceptions formed in the minds of consumers about a brand, and can have a significant impact on customer choice and loyalty. Brand value is a multidimensional concept formed based on factors such as service quality, user experience, innovation, marketing strategies, and social interactions. In the online education industry, brand acts as a key competitive factor because users pay special attention to the reputation, credibility, and interactions of brands in addition to the quality of educational content. This value includes service quality, user experience, innovation, marketing strategies, and social interactions. To succeed in this field, companies should pay attention to factors such as the reputation of instructors, content personalization, the use of advanced technologies, and student interaction with the educational system. Also, it is essential to create differentiation and increase brand credibility by producing unique content, designing a smooth user experience and providing effective support.

This research seeks to identify the factors affecting the brand value of Internet companies active in the field of online education to help managers of these companies adopt optimal strategies to attract and retain audiences.

### Theoretical framework

#### Brand and brand value

Brand and its value are a vital issue in management, and managers are aware of its role in the success of organizations. Brands play multiple roles by improving the lives of consumers and increasing value for companies. Companies are looking for strong brands in domestic and foreign markets to increase sales and profitability. A brand is a set of features, names, symbols and designs that distinguish a product or service from others. A brand can communicate with customers' emotions, attitudes, and expectations. On the other hand, brand equity is the assets and liabilities associated with a brand that can increase or decrease the value of products or services. Key elements of brand equity include brand awareness (the level of customers' recognition of the existence and characteristics of the brand), brand image (customers' perceptions and associations with the brand, including experiences, feelings, and values), brand loyalty (customers' willingness to continue to purchase and support the brand), and perceived quality (the quality that customers perceive of the brand's products or services) (Aaker, 2020).

#### Online Education

Online education is a set of educational software and methods that include computer-based education, the web, virtual classrooms, etc. Online education is accessible through electronic media, the Internet, organizational networks, and ... The advantages of online education can be considered as saving time and money, high flexibility and eliminating geographical and time restrictions, flexibility in time and place of learning (El Said, 2021).

The following is a summary of similar research related to the research topic:

Ngozi et al, (2024) conducted a study entitled The Impact of Information Technology on Teaching and Learning: Focusing on the Hybrid Teaching (HT) Mode. The results of the analyses show that information technology, especially in the form of hybrid teaching, has led to innovation, transformation, redefinition and simplification of teaching and learning processes.

Jalalniya (2022) conducted a study entitled Providing a Model for Evaluating Virtual Education in Higher Education During the Corona Pandemic with a Structural-Interpretive Approach. The findings show that virtual education planning and support affect the quality of information, system and hardware platforms of virtual education.

The results of Latheef et al., (2021), titled Structure of Learning Analysis through Visual Media and Online Classrooms on Social Cognition during the Covid-19 Pandemic, show that visual media such as advertisements and videos have a profound impact on human learning and perception processes, especially among adolescents and young people.

Jafari (2021) conducted a study titled The Impact of E-Learning on the Quality of Work Life and Job Satisfaction of Employees of Islamic Azad University of Tehran Province. Data analysis using stepwise regression method showed that e-learning has a role in the quality of work life.

### **Methodology**

The present study is qualitative in nature and method, and applicable in purpose. The statistical population of this study is 10 university professors and experts specializing in the field of e-learning. In order to collect data, a 75-item questionnaire derived from the model of Aaker (1991) and Lin (2006) related to the field of virtual education was used; and in order to analyze it, the multi-criteria decision-making theory FTOPSIS and FAHP were used. Also, to examine the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was used, which was approved based on all its components (because they were higher than 0.7).

### **Findings**

In this study, the factors affecting the brand value of Internet companies active in the field of online education were examined. For this purpose, a questionnaire was designed and provided to experts to evaluate various indicators. The results showed that all indicators were approved and no criteria were eliminated.

Main components and indicators:

- Brand/Web value: repeat purchases, preferences, purchase decision.
- Brand awareness: name/logo/website, recognizability and recall.
- Brand associations: brand image, relevance, field of activity.
- Perceived quality: content relevance to needs, content quality, reasonable price, security.
- Brand loyalty: repeat purchases, loyalty, preferences.
- Marketing communications: advertising, public relations, interactions and support.
- Interactions: navigation, two-way communication, interaction with instructors and users.
- Customer service: company facilities, service delivery, support.
- Educational content: content relevance to goals, content quality, scheduling.
- Instructors: knowledge and skills, reputation, communication skills.
- Technical structure of the system: multimedia features, speed of access, ease of use.

### **Prioritizing factors affecting brand value using the FAHP method:**

The following are the results of prioritizing factors affecting brand value of internet companies active in the field of education, content production and virtual teaching using the FAHP technique: Educational content (rank 1), instructors (rank 2), marketing communications (rank 3), customer service (rank 4), brand awareness (rank 5), perceived quality (rank 6), technical structure of the system (rank 7), interactions (rank 8), brand associations (rank 9), brand loyalty (rank 10).

### **Conclusion**



This study examined the factors affecting brand value of internet companies active in the field of online education. The results show that the brand value of these companies is affected by various factors, including service quality, user experience, and educational content. Successful brands in this field try to attract and retain customers by offering diverse courses, reputable professors and user-friendly platforms. The results of this study were compared with similar studies including Almaiah & Alyoussef (2019), Ghobehei et al, (2019, Yaramadi et al., (2023), Chen et al., (2020, Yaramadi et al., (2023), Phong et al., (2020), and Lai et al, (2019), which can be presented as follows:

- Educational content: Relevance of content to course objectives, high quality, and appropriate timing are key factors.

- Instructors: Instructors' knowledge and teaching and communication skills have a significant impact on learning.

- Perceived quality: Service quality and user trust are important factors in satisfaction and loyalty.

- Technical structure and customer service: Effective support, two-way interaction, and easy user experience are among the factors that improve brand value.

- Branding and brand awareness: Attracting new students and users is possible through effective branding.

- Online engagement and loyalty: Positive interaction with users and repeated purchases indicate brand loyalty.

Finally, based on the research findings regarding each of the factors affecting the brand value of internet companies active in the field of education, content production, and virtual teaching, the following are suggested:

(Improving the quality of educational content:

- Focusing on producing high-quality, up-to-date content that is tailored to the needs of learners.

- Using modern educational methods such as interactive videos and educational games.

(Improving the skills of instructors:

- Holding training courses to strengthen online teaching skills.

- Attracting experienced and well-known instructors.

(Strengthening marketing communications:

- Using digital marketing strategies such as targeted advertising and producing attractive content.

- Collaborating with educational influencers and creating creative advertising campaigns.

(Providing differentiated customer service:

- Developing 24-hour online support systems and smart chatbots.

- Training employees to provide quality and personalized services.

(Increasing brand awareness:

- Extensive advertising and participation in educational events.

- Professional use of the logo and brand name on all platforms.

(Improving perceived quality:

- Providing quality content, ensuring information security and competitive prices.

- Receiving feedback from users and continuously improving services.

(Optimizing the technical structure of the system:

- Improving access speed, ease of use and interactive capabilities.

- Adding multimedia features and supporting different devices.

(Strengthening interactions:

- Creating an interactive space on platforms for two-way communication between learners and instructors.

- Holding live webinars and creating online forums.
- (Creating positive brand associations:
  - Emphasizing values such as quality, innovation and social responsibility.
  - Participation in social and educational activities.
- (Increase brand loyalty:
  - Provide special discounts and incentive programs to loyal customers.
  - Receive feedback and continuously improve services.
- (Use of new technologies:
  - Take advantage of smart technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, etc.
- (Continuously review user needs:
  - Conduct periodic surveys and analyze user behavior to identify strengths and weaknesses.