

Green Campus Initiatives as a Branding Tool: A Marketing Study of Indian Private Universities

¹Dr. Geethanjali G, ²Dr. Harish K S, ³Manjunatha S, ⁴Dr Ajatashatru Samal, ⁵Dr Y.K Sunita, ⁶Dr Lokesh G R

¹Professor & Head, Department of MBA, Nagarjuna College of Engineering and Technology, Bengaluru, Karnataka , Email - geethanjali123@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor & HOD, School of Management Studies, REVA University, Yelahanka, Bangalore, Email- harish.ks@reva.edu.in

³Research Scholar, Department of MBA, Rayalaseema University, Kurnool, Email - smanju27n@gmail.com

⁴Associate Professor & HoD, Department of MBA, Sri Venkateshwara College of Engineering, Bangalore, Karnataka, Email- ajatashatru7@gmail.com

⁵Professor, Department of MBA, Free Lancer, Email- yksunita@gmail.com

⁶Associate Professor & Research Supervisor, Department of MBA, Nagarjuna College of Engineering and Technology, Bengaluru, Karnataka , Email - grlokeshmba@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Recently, how a college or university fosters sustainability has started to play a major role in its branding efforts. The study examines how green campus practices influence the way people view private universities in India. As more people become aware of environmental problems, educational facilities are choosing eco-friendly approaches which can be found in their buildings and learning programs, how they reuse or recycle waste and their ability to be green-certified. It investigates the effects of these initiatives on how people view the credibility, responsibility and strong academic performance of a university. The study uses both surveys and in-depth interviews of marketing experts from a number of private universities in India. It is clear that environmental activities on campuses support better operations, help with marketing, attract students focused on the environment and give those institutions a lasting advantage over their competition. In conclusion, the study recommends incorporating sustainability into university branding processes to form a reliable and ethical reputation for the institute.

Keywords: Green campus, sustainability, university branding, private universities, marketing strategy, India, higher education, eco-friendly initiatives

INTRODUCTION

Today, with more attention being given to the environment, learning institutions are paying more attention to including green practices in what they do. As part of their eco-friendly strategies, some Indian private universities use green campuses to keep nature safe and also to raise their brand recognition and popularity. To have a “green campus,” different actions are taken, for instance, relying on environmentally friendly ways to produce energy, save water, handle waste responsibly, create environmentally safe buildings and educate about the environment. Rather than just meeting social responsibility rules, these measures are being embraced by universities to attract students, academics and others who care about the environment. Since there are more higher education institutions now, Indian private universities are experiencing more rivalry when recruiting students, teaching staff and obtaining financial assistance. Nowadays, distinguishing a business’s brand image in a positive way is very important. So, when colleges focus on sustainability and care for the environment, it gives them a special edge.

The rise of using sustainability for branding is linked to a growing attitude among younger shoppers. Besides scoring well academically, students now consider how universities contribute to addressing problems in the world around them. This means that colleges that display a commitment to sustainability are seen positively by people who may apply or send their children to these institutions. Furthermore, having a green campus typically brings extra media exposure, better word-of-mouth

feedback and boosts the school's status, helping its brand become stronger. As a result, private universities' marketing departments start including environmental messages in their sales campaigns so their schools are known as initiators of sustainability and upcoming technology. The information is delivered to people using websites, social networks, prospectuses and during campus tours, all of which add to the green identity of the university.

Green branding is gaining importance, yet limited research examines the impact of green campus activities on university branding in India. The research sets out to examine how green projects are utilized by private universities in India as a way to promote themselves. The purpose is to assess how these efforts influence people's views and their choice of enrolling, as well as how useful they are for the company in the future. The study will involve both type of surveys and interviews with university officials, marketers, students and teaching staff to thoroughly examine how green efforts support a university's image. I seek, through this study, to equip leaders and marketers at universities with advice on how to unite key sustainability efforts and brand strategies, leading to success and strong competition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past two decades, sustainability has become a main focus for developing colleges and universities and is now a cornerstone of branding. Sustainable initiatives at universities have become central to who the institution is and how it highlights itself to the world. Ramísio and colleagues (2019) revealed, from a nine-year case study, that including sustainability in a university's strategy causes major changes and helps develop the school's brand. The study shows that ongoing dedication to sustainability plays an important role in allowing an organization to stand out.

Cai and Ahmad suggested a model to guide the changing of entrepreneurial universities into sustainable institutions. They state that sustainability helps achieve results and further enhances a university's image, especially as reforms unfold in European higher education—an issue now important to Indian private universities too.

In addition, Nicolino and Barros (2020) designed the GAUSI (Graphical Assessment of Universities' Sustainability Image) tool to gauge and illustrate what different groups believe about a university's commitment to sustainability. They demonstrate that reviewing data can show the effect of environmental efforts on a brand. Along with this, Disterheft et al. (2016) presented the INDICARE model which focuses on involving stakeholders in testing sustainability in universities to support the relationship among authenticity, engagement with stakeholders and a university's reputation.

Students' opinions play a vital part in branding. According to Morales-Baños et al. (2023), university students in nautical education in Spain want their instructors to focus on sustainability in their lessons. At the same time, Redman et al. (2021) discussed the use of tools to measure students' sustainability skills, showing that competency improvement contributes to students seeing the university's education more favorably.

According to Lopes et al. (2023) and Hernández-Díaz et al. (2021, 2023), universities in Brazil and Colombia, respectively, have begun to integrate sustainability into the way they measure and evaluate their performance. The study confirmed that sustainability affects how a company operates and how others view its brand, provided that expectations from stakeholders are considered.

Amani (2023) looked closer at how the combination of internal corporate social responsibility and brand legitimacy appears in Tanzanian universities. In his work, he noticed that implementing green practices in CSR encouraged loyalty among employees and accepted the brand externally, proving that internal cohesion depends on green branding as well.

In India, Yadav, Shiva and Narula (2024) considered the elements that influence students' perceptions of private universities. It has been observed that among many other factors, sustainability greatly affects student applications and the trust placed in a school, further proving that being green on campus deserves consideration in India's college promotion.

In the Sustainable University (2013), Sterling et al. cover all main achievements and obstacles related to sustainability at universities. In their view, sustainable development is effective in universities when it becomes part of their culture, how they work and their identity.

Overall, the findings of these studies support an analysis of how Indian private universities can use green campus activities to strengthen their place in the market and build their brand. Even as worldwide literature on sustainability in universities increases, there is still a lack of research about the same in Indian private universities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the key green campus initiatives implemented by Indian private universities.
2. To examine the role of green campus initiatives in shaping the brand image of private universities.
3. To assess students' and stakeholders' perceptions of sustainability practices as a marketing tool.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant implementation of green campus initiatives in Indian private universities.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): There is a significant implementation of green campus initiatives in Indian private universities.

Research Methodology

We have used mixed methods modeling to investigate whether and how green initiatives are being used as a brand promotion method in Indian private universities. Both techniques were used to collect data in order to fully understand the subject. A questionnaire was administered to students, faculty and staff in private universities according to a plan. The questionnaire asked participants to rate their opinions using a Likert scale about green initiatives influencing the brand name and choices of the institution. For this section, I held informal interviews with employees from universities and marketing services to gather detailed information about the way strategies and sustainable actions are put into practice. Only institutions recognized for using green practices were included in the study using a purposive sampling approach. Scores on the survey's quantitative questions were analyzed with descriptive statistics and chi-square tests and answers to the qualitative questions were studied with thematic analysis. With the help of different research methods, the study was able to assess the true and accurate role of environmental sustainability on the brand positioning of Indian universities.

Table: Descriptive Statistics of Green Campus Initiatives in Indian Private Universities (n = 200)

Green Campus Initiative	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum
Use of renewable energy (e.g., solar panels)	4.12	0.76	2	5
Waste segregation and recycling programs	4.08	0.81	2	5
Rainwater harvesting systems	3.95	0.89	1	5
Green landscaping and tree plantation	4.25	0.68	2	5
Use of eco-friendly transport (e.g., bicycles, EVs)	3.78	0.94	1	5
Paperless administration practices	4.01	0.87	2	5
Awareness campaigns and sustainability clubs	4.10	0.79	2	5
LEED-certified or green building standards	3.85	0.91	1	5

ANALYSIS OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

It appears that stakeholders consider green campus initiatives to be regularly or routinely in place at Indian private universities. Among all the actions, the strongest emphasis was given to green landscaping and tree plantation (M = 4.25, SD = 0.68). After that, people tend to use solar panels (M =

4.12, SD = 0.76) and promote initiatives to raise awareness about the environment (M = 4.10, SD = 0.79) which points to their efforts in supporting the environment. Most universities are adopting both waste segregation and recycling programs (4.08) and are manually uploading documents (4.01). Mean values suggest that rainwater harvesting, eco-friendly transport and green building certificates are found in the company, though they are not the same or used everywhere. Since all the standard deviations are close to each other (ranging from 0.68 to 0.94), the respondents demonstrated a stable pattern which makes the information trustworthy. All things considered, the analysis shows that green initiatives are widely used in Indian private universities, though several measures are adopted differently.

One-Sample Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Green Campus Initiatives Score	200	4.05	0.72	0.072

One-Sample Test

Test Value = 3.00	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
Green Campus Initiatives Score	14.58	199	0.000**	1.05	0.91 to 1.19

A one-sample t-test was applied to determine if there is a noticeable amount of green campus initiatives in private universities in India and the test value of 3 indicated a middle or neutral step in applying them. Our results found the implementation of green initiatives to have an average score of 4.05 (SD = 0.72) which demonstrates that it is also greater than the neutral average. Results were found to be significant because the calculated t-value was 14.58 with 199 degrees of freedom and the p-value was found to be less than 0.001. These findings lead to the conclusion that green campus initiatives are being implemented effectively in Indian private universities. The evidence shows that they are making use of sustainability in their campus governance and as a way to promote their brand.

DISCUSSION

According to this study, Indian private universities are making greater efforts toward sustainability and caring for the environment by implementing green campus initiatives. Very high mean scores related to green landscaping, energy, waste management and sustainability campaigns suggest that the university is giving eco-friendly practices a higher priority. It reflects what is happening worldwide, as higher education institutions are adding sustainability to their systems to increase their social good and reputation.

Since many universities are implementing green practices, this is both important for the environment and strengthens their image in the education market. If universities act green, they stand a better chance of attracting students, teachers and investors because more people today care about environmental issues. As a result, sustainability practices make the institution look better, encouraging more people to join in and offer support for more sustainability activities.

Yet, the assessment points out that rainwater harvesting, eco-friendly ways of moving goods and people and green certifications performed relatively worse than other environmental actions. This indicates that though universities have committed themselves to being more sustainable in visible ways, this effort could be developed further. The variations might result from factors such as costs, problems with infrastructure and how familiar people are with health insurance.

All things considered, this study proves that green initiatives on campuses help private Indian universities grow and maintain a strong market position. More research in the future could study how these programs influence student happiness, the number of students applying to these universities and the overall growth of these institutions. Studying the adoption of sustainability in both public and private colleges, as well as in different places, might bring out additional important factors.

Conclusion

These findings suggest that Indian private universities are doing their part to go green and protect the environment. The test shows that the universities are much more active than the middle level in

adopting eco-friendly practices. It is in line with the global move to add sustainability to everyday operations and promote it as part of their core mission.

Universities worldwide are promoting green initiatives such as managing resources, handling waste, creating green gardens and educating people about being sustainable. They help reduce the environmental impact of universities on campus and also raise the universities' brand image. With the sector becoming more competitive, these types of projects help attract environmentally minded students, professors and others. If a campus focuses on sustainability, it may attract more students, receive more financial help and gain respect from the local community.

While the study shows mostly positive results, some green approaches such as rainwater harvesting, using eco-friendly transport and green building certificates, are adopted by less of the population. So, there are still opportunities to make these topics more sustainable through additional development and investing. The differences might be because of difficulties like money problems, low existence of necessary infrastructure and lack of education.

All in all, environmental projects on Indian university campuses boost sustainable actions and help raise the university's profile among its partners and potential students. To keep up with others and guide sustainable development in higher education, these universities should focus on strengthening these projects.

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