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## **Branding Business Schools: Introducing "Students Decision Journey" as a Guidance Model**

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# Abstract

**Title:** Branding Business Schools: Introducing “Students Decision Journey” as a Guidance Model

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**Key Words:** branding, higher education, internet communication, consumer behavior

**Thesis Purpose:** This thesis aims to study how a business school’s brand is built in the mind of prospective students and examine the role of internet communication plays in the brand building process.

**Methodology:** Qualitative research method is mainly used in the thesis, several focus group interviews and individual interviews have been done with master students and administration officials to collect primary data in a two case studies from CBS and LUSEM. In addition to public reports and WebPages of different business schools that have been studied to collect the secondary data.

**Theoretical perspectives:** The theories used in this study are theories on Brand Equity, Higher education, consumer behavior with internet communication, and buying decision process. The framework is based upon Keller’s four stages of a brand development process combined with Kotler’s buyer decision process.

**Empirical Data:** In-depth interviews were adopted in this research study, to form an understanding of schools strategic standpoint regarding branding and internet communication with International students, and then focus group interviews followed for collecting students’ stories of applying, the influence of internet on their brand perception and decision making process.

**Conclusion:** For a business school brand to succeed in its marketing communication attempts with its stakeholders i.e. mainly students, a brand has to understand what goes in the consumers’ minds when it comes to valuating choices, they have before applying for a program offered. Internet has proven to be one of the main channels of communication that links schools with potential students, designing an informative and attractive website can have an effective influence on student’s perception. A typical student decision journey as a guidance model is being introduced in this study.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

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The research paper focuses on business school branding and internet communication from students' perspective, this chapter first introduces the background information about higher education, business school branding and internet communication influence on consumer behavior; the knowledge gap and research questions have been also presented in this section.

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### *1. Background*

#### **1.1.1 Higher Education in Nordic Europe**

It's an undeniable fact that higher education sector is gradually turning into a commercial industry. That trend started from USA, Canada, UK and Australia. Although Nordic European institutions always insisted that education should be a completely public affair which is supposed to be far away from such "superficial" words as advertising or marketing, Nordic Europe also cannot avoid that industrialization trend any longer. The report Education at a Glance by OECD (2009) indicated that, out of all the funds for higher education, the relative proportion of public sources decreased to a certain extent from 2000 to 2006 in Nordic Europe. A growing percentage of funds come from private spending. Under such circumstances, universities face the challenge to build a stronger brand for the sake of survival.

The globalization encourages the stiff competition in HE further. It is reported that the number of international students all over the world has surged considerably, from 0.8 million in 1975 to 3 million in 2007 (OECD, 2009). Although Nordic European universities devoted some investments to attract foreign students, they still merely take a small share of 2.9% in total (ibid).

All the cold facts above push Nordic European universities to create a global competitive edge, in which university brands play a significant role. For graduates, university brand is an asset to benefit their long-term career life; for investors, it is a guarantee that their investments are justified effectively; for prospective students, it is a top criterion when they choose universities. Only with a distinctive brand image, universities have better chances to attract students, investors, faculty and staff (Moogan, Baron& Bainbridge, 2001).

In recent years, more and more research has been undertaken in the area of higher education branding. Although some scholars claimed that commercial marketing activities contradicts with the non-profit aim of HE, a growing number of universities adopt more proactive marketing, advertising and public relationship strategies (Curtis,

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Abratt & Minor, 2009). However, some researchers found the difficulty when applying business branding theories into HE context. As pointed out by Wæraas and Solbakk (2009), a university may be too complicated to be summarized into a one brand identity. Take the example of business schools. For those business schools that belong to large education institutions, it's more difficult to build an effective brand identity consistent with the aggregate university brand. The specialty of business schools branding calls for more research in this specific area.

### **1.1.2 Business Schools with International Standards**

In 2007-2008, the estimated number of worldwide educational institutions offering business degrees has grown to 11,833 (AACSB international, 2009). From 1990 to 2005, the number of master's business degrees conferred in the US almost doubled (ibid). Together with the popularity of business schools, the competition within business education market intensified as well.

Generally speaking, there are two kinds of business schools: independent schools and those belonging to larger universities. In Nordic Europe, most business schools are part of complex universities, such as the School of Business under Stockholm University and the School of Economics and Management under Lund University. Those business schools often benefit from the reputation of universities, but usually ignore creating their own school brands competitive enough in the business schools market. In many universities, the faculty of business is merged with other faculties. For example, Gothenburg University combines business, economics and law together in one school. In that case such a business school is not even regarded as a complete organization, the creation of a business school brand is nearly impossible.

On contrary, the brands of small independent business schools are usually better built and maintained because there is no university brand and reputation they can rely upon. When it comes to organization structure, they are normally more flexible to changes, striving to create their own brand identities.

### **1.1.3 Internet Communication in Higher Education Marketing**

Apart from traditional media such as journal publications and information conferences, internet has been accepted as a major communication platform which business schools must spend time and money on. The research by Gray, Fam & Llanes (2003) proved that web pages are a main information source for potential international students. Also, a web site, as part of image, is an effective way to position a school against its competitors (Opoku, Hultman & Saheli-Sangari, 2008). A prominent web-site can successfully portray strong brand personality (ibid).

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Web 2.0 technology led to the revolution of communication to a further step. Due to the development of social media, the relative roles of message sender and receiver changed. Consumers are not passive information receivers any longer. They are provided with many opportunities to express their own opinions and real experiences. More buzzes emerge online, influencing the patronage decision making. People believe that user-generated reviews, compared with advertisements, are more trustworthy.

When it comes to higher education sector, there are a large number of blogs, review websites and forums, which affect the brand image of universities. Although unable to control online buzz, many universities and schools have participated in popular social media, with the aim to achieve higher media coverage and to influence public's words. For example, Stockholm school of economics created a channel on YouTube, where academic conferences and introduction about schools are shared with millions of people.

### ***1.2 Literature Review and Knowledge Gap***

So far, the academic research on business school branding is still extremely scarce. Of note, some researchers suggested several basic principles and marketing mixes that business schools should follow (Antonazzi, 1998; Bisoux, 2003; Ivy, 2008; Caruana et al., 2007). Ivy (2008)'s research concluded that traditional 4P, 5P or even 7P marketing mix does not fit in business school marketing very well. Instead, he introduced a seven factors solution for marketing MBA programs, including "new program element, prominence of degree, mass media advertising, hard copy promotional materials, price, people and premiums" (Ivy, 2008).

Although the articles of researchers above are quite practical and useful for a business school management, they haven't though based their researches on solid academic methodology and lack theoretical models. Caruana et al. (2007) did apply the theory of brand personality in business school branding, but the results were merely restricted to the psychometric properties of the brand personality scale, which were unable to include all the important aspects of brand.

In order to have a better understanding of this research area in depth, we reviewed a broad literature on higher education branding (Selby, Jones & Kagawa, 2009; Roper & Davies, 2007; Bennett and Ali-Choudhury, 2009; Harris, 2009; Wæraas and Solbakk, 2009; Curtis, Abratt & Minor, 2009; Gray, Fam & Llanes, 2003; Brewer and Zhao, 2010; Clark, 2009 etc.). Among those studies mentioned above, a majority just claimed what are good or bad branding strategies from the perspective of university management, without testing results among students. Although Clark (2009)'s thesis grounded the research on the Customer-Based Brand Equity model, in fact, he didn't collect students'



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experiences or opinions, which is an inappropriate way of using Customer-Based Brand Equity.

Of note, there are three previous studies taking the perspective of students (Caruana et al., 2007; Gray, Fam & Llanes, 2003; Bennett and Ali-Choudhury, 2009). However, all of them adopt quantitative methodology, in which researchers sent out hundreds of questionnaires and then tested survey results in a hypothesized model. Those studies did contribute to the higher education branding area in a way, but such methodology was restricted to hypothesizing and testing variables, incapable of keeping the complete and nature of empirical data. It's quite possible that some unexpected significant factors are ignored in the data processing.

Since this thesis focuses on the communication of brand for the prospective students, some literature on communication strategy of universities are also reviewed, such as Gatfield, Barker & Graham (1999). Gatfield, Barker & Graham (1999) investigated the impact of promotional materials of case universities. Nevertheless, those studies looking into communication didn't discuss brand. Consequently, there is a lack of research investigating the communication influence throughout the process of brand building.

In a word, the current knowledge gap in higher education branding urgently calls for research on communication influence in brand development process from the perspective of prospective students, who are the consumers of higher education.

### ***1.3 Problem Formulation***

As previously discussed, Nordic European institutions only have a small share of international higher education market. When the funding of higher education institutions in Nordic Europe is starting to come more from the private sector, the whole industry is gradually transforming into a real business industry. Under the stiff global competition, branding is a useful approach to help universities position themselves and set themselves apart from competitors. However, the research on higher education international branding so far is not enough.

Given the complexity of university organization, it is hard to create a consistent message and to establish one single brand identity for a university. We presume that each school can form its own brand identity. The relationship between the university and its schools can be understood as mother-daughter brand relation. This is especially true for business schools, which aim to cultivate managers with practical skills for real business world. This makes business school branding different from other schools. Although a rich body of research has been undertaken to apply modern branding theories into university

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management, business school branding still needs further investigation. The popularity of business education in past decades calls for research in this area further.

Communication plays a significant part in brand creation and maintenance. In the era of web 2.0, internet has become one of the most important sources of information, which has a huge impact on public's way of thinking. Although some business schools have taken proactive online actions to build a stronger brand, scarce studies have been found concerning the application of internet communication on higher education branding. With little theoretical guidance, schools often find it difficult to take advantage of internet very effectively.

### ***1.4 Research Objectives and Questions***

Our study aims to explore the building process of business schools' brands from the perspective of potential international students and to study how internet acts as an external corporate communication tool in this process. Designing an effective website that attracts prospective students to join a Business School, a key challenge web designers and school marketers are facing nowadays that's what we've noticed in our early stages of research on branding business schools. The best way to track these challenges and come up with creative solutions is to go after the groups being targeted by those marketers and web designers, and in that case it's mainly prospective students. That's why in our research students are the central focus of this study. For this purpose, the following research questions were developed.

- 1) In what ways business schools are communicating their brands to international prospective students?
- 2) How a school brand perception is formed in the minds of prospective students?
- 3) How brand perception and web-based information influence the students' decision of school choice?

Following this chapter, a second chapter covering broad reviews of literature on brand building, higher education marketing and consumer behavior theories; from previous theories and researches, a theoretical framework is drawn aiming to help explore our research questions which we later in our study developed it further more introducing a whole new consumer perception model . In chapter 3, the research methodology used in this thesis is being discussed. Then, chapter 4 demonstrates the background of two case schools, giving objective information with regard to research topic. To continue, chapter five presents the empirical findings drawn from two cases. The thesis follows with an insightful analysis of these findings based on a clear theoretical framework. Finally, the thesis continues into conclusion part, together with a discussion of limitations, theoretical and managerial implications.

## Chapter Two: Theories

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*This chapter presents all the basic theories for this research and the current studies on business school branding and internet communication. After a description of Keller's brand development process model and Kotler's buyer decision process, a theoretical framework is presented.*

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### 2.1 Branding

Nowadays, the significant role of brands has been widely recognized in business world. Many companies believe that brands are their most valuable assets in the sense that brand equity is built through years of investments and efforts. Once successfully created, a brand cannot be duplicated by its competitors (Keller, 2008: 9).

According to Aaker (1991), brand is “a name, sign, symbol, slogan or anything that is used to identify and distinguish a specific product, service, or business”. Kapferer (2008: 13) simply defined brand as “a name with the power to influence the market”. Although the definition of brand varies from one scholar to another, there is no doubt that the essence of brand is differentiation and competitive advantage creation. To achieve that goal, brand is much more than a trademark printed on the product package. As pointed out by Kapferer (2008: 30), branding requires a long-term strategy based on corporate resources and abilities.

After fifty years of development, a rich body of theories has been built in branding area. The modern branding theories shifted from product communication to organizational image and relationship establishment (Laforet, 2009: 2). In this thesis, the authors specifically focus on brand positioning, brand image and corporate branding.

Keller's customer-based brand equity model is one of most authoritative models in branding theories. A large number of studies related to branding are based on CBBE model. It successfully distinguishes brand into six blocks, each one representing one component of brand in different levels. A vast majority of previous research went into every block and aimed to explore brand equity based on those components. Actually, the CBBE model can be used in another way that emphasizes four stages of brand building without specifying six blocks. Keller (2008) concluded four steps of brand building, each is relying on previous ones.

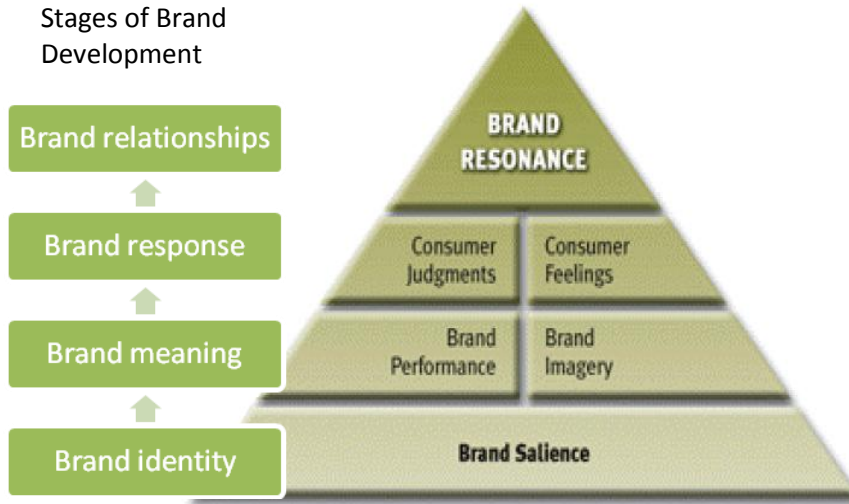


Figure 1 Customer-Based Brand Equity Pyramid (Sourced from Keller, 2008: 60)

In contrast to brand positioning, which is on the side of the brand owners, brand development stages are from the perspective of consumers, which represents the end-product of marketing activities. As Figure 1 shows, the brand building consists of brand identity, brand meaning, brand response and brand relationships.

Keller (2005) disintegrate brand building into two routes: “rational route”, which leads from brand performance to consumer judgments, and “emotional route”, which relates brand imagery to consumer feelings.

### 2.1.1 Brand Identity—Who are you?

In CBBE model, brand identity is the most fundamental floor in CBBE pyramid. In Keller’s theories, brand identity is the synonym of brand saliency and brand awareness. According to Keller (2008:60), ensuring brand identity means creating brand saliency in the mind of consumers, and means forming brand awareness.

In the research field of branding, the definition of brand identity varies from one scholar to another. Sometimes, the gap between two definitions is extremely huge. For example, Aaker (2003) defined brand identity as “a set of brand associations which need to be developed and retained for a brand strategy” (cited in Vytautas, Aistė & Regina, 2007). Kapferer (2008) built “identity prism”, which described the six facet of brand identity, including physique, personality, culture, relationship, customer reflection and self-image of brand.

To avoid confusion, in this thesis we replaced brand identity with brand awareness, a relatively simple and clear concept. As pointed out by Keller (2008:61), brand awareness contains “brand recognition” and “brand recall”. Brand awareness measures consumers’

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ability to recognize and recall a brand and to link this brand to related product categories. Keller (1993) explained brand awareness explicitly, saying that “it represents customer’s ability to identify a brand in the memory and to increase the likelihood of that brand name coming to mind with or without outside aids” (Franzen, 1999; cited in Xu and Chan, 2010).

It is accepted among scholars that brand awareness can increase the people’s familiarity with a brand and affect their brand choice. For instance, Brewer and Zhao (2010) pointed out that consumers’ purchase behaviors rest on a famous brand name, when they have little or no experience. Usually, school application choice is alike in such situation where high brand awareness is seen as a risk reducer.

### 2.1.2 Brand Meaning—What are you?

After achieving brand awareness, the next step is to connect the brand with a certain number of values and to create “the totality of brand meaning in the minds of customers” (Keller, 2008; 59). Those values linked to a brand are also named brand associations, maybe tangible or intangible. Brand awareness helps consumers recognize and remember the brand while brand meaning makes the brand differentiated from others. A successful brand meaning must be strong, favorable and unique in the order (Keller, 2008: 67) Brand meaning comprises brand performance and brand imagery, as shown in Figure 1.

Brand performance refers to the functional performance of brands, which means “how well the product or service meets customers’ more functional needs” (Keller, 2008: 64). According to Keller (2005), five kinds of utilitarian attributes exist: “Primary ingredients and supplementary features”, “Product reliability, durability, and serviceability”, “Service effectiveness, efficiency, and empathy”, “Style and design” and “Price”. These intrinsic properties of brand constitute the fundamentals of the overall brand experiences. Without these real attributes embedded in product and service, brand perception cannot be maintained even if large amounts of money are spent on marketing campaigns.

In contrast to brand performance, brand imagery refers to more intangible aspects of brand image (Keller, 2008: 65). Those intangible brand associations can be grouped into four sets—“user profile, purchase and usage situations, personality and values, history, heritage and experiences” (ibid). Laforet (2009: 115) also classify brand associations into two groups: “functional” and “symbolic”. The symbolism facet of brand has been widely recognized by businesses. The study undertaken by Swartz (1983) demonstrated that consumers interpreted a product not only through its function and design but also through external communication message, such as PR and endorsement.

Brand meaning is formed and updated after consumers receive and perceive all kinds of information pertaining to that brand. Messages sent out by companies, including marketing communication and consume experiences, are a main source. By means of

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various approaches, companies attempt to build a positive image differentiated from their competitors. Yet, in this new era of high-technology, consumers have more and more accesses to information. Extraneous messages play a more and more significant part. Those messages may come from public reviews, competition and WOM. The rise of social media exceptionally encourages the spread of those messages further.

### **2.1.3 Brand Response—What do I think or feel about you?**

Brand response, the third stage in brand building process, leads to the ultimate brand relationships. Brand response is a higher level of consumers' perception of brand, based on more concrete brand properties. In other words, brand response means "what do consumers think or feel about brand?" (Keller, 2008: 60). Like brand meaning, brand response can be disintegrated into cognitive aspect and emotional aspect as well, respectively called brand judgment and brand feelings.

Brand judgment is the aggregate rational evaluation of brand attributes by consumers. As Becker-Olsen and Hill (2006) pointed out, brand judgments are "cognitive responses consumers have to brand stimuli including thoughts regarding credibility and quality". Keller (2001) argued four kinds of brand judgments are of significance: "brand quality, brand credibility, brand consideration and brand superiority". In the case of business school brand, brand judgment can be resulted from hard facts such as rankings and accreditations.

In contrast to brand judgment, brand feeling is what consumers feel about a brand from the "heart" (Keller, 2001). In the explanation of Becker-Olsen and Hill (2006), it means affective response to the brand stimuli. Kahle et al. pointed out six crucial feelings pertaining to brand building: "warmth, fun, excitement, security, social approval and self-respect" (cited in Keller, 2005). In the case of higher education, social approval that business schools acquire is a possible brand feeling.

### **2.1.4 Brand Relationships—What about you and me?**

In the brand development ladder, the final step is to convert brand response to a mutually beneficial relationship between consumers and the brand. A strong loyalty brand relationship is what each marketer is striving to achieve, for it is the source of repeat purchases and long-term profits. Brand relationships, in the view of Keller (2008), require "attitudinal attachment, active engagement, behavioral loyalty and sense of community". In the higher education industry, brand relationships take the form of school enrollment, retention rate, alumni attendance and even the recommendations to others.

### **2.1.5 Corporate Branding**

With the trend of globalization and merger mania, a growing number of companies have recognized the importance of a strong corporate brand (Gray and Balmer, 1998). Perception of a company as a whole plays a growing important role in purchase decision (Keller, 2008: 449). According to Roper and Davies (2007), corporate branding is especially appropriate for non-profit organization such as universities, because of the intangibility and complexity of products offered by NPOs.

Like product branding, corporate branding also purposes for differentiation and preference, but at the level of an organization (Knox and Bickerton, 2003; cited in Roper and Davies, 2007). On the other hand, it has an advantage over product branding in that a successful company brand contributes to all the brands and products of the company. It better leads to the increase of company's "visibility, recognition and reputation" (Xie and Boggs, 2006, cited in Curtis, Abratt & Minor, 2009). Furthermore, corporate branding is towards to a wider range of stakeholders, such as investors, government and employees (He, 2008).

Compared with product brand, corporate brand usually is associated with a larger number of attributes (Keller, 2008: 449). Also, a corporate brand is different from a product brand in that corporate brand associations are more abstract, with regard to the image of the whole organization more than specific product characteristics. Spector (1961) identified six basic dimensions of corporate image: "dynamic, cooperative, business-wise, character, successful and withdrawn". Barich and Kotler concluded a host of determinants of corporate image, such as social conduct, business conduct, sales force and support etc. (cited in Keller, 2008: 450). Among the host of possible associations, corporate reputation, credibility and culture are most frequently mentioned.

The foundation of strong corporate brand needs the vision of top management team and efforts of each department. Schultz et al. (2005) described corporate branding as "a process of creating, nurturing and sustaining a mutually beneficial relationship between a company, its staff, and external stakeholders" (cited in Curtis, Abratt & Minor, 2009). In order to build a positive brand relationship, a corporate brand must have a long-term and consistent vision and strategy.

## ***2.2 Strategic Marketing of Higher Education***

According to Kotler & Fox (1994) marketing is a vital activity for modern Higher education institutions, those looking for growth and effectively serving areas of human need, where market knowledge is an essential factor of survival and success in attracting resources for appropriate programs designed.

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The modern institution aims to achieve its goals mainly by offering and exchanging values with various markets and publics. Marketing means the selection of target markets rather than an attempt to be all things to all people. Educational institutions operate in a complex environment of publics and customers, making effective targeting even more vital to marketing success (Kotler & Fox 1994). Marketing helps institutions survive and prosper through serving their markets with greater effectiveness. Thus setting marketing plans requires institutions to be very specific about their objectives.

“Marketing relies on designing the institution’s offering in terms of the target market’s needs and wants. Efforts to impose a program, service, or idea that is not matched to the market’s needs or wants will fail... A school may do no advertising and yet attract a large following because of its location or its reputation for effective teaching (Kotler & Fox 1994).”

## 2.1 Evolution of Enrollment Marketing

In Kotler & Fox’s book *Strategic Marketing for Educational Institutions* (1994) branding education is considered to be a historic developing activity for educational institutions were it had developed over time. At first marketing was considered unnecessary, and institutions assumed that the value of education was obvious and students had no alternatives but to enroll in limited programs offered. Later schools started to realize that prospective students have to be actively motivated to apply, when educational alternatives were mounting. Schools started to act as sales calls handing brochures and printing posters to attract students to join.

The more the competition intensified the less effective brochures targeting undefined number of potential student became, leading to market positioning and strategic planning. In recent years enrolment management became significant in importance giving greater attention on student retention, student’s satisfaction, career placement and alumni relations, all transforming education from passive learning to continuous knowledge sharing.

## 2.2 Higher Education Branding

According to Melewar & Akeel (2005), education is a service that could be marketed worldwide. The globalization of education sector increases the international competition (ibid). To attract students and faculty of high quality, “education marketing is developing standards more akin to consumer goods marketing” (ibid).

Wu, Fan & Wang (2008) explained that university brand is more than symbols of university like logo and color, but needs integrating visible and invisible resources to build competitive advantages. For the purpose of establishing a distinguished brand, university has to set core brand values, shape brand personalities and build a profound



## CHAPTER 2: Theories

brand image (ibid). In the opinion of Wu, Fan & Wang (2008), a successful brand is beneficial for university to offer education of higher quality and helps students make choices fitting themselves best.

A brand consists of a number of components. For universities, they can distinguish themselves on a variety of attributes, such as facilities, programs, rankings, alumni, graduate starting salary and financial support (Curtis, Abratt & Minor, 2009). Via case study, Curtis, Abratt & Minor (2009) found that universities pay attention to three branding areas, including “web communication, program marketing and corporate brand positioning”. Like Wu, Fan & Wang (2008), Curtis, Abratt & Minor (2009) pointed out that corporate branding in higher education sector requires the creation of organization vision and values. Furthermore, he argued that university brand is also about belonging and recognition (ibid).

Some researchers noticed that it's difficult to harmonize the views of different stakeholders. In the study of Melewar & Akel (2005), stakeholders were classified into two broad categories: internal; and external stakeholders. A Business school external stakeholders cover a wide range of audiences from opinion leaders (business, media, academic, think tank, specialist education, government/ political) to alumni and teachers (ibid). The internal audiences were divided into three main groups: students; academic; and administrative staff (ibid). The research of Roper and Davies (2007) demonstrated that different stakeholders have different perception of the same university brand. They concluded that different stakeholders are looking at different aspects of brand meanings (ibid). Roper and Davies (2007) suggested that institution should communicate with different stakeholders in different ways, so that every group is satisfied. According to Melewar & Akel (2005), school's corporate communication is an instrumental managerial strategy forming and harmonizing positive relations with external and internal stakeholders.

In the research area of higher education branding, some studies take the perspective of students (Caruana et al., 2007; Gray, Fam & Llanes, 2003; Bennett and Ali-Choudhury, 2009). Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009), with quantitative research approach, identified the brand dimensions and their strength, showing that prospective students' perceptions of university brands are affected by university promises to a large extent. Key dimensions of brands are composed of “a person's prospects on graduation” “social environment” and “learning environment” (ibid). On the contrary, prospective students pay little attention to organizational vision or mission. The study of Caruana et al. (2007) looked into the properties of brand personality of university. The results indicated that the general brand personality scale is not applicable in higher education sector (ibid).

When it comes to business school branding more specifically, the researches of Antonazzi (1998) and Bisoux (2003) are of note. According to Bisoux (2003), a brand is

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more than ranking, name or logo. It is the organization culture and mindset that make a brand distinguished and successful (ibid). In the process of positioning, schools should utilize such resources as vision, histories, legacies, personal expertise and place. Meanwhile, both Antonazzi (1998) and Bisoux (2003) noted the importance of communication. Without proper communication media, the school cannot reach its audience even though it has rich resources and capabilities. As Bisoux (2003) said, the brand relationship is established through every avenue which communicates messages.

Some researches, however, raised the questions whether traditional branding theories are applicable in higher education sector or not. The research of Chapleo (2004) implied that university executives didn't clearly see the gap between reputation and brand. In his study, Chapleo (2005) found that it's actually extremely hard to build substantial differentiations from other universities, although a clear differentiator is a prerequisite for a successful brand.

Wæraas and Solbakk (2009) reported the process of University defining its identity and image. Their study results supported skeptics of higher education branding. They demonstrated that, even though academic scholars believe that a brand is supposed to have clear focus and consistent communication strategy, that goal is extremely difficult to be achieved (ibid). According to Wæraas and Solbakk (2009), a higher education institution may be too complex to be refined to a precise essence.

### ***2.3 Internet Communication***

One of the widely accepted notions in consumer behavior is that word-of-mouth communication (WOM) plays an important role in shaping consumers' attitudes and behaviors (Jacqueline & Reingen 1987). Sometimes that role is even more important for consumers than the role of marketing activities themselves. Building loyalty and advocacy for a product or service offered matters for business growth and development. It is debatable whether potential customers are influenced more by positive word-of-mouth (PWOM) or negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) but what's agreeable is that WOM no matter if it's positive or negative shapes consumers' purchase intentions and perceptions on different products or services (Samson,2010).

Consumer attitude and brand awareness are vital factors in the decision making process. With the introduction of eWOM, consumers are now faced with many more external factors that can affect their decisions. Prackash et al.'s "brand consideration model" is a four step process explaining how consumers make their choices in purchasing a brand. The first step is the universal set, where the consumer lays out all possible options. The second step is the awareness set, in which the consumer chooses the options from the universal set based on "awareness" and that are believed to be appropriate choices for the

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consumer's intention. As Prackash et al. states, "knowledge of the items in this set is presumed to reside in the individual long-term memory". The third step, the consideration set, is more evolving as it considers the alternatives that are best suited to achieve the goal. However, eWOM affects this step as the consumers' processes external reviews and recommendations about the particular choices left. In this case, it is more short-term memory driven and focused on specific details about the product or the brand (Prackash et al. 1991).

### 2.3.1 Internet Branding

The fast development in the Web technology have widely offered solutions to consumers in the form of online decision aids which provided an intelligent interface to the consumer; Consumers are now more likely to develop novel prototypes of information search and their decision making is influenced by the information flow expended in cyber space (Pereira1999).

Building strong brand in digital era have had attracted considerable attention from both academic researchers and marketing managers. Plentiful research have been done for examining the brand building offline but the studies on online branding is insufficient. According to Rowley (2009) , the two reasons lay firstly in the contradictions among researchers about the role and significance of brands in online channels, another aspect refers to that online branding not only need the practical branding principle but also specific opportunity offered by online channel. Therefore, Rowley describes online branding as a mixture of branding concepts, practices and strategies, as well as the design and delivery of e-service and e-commerce experiences.

In Rowley's study (2004), she mentioned some challenges when branding online, such as "the message capacity of Web pages, the need to integrate branding and marketing communications across different channels, the trend towards organizational value propositions, brands as search keys, the opportunity to link and develop brand positions, globalization, and the increased engagement of the public sector with branding."

Hashim and Murphy(2007) stated that registering a branded name is a key point for the successful online branding which could enhance the online familiarity, thereby increase the likelihood of locating the brand's website and avoiding sabotage from competitors (Rowley, 2009), the website is also been found that could strengthen the brand image by Thorbjørnsen, Supphellen and Nysveen(2002).

### 2.3.2 Spread of Social Media

It's now easier to stay connected with school's prospects, students, alumni, friends, parents and community in forums and online interfaces creating an interaction like never before, thanks to the social media which bridging people with info needed.

Schools and universities are more and more embracing social media and recognizing its likely influence and implications for using it as a component of their overall marketing mix connected to some of the most popular forms of social media, including facebook, YouTube, Twitter, blogs (Reuben, 2009).

## 2.4 Consumer Behavior

### 2.4.1 Buyer Decision Process

There were different classifications for the process of a buyer purchase decision, Blackwell Miniard & Engel (2001, cited in Valck, Bruggen & Wierenga, 2009) thinks that consumers go through 7 stages to make buying decisions, firstly the need recognition, secondly search for information, thirdly pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives, and comes to purchase and consumption, next is post-purchase evaluation, and the last is divestment. However, Kotler and Armstrong (2004) provides a similar but more simple one, as Figure 2 shows, there are totally 5 stages in the process of consumer decision making.



Figure 2 process of consumer decision making (Kotler and Armstrong, 2004)

They believe that the decision process starts from consumers' need recognition, which could be prompted by internal stimuli, for example, one's normal and physical need, and external stimuli, such as the advertisement and friends' recommendation. The need to consume drives people to pay attention to and search for relevant information, they could get information from personal sources, like from family, friends and acquaintance; they could also obtain them from commercial sources, i.e. advertising, sales people, dealers, packaging, and displays; other source are the public sources, including mass media and consumer-rating organizations; as well as the experiential sources, like handling, examining and using the product. The commercial sources provide the most information but the personal sources tend to be the most effective. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2004)

Then it comes to the evaluation stage. Kotler and Armstrong (2004) points that there will be some evaluate procedure for consumers to form attitude toward different brands, they will compare and evaluate the alternative choice based on the information they got, and consequently rank the product brands and form their purchase intention, however, the

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purchase intention sometimes don't result in the actual purchase choice because of the influence from others attitude and unexpected situational factors. The last stage is the post-purchase behavior, which will depend on whether the products' perceived performance match to the consumer's expectation, and then influence the consumers' future purchasing action, for example, the satisfied customer might buy the product again and talk it favorably to others and uneasily being attracted by the competing product, while the comment from a dissatisfied customer might damage the product image among other customers. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2004)

### 2.4.2 Students Applying Choice

College education is a big investment for the return of both monetary and non-monetary. The costs, meanwhile, are also high no matter in money or in time. Consequently, the choice of college always needs difficult decision process. There has been a rich body of research exploring college choice process.

According to Hossler and Gallagher (1987, cited in Paulsen, 2001), college choice process can be divided into three stages: "the formation of college aspiration", "identification, selection and application" and "admission, college enrollment and attendance". Each stage is influenced by a large number of factors. The interactive connections among those factors make the college choice decision process more complex. Desjardins, Dundar & Hendel (1999) concluded that all those factors can be classified into three groups: "characteristics of students", "institutional characteristics" and "contextual factors". Numerous studies have in more detail examined the effects of specific variables on college application decision.

The study of Weiler (1994) proved that a range of characteristics of students have a substantial impact on application decision. Students' test scores and high school rank percentile, age, location and family income are all important variables (Desjardins, Dundar & Hendel, 1999). On the other hand, characteristics of universities also play an important part. Location, tuition fee, academic requirements are accepted as most crucial factors.

Besides, as pointed out by Salisbury et al. (2009), the educational choices of students are frequently related to their socioeconomic contexts, for example family and high school environments. The environments where they grow construct their attitudes, beliefs and aspirations to higher education (ibid). The concepts of social capital and cultural capital can also be applied in educational choice to explain the formation of students' characteristics (ibid).

The match between characteristics of students and institutional characteristics affects decision making most substantially (Weiler, 1994). For instance, one key reason why

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many colleges are out of consideration set is the large gap between the test scores students gained and average score of previously admitted students (ibid).

Some scholars also noted the critical role of government in college choice of students. For public higher education institutions, governments are still the largest source of funding, which is the foundation of academic excellence of universities (Perna and Titus, 2004). Tuition and financial aid are another way that public policies affect individual students (ibid).

Salisbury et al. (2009) held that three phase model of college choice is applicable to the intent of studying abroad. Like other students, students with intent of studying abroad evaluate the potential benefits, expected costs and financial constraints. Apart from affordability, academic records and curricular viability that often involved in college choice, cultural accessibility and second language proficiency are factors considered by international students (Salisbury et al., 2009).

## Chapter Three: Methodology

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*This chapter outlines the whole process of the methodological reasoning that we followed, including the research design, the research strategy and data collection methods.*

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### **3.1 Inductive Research Approach**

The research doesn't restrict itself to traditional branding theories, but aims to come up with a new model combining the previous theories on branding and internet influence on customer behavior, and explores how potential students build their views on business schools through internet. Therefore this research is believed to be following the logic of inductive reasoning, which is an approach to generate theory from data rather than to test it through hypothesis (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 11-14, 581). Due to the inductive research requirements that entitle the researcher to track back and forth between theory and data (Bryman and Bell, 2007:581), the data in this research will be collected according to the previous theory and consequently form a new model from students' perspective.

### **3.2 Qualitative Approach**

As mentioned above, part of our logic in this research is the inductive reasoning, and the inductive research is often associated with qualitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 633), and also given that the purpose of this study is to develop previous branding theories for better exploring the role of internet plays in a business school's branding process from students' perspective. We've decided to hold an open mind at the beginning and to have a research structure flexible to changes throughout the research process, that's why we thought qualitative approach is the most appropriate for this paper. In addition, qualitative method fits in this research since brand perception, which is a major object of study in this thesis is quite complex to determine its dimensions without referring back to the consumers say on it. Furthermore if we've restricted our data collection methods to quantitative research at first, without scientifically defining the variables to be examined under this study could have turned us bias and subjective. On the contrary, qualitative research, as Bryman and Bell (2007:402) stated, usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data; as a result, the creative meaning of data can be reserved which in turn helps researchers to get an in- depth understanding for later measurements in future studies.

### ***3.3 Multi-case Study***

Considering the purpose of this research, we believe that the case study design should be the most applicable method and it is also helpful in narrowing down the study area. As Bryman and Bell (2007: 63) pointed, the case study is appropriate when research requires in-depth investigation of an object of interest. And Dubois and Gadde (2002) also hold that case studies could offer a unique way to develop theory by exploiting in-depth insights of empirical phenomena and their contexts. Although the traditional case study is referring to one single case, this thesis employs multiple-case studies, a methodology becoming more popular in business and management research (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 64). The multiple-cases study could encourage the researchers to think about the uniqueness of each case and the common points between them, thus promotes comparison on the findings (ibid). Therefore this method is considered as comparative design which, as Bryman and Bell (2007: 69) said, “allows the distinguishing characteristics of two or more cases to act as a springboard for theoretical reflections about contrasting findings”. “By comparing two or more cases, the researcher is in a better position to establish the circumstances in which a theory will or will not hold...moreover, the comparison may itself suggest concepts that are relevant to an emerging theory” (Bryman and Bell, 2007:68). Through comparison, our research will be in better position for theory understanding, and exploring new ideas from the respondent’s perspective.

For our study, we’ve chosen Lund University School of Economics and Management (LUSEM) in Sweden and Copenhagen Business School (CBS) in Denmark as our cases. “Convenience sample is one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility” Bryman & Bell (2007:196). For us as a master students at Lund University administering both the collection of data and semi structured interviews with several faculty staff and students at Lund School of Economics and Management, all of whom we got to know during our late tenure of studies, is relatively accessible and fastest to reach bearing in mind the time limit and open excess of information that we might not have if choosing another research sample site like any other business school for instance. CBS and LUSEM They are two higher education institutions present in Nordic Europe. Although both schools are located relatively close in the Oresund region, LUSEM and CBS represent two different types of business schools in Nordic Europe and thus serve well as comparative cases. In addition, at the very beginning of collecting relevant information, we have noticed that these two schools act differently when branding themselves. For instance, CBS has employed the online social media which is missing in Lund’s home page. Through comparing the students’ views on these two business schools, we expect to have richer data in revealing the role and impact of internet in the branding process.



### ***3.4 Data Collection***

Since the aim of our research investigation was driven from a consumers' behavioral approach, one of the main challenges in front of us was: In what ways we can know how students truly think and respond to brand values communicated by schools. In-depth interviews are a good research strategy to solve this problem. Face-to-face interviews are the key methods adopted in this research. As Easterby-Smith et al. (2008: 142-145) pointed, collecting the natural language data by in-depth interview is frequently used in qualitative research. Given that interview aims to collect the views, perception and opinions from both individual and groups through language (Easterby-Smith et.al. 2008: 142), it is the most appropriate to study brand perception of business school in the mind of international students. Interviews, either individual or group, are used quite often in studies with regard to consumer perception and behavior and are accepted as an effective methods in this area.

As previously mentioned, face-to-face interviews are chosen, instead of telephone interviews, because the in-depth interviews conducted in this research are too long to be done by telephone. In addition, face-to-face interaction is beneficial to the relaxation of interviewees. When sitting together, as pointed out by Bryman and Bell (2007: 214), researchers have a chance to observe the facial expression of respondents and raise follow-up questions according to their responses.

#### ***Interviews with Administrators from Schools***

Before interviewing international students, who are the main subject of this research, the interviews were conducted with LUSEM and CBS's administrators who are responsible for the branding of their schools. The views of administrators are extremely important in the process of branding a business school, for they are the senders of messages, and responsible for the brand development strategies of schools. Therefore, collecting the administrator's view is also a part of this study. Considering we have a clear and focused topic, a relatively structured interview is used with the administrators unlike the interviews conducted with students which were semi structured and more open. Through that, we were looking ahead to better understand the gap between the information the school plans to communicate and the information that students are actually relying on.

All the questions (See Appendix I) covered are made up of two parts. The first part is based on the theories of brand building. Through those questions, the researchers can have a solid understanding of the branding strategy of LUSEM and CBS. The second part is intended to investigate the role of internet plays in the communication with prospective international students. The following are profiles of interviewees from school administration:

## CHAPTER 3: Methodology

Interviewee: Prof. Kristina Eneroth  
Position: Vice Dean of LUSEM  
Date of Interview: 09-04-2010  
Location of Interview: Conference room, LUSEM  
Duration Time: 1 hour  
Language: English

Interviewee: Mrs. Katarina Csanta  
Position: Web Editor of LUSEM  
Date of Interview: 19-04-2010  
Location of Interview: Conference room, LUSEM  
Duration Time: 1 hour  
Language: English

Interviewee: Mr. Niels Henrik Larsen  
Position: Deputy Director of International Programs  
Date of Interview: 27-04-2010  
Location of Interview: International Office, CBS  
Duration Time: 40 minutes  
Language: English

***Focus group interviews with international students***

This thesis primarily takes the perspective of international students most as a basis for the analysis, so that international students from LUSEM and CBS make up the main participants in this research. Considering that the undergraduate programs offered by LUSEM are only in Swedish, we decided to select master students as our subject. In order to get rich data for analysis, in total 18 international master students are invited to attend four focus group interviews, two in LUSEM and two in CBS. Each focus group is made up of four or five students. The following table is the brief profiles of focus group participants:

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	LUSEM		CBS	
	Interviewee	Nationality	Interviewee	Nationality
Group 1	Christian	Germany	Melanie	Austria
	Begum	Turkey	Eva	Poland
	Tracey	China	Danh	Vietnam
	Igor	Kyrgyzstan	Jing	China
Group 2	Sundus	Pakistan	Lena	Germany
	Caroline	Germany	Henry	U.K.
	Andres	Mexico	Barika	Kenya
	Ahmed	Maldives	Diana	Latvia
	Lauri	Finland	Amanda	France

Table 1 Focus group participants' profiles

Focus group interview is employed in this research because it is beneficial to stimulate respondents' in-depth opinions and to recall their memories. According to Bryman and Bell (2007:511), focus interviews are more focused than simple group interview. "Interviewees are selected because they 'are known to have involved in a particular situation' and are asked about that involvement" (ibid). Also, focus group saves the duration time of interviews, compared with individual interviews one by one.

As previously discussed, this thesis intends to be as objective as possible with no hypothesis and assumptions so that more insightful opinions can be captured from interviewees. As a result, the authors use semi-structured interviews. As Bryman and Bell (2007:474-481) suggested, the semi-structured interview is appropriate when the researchers begin the investigation with a fairly clear focus, so that more specific issues can be addressed. The reason why this research does not go to extremely unstructured interviews is that some kind of structure is needed in order to control the conversation in a relatively relevant domain and to ensure the cross-case comparability (Bryman and Bell, 2007:480). In addition, this open atmosphere could encourage interviewees to be more personal, consequently it will increase the confidentiality of the context (Easterby et al. 2008: 144-145,150-151). During the focus interview sessions, interviewees were offered cookies, candies and refreshments as part of breaking the ice with students, so they feel more comfortable and open to speak in a free mood.

As this thesis takes the perspective of prospective students, in the whole process, we lead respondents to go back to the time before applying, so that their answers are not affected by real experiences in the school after admission. At the beginning of focus group interviews, like what other behavioral researchers did, we asked interviewees to talk about their life experiences and stories, more specifically, their applying experiences. Via such conversations, we got rich data about how they got to know, searched for and evaluated programs and business schools. Before the focus interviews were conducted

## CHAPTER 3: Methodology

interview guidelines were set to shape the topics intended to be covered based on theories and literature reviews that best serves our investigation purpose (see Appendix II)

Then, the interview came to the part of brand development process. Interviewers asked some open questions to stimulate participants talking about their feelings and judgments about their schools. In this section, we aimed to capture respondents' mental road map of LUSEM and CBS, through investigating the favorability and uniqueness of the schools brand associations with their future expectations, as well as their impact on applying choice decision.

### ***3.5 Recording and transcription***

All the individual interviews and focus group interviews, were video or audio recorded and afterwards transcribed as well. This tool is also recommended by Bryman and Bell (2007) and Easterby-Smith (2008). Bryman and Bell (2007:513) believe that "the focus group session will work best if it is tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed". And the main reasons why we've chosen to record for it's difficult to write down the exact words everyone said when conversation happens, especially in the focus group, the record will "correct the natural limitation of memory" and it could reduce the influence from researcher's value or biases, as said by Heritage(1984, cited in Bryman and Bell, 2007:489). The record will be convenient for the researchers to accurately transcribe (Easterby-Smith, 2008:150) and reexamine the interviewees' answers (Bryman and Bell, 2007:513-514). Moreover, since there are several participants attending in the focus group, in order to better recognize them and observe their reactions when they talk, permitted video-recording were used in the focus group interview sessions. A total number of 104 pages of transcribed recording provided us with valuable data to back our analysis.

### ***3.6 Validity and Reliability***

In order to make sure our research will be reliable and valid, we conducted our research with the consideration of two primary criteria set for qualitative research by Guba and Lincoln (1994, cited in Bryman and Bell, 2007:411): trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness is of four criteria, including credibility or internal validity, transferability or external validity, dependability which similar with reliability and conformability which parallels objectivity.

In order to increase the credibility or internal validity of this study, respondent validation is adopted, which is recommended by Bryman and Bell (2007:411). To make sure that we

## CHAPTER 3: Methodology

correctly understood the empirical data, we shared with interview participants our records, transcriptions, research findings and the final work. Guba and Lincoln suggested that “a thick description” should be an effective way approaching external validity, or transferability (1994, cited in Bryman and Bell, 2007:413). In this study, a thick description of case backgrounds was offered so that future researchers would understand in what contexts research findings of this thesis could be transferred. Besides, we burned the interview recording and transcription on CDs as a data base.

In qualitative research, reliability parallels dependability, which can be ensured through auditing approach, as Bryman and Bell (2007:414) suggested. Every key phase of this research was under the supervision of experienced researchers in related area. Given that this study was conducted by three researchers, internal reliability was a concern of trustworthiness as well. All the interview transcriptions and analysis were rechecked among three researchers. To keep inner agreement and consistency, we discussed and exchanged opinions through all the process of this research. Since this thesis was edited by three researchers together before it was submitted, we all agreed about its content. Bryman and Bell (2007:163) defined reliability in general refers to the consistency of a measure of a concept, the researchers decide the inter-observer consistency.

To meet the confirmability or objectivity, we kept reminding ourselves that research findings should not be biased by our own values. Although we are also students and already had some opinions on our research questions, we were very aware of not misleading the participants when asking questions in the interviews, transcribing or analyzing.

## Chapter Four: Cases Background & Schools' Perspective

*This chapter aims to provide the readers a brief introduction on the two Nordic business schools, LUSEM and CBS, as well as the branding success in students reach out measurements from the management's perspective. Overview on these schools and information on study programs and students in this chapter offers the footstone for the empirical data collection. Including interviews with administration officials from LUSEM and CBS is covered in this chapter.*

### 4.1 School of Economics and Management, Lund University

#### 4.1.1 Overview

LUSEM is one of eight faculties within Lund University, which is one of the most famous universities in Sweden. The university located in southern Sweden and is funded from both state money and funding raised elsewhere. Because of its long history and broad academic atmosphere, Lund University is regarded as a traditional large university of excellence. It was founded in 1666 and has grown to a huge university with approximately 46000 students and 474 single subject courses of wide range. (www.lu.se)

“LUSEM’s mission is to, through research and education; actively contribute to resolving global challenges and to decision-making in the business community and the public sector” (EQUIS, Self-Assessment Report, 2006: 16)

The vision of LUSEM “is to be one of the leading schools in Europe in educating and develop leaders for business and public organizations, with a distinctive competence in innovation and change processes, based on cutting-edge research” (ibid)

#### 4.1.2 Accreditation and Programs

It’s worth mentioning that LUSEM is an EQUIS (European Quality Improvement System)<sup>1</sup> accredited member since 2001. LUSEM is involved in research and education on business administration, business law, economics, economic history, informatics and statistics, as well as research policy. (www.lu.se)

The school offers three major degree programs (Business Administration and Economics program, the International Business Administration and Economics program, and the Systems Design program) and organizes joint programs together with other faculties within Lund University, as well as a large number of single-subject courses (EQUIS, Self-Assessment Report, 2006: 16). About 4100 students and 300 researchers, teachers

<sup>1</sup> EQUIS is an international system of quality assessment and accreditation which aims to raise the standard of higher education institutions in management and business administration.(www.lu.se)

## CHAPTER 4: Cases Background &amp; Schools' Perspective

and other staff study and work at school ([www.lu.se](http://www.lu.se)). LUSEM also value the international activity which means, intensive and high-quality student exchange, opportunities for internationally geared education and encouragement of teacher exchange (ibid).

### 4.1.3 Internationalization of LUSEM

Lund University began its internationalization as early as in 1668; the programs now are designed to provide students with knowledge and skills in a globalized and multicultural world (EQUIS, Self-Assessment Report, 2006, LUSEM: 175). There are two dimensions of internationalization of LUSEM, on one hand all the researches are done in an international arena, “our researchers belong to international network, take part in international research projects and deal with problems of international relevance” (ibid); On the other hand, LUSEM has long history on studying specific regions and particularly strong in research on East and Southeast Asia, on Africa and European studies. (ibid)

Furthermore, LUSEM also is active in international alliances. It is a member of *Universitas 21*, a global network of twenty four top universities fifteen countries; also a member of some other alliances like the *World Association for Case Method Research and Application*; *Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business*; *the League of European Research Universities* and so on. (EQUIS, Self-Assessment Report, 2006, LUSEM: 178)

With the launch of 16 international master programs([www. lu.se](http://www.lu.se)) in different study areas, LUSEM welcomes large amount of international students, for example, almost 40% who are studying business administration are international students and in the master program of European Affairs, international students account for the vast majority; the international PHD students also helps LUSEM's internationalization since they would form the international network of LUSEM (EQUIS, Self-Assessment Report, 2006, LUSEM: 180). Meanwhile, LUSEM attracts lots of exchange students through various programs, and each year, over 200 students go abroad, having the exchange study and over 300 students come to Lund. (ibid)

## 4.2 LUSEM Administration

From the conversations with administrators of Lund University School of Economics and Management, it's obvious that LUSEM doesn't have much autonomy for branding due to its limited resources and Lund University's bylaws. On the top of LUSEM, there are two levels of umbrella brands—the country, Sweden, and Lund University. According to Prof.

## CHAPTER 4: Cases Background &amp; Schools' Perspective

Eneroth, the vice dean of LUSEM, it's the country that comes first when branding LUSEM:

*"We don't necessarily brand education at the university level. We are branding at the country level in a sense."*

In some sense, it is Sweden, instead of LUSEM, that competes on the global market with business schools in other countries. Students are looking for experience in Sweden, as Kristina agreed. However, the situation is going to change dramatically after tuition fees are introduced in 2011 for students from outside European Union. Prof. Eneroth and Katarina, the information officer, both realized the possible huge impact of tuition fee introduction on the school international students' enrollment. Lund University, as well as the school, has decided to take more proactive branding strategies, as Prof. Eneroth said:

*"The universities are reacting to introduction of tuition fees. They are gradually starting to realize that maybe we have to start to do branding at the university level...."*

By the time Lund University is starting to react proactively to the international competition, LUSEM, the school itself, does not show any intention to be more independent from the central university. As a faculty of Lund University, LUSEM depends on the university to a large extent and has to follow the policies from the central administration of Lund University. In the interviews, Prof. Eneroth and Katarina both verified LUSEM's high dependence on Lund University in branding strategy:

*"Lund University is now trying to get its faculties to accept that it is Lund University that is going to be branded. So primarily the university, secondly the faculties...Then they want us to use university umbrella brand. LUSEM name itself is a reflection of that."*

Even though LUSEM doesn't have many resources for branding the school by itself, from the interviews we found that the school has a clear understanding of its competitive advantages and disadvantages, in other words, brand positioning. Next, we are going to discuss further LUSEM's brand in the eyes of its management and how they are communicating it via all kinds of media.

#### **4.2.1 Brand Awareness**

Keller (2008) pointed out the importance of brand awareness. Repeated exposure leads to the increase of the brand awareness and familiarity (Keller, 2008). In the case of LUSEM, the visibility of the school is highly dependent on the central university. Katarina verified this explicitly:

*"So we have to rely quite to the central, because we are quite small. The more visible they are (Lund University) the more possible students search for some business programs in the Lund."*



## CHAPTER 4: Cases Background &amp; Schools' Perspective

From LUSEM's point of view, the university's brand familiarity is beneficial to the school naturally. Internet plays a major role in this phase. Website is the main focus to reach prospective students, as Katarina said. Apart from the university and school webpage, some related portals and search engines are regarded as an effective way.

*"This year, we are going to international master portals for master programs, there is one masterstudies.com... This is also part of increasing the visibility."*

LUSEM has had one foot in search engine, but has not taken full advantage of it. Katarina told us the key-word method is used but admitted that other aspects are out of control actually:

*"We don't buy ad words. We don't actually have opportunity to do that."*

Online advertisements have not been used so far as many American business schools are doing. Marketing activities are restricted by the funding to a large extent. Consequently, some expensive campaigns such as information sessions are seldom held. Katarina said that in all the international recruitment fairs, it is Lund University as a whole rather than LUSEM is present.

*"We don't attend international student recruitment fairs. We don't have such resources. There are some international fairs Lund University attending as a university. But the school itself is not present."*

#### **4.2.2 Brand Meaning**

When asked about the brand positioning, Prof. Eneroth talked much about some advantages LUSEM had built, including Lund University umbrella brand, EQUIS accreditation, high extent of internationalization, a broad portfolio of international programs and solid research base.

Lund University is confirmed again as a significant support for LUSEM. Prof. Eneroth and Katarina were both aware of that clearly, Katarina added:

*"We have a saying we are more than a business school. We don't only have business and management. We have a big university behind us, with language, science etc. We can use everything. That could be a competitive advantage."*

Prof. Eneroth mentioned that, Lund University is not just a name for LUSEM, the resources of other faculties can provides many opportunities for the development of LUSEM, such as joint degrees. In the interview, Prof. Eneroth spoke glowingly of EQUIS, believing that it is one of the most valuable assets for LUSEM:

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*“If you are EQUIS accredited, which we are. Then you can claim that you are internationally established. You have some sort of position. We are the only faculty within the university that holds international accreditation here at LU.”*

Internationalization is another unique attribute of LUSEM, from the perspective of administration. In three years, LUSEM achieved its international vision with extreme success. When talking about internationalization strategy, Prof. Eneroth was very sure of:

*“We are very clear when we changed our portfolio in 2007. We are very clear we want to establish ourselves as a player in international market of higher education.”*

Prof. Eneroth spoke about another equally important advantage of LUSEM which is its strong research base, which was the foundation of its competitive programs at start. At the same time, she recognized that this advantage could also be a disadvantage, because most students are looking for practical knowledge instead of academic theories.

*“That is our advantage we are genuinely research based. That could also be a disadvantage for us, because students are often more interested in combing research base with more practitioner-oriented education.”*

Besides, Prof. Eneroth admitted that free tuition fee is one main advantage of LUSEM till now, compared with business schools in other countries:

*“... Tuition free is the main selling point, unique selling point. I have to admit.”*

With the introduction of tuition fee planned to be started in 2011, LUSEM is going to lose this advantage soon. This issue is the biggest challenge in the face of the whole Lund University. From the interviews, it's easy to infer that branding is not completely under the control of the university or the school.

The difference in educational system, according to Prof. Eneroth, hampers the competitiveness of LUSEM in international business schools ranking as well, which is a disadvantage of LUSEM:

*“That's been very difficult for Swedish business schools to get on that place (international ranking) because we don't have long tradition of teaching in English. Make it impossible for Swedish schools to enter into those lists because the educational system was not comparable. We didn't have the system until 2007.”*

In conclusion, LUSEM is well aware of its position in the business education market. It is set clear with ambitious strategies to achieve. LUSEM has been strong on the national level. Nevertheless, the international communication strategy is relatively weak. Without the full support of proactive communication activities, the school brand is difficult to be transferred to international prospective students. Katarina verified this in the conversation:

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*“When it comes to international marketing, we are behind. That’s the truth. But the goal is to be more proactive when it comes to international recruitments, of course.”*

### 4.2.3 Internet Communication of Brand Meanings

#### 4.2.3.1 The use of website

Prof. Eneroth and Kristina firmly stated that website is a main communication channel.

*“Web communication, that’s the only way to reach international potential students, we can’t have information sessions in the entire world. We get online immediately and are available all over the world. So it’s great impact with fairly small resources.”*

The website design, including the color and structure, is consistent with the design of the university website. Katarina verified that and made some comments:

*“We do think that it’s beneficial for all of us to look the same, have the same feelings. So you could really see that we are a part of university. We are not something else.”*

Nevertheless, both interviewees were not satisfied with the current website design of Lund University and are looking for more updates.

*“We don’t really like the structure, the graphic profile. But we can’t do much of it because it’s centralized.”*

They thought, for the time being, the webpage of LUSEM was not dynamic enough. This shortcoming was resulted from funding and technology constraints to a certain extent. But for now they are working hard on the improvements of website. For instance, Katarina was preparing some videos in which students and faculty would be interviewed. Those videos were about to be put on the webpage of LUSEM in this fall. Prof. Eneroth indicated:

*“I can tell you how much I am desperate to get moving pictures on web, because now there is too much text, not enough pictures. ... We are now filming the students and now waiting for the big Carnival in May. So we are going to have a lot of information on that one. Interviewing students and interviewing faculties is of good ways to interact with prospective students I would say....”*

Besides, the distinctive advantages of LUSEM are not clearly presented on the webpage. When Prof. Eneroth was asked about the validity of the current website of LUSEM in showing unique selling points of the school compared to other institutions her answer was a “No.”

#### 4.2.3.2 The use of social media

In 2010, Lund University launched a project bringing up the use of social media to promote the university. LUSEM was into that as well and gained benefits from it automatically, as pointed out by Katarina. The whole university, as well as LUSEM itself, noticed the effect of social media and knew that social media was what they are moving towards. Kristina confirmed that several times in the interview:

*“Keeping up with the evolution of social media, that is the major concern for us.”*

The most popular social media, Facebook and YouTube, were discussed in depth in the interviews. So far, there have been many Facebook groups related with LUSEM and its programs. Yet, none of them targeted international prospective students directly. On YouTube, LUSEM has its own video channel, but only Swedish lectures were uploaded for the time being. LUSEM was planning to share more interviews with students and professors on YouTube in the future, from a perception that internet shared information might have an effect on school's visibility and new potential students reach out, and could impact students' knowledge about opportunities offered.

When it comes to the use of social network like Facebook, Katarina believed that the school should be braver to try new media:

*“We can only try, let's not be afraid. We don't have to analyze and make a study should we use this or that. Let's just try. If it doesn't work, then we just retire from that and focus on something else.”*

LUSEM administrators agreed that school doesn't have to be present in the group, leaving more freedom to the students talking about good and bad stuff about the school. On one hand, LUSEM relies on the central university in terms of brand communication. On the other hand, Katarina approved that the use of social media can be decentralized to each program or on department level, given that they knew themselves better.

*“For the master programs, they are administered by the six departments. I think we should all get together working on that. (So in each department, there should be someone supporting for this office) Yes. They could work with Facebook, YouTube, Blogging, everything.”*

In the interview, Katarina emphasized on the resource restrictions. In her opinion, in order to achieve LUSEM's ambitions, there should be more professionals working on the web building and social media involvement:

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*“But we don't have more people working on those issues. So it's really hard to be able to make all of it. I think we should expand. We need more people to help working on this.”*

## **2.4 Brand Response and Relationships**

Brand response is a measurement of the effectiveness of branding activities. In LUSEM case, the school administration regarded the total number of applications annual statistics as a good reference of brand response. Prof. Eneroth pointed it out directly:

*“What we can look at is statistics, like number of first hand application we can follow.”*

She also mentioned the retention rate as a manner of measuring communication effectiveness. Katarina agreed with those measurement dimensions, and supplemented more statistics with regard to internet communication, such as reach out and surfing count:

*“...Yes. It's a rule of thumb to see website statistics; it's not an exact science. But you can have it as a rule to follow. You can track the most downloaded pdf files and testimonials checked, thus we can tell how popular that pages compared to other pages on our website...”*

Katarina added that when posting an add online with Google it can be measured, yet the effectiveness couldn't be exactly traced, like whether it was checked by potential students to be targeted by school's strategy or not:

*“We don't get any feedback so it's hard to decide whether it is serving. What we can measure, we have Google statistics. We use that on our website. So I can see if we make, we haven't done this on international level. But if we can have an ad, let's say in the Swedish news magazines on the website, we can see how many clicks generated on that banner. We can find maybe this didn't give too much, so let's not do that again. And we can also see how the website is used...”*

## **4.3 Copenhagen Business School**

### **4.3.1 Overview**

Copenhagen Business School (CBS) is “a private educational institution, which was established in 1917 by the Danish Society for the Advancement of Business Education” and became integrated as an institution of higher education in the Danish education system in 1965(www.cbs.dk). It is a member of CEMS (Community of European Management Schools and International Companies) and PIM (Partnership in International Management), being accredited by EQUIS and AMBA, and now it's in the process of accreditation by AACSB (ibid).

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*“Vision: CBS educates dynamic thinkers who are internationally competitive by virtue of their research-based knowledge, innovation abilities, cultural understanding and personal leverage.*

*Mission: CBS aims to: be an internationally recognized business university at European top level; offer world-class research environment and programmes; contribute new, pioneering knowledge which can be converted into innovation, competitiveness and value creation.”* (Facts & Figures, 2009, Copenhagen Business School)

As one of the largest business schools in Europe, Copenhagen Business School has around 16,000 students in total, including about 1800 foreign students and an annual intake of around 1,000 exchange students; it employs around 400 full-time researchers and 500 administrative employees. (Facts & Figures, 2009, Copenhagen Business School)

### **4.3.2 CBS International**

It is communicated by its administration as one of the most international school in Denmark; CBS has exchange and cooperation agreements with 367 universities and business schools in the world (Facts and Figures, 2009, Copenhagen Business School) and welcomes over 2,000 international exchange students and international degree students each academic year ([www.cbs.dk](http://www.cbs.dk)). CBS has also participated in “international research forums, bilateral exchange agreements for both students and faculty, and strategic alliances for several decades”. ([www.cbs.dk](http://www.cbs.dk))

On the other hand, CBS ranks highly in Europe and worldwide in different ranking, some focus on the programs, some focus on the research in general, and some focus on specific study area. These high rankings reflect the reputation and quality of this school. (ibid)

### **4.3.3 Study Programs and Corporate Partnerships**

CBS offers a various full-time and part-time programs at Bachelor, Master and PhD levels, as well as some diploma programs and short courses. Most of them are taught in English. In addition to general degree programs, CBS also provides the integrated programs that combine business economics and modern languages with other areas, such as “psychology, communication, IT, management science, philosophy, area studies, and law”. ([www.cbs.dk](http://www.cbs.dk))

*“The purpose of a Corporate Partnership is to build a bridge between the academic/research world and Danish/foreign companies”* (Facts and Figures, 2009, Copenhagen Business School)

CBS establish close ties with around 25 companies in different industry, such as, KPMG, Nordea, IBM and DSB and so on ([www.cbs.dk](http://www.cbs.dk)). By means of corporate partnership, not

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only could the companies stay close to their future employee, but also CBS get an opportunity to attract better teacher and develop new research environments (Facts and Figures, 2009, Copenhagen Business School). Apart from the corporation with companies, CBS also establish collaboration and exchange agreements with more than 300 universities and business schools worldwide ([www.cbs.dk](http://www.cbs.dk)). These partnerships are quite much communicated on CBS's official website.

#### **4.4 CBS Administration**

We had the opportunity to meet with the Deputy Director of International Programs, Mr. Niels Henrik Larsen at his office in Copenhagen Business School. Mr. Larsen explained to us the major role the school plays from its administration level aiming to reach out the largest number of prospective students possible:

*“The International office here is designed to receive all kinds of inquiries any potential applicant who wants a follow up support with, from anywhere in the world... we help students in their housing, give them info on their stay in Copenhagen, and connect them to answers on all questions they need to know beforehand.”*

At the administration level in CBS the brand pillars are clear and the competitiveness of the school are widely communicated everywhere you go from banners, clichés, slogans, and pictures, all communicating the CBS brand .Mr. Larsen mentioned that it's the responsibility of program directors to provide the kind of information they find necessary and good enough to communicate with prospective students via the website. At CBS there's a degree of autonomy within departments offering master programs taught in English.

##### **4.4.1 Brand Awareness**

In the case of CBS, most interviewees notice that CBS has its own brand, when being asked about the visibility of CBS as a brand, one administrator replied like this:

*“It becomes visible to anyone every time you mention that you work at CBS. The newspaper reviews, media coverage all describe CBS as a sort of Business school that is different from other universities, people are aware what CBS is.”*

For staff and faculties, brand awareness is not just for external stakeholders. Internal visibility of brand is equally important:

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*“it’s just a sign for me, educational institutions are competing with other institutions, it’s not an outside image only but it has internal image in itself, .... It is a faculty of business named CBS”*

Like what we found in LUSEM, the brand awareness of CBS is related to the visibility of its programs. Some professor commented on that:

*“Some students don’t really consider themselves as CBS students but more as a students of particular program, that has a connection with which institute they are.”*

Generally speaking, the CBS brand is becoming more and more visible. In some administrators’ opinions, the brand awareness of CBS doesn’t rely on the reputation of Copenhagen University anymore:

*“I think CBS is becoming a place, without comparison, people would like to mention CBS without explaining what’s the former head of the school”*

#### **4.4.2 Brand Meaning**

##### ***Innovation***

In CBS administrators’ mind, CBS has strong uniqueness, different from business schools in common sense. CBS has been promoted as a big and unique European business school to attract students. This attribute is a major competitiveness of CBS, like one administrator said:

*“...CBS is the biggest school in Northern Europe... and second thing...it’s really a different kind of a Business School, much more open, much more experimental, quite kind of a different place to a Harvard-like standardized business schools, that’s the big effect.”*

##### ***Internationalization***

Like LUSEM, CBS has achieved a high level of internationalization. For CBS administration, the internationalization of CBS becomes a selling point here:

*“CBS is experimental open and finally very international in the terms of education, students, and faculty.... They all end up here and go there, students sent to faculties across the globe.”*

On one hand, CBS is trying to attract more international students studying at CBS, creating an international learning environment. On the other hand, CBS has built strong international partnership with other schools all over the world. Mr. Larsen verified that in the interview:



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*“... It’s absolutely good to encourage more global openness... I think it’s quite valuable to have relationship with other institutions, to really build strong partnerships....it’s great window into Europe, because it’s international... that’s what we communicate to the outside world... its CBS advantage.”*

### **Ranking**

From the interviews it was noticed obviously that CBS tries various ways to brand itself, not only on the traditional advertising or promotional way. For example, the school administrators have noticed that the ranking could also be a strategy to brand. CBS has high rank in the European business schools, which is used as a competitive selling point. One administrator said in the interview:

*“A brand is a set of promotional tools that connect identity with activities taken...except the traditional advertising, there are other paths CBS could use, like ranking.... It’s good strategy...”*

### **Partnership with Businesses**

Cooperation with businesses is another value of CBS brand. In the interviews, partnership with business is mentioned again and again that it is one of pillars of CBS brand.

*“...there are 3 pillars of CBS, international partnership, partnership with business and learning style of the university... We cooperate with many companies..., you can look at our classrooms sponsored by the famous companies. We have long-term relationship with them...”*

### **4.4.3 Internet Communication of Brand Meanings**

The website shouldn’t be ignored in the branding process, in the website of CBS,

The importance of website communication is emphasized by the following statement by Mr. Larsen.

*“We have been receiving from international students we get in touch with, that our website is in a way helpful with information they are looking for. But I have to tell you that it’s not the perfect website and we always try to update most of the material posted, here in the international office team and with the program directors as well.... ”*

### **4.4.4 Brand Response and Relationships**

As mentioned before, the brand response could measure the effectiveness of the brand activity. In the interviews with administration of CBS, they didn’t talk much about brand response on the students’ side. From the perspective of the administration, it could be reflected in the brand allegiance among professors and staff in CBS. The conversations

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with them implied that they have relatively high brand allegiance for CBS. An interviewee spoke vividly of CBS brand:

*“Yeah, when people doing introduction, speaking to other business schools or other groups... I think I quite take pride of that...when I teach, I use the name or logo of CBS, but not necessarily in seminars or conferences, not consistently”*

### ***Problems when branding***

The problems also exist in the process of branding from the administrators' point of view, the main one is that the public easily connect CBS with Copenhagen University, rather than perceive CBS as an independent unique business school. Just like one administrator mentioned:

*“When I say I work in CBS, people may say woo it's Copenhagen university, and European custom that don't have business school distinct from university, just an institution in university, CBS is a part of Copenhagen University,...”*

The second problem is that the interviews implied that CBS administrators had different understanding of brand strategy of business schools. According to one administrator, there is also a knowledge gap between the image received by outside world and the inner side in the school itself, as mentioned by one officer:

*“...It's not a consistent brand, people you stop randomly in the street would not know the inside academic view, the outside perception of brand image really depends on who you ask what they think.”*

Some administrator held that a brand is not about what the school has done but about how the public perceives the school:

*“I think the brand means what takes people to talk about, can be good or bad, because people can say online what it is about...”*

Some thought that the branding strategy should be applied internally:

*“...I see it as a part of how to use resources, such as Human Resources, internally the university disseminate the knowledge, anticipating the conferences, presenting workshop, visit-professorship, they are part of CBS strategy to be projected to the public”*

## Chapter Five: Empirical Findings

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*This chapter demonstrates the major findings drawn from the interviews with international students, and also analyzes the empirical data in depth based on the brand building process. Given that students, main consumers of higher education, are our research subject, the chapter presents their perception on business schools brands.*

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### 5.1 LUSEM International Master Students

#### 5.1.1 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness, according to Keller (2008), influences the formation of brand dimensions, consideration set and finally purchase motivation. Consequently, it is the first step in brand building. All kinds of marketing communications (advertising, promotion, sponsorship, event marketing, public relations) can increase the exposure of brands (ibid). Given that LUSEM is not much into advertisements in international market, the brand awareness cannot rely on those marketing communications like consumer goods. In the interviews, when talking about when and how international students knew about LUSEM, the most common answers are WOM, Swedish education websites and master programs portals.

#### **WOM**

Above all, many students spoke of the recommendation from friends in terms of where to study. For example, Tracey described how she heard of LUSEM from her friend:

*“...then there is a friend, he told me about this Lund University and Stockholm University, so I checked that out from internet, and I found it’s quite good, so I applied.”*

Like Tracey, most students stated that WOM from peers did affect their application choice but only at the first stage—which country to go to, rather than which specific university in this country to apply. The decision journey of Sundus reflected this:

*“I knew that higher education in Sweden is free because a lot of people in my country come here, but they only come here for science, engineering, chemistry and biology. But I have never met anyone who have had come here for business studies.”*

#### **Swedish education websites**

Secondly, after they decided that Sweden is their destination, many potential students go to the Swedish official education website such as [studyinsweden.se](http://studyinsweden.se) and [studera.nu](http://studera.nu), to get to know Swedish universities and programs in more details. For those students, they put Sweden as their priority and then select schools within Sweden. From those central

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education websites, they found out Lund University, LUSEM and its programs. This point was particularly clear in Andres's statement:

*“I also went to studyinsweden.se, I browsed masters of marketing in Sweden, they gave me a list of masters in marketing in Sweden. From there, I went to each web page of universities.”*

### ***Master programs portals***

There are also a part of students who included business schools outside Sweden in their consideration set. In order to compare various business programs offered by a wide range of countries, they went to some master program portals like mastersportal.eu. Those portals offer search engines that can help people check out most master programs in Europe and screen them in terms of costs, major and country etc. On those portals, LUSEM can appear on the screen if its programs match with what people are searching for. The experience of Caroline was illustrated as follows:

*“I browse according to cost, because I have to pay pretty on my own. You can get a link to the universities, and then I browsed all the programs. I found Lund is the only one that's really focusing on international marketing.”*

Some students didn't even go to those professional portals but searched for possible programs and schools via Google. Begum verified this:

*“For my case I'm looking for international marketing master of science program, when I typed it at that time on Google one of the first hits was Lund university. It should be like this, and I think it's still up till now if you type International Marketing master program you'll get LUSEM as first hit, check it out!”*

Half the interviewees admitted that they didn't know about LUSEM until they started searching for appropriate master programs. In other words, the brand awareness of LUSEM is relatively low in international education market, especially in Asian and American market. No matter in which approach students got to know LUSEM, we can conclude that the visibility of LUSEM highly relies on the visibility of programs it offers. Almost all the students in our focus groups stated that they searched for programs they felt interested at first and then went to LUSEM website via the link in the program description.

### **5.1.2 Brand Meaning**

In CBBE model, brand meaning is composed of brand performance and brand imagery (Keller, 2008). Brand performance is made of cognitive brand associations while brand imagery consists of emotional brand associations (ibid). Empirical results showed that, in the mind of prospective students, most of the brand associations are in the rational

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category. These brand associations will be present as follows and then the communication of these brand values will be discussed.

### **What are brand associations of LUSEM?**

Unlike many consumer goods, which have a lot of brand associations, it's hard to establish brand associations for higher education institutions. LUSEM was not linked to many unique brand associations in the mind of students. It is the ranking of Lund University, niche programs student town and its location that is most frequently connected to LUSEM brand, according to our findings based on the focus group sessions with students.

#### ***Ranking and reputation of Lund University***

In order to figure out the brand meaning of LUSEM in the view of students, we asked participants to recall the words came first to their mind when they thought of LUSEM. Ranking of Lund University was mentioned by participants again and again in the interview, which means that the ranking of Lund University is the most significant aspect of LUSEM's brand meaning. Since LUSEM itself is not in the international business schools ranking, the reputation of Lund University as a whole becomes what people base their judgments of LUSEM on, like many of them said for example Lauri added:

*“For me, the name and reputation are one of the main reasons we end up choosing Lund. Like, the same course, I came here for the course finance, but if the course has been in some smaller universities in Sweden or Finland, probably I would not have come.”*

On one hand, participants believed that the reputation of the Lund University is what LUSEM can definitely rely on. On the other hand, some participants, such as Igor, expressed their wish that LUSEM could be in business school rankings:

*“There are so many business schools. We need some help from professional information on rankings, i think it ' s pretty good for Lund business school to earn high rankings. I mean it can influence people ' s perception on the school as well.”*

#### ***Niche Programs***

As discussed above, programs play a significant part in the creation of brand awareness of LUSEM. For most of interviewees, programs, instead of LUSEM, first hold the interests of prospective students. Naturally, those niche programs are good selling points to attract international students. Program content, of course, is what potential students care about most. All the students checked the curriculum of the program before they decided to apply. Lauri supported that program content is the most important factor he used to consider.

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*“...For me, also because of the courses. I was looking for courses back here in Scandinavia, like Lund Universities and some other places. For me why I just chose Lund, it was mostly because of the course description, the course is exactly what fits with what I studied back in England. It’s just very easy to come here and continue my study in England.”*

Caroline added on Lauri’s comment, expressing that the program was quite convincing for her and the description provided on the website motivated her much:

*“You can get a link to the universities, and then I browse all the programs. I found Lund is the only one that’s really focusing on international marketing. I applied for only one university and my first choice was International Marketing and Brand Management, it’s the only program that I found based on its course description most interesting for me ...”*

LUSEM offers a wide range of international master programs, some two-year and some one-year. When it comes to this issue, most participants specified that one-year program is far better, since it saves time and cost. Ahmed is one of interviewees holding such point of view:

*“We thought either Lund or Uppsala, SSE, but the thing is those two did not give one-year masters. One-year saved quite a lot of time, and you can graduate faster and start a career earlier in your life”*

It is notable that there are different, even totally opposite opinions about this issue of program duration. Igor, for example, preferred two-year master programs. As a result, one-year becomes a disadvantage, rather than an added value.

*“I really like that would be a two year program rather than one, because right now I still think one year is not enough to get a degree to get a master degree. It was really fast, and I don’t have profound background in marketing and my opinion is that it’s a little bit too fast.”*

### **Location**

Another distinct advantage for LUSEM is its location. Located at Southern Sweden, Lund is close to the rest of Europe. Compared with other business schools in Nordic Europe, especially in Finland, LUSEM is more attractive for international students. That was brought up by some interviewees in two focus groups. For those coming from other continents, this factor is more vital, as they are abroad also for travelling and experiencing the Europe.

*“I think Southern Sweden in Scandinavia is so well connected to the rest of Europe, far more attractive to come here than even go to Umea. I come here so far, it’s so different from us so I need it really connected with rest of Europe” Sundus commented.*

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***Value for money***

Most of the interviewees spoke of tuition free as one of the attributes that motivated them to apply to LUSEM, but from the interviews it can be inferred that they took that for granted, which significantly affect their applying decision to a large extent. Almost all the interviewees admitted this point openly. Ahmed's said:

*"For me, my wife wanted a master degree more than me. She was doing all the searching and found out that Sweden was free. That's why we applied for Lund, pretty much Swedish education is free."*

Furthermore, tuition free was believed among the interviewees, to be good for education quality in sense of broadening the scope of attraction of potential students who are good enough but are cost sensitive, and wouldn't consider going for higher degree studies abroad if it wasn't convenient enough in terms of cost, according to some students such as Begum:

*"They have the chance to pick best students because everybody can apply, it was free, and intelligent students also can try to apply for Lund University they have all the applications so they can pick whoever they want."*

***The ease of application***

Apart from what's been discussed above, interviews covered other aspects of the school as well. These attributes are not automatically linked to LUSEM in the mind of interviewees, but most interviewees believed that they are important in any school application process. For instance, many participants like Caroline said that the ease of application is encouraging:

*"The application process, I thought it's so easy. It's one reason why I chose Lund University because you don't need GMAT, TOFEL test line is low. It's really easy to do it. I really appreciate it. That you don't need GMAT and some other documents it's not time wasting before you apply, it's encouraging."*

***Student Town***

When talking about how they felt about LUSEM, participants closely linked LUSEM to Lund city. They described Lund city with words such as "small" "quiet" "student town" "like Cambridge". Obviously, most interviewees were happy about this city image and thought it could be one of advantages of LUSEM. Caroline talked about that in detail:

*"It still feels like a family. You can go to the nation, you can run into somebody. Here you go to ICA, you can easily catch five people...I have never heard about that Carnival, nations, like the end of April, they are going to the park."*

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Sundus confirmed that as well. She became excited when speaking of a video taken by BBC about Lund town:

*“I like the university town. It’s very comfortable for me. The BBC video came up that Lund as a cycle town. Everyone put it on to their Facebook. I put it up, it’s branding like my city I am branding. It’s quite good for us to see our city on BBC.”*

They agreed that the university town can be a selling point of LUSEM and should be promoted more on the website for its possible impact on other potential students like them whom if they knew more about LUSEM’s environment they would be more encouraged to apply.

### **What are LUSEM’s advantages uncovered in communication**

#### ***Partnership with business***

LUSEM has built broad relations with companies. In one way, such network is valuable asset of LUSEM for those companies are possible sources of endowments. For students, the more the partnerships are directed to their personal benefits with such network in acting in guest lectures and career development the better. Although LUSEM has such resources, unfortunately, it doesn’t show that to prospective students. When speaking of guest lectures in her program, Caroline got quite excited:

*“I also think that guest lectures are interesting. I mean it’s a university; you get guest lecturers from L’Oreal, Unilever, like all of them. Why they are not using that in their communication on the web. I find it so amazing; they are talking to us and coming over.”*

It was come among students interviewed their concern about their future job, and how can their studies help them increase their chances in making it to real career success. .Begum suggested taking a video of career fair where a lot of famous companies are present at that time, or even ask high profiled managers to recommend the school’s quality of education and their trust in employing its graduates.

*“For example they can put a video about career day, i wish they had it, it was really good because people could see like many companies are here, they can take some, like P&G for example, it can be a good impression for students.”*

#### ***Internationalization***

As LUSEM administration said, LUSEM is a quite international business school. With a wide range of international master programs, LUSEM has achieved a high degree of internationalization. In the interviews, participants expressed their appreciation for that:

*“I will say it’s so international. I found it kind of emotional. It’s a good university, everybody comes to us.”*Caroline added.



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When asked how they knew this place is such an international business school, most interviewees claimed that they were not informed about this advantage of LUSEM enough before they came over to Lund after admission, Christian said:

*“Cranfield University for example, I was very impressed by this school. Also the webpage is really professional and they have for example an over view pie chart from the last class, this percent of people came from Europe this percent from Asia that other percent from Americas. It’s quite useful to get a nice overview of who will be my classmates. On Lund website, this information is missing.”*

### **EQUIS**

One interesting finding is that most of participants have no idea of EQUIS, an accreditation LUSEM administration was quite proud of. Many interviewees did not think that accreditation was important for them. Over half of them had not even heard of it before:

*“What’s it? It’s my first time to hear that. Ranking is more than enough, not the school, the university.” a student said*

Christian was an exception during of the focus interview sessions, who took EQUIS as one criterion for choosing a business school to apply for:

*“It’s important to get the EQUIS accreditation for example, the quality certification, its one side, you need to have the professors doing a lot of high quality research and a number of publications, on the other side it is the internationality what accounts to get this certificate and global standards followed, and then the teaching and a lot of aspects, that’s why i think it’s quite good, otherwise you won’t get the certification... for continuing studies elsewhere later, or even for employers it’s good to have it...”*

### **The effect of WOM on brand meaning communication**

At this stage, the effect of WOM is not as strong as in the increase of brand awareness. Only three participants mentioned that they got from their friends some information about LUSEM. Christian was a typical example. He thought the recommendation from friends is more reliable:

*“I would say recommendations, it comes first it’s that I already know this guy for example was a student or staff I think if he choose this program that should be quite good for me to go for it if he was positive and convincing about it.”*

### 5.1.3 Internet Communication of Brand Meanings

#### The use of website

The empirical results imply that LUSEM website is the major information source for exploring LUSEM. After people are aware of LUSEM and feel interested in joining, then it is LUSEM's webpage that acts a major role. Tracey's statement confirmed this when students were asked to explain about how did they search and gather information:

*"The website basically, I found it's quite useful. My friends told me about Lund University and Stockholm University. I went to the websites, and then I applied."*

All the participants supported the point that LUSEM's website is their main judgment basis. For international students, education in Sweden is completely unknown for them. They don't have a chance to come and investigate it for real. Consequently, internet is the easiest way of gathering information. They expected from LUSEM's website, to provide them with insights about the education experience more and students life more. Some correspondents didn't like much the website it for the following reasons.

Students started to talk about the navigation that is to some not much user-friendly. Over half the interviewees complained about this problem. Tracey raised this issue by saying:

*"But there is something i don't like is that it's not in one page u cannot find everything, u have to go through different places to collect everything i remember, it's not like just easy shortcut way."*

Secondly, some practical information prospective students are looking for is missing on the webpage. For instance, Sundus emphasized a lot on the lack of information on web:

*"... the good business schools tell you that you need five years' work experience or two years to be able to join, They mention it somewhere. Or you have to have certain GMAT score... Here, this specification is not only not required but also not clear, you don't know the level of experienced people you'll be studying with, I would suggest them to specify who is allegeable for a program in the descriptions designed."*

Begum added that:

*"It's a big problem that every person is asking about, how many international students are in the program? It's really good to know how many students are going to be accepted ..."*

Other interviewees agreed with Sundus and Begum that, as everybody is looking for different things, LUSEM should make it clear enough to avoid misunderstandings and to meet different potential students' expectations.

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Thirdly, the advantages of LUSEM are not promoted enough on the webpage. In order to be more attracting, the school needs to give more selling points to prospective students, such as its internationalization and amazing student life. Many interviewees such as Christian verified that:

*“For the website, they should improve the most necessary i think, is pointing out the main advantages of studying here, what makes it valuable for me to join this school like very diverse!”*

Thirdly, the website should be more interactive in order to trigger positive emotional response among prospective students. Almost all the participants approved of putting videos on webpage of LUSEM, especially Begum, Caroline and Christian who gave plenty of suggestions on that issue:

*“It must be really reflecting your life you can show career fair days, maybe some lectures, interview the lecturers, interview the students about their feelings the day they are graduating, put something under the student social life, you can show the students life”*

*“if I were the web designer I would go after students on graduation day, the day when they are really happy and excited and capture their emotions and post it in a video ask every student to tell one or two words about Lund in short, amazing and fun then mix them all! Can you imagine how nice it can look for browser I’ve seen that in lovemarks”*

Igor, in contrast, said that official website can’t be too emotional and neglect hard facts about LUSEM, he insisted that such personal reflections can really change students perception when it comes to education choices at least for him. Participants agreed that there should be a balance between emotional and functional, like Sundus pointed out:

*“I think they should find a balance. You will tell about credibility, you will tell about how strong an institution they are. At the same time, there is information really attractive and emotional. So you are satisfied, and then you are also emotionally attracted.”*

### **The use of social media**

Surprisingly, none of the interviewees went to LUSEM Facebook group or other social media to gather information about LUSEM but rather joined those groups after being admitted to explore more about what they are going to expect, except for Begum:

*“I emailed a lot of Turkish people in Lund, and they gave me information through Facebook after asking them to tell me more about Lund. Now a lot friends and friends of friends are sending me requests and emails asking me about how they can apply? What is it like in Lund? And many they even just check my photos and see how happy I’m there! ”*

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Other participants were not so into social media and viral marketing. They used social media but did not regard it as an efficient approach to gather reliable information. Some of them claimed that they would not need gathering information via social media anyway since all the information existed on official Webpage of schools, Many agreed that they rely most on the official website information. Lauri was not into the use of social media as communication medium for a business school:

*“I think we are given too much information already. I don’t think it would make any differences to my opinions whether they have YouTube or not. It would not make any difference.”*

There are also some interviewees feeling that social media is a trend. Although they didn’t use it one year ago, that doesn’t mean it is unnecessary in the near future. Christian had such opinion:

*“But I still think It’s like a trend to have a page for the program maybe a fan page when you have this information again, it’s just another source, and it would make sense, and if it’s in a good and clear way, maybe there will be new webpage for the program then you have the link or button, ok here you get the fan page in Facebook you can get information or spread the word or whatever, twitter.”*

Although there are some disagreements in that issue, all of participants agreed that social media is just a plus; the main focus of communication should still be website of the school. After all, official websites are their main information source. Lauri verified this:

*“Social media is in the later stage. You’ve got to have official information first. You’ve got to do very well in your main website Then you can add things, make it as good as possible like in consumer goods brands for instance they leave that for fans, but they try to upgrade their official website to look like social medium connector.”*

#### **5.1.4 Brand Response and Relationships**

Keller (2008) separated brand response into two parts, brand judgments and brand feelings. Brand judgments are on the cognitive side while brand feelings are on the emotional side. Brand response can’t be separated from brand meaning. As discussed above, brand meaning of LUSEM consists of both emotional and more of cognitive brand associations, in other words, brand performances. In contrast, brand imagery is relatively weak. From the interviews, we found that brand response of LUSEM was more rational as well.

At the end of interviews, we asked participants their overall judgments and feelings about LUSEM before they decided to apply for it. The answers are related to rankings and reputations again. What Sundus said:

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*“I think the ranking of university is good. So I expected naturally the school of economics and management will also be good. That’s what I felt... ”*

Of note, focus group participants didn’t say unambiguously their feelings about LUSEM, but it can be implied from the interviews that LUSEM gave students a feeling of warmth.

Christian added: *“this place is a perfect student town it’s not only you come here and study business and economics at LUSEM it’s an unforgettable life journey....”*

Tracey noted that it’s a perfect choice she made in her life by choosing Lund, she said *“this place is small and quite perfect for learning, I think it just looks like Cambridge really I’ve been to the UK , I’d loved to study there it didn’t work, but I don’t regret it”*

Caroline on the other hand expressed her love to the city and its people by adding: *“this Swedish town is a perfect student town, I felt like I’m surrounded with family, all people you meet are friendly...”*

## **5.2 CBS International Master Students**

In the focus groups with CBS international students, a wide range of topics were covered, on brand, internet and applying decision making. The following section will present these valuable empirical findings, regarding international students’ decision journey before applying and what are the best marketing practices that can influence a student’s positive perception.

### **5.2.1 Brand Awareness**

To identify the brand awareness of CBS, we first asked the participants to recall their memory, explaining us when they first considered CBS as an option for their studies and then to reflect on the whole story of their early application days. Questions on how CBS turned to be a favorable choice to apply for and when did they’ve first thought that it’s time for them to apply for an international degree helped figure out the early process that students pass through and which appeared to be common among most of our respondents.

Country image, in this case Denmark, helps the creation of brand awareness of CBS. Many interviewees claimed that they were interested in CBS because they had decided on Nordic Europe to be their destination and CBS was a quite favorable choice among business schools in this region. Lena from Germany, when asked to reflect on when she first thought of going abroad, said that:

*“It was clear for me from the very beginning that I want to have an international degree, especially when it comes to the style of teaching, I really prefer the Scandinavian way of*

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*education than the German style, so I want to add such an experience on my knowledge and I was only searching within Nordic schools, so I knew that my choice will not be somewhere in France or Spain, cause I've been in my bachelor degree part of an exchange program with a French university, but I didn't really like it"*

And we also noticed that students we've come to interview all have in a way an idea of a concentration or study track that they are mostly interested in and they base their search on what their looking for. Some of them based their search on the program descriptions and course content and some other based on the language of instruction.

For Melanie, she thinks "*...it's my studies. I am in the final year of my study, so I have to see if it suits me or not. So I looked at the course content"*.

Apart from the course, the teaching language is also quite important for an international student as collected from the interviews. Barika, a student from Kenya, said,

*"I looked at what opportunities are there to study in English, and in Sweden, there were not so many... so when I looked at the website(CBS), I read more so I saw other students are saying about that school, what the program is offering..."*

Diana, Latvian student studying at CBS began her basic search for studying aboard based on the language of instruction to be in English as many other students interviewed did:

*"I'm looking for like, how many programs in all are provided in English, because it's the only language I know for study, and I was looking at what kind of program there were in English...and that best matches my interests when it comes to topics covered"*

The fact being found after the interviews is that Internet and Word of Mouth plays a crucial role in the first stages that triggers and motivates students to go ahead and start their evaluation of choices regarding their abroad study plans.

### **WOM**

Most participants said they first knew CBS from family and friends' recommendations, as well as some previous students' experience. When asked when CBS became a choice, Lena, a student from Germany, said:

*"Actually CBS is a popular school in our International Office in the University where I got my bachelor degree from, and that's the place where I went to ask about program offered abroad. CBS got a good reputation at our University and among the people who work in the students office, and when I went there they gave me a lot of information and stuff that I can help form my decision especially former students who've been there either for exchange or a full year program"*

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Eva, a Polish student, explained that her parents and friends were significantly influential and had an impact on the reason behind her choice of applying to CBS she also mentioned that her basic online search comes after and mainly from the school's site:

*“my parents have kind of big love to Scandinavia, so it was Sweden and Copenhagen...I know another guy who graduated from CBS and he recommended me this school as a good choice....I'm pretty much used to build my opinion on the opinion of others, that's how it went for my school choice as well and the internet yeah the internet too.”*

### **Online visibility**

When word of mouth had affected so many interviewees in their school searching process, some other participants didn't think of WOM as that important to them. For these students, internet is the really influential information source. They searched for programs and schools they felt interested in and the most popular searching engine Google.com. Bing is one of them:

*“...I just search online about those business schools in Europe, then I found the one in Denmark, ah saw it first through Google!! Yes I remember ”*

Although it is accepted by many that the official business schools websites are an important information source if not the main source, some focus group participants raised the question of some review websites' reliability. Melanie is one of them:

*“I didn't rely much on the online material, because you don't even know if it's fake or real...recommendations for me come first in forming my perception about a school...website is for more info but I won't visit a website if I'm not interested and if that place is not of a choice for me from start ... ”*

Eva also doubted the information on internet, she said that:

*“I don't think it is real in that sense...every school...they all show you the best classes, the best professors and the best parties, it's marketing the great part only.. yeah.”*

### **5.2.2 Brand Meaning**

The previously mentioned theory clarifies the brand meaning as brand performance and brand imagery, in order to get deep understanding on these two parts, we asked our interviewees questions like how do you think of CBS as a brand and do you have any perception about CBS.

### 5.2.2.1 What are the brand meanings of CBS

#### *Internationalization*

For international students, the most attractive point of CBS is its internationalization; almost all the participants mentioned directly or indirectly that internationalization is quite important to consider when applying for a master program. One example is from Diana, who said,

*“The internationalization was a criteria for me as well, when I heard about that one third of students in this particular program are coming from different countries...that encouraged me very much, because I’m very into that...”*

Focus group participants showed obvious satisfaction with the internationalization of CBS. What the internationalization could bring to students is the cultural diversity and international experience; that’s really important for some students, Amanda a student from France said:

*“It’s a huge plus if you know how to communicate with foreigners on business terms...you should learn about different cultures and different ways of life, it’s very interesting to discuss with everyone else, it’s interesting to live with a lot of people, and to practice your communication with your peers, or you don’t know how to do it later...”*

#### *Niche program*

Just like the case of LUSEM, The master program in CBS and courses content are influential factors as well, both for brand building and students school choice. Since CBS really focuses on business, it attracts those students who had studied in business and who are interested in some specific programs. For example, Jing studied business administration before, she said that:

*“My bachelor is about business administration, so I prefer to continue my higher studies with in this specialty at a business school I’m familiar with...”*

As to Eva, she firmly decided her major before she started searching for schools. The program she was looking for was only provided by CBS:

*“What I wanted to do is logistics and operations; CBS was the only place to study that, so that’s a pretty obvious choice just met here, and it’s relatively easy once you graduate from here, to get in two year master programs.”*

Barika who is interested in service industry agreed with Eva and added that program is the first criteria when evaluating school choices:



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*“I was always been interested in service industry, I saw this program that we are studying now, business administration integrated service management, I thought it’s a really good combination”*

According to their response, some specific or unique programs or courses could be the selling points, and could help to form the students’ impression on this school, for instance, when talking about the perception of CBS, Melanie mentioned that,

*“My impression was based on the course itself. I looked at the courses and the literature. I had a good impression on it. That’s all. Also the facilities here, possibilities gained and opportunities... I had a good impression of all that ”*

### ***Future career opportunities***

The future career consideration is the second thing mentioned most during the interviews, which related to the schools’ partnership with businesses and the programs designed. Most participants choose the master program from practical perspective, which means that they prefer the programs which are closely connected with the real business world, rather than theoretical knowledge, and they also hope the study of such knowledge could be a merit for their future career.

If Jing’s reflection taken as a example, when discussing about what’s the criteria for choosing a business school, one of the criteria for her was the practical knowledge: *“I wanted to learn some practical knowledge not theoretical, and whether those things are useful after graduation, match to the future work or career”*

For Diana and Barika, they both think that an international degree could help them to be better prepared for the future work in the international market, for Diana studying service management, she thinks that:

*“When I heard about service management, I felt like it’s interesting, you can work in different areas in any service industry, consulting company, you have a lot of opportunity at the time you graduate, this is the criteria as well.”*

Henry reflected on the online search criteria he followed when looking for a business program, for him as for many other students we’ve interviewed the program description seems to be a key source of data to build and connect a student choices with:

*“It’s for me the relevance to my future, like will I be provided with a backup knowledge that will contribute in my career life and the work place I’ll be in, what skill set that a student will achieve after graduating. I wanted to know what kind of a person will I be after my studies, and what will I be prepared with, that would have been insightful if provided in those program descriptions.”*

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Moreover, there are some different points of views on this issue. For example, the selling point of future career opportunities did not work for Melanie. She had such an attitude to the future career consideration part with that to the internet sources, she said:

*“I don’t care about it at all, because everybody is different. Just somebody can manage a company doesn’t mean you can do it as well. It’s not important. And I don’t think it will encourage students like me to form a positive perception no, not for me.”*

### **Location**

In the interviews, we found that CBS attracts a lot of international students because of its location. Although both CBS and LUSEM are located near the main continent of Europe, Copenhagen seemed for many; more attractive than Lund since it’s a big city with rich facilities. Melanie stated that the reason why she chose CBS rather than Oslo University was that she preferred Copenhagen to Oslo. She replied that:

*“I had Oslo and Copenhagen as an option to apply for. Since I knew Oslo, and I knew Copenhagen. Compared to Oslo, I preferred Copenhagen. I preferred the city of Copenhagen. Yes city life here it’s different, I felt it suits me more, and I found myself...”*

As discussed on the role of family in the brand awareness increase, some chose CBS because of their family members’ recommendations and experiences are here, for example Diana also had such a choice consideration affect:

*“ I was only considering Denmark, because I guess it’s too risky to go to a new place where you don’t know anybody there, because my sister is already here, I thought it was the best choice for me if I try to have international experience....”*

### **Learning theories and practice**

Empirical results indicated that international students were basically satisfied with the teaching style of CBS. They were especially happy with the CBS’s manner of combining theories and practices perfectly. When speaking of his main perception of CBS, Henry mentioned this point:

*“It’s a business school that very well combines theories and real business. I really appreciated that, because both aspects were so important for our future career development.”*

Lena could not but agree with Henry as she was excited to explain on her relevant experience she had just few weeks before this session. She explained this point in more details:

*“Yeah, exactly. As part of our program, every student must work with a company on a project. I used to be very nervous, not sure if I can find a good company. But then I found*

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*that CBS had good relationship with those famous companies. Companies arranged it very well. They have had rich experiences working with students.”*

### **Facilities**

Almost half of the focus group participants mentioned how impressed they are with the facilities of CBS. The modern design of CBS buildings seems to have had helped transferring an innovative image. Eva and Melanie talked about their feelings when they watched the videos of CBS. They admitted that the video exaggerated somehow, but they still liked it. When speaking about this issue, Melanie turned quite excited:

*“One thing was quite funny. I watched all the movies and I saw all the halls, buildings and facilities. It’s so impressive, It’s so big but when I came here, it’s a bit small. But it’s not so big. But it’s very good thing to discover the school before you join it.”*

### **Ranking**

First according to the previous interviews, the school administrators have recognized the ranking could be a promoting strategy part of a branding process. However, during the interviews, we found that the ranking and accreditation of CBS didn’t get equal attention compared with LUSEM from students, few of them checked the ranking and whether it’s an accredited business school or not. More than one student thought the ranking couldn’t reflect the quality of education, Barika is one of them, she said

*“I knew it’s very popular but I didn’t know about its rank. Rank and accreditation are not for me. I think the qualities of education are not measured by ranking ...”*

## **5.2.3 Internet Communication of Brand meanings**

### **5.2.3.1 The use of website**

The CBS official webpage which is updated and designed by the school’s administration different boards is the main online source of information that international students had depended mostly on during their evolution of choices before applying. In their information gathering process, all of the interviewees went to the official webpage of CBS. For instance, Eva was very sure about the role of internet in school branding:

*“I think the website does matter for sure; they give some information about the structure of this school, how easy will it be to get the information, yeah for sure, especially if you are coming abroad, this is pretty much what to expect getting when you join, I mean you won’t go to any school you intended to go to and not looking how it looks like, what their facilities look like and what the city is like, so you just rely on whatever they tell you”.*

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Generally, they were satisfied up to an extent with the current CBS website. Even with some issues about content, navigation and design, participants thought it was fair enough when it comes to information they were looking for.

A student during one of the focus interviews conducted expressed his satisfaction with the online information on CBS home page,

*“The accommodation, costs of living, the useful information. You can find everything within two clicks. You don’t have to search for it. There is even more information you could expect normally because it also said have to visit this, you have to go there and you have to do this. It’s very clear and very useful...”*

Diana gave positive comments on the navigation and layout of the CBS website:

*“When I look at the website of CBS... I thought it was quite easy to navigate and was very welcoming...they put it in very nice words, actually they put it like talk about our students...”*

Especially, some interviewees thought that the videos are very helpful for understanding CBS even more. Eva referred to the usefulness of interactive material on the school webpage, she indicated that videos made it easier for her to visualize a clear image about the school she’s intending to join.

*“Videos content are really impressing like it’s completely different when you see students maybe in the video were sharing experience, I think it would be useful to promote this school...”*

As discussed above, most comments on the CBS website were somewhat positive, but still with some complaints, most about navigation and students experience sharing, students agreed that they wanted more info on previous students’ experience, which if present could have had helped them more in their decision of applying especially when it comes to programs they plan to join

### ***Navigation***

Jing and Danh they both think that the navigation should easier to use when browsing a school’s website and not complicated. Danh commented as follows:

*“It’s confusing. There is cbs.dk, e-cbs.dk and another, three different sites; I don’t know how to look around... and the program pages and links...”*

Furthermore, Lena thought the link was not very clear for her to collect information:

*“At the beginning you get a little bit confused. What was distracting in that process, the links on the webpage that I had to browse and then go back to the main page again and*

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*again to select another program, or even other related links like students life and application requirements”*

### ***Previous students’ career development***

When interviewees were asked about the significance of successful stories of previous students, it appeared that such a section students are interested to know more about, to help them form their perception on a school and its people. Henry added on the importance of successful stories section:

*“ you don’t find much about previous students if not anything about that thing out there in the current webpage..., it could be very intuitive, in a way saying our graduates got this position in that company or in that organization because then you also get a better feeling of where previous students ended so to form your response...”*

Lena added: *“yeah more about where will students be after graduation, will I be a marketing associate, can I be a product manager if I joined this program, more on the chances and possibilities that a student can gain from the real career market.”*

### **5.2.3.2 The use of social media**

Before we conducted the interview we had surfed on the webpage of both LUSEM and CBS and found that, CBS had introduced the social media tool, like a share link with Facebook and twitter, as well as some videos on YouTube, which is about the campus and facilities. When asking students on the importance of social media and to what extent they rely on information shared, students responded negatively. They did all agree that social media especially Facebook, YouTube and Twitter takes a large part of their daily life, yet when it comes to education there are some constraints.

When asking whether social media is useful for evaluating schools or not, both Nina, a student from Latvia, and Barika, a student from Kenya, said they had never used that. Diana didn’t notice the groups related to CBS on the Facebook:

*“I’m not sure if there is any CBS group on Facebook right now, I guess there should be actually, but I didn’t go there.”*

Although few of the participants took the advantage of social media for gathering information about CBS, some of them thought that the usage of social media could help people to visualize the brand of CBS, just like Barika said:

*“Focus more on social media, and interview students, not only talk about the best thing about CBS but also the difficult things what should be like to be student there, so not only positive but negative things as well. And touching the regular life and study...It could help a person to visualize... I think it’s very important for them to have social media...It’s*

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*more realistic, it is like the virtual world, it bring you closer to what could be studying here,”*

Supporting that social media was helpful in sharing real students experience online with prospective students, Diana added on that more:

*“Like any videos content are really impressing like it’s completely different when you see students maybe in the video were sharing experience, I think it would be useful to promote this school.”*

In one word, the research findings in CBS concerning the use of social media are similar with those in LUSEM case. Participants did consider social media as an additional information source, yet for many it wasn’t that much influential on their applying decision. Consequently, social media could be a nice plus on the basis of informative official webpage. Melanie verified this point of view:

*“I don’t think it’s helpful but a nice plus you can have. You don’t expect it but it’s nice to see it, because it’s nice to know where you are going, and to see how is it like, that makes you more familiar with your choice I guess...”*

#### **5.2.4 Brand Response and relationships**

According to the theory part in chapter 2, brand response could be measured from consumer judgments and consumer feelings. As mentioned before in the theory part, in the case of business branding, the brand judgment could result from the brand performances, the cognitive values of brand as the ranking and accreditation and courses description. Based on all the hard facts, many students implied that CBS was an institution of high quality. Its reputation was spread with WOM, encouraging prospective students applying for it. When we asked how they judged or felt about CBS, most of students mentioned the words—quality and reputation. Danh said he knew from his friends and family that CBS was an excellent business school:

*“I forgot who told me, but I knew a long time ago that CBS was good, the education here was high quality and had a good reputation. (Your peer fellows?) Maybe, maybe my family.”*

Besides, with high reputation, CBS got high social approval. Among the six crucial feelings related to brand building set by Kahle et al., excitement could best describe the feelings on CBS brand. For some students, the feeling of excitement was created when they watched the videos of CBS buildings and facilities. The modern buildings strengthened the modern image of CBS brand. Melanie said she really enjoyed those videos and watched every one.

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*“I watched all the movies and I saw all the halls, buildings and facilities. It’s so impressive, It’s so big.”*

For some students, they were excited while reading the career opportunities stated in program descriptions, which made them more encouraged and motivated to take a move and consider applying.

## Chapter Six: Empirical Data Analysis

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*This chapter demonstrates an insightful discussion of empirical findings, in which a new model of a student decision journey is introduced to explain the applying decision making process of prospective students.*

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It can be drawn from this study: that a business school has to have a brand to compete on a global level attracting students from abroad. Differentiation is a key focus in traditional branding theories; however, it's more difficult to differentiate business schools than to brand normal consumer goods. From the perspective of students, brand meaning of business schools is composed of rankings, reputations, location, career opportunities, programs, internationalization, student life and facilities. Apart from these attributes, which are found to be an evaluation criterion of prospective students, adding more unique values is quite challenging. It's even more difficult to create emotional brand associations linked to business schools and to trigger strong brand feelings.

### **6.1 Bridging the Gap between Senders and Receivers**

In addition, it's worth noting that there is a gap between administrators'(senders) and potential students'(receivers) perception of brand, which is largely resulted from the lack of effective communication. Take the example of LUSEM, over half of the interviewees claimed that they had no idea of EQUIS while administrators empathized on it and regarded it as a major competitive advantage. In CBS case, administrators thought ranking was a branding path, but most focus group participants didn't put much merit on ranking.

Restricted to a certain number of brand values, business schools can optimize branding via effective online communication. In international education market, internet plays a significant role in brand communication, which is agreed from both sides of school and students. For schools with limited resources, it is almost the only way of reaching international prospective students. WOM and search engines are often the first step. After that, students use business school official website as the main information source. Therefore, all the necessary information is supposed to be on the website in a user-friendly way, given that it is the foundation on which brand judgments and feelings are shaped. Putting more content on student life, as well as more videos, is beneficial to brand feelings generation. Schools have started testing their presence on social media aiming to reach out students, yet students haven't shown in this study their dependence on social media as a supplement information source for evaluating business schools. In their views, social media is a plus and nice to have but the communication focus for them is still the official website of schools.

Keller's brand building process is applicable in higher education sector but is not sufficient enough for explaining students' applying decision behavior.



## ***6.2 Introducing our Student Decision Journey Model***

After setting our empirical data in an integral form fitted into Keller's stages of building customer based brand (2008) from mainly two different perspectives senders level and receivers level, our data analysis is consumer centric, because students are the main consumers of higher education and they are the first to receive schools brand communication material. Our empirical findings have been analyzed following the logic of Kotler and Armstrong (2004) on their model of Buyers Decision Process. Based on our research we've classified students as the consumers of the higher education branding or in other words the buyers of what's been showcased from information via different online sources in specific.

There are certainly several attributes that triggers the student decision making process for a school choice. In our study we were able to collect numerous traits and attributes that normally influence students decision, a discipline that is close to be like a journey that students pass through when they start to recognize a need for continuing their education at a certain level of time which leads them to think of going abroad for perusing an international degree. We've investigated the nature of the driving forces behind such a decision a student makes and the influence a school corporate brand communication can create in the consumer's mindset; in our study students of LUSEM and CBS were the focus. To understand this process more, all the data that we've collected from focus interviews conducted with international master students in both business schools is being explored in a chain of events a typical prospective student follows.

### **6.2.1 Need Recognition: Students Initial Consideration**

According to our empirical findings we've come to notice a relatively close relation between students need to enhance their education, gain international experience, get well prepared for a future career and between their initial considerations in searching for the most suitable programs they get aware of offered by business schools. It's a whole set of factors that are correlated and hard to separate from one another. For nearly all students we've had the chance to interview, they've expressed the importance of a school's reputation that they consider applying for which for them it comes first as a brand preference followed by the country were the school is based. The program offered comes next in importance as to what extent the program captures a student needs and aspirations.

Students have expressed that the more the program description is personalized to their needs the higher the chances are for them to apply for that specific program which captures their demand closely compared to other programs offered elsewhere.

From those stories we've gathered from international students, it was found that the more students are aware and familiar with the country a business school is based in, the more confident they are in their choice of applying. In addition to word of mouth from family

## CHAPTER 6: Empirical Data Analysis

and friends of whom they've got the chance to exchange their intention to start a search for enrolling in a higher degree program. Though some students have expressed clearly that they do know that people no matter how close they are, still they might be bias and not objective when it comes to recommendations.

So following Kotler and Armstrong (2004:155) model on buyers decision process which starts with a stage of consumers' need recognition that is described as the stage where consumers can be triggered by an internal and external stimuli, combined with Keller's process of consumer brand based, in its first stage which is the creation of brand awareness. Which after this research we came to believe that both go at the same level of events, our first chain of stages in a student decision journey is that stage when students are exposed with life choices put in balance with a defined need student's early consider for continuing studies, which a school brand success can be measured in the ability to capture such a student attention.

### **6.2.2 Information Search & Evaluation of Alternatives**

Then comes the Information search after the initial consideration stage which is triggered by the need to go for further studies if captured, driving people to pay attention to search for relevant information, they could get information from personal sources, like from family, or friends; yet internet has become the easiest way of all to start a preliminary search. In our research we found that school's administration in both LUSEM and CBS relay heavily on website for addressing international potential applicants with their brand meaning. Like defining the meaning to be a student in such a school and what kind of added values the school can bring to the higher education consumption experience. The next step that students as consumers of education pass through is the evaluation of choices.

The internet information sources in general, the schools Webpages in particular were proven to be of important in their influence on a student's perception for a school brand throughout the research paper. Students have expressed their feelings about capturing the attention of the reader (browser), it was found that the official schools websites are the most reliable sources students depend on in gathering information about study programs.

Surprisingly, social media's influence on student decision making haven't proven to be as strong as in other purchasing behavior aspects in different sectors. Students have expressed that it's true that they spend much of time on social media networks like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, but when it comes to higher education choices it's the school's official webpage's that are mostly reliable according to most.

Students were asking for more interactive engagement when it comes to schools communication, they've expressed their desire to be take part of spreading the word.

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Kotler and Armstrong (2004) pointed that there will be some evaluation procedure for consumers to form attitude toward different brands, they usually tend to compare and evaluate alternative choices based on the information they've received from the brand , and consequently rank the product brands and form their purchase intention, however, the purchase intention sometimes don't result in the actual purchase choice because of the influence from other attitude and unexpected situational factors.

For students, a business school brand meaning can be served and communicated more clearly from the school's side if new means of advanced technologies are imbedded in a webpage, like videos, virtual tours, and program micro sites that are user friendly.

### **6.2.3 Purchase Decision: Student Moment of Applying**

Students interviewed have had shown that for a school to be attractive enough for them to apply for, it must address them personally in its marketing communication, for they are the main stakeholders of those business schools.

The school marketers should research consumers to find out what kind of needs or problems arise when students consider to apply for studies, what brought them to be attracted to a particular program or distracted, and how they can lead the consumers to particular programs and services offered efficiently in a way that serves the schools best interest.

The annual number of applications is a measurement that is followed in both CBS and LUSEM administrative officials, when it comes to valuating the attractiveness of the brand communication.

### **6.2.4 Post Purchase Behavior: Previous Students Brand Experience Sharing**

Most Students according to our findings have had shown their interest in knowing more about previous students experiences with similar programs that they're intending to join. When sharing their experiences with us and recalling the stages they've passed through especially after intending to start their studies abroad.

Many international students from both CBS and LUSEM expressed that it's somewhat impossible to predict the kind of outcome their choice would bring them after joining a school, that's why most students agreed that stories from previous students who attended similar studies as the studies their intending to apply for helps them visualize a clearer perception of what to expect. Students sharing and spreading the knowledge about a school or a specific program previously attended proven to be popular among students.

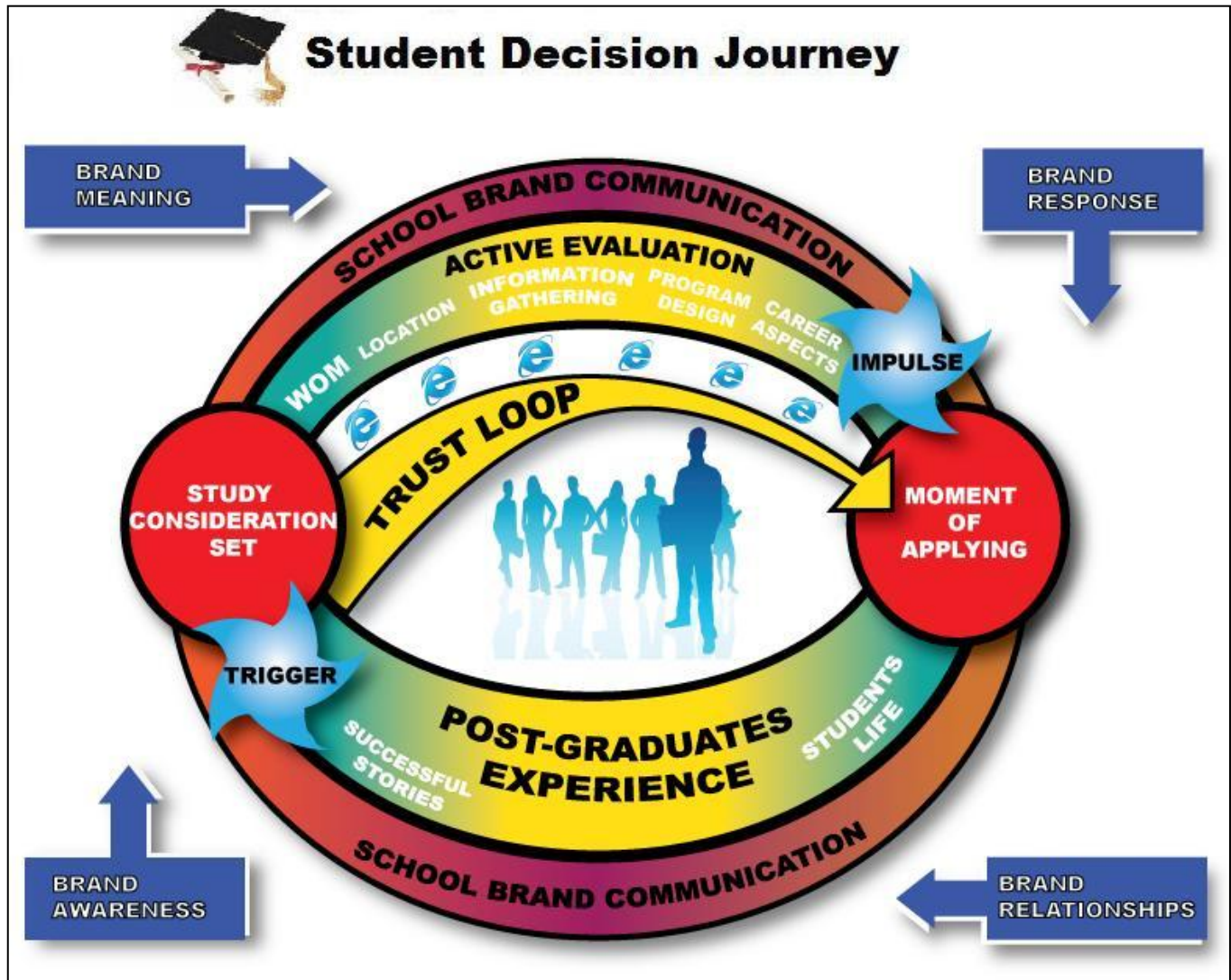


Figure 3. The Students Decision Journey Model (inspired from Keller, Kotler, Mckinsey)

#### A School Brand Perceived in the minds of Students:

A prospective student with an intention to go for international studies can be captured by schools through a branding awareness strategy designed to target such group of students. A student becoming aware of a certain business school together with his/her willingness to study abroad triggers the purpose for searching out and evaluating choices available. A second phase in a student decision journey is looking into the school brand meanings based on the brand values and imagery communicated with in a set of aspects taken into consideration that normally support a student's judgments and feelings which in turn if matched with a student preferences creates an impulse that leads a student to trust the information communicated online and on top feeling comfortable and confident in a choice to be taken ending up applying for that school and not the other schools.

## CHAPTER 6: Empirical Data Analysis

It is good to mention that this journey introduced might be followed differently among students, possibly depending on several personal factors or other constraints not covered in this study. Yet what's common in that typical journey is that in any way a student takes a path following at least one or more of those factors that are presented in our model, those factors in turn create a certain influence on a student applying choices.

**Influential Factors in the Students Decision Journey: (based on this Research)**

**WOM:** At this point a potential student enters the phase of information seeking, whereby students tend to relay on their close network of people when they are seeking an advice or support, those people whom they share with a form of social tie, they could be their family members, colleagues, neighbors, citizens, and club members or at least they have something in common with; and that is a first step before seeking any other source of knowledge about their future studies. Not all questions and concerns can be answered through WOM, but it's just one criterion out of many that come after it.

**Location:** Another important aspect for prospective students when considering applying abroad is the awareness about the nature of the place that will host their studies. This is of different dimensions which include the schools geographical location, a student's convenience with settling in a new place away from home, facilities at a school from buildings and equipment.

**Info Gathering (facts & figures):** This stage reflects mainly on the students' dependence on facts and figures, tuition fees and cost of living that the business schools provide via the webpage in addition to ranking, number of international students, programs offered in English or any other preferable language, and accreditations.

**Program Study Design:** Different study programs designed by a school are a major element in the influential aspects students are exposed with when it comes to evaluating their choices. Students intend to choose programs that serve best their aspirations and fit their current needs; they tend to look for the future value a degree in a certain concentration can add them.

**Career Aspects:** It's about practical examples of a potential career a student can link his/her studies with after graduating, the inter-connection with studies and career opportunities after students' graduation and the nature of the backup knowledge that will contribute in prospective students' career life and their success in future work places.

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***Post Graduates Experience Sharing:*** “Honeybees are social insects, communicating with each other to exploit the food sources discovered by individual foraging bees. When a bee comes across a promising food source, it returns to the hive and does a little “waggle dance”; this tells the other bees where to fly” (Peppers 2008). This exactly what we humans experience when shopping, traveling, and studying if we have a good experience with a product or service we start buzzing and wagging about it with others sort of speak, creating a positive word of mouth spread!

***Students Life:*** The Highlighted extracurricular activities students are usually part of during their studies period. Information sharing on real life experiences, former and current students’ share, in addition to graduates experience during the previous academic years; that can all help potential applicants to visualize a clear image of what to expect.

***Alumni Successful Stories:*** Real life stories of graduates current work positions and type of jobs they are handling currently, motivates students to follow the same journey those successful students reflected in their stories.

All those variables presented above, if matched with students preferences trigger trust among prospective students creating an impulse to apply for a school that is mostly close in addressing such influential aspects that might meet a potential student’s expectations. Some students might not require all those factors to evaluate their school choice and that varies among students, but what has been presented in this model are the most common factors reflected from “interviewees applying stories” presented and analyzed explicitly in the empirical findings chapter. Those factors in turn are found to be considered by students as “the must have” in a school brand communication via a school website.

This study doesn’t provide a measurement of importance for each and every aspect of the students consideration set explained, but rather identifies those factors that are of real influence on a student behavior when it comes to valuating choices for studying abroad based on in-depth qualitative research. While measuring the degree of influence and importance among those factors needs to be carried out for further research, since it’s not the aim of this research.

## Chapter Seven: Conclusions

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*In this chapter, conclusions of this research are presented, theoretical contributions, managerial implications, limitations and future research suggestions are followed.*

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### 7.1 Conclusions

Given all what's been presented in the empirical and analysis part of this research, a belief could be drawn that for a business school brand to succeed in its marketing communication attempts with its stakeholders i.e. mainly students, a brand has to understand what goes in the consumers' minds when it comes to valuating choices.

In order for marketers to reach an optimum level of satisfaction among average web users, they have to understand the journey that students experience while being exposed to various testimonials, this study highlights on the importance of creating a user friendly school online homepages, and the kind of material that students normally are looking for and attracted most to. Internet has proven to be one of the main channels of communication that links schools with potential students, designing an informative and attractive website can have an effective influence on student's perception. A typical student decision journey as a guidance model is being introduced in this study.

### 7.2 Theoretical Contribution

Our theoretical contribution is mainly within two streams of marketing and branding areas, corporate brand communication theories and consumer buying behavior theories. This thesis introduced a new model on a behavioral experience a specific consumer passes through during stages of decision making, and those niche consumers under study are the students who are intending to pursue their higher education abroad. Based on a combination of two theories, the Keller's four-steps brand development process combined with Kotler's buyer decision process. This thesis tried to touch upon stages that consumers of higher education go through before deciding what to consume.

This research contributes to both existing branding theories and practical domain. This thesis introduces possible guidance by which a business school can follow aiming for brand positioning through significant investments and branding campaigns in mass media with main focus on the internet brand communication. The research results can be used directly by business school management and has a managerial implication for other type of schools and universities as well. The methodology design adopted in this study can also be a reference for university administration when they are conducting empirical research about branding.

## CHAPTER 7 Conclusions

In addition, by applying classic branding theories into a new consumer behavior context, this research enriches the current research field of branding. There are insufficient previous studies on internet use during the communication process of the brand values. This research fills this gap to a certain extent.

### 7.3 Managerial Implications

Having a consumer focused brand, this study examined how a business school's brand is built in the mind of prospective students and examined the role of internet communication plays in the brand building process. After this research work, school administrators and web designers can find it easier to go through this study and get to know what the prospective student have been valuating when it comes to brand meanings communicated online.

A business school online brand communication has to be designed to attract students; the more the school is visible and clear in its brand communication the faster it can trigger students to consider searching for more information and encourages their online revisits thus creating an emotional connection and personal benefits.

#### Applying Major components of Corporate Marketing on Higher Education Institutions

Major components of corporate marketing (Balmer, 2001)		Major components of marketing (McGee and Spiro, 1990)
Orientation	<i>Stakeholder</i> Understanding present and future stakeholder (including students) wants, needs and behavior.	<i>Potential Student from overseas (customers)</i> Understanding student's wants needs and behavior
Organizational Support	Coordinated organizational activities Undertaken to support stakeholder's orientation	
End – focus	Value creation Enrollment orientation is primary but is by no means the only focus. It includes teaching excellence, meeting societal needs and education standards	Focus on students satisfaction rates
Societal Application	Present and future stakeholder and societal needs Balancing current stakeholder and societal needs with those of the future. Showing sensitivity to the organization's inheritance where applicable. Research	Community welfare (career aspects) A commitment to prepare a skilled working force society's long-term interests

Table 2. Understanding Students' Needs for Designing a School Marketing Plan (inspired from Balmer & Greyser's study (2006), see Appendix IX)



### ***7.4 Limitation***

It's hard yet not impossible to make everything perfect, but the limited time is the main difficulty for this research. The thesis has been done with enormous efforts in 10 weeks, while the qualitative research strategy mainly used in this study always requires more time since it aims to explore the detailed information, and it takes time to arrange focus group and individual interviews. If there is more time, more interviews would have been conducted and more deep details would have been explored. Another limitation is the case sample, LUSEM and CBS are chosen for the geographical consideration and the limited time and budget, but they are not representative sufficiently for all the business schools in the Nordic Region. If there is enough time, other major business schools in this region should be studied.

### ***7.5 Further Research***

The researchers came to notice that attracting students from abroad to apply for study programs offered in Nordic European business schools is growing in importance as part of the global competitiveness standards schools are working to have, aiming to attract the best skilled potential students possible. A university Higher education system that is international and following global standards in research and teaching has become to be a major element a school brand projects as part of its identity. But for all that to be successfully implemented an online reach out plan needs to be studied in order to target students from abroad who surf the web and search for study options.

Therefore by following the same methodology that has been applied on the two case studies presented in this study. We suggest that within additional two more months same research framework can be implemented like in cases of CBS and LUSEM in this research paper on other Nordic schools as well, setting focused interviews with an equivalent number of international students in order to get a more representative picture of students behavior before applying with a broader picture than the Oresund region only, and to be applied on Stockholm Business School, Helsinki Business School and Oslo Business School, then a bigger picture can be conducted and conclusions can be drawn on a larger scale.

A future quantitative research based on our findings is recommended, in order to test the new model in this study and to measure the relative importance of each influential factor identified as acting in student applying decision journey.

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## **Appendix**

### ***I Interview Questions for School Administration***

1. What's the current position of LUSEM in the international business education market?
2. Does the school have clear market positioning strategy? Is it going to change or maintain its current position?
3. What are the competitive advantages of the school? How unique those advantages are?
4. What are the disadvantages of the school compared to its closest competitors?
5. How does the school communicate its brand/advantages to international prospective students?
6. How much does the communication rely on internet? What internet tools are used? (website, social media, review website, e-news)
7. To what extent the web communication serves the school's internationalizing vision? And would any improvement in the internet communication help in that?
8. How do you normally measure the effectiveness (students reach out rates) of the school's communication and branding attempts?

### ***II Focus Group Interview Guide***

1. Could you please tell us your story of applying for master programs? When and how did you learn about LUSEM/CBS?
2. What came to your mind when you thought about LUSEM/CBS?
3. What were your judgments and feelings about LUSEM/CBS?
4. What motivated you most to choose LUSEM/CBS?
5. Where did you gather all the information you are looking for?
6. Did internet matter to your school choice?
7. What did you think of the website of LUSEM/CBS?
8. Did you searched in social media for information related to the school?



### III LUSEM Home page

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Lund University School of Economics and Management. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Lund University', 'Maps', 'Extended Search', and 'På svenska'. The main header features the university's logo and a navigation menu with items: 'About us', 'Education', 'Executive Education', 'Research', 'Relations', and 'Contact'. Below the header, there are 'Quick Links' for 'Departments', 'Career Centre', 'Library', and 'Join us on Facebook'. A central banner reads 'LUND UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT'. To the right, a blue box promotes the '2010 ISLC CONFERENCE: Leadership: Missions, Myths, and Mysteries' with a 'Call for papers' button. Below this, there are sections for 'Prospective Students', 'Current Students', 'Alumni', and 'Recruiters'. A 'News' section on the left highlights the 'Erasmus Mundus Master Course Master in Economic Development and Growth'. The main news area contains several articles, including 'Emerald Literati Award to Lars Oxelheim' and 'IKEA's image created in stories of consumption'. A right-hand 'Aktuellt' section lists events like 'Realism, Symmetry and Performativity in Management Theory'. At the bottom, there is an EQUIS accreditation logo and contact information for the school.

### IV CBS Homepage

The screenshot displays the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) homepage. The top navigation bar includes links for 'For CBS students', 'For CBS staff', 'For CBS Alumni', 'Sitemap', and 'Contact'. The main header features the CBS logo and a search bar. Below the header, there are several content blocks: 'Open Day 2010' with a 'Learn more about our programmes, admission etc.' link; 'Apply for Admission at CBS' with a 'Read about admission at bachelor programmes and graduate programmes' link; 'Climate strategy on a road to nowhere' with a link to a commentary piece; 'Copenhagen Business School' overview text; 'Do you want to study at CBS?' with a link to 'VISIT OPENDAYS.CBS.DK'; 'Programmes at CBS' listing Bachelor, Master's, Study programmes A-Z, MBA & executive, and Research programmes; 'For Researchers', 'For Recruiters', and 'For International Students' sections; 'News' section with a link to '35 % af alle voksne danskere arbejder frivilligt'; and 'Events' section with a link to 'Kaplan Executive Master Class'. The footer contains accreditation logos (AACSB, EQUIS, AMBA, CEMS, Association of MBAs) and the 'CO2 neutral' logo, along with the school's address and contact information.

## V LUSEM Facebook Group

**facebook** Search

**School of Economics and Management, Lund University** Like

Wall Info Photos Events

**Priscilla Titilope** Hi, intend applying for Msc Accounting and Auditing, do Lunds admit student for jan start date?  
11 hours ago · Flag

**Maria Senyk** Hey! My greetings to all admitted to master in European and International tax law! See you in Lund! :)))  
Monday at 8:57pm · Flag

**Marco Del Canale** hi! someone admitted to the master in economic growth, innovation and spatial dynamics starting from august 2010? ciao )  
Monday at 1:24am · Flag

**Lisa-Laurie Hébert** Ohhh, me, sort of! I'm not admitted to that master but I applied for some classes that are a part of the curriculum :) I'm a business master student!  
Monday at 8:47am · Flag

**Kristin Kim** Hi, I'm Kristin from Korea. I'd really like to study in the MA program for International marketing and brand management. Is that program used to open for fall semester only? Could I apply in this year for next spring semester?  
May 21 at 1:35am · Flag

**School of Economics and Management, Lund University** Our master's programmes start in August each year. You are welcome to apply when the application site opens somewhere around November/December 2010.  
May 21 at 3:21pm · Flag

**Kristin Kim** Thank you!

More than a Business School...

**Information**

Location:  
Holger Crafoords Ekonomisentrum,  
Tycho Brahes väg 1  
Lund, Sweden, 223 63

Phone:  
+46 46-222 00 00

**5 Friends Like This**

Lina Rudin Jila Shademan pour Owen Murray

## VI CBS Facebook Group

**facebook** Keep me logged in Forgot your password?

Email Password

**Sign Up** Copenhagen Business School International students is on Facebook  
Sign up for Facebook to connect with Copenhagen Business School International students.

**Copenhagen Business School International students** Like

Wall Info Photos Discussions Video

**Andreas Heinz** Hi! I applied for the ISUP (I may need 2 courses as supplementary courses for may masters application). I did not get any further information (admission package, fee paying etc.) since April though. Can someone tell me if there is everything alright with my summer university application? Thank you!  
12 hours ago · Comment · Like · Flag

**Copenhagen Business School International students** @Andreas: Ill look into it asap and get back to you :-)  
9 hours ago

**Copenhagen Business School International students** says have a look at aok.dk. It is a fantastic website for letting you know everything that is going on in Copenhagen.  
<http://www.aok.dk/english>  
22 hours ago · Comment · Like

**Mina Mafine** Academic Models looking for models and extras!Academic Models is an international modeling/extra agency created only for university students. Academic Models is representing female models, male models and also extras from all over the world. <http://acamod.com/>

For all foreigners who came to CBS and want to keep in touch and share experiences - and to all the curious.

**Information**

Location:  
Solbjerg Plads 3  
Frederiksberg, Denmark, 2000

Phone:  
+4538153815

**189 People Like This**

Ryad Krim Dimitra Makri Encarni Vázquez Sánchez

## VII LUSEM on YouTube

YouTube

Search Browse Upload Create Account Sign In

Lund University: LUSEM  
LUSEMLund's Channel

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An idea of human rights

0:00 / 3:00 360p

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LundUnive... - 844 views  
3:04

Eyetracking  
LundUnive... - 630 views  
3:22

Lund, Sweden - Home of Lund University  
JohnWLund - 22,327 views  
3:00

## VIII CBS on YouTube

YouTube

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Copenhagen Business School  
CBSkommunikation's Channel

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Like Comment

From: CBSkommunikation | September 11, 2009 | 1,627 views

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More Info

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Copenhagen Business School Presentation  
CBSkommun... - 2,535 views  
2:06

Johan Roos Presentation  
CBSkommun... - 420 views  
3:18

5 Guiding Principles  
CBSkommun... - 1,372 views  
0:46

The CBS Guiding Principles - Midway  
CBSkommun... - 197 views  
2:53

Valg af kvote  
CBSkommun... - 10 views

### ***IX “Comparing the Major Components of Corporate Marketing”***

	Major components of corporate marketing (Balmer, 2001)	Major components of marketing (McGee and Spiro, 1990)
Orientation	<i>Stakeholder</i> Understanding present and future stakeholder (including customer) wants, needs and behaviour.	<i>Customer</i> Understanding customer’s wants, needs and behaviour
Organisational support	<i>Co-ordinated organisational activities</i> Undertaken to support stakeholder’s orientation elicited above	<i>Co-ordinated organisational activities</i> Undertaken to support customer orientation elicited above
End-focus	<i>Value creation</i> Profit orientation is a primary but is by no means the only focus. It includes business survival and meeting societal needs as detailed below	<i>Profit orientation</i> Focus on profit rather than on sales (needs to be adapted to not-for-profit organisations)
Societal application	<i>Present and future stakeholder and societal needs</i> Balancing current stakeholder and societal needs with those of the future. Showing sensitivity to the organisation’s inheritance where applicable	<i>Community welfare</i> An obligation to meet customers’ and society’s long-term interests

**Source:** Balmer & Greyser (2006)