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**كلية التجارة**  
**ماجستير إدارة الأعمال**

## **Brand Building of Higher Education Institutions**

### **Case study: Islamic University of Gaza – MBA students' perspective**

**بناء العلامة التجارية لمؤسسات التعليم العالي**

**دراسة حالة: الجامعة الإسلامية غزة – وجهة نظر طلاب ماجستير**

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إقرار

أنا الموقع أدناه مقدم الرسالة التي تحمل العنوان:

## Brand Building of Higher Education Institutions

### Case study: Islamic University of Gaza – MBA students' perspective

بناء العلامة التجارية لمؤسسات التعليم العالي

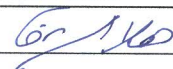
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الأعمال

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## نتيجة الحكم على أطروحة ماجستير

بناءً على موافقة شئون البحث العلمي والدراسات العليا بالجامعة الإسلامية بغزة على تشكيل لجنة الحكم على أطروحة الباحثة/ هلا نعيم هاشم الشرفا لنيل درجة الماجستير في كلية التجارة/ قسم إدارة الأعمال وموضوعها:

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وجهة نظر طلاب ماجستير إدارة الأعمال

### Brand Building of Higher Education Institutions

### Case study: Islamic University of Gaza - MBA students, perspective

وبعد المناقشة العلنية التي تمت اليوم الثلاثاء 14 رجب 1438هـ، الموافق 2017/04/11م الساعة

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وبعد المداولة أوصت اللجنة بمنح الباحثة درجة الماجستير في كلية التجارة/قسم إدارة الأعمال. واللجنة إذ تمنحها هذه الدرجة فإنها توصيها بتقوى الله ولزوم طاعته وأن تسخر علمها في خدمة دينها ووطنها.

والله ولي التوفيق،،،

نائب الرئيس لشئون البحث العلمي والدراسات العليا

أ.د. عبدالرؤف على المناعمة

## **Abstract**

Even though brand is a well-known concept in the business sector, the application of branding in the field of higher education is relatively new. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the important touchpoints in building a higher education brand, by examining the various touchpoints of the MBA students' journey in the IUG. Building a strong brand can enhance a university position and to be more appealing to its current and prospective students.

The research followed the descriptive analytical approach. Data were collected through a questionnaire and surveyed a sample of (150) MBA students. Data were collected and then analyzed using SPSS program.

Results from this study shed light on the main factors affecting students' decision in the "pre admission stage"; in general the overall items of this stage were of a high influence with mean equals 7.12 (71.22%), the "university's reputation" sub field was the highest influence with mean equals 7.92 (79.18%). Level of satisfaction of the overall items of "during the course stage" was neutral with mean equals 6.16 (61.61%), the "learning resources" sub field was the highest with mean equals 6.94 (69.38%). Moreover, the rating about the "post passing stage" also was neutral with mean equals 6.02(60.23%), the "career growth" sub field was the highest with mean equals 6.46 (64.64%). Finally, overall items of the "influencing touchpoints" for the brand building perceived high by respondents with mean equals 7.38 (73.81%).

The study recommended to assign a brand marketing executive manager for the university, create a sense of community between the students and employees inside and outside the university, to support the extracurricular activities, seminars, workshops and conferences, need to be enhanced, famous professional experts, are necessary, the teaching methods and curriculum need improvements, remarkable attention is needed to scientific research, to give the opportunity to students along with the alumni to participate and organize events and participate in the admission and academic process, the need to follow up social media, and the need for a university tour guide.

## ملخص الدراسة

على الرغم من أن مصطلح العلامة التجارية معروف في قطاع الأعمال ، إلا أن تطبيقه في قطاع التعليم العالي يعد جديد نسبياً. لذلك، يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة نقاط التواصل المهمة في بناء العلامة التجارية لمؤسسات التعليم العالي من خلال دراسة نقاط التواصل المختلفة طوال مسيرة طلبة ماجستير إدارة الأعمال في الجامعة الإسلامية غزة. بناء العلامة التجارية القوية بإمكانها تعزيز مكانة الجامعة و أن تكون أكثر جاذبية لطلابها الحاليين والمحتملين.

تم اتباع المنهج التحليلي الوصفي في هذا البحث. تم جمع البيانات من خلال استبانة بعد تنقيحها ومراجعتها على عينة مكونة من 150 من طلبة الماجستير في إدارة الأعمال. تم جمع البيانات ومن ثم تحليلها باستخدام برنامج SPSS.

تسلط نتائج هذه الدراسة الضوء على العوامل الرئيسية التي تؤثر على قرار الطلبة في مرحلة "ما قبل الانتساب الى الجامعة"، بشكل عام كان مجمل العناصر لهذه المرحلة له تأثير مرتفع بمتوسط يساوي 7.12 (71.22%)، المجال الفرعي "سمعة الجامعة" كان له أعلى تأثير بمتوسط يساوي 7.92 (79.18%). كان مستوى الرضا لمجمل عناصر مرحلة "أثناء الدراسة" محايد بمتوسط يساوي 6.16 (61.61%)، المجال الفرعي "المصادر التعليمية" هو الأعلى بمتوسط يساوي 6.94 (69.38%). بالإضافة الى ذلك، كان تقييم مرحلة "ما بعد التخرج" محايد بمتوسط يساوي 6.02 (60.23%)، المجال الفرعي "التطور الوظيفي" هو الأعلى بمتوسط يساوي 6.46 (64.64%). وأخيراً، مجمل بنود "نقاط التأثير" على بناء العلامة التجارية كان لها ادراك عالي من قبل المبحوثين بمتوسط يساوي 7.38 (73.81%).

أوصت الدراسة بتعيين مدير تنفيذي تسويقي للعلامة التجارية للجامعة، وأهمية تهيئة الشعور بالانتماء بين الطلبة والموظفين داخل الجامعة وخارجها، دعم الأنشطة اللامنهجية، و أيضاً ضرورة تعزيز الحلقات الدراسية وحلقات العمل والمؤتمرات، من خلال خبراء مهنة مشهوريين، ضرورة التحسين من طرائق التدريس و المناهج الدراسية و هناك حاجة لاهتمام ملحوظ بالبحث العلمي، الضرورة لاعطاء الطلبة و الخريجين الفرصة للمشاركة و تنظيم الفعاليات و المشاركة في اجراءات القبول الجامعي و العملية الأكاديمية، الحاجة إلى متابعة وسائل الإعلام الاجتماعية ، والحاجة إلى دليل / مرشد جامعي لابرار الصورة الكلية للجامعة.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

﴿ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا ۗ إِنَّكَ

أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴾

[البقرة، 32]

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved Father and Mother  
You have successfully made me the person I am becoming

My brothers and my beloved sister

My friends

For their support and encouragement

My study colleagues

For their support, help, and joyful company

My respectful university” The Islamic University of Gaza”

All academic & administrative staff

For their infinite teaching and support

## **Acknowledgement**

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Looking at the world today, higher education seems to be similar to business sector; they are facing global challenges, technology infusion and competition. The higher education institutions are service providers that provide education and gain from the intake of students and other revenues (Amzat, 2016).

Organizations, in today's competitive environment, continue in their struggle to carve out their competitive niche in the marketplace (King & Grace, 2008). Universities and other institutions of higher education need to contend with each other to pull in top notch students and scholarly staff at a global level, henceforth, rivalry is no longer constrained inside national outskirts (Melewar & Akel, 2005).

Globalization of business has been embraced by the higher education sector in which education is seen as a service that could be marketed worldwide. As education become a global business sector, education marketing is developing standards more akin to consumer goods marketing (Melewar & Akel, 2005).

According to Krachenberg "It did not matter what it was called, who did it, or where in the institution it was being done, universities were unequivocally engaging in the practices of marketing" (Frost, 2010). Many concepts of marketing can be applied in the higher education institutions, for example, important strategic tool, marketing mix of higher education, follows the same idea of marketing mix of four "P"s, recruiting as Promotion, financial aid as Pricing, and the curriculum as Product, and the Place where scholarly activity occurred (e.g. classes, labs, the Internet) was how it was distributed.

This marketization view may turn students into consumers and educators into service providers (Molesworth, Scullion, & Nixon, 2010). Students seem to be the central focus of universities, since the overall resources and capabilities toward satisfying and influencing their needs. Universities are directing significant resources to the task of standardizing their images, reputations, and core messages for the purpose of

influencing a variety of target audiences (students, staff, faculty, alumni, donors, government, the media, friends of the university, etc.) (Frost, 2010).

As a result of increased competition, increased demand for higher degrees, and the changes in the internal and external environment, higher education institutions are marketing themselves more aggressively to be able to increase their market share (Becker & Palmér, 2009).

From websites to architecture, fundraising to community involvement, mission statements to campus events, every dimension of the institution is examined and leveraged to support the reputation and image determined by a university's chosen brand strategy (Frost, 2010). One wonders what education has to do with branding; hitherto, the term has been exclusively applied to the business sector and commercial products. Branding is an old common practice in the business world and considered to be a new concept in the educational setting (Amzat, 2016).

Aaker pointed out that “a brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. Branding, over the last few years gained increasing popularity in higher education institutions, universities and colleges in all parts of the world have begun a search for a unique definition of what they are in order to differentiate themselves and attract students and academic staff (Wæraas & Solbakk, 2009).

Branding in higher education gives institutions an identity that locates them in the social world. Although branding goes beyond recognition, students may like to see themselves in that institution and to associate themselves with a history of excellence (Lambooy, 2011).

In the field of management education, the experiential service is the manner in which knowledge is gathered from various knowledge sources and imparted to the students in order to enhance their knowledge base and employability, thereby helping to create a higher education brand. Experiential services are defined as services where the focus is on the experience of the consumer when interacting with the organization, rather

than just the functional benefits following from the products and services delivered (Khanna, Jacob, & Yadav, 2014).

The idea of the role of branding in higher education institutions and the view of marketization has challenges, questions, and critiques (Molesworth et al., 2010). Furthermore, commercially focused activities, such as branding, are inherently difficult for universities and articulating real differentiation is often a challenge (Chapleo, 2015).

This study examines the role of the various touchpoints, throughout the journey of the student, that help in building a higher education brand at the (IUG) from the MBA students' perspective.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

With the increased number of higher education institutions whether public or private, small or huge, lead up to the increased competition and the increased number of students. Colleges and universities compete vigorously for talented students, at the same time students are looking for universities with perceived reputation, image, and academics.

Back to the year 2007/ 2008, there were 12 Palestinian traditional universities (9 in West Bank, and 3 in Gaza), 12 university colleges, and 19 medium colleges. The newest students in traditional universities, open education, university colleges and medium colleges were (27969, 11610, 2536 and 4864 respectively). Comparing to the year 2015/ 2016, there were 50 accredited and licensed higher education institutions in Palestine, the newest students in traditional universities, open education, university colleges and medium colleges were (33876, 12915, 5682 and 4496 respectively). Those statistics showed that number of students increase to the main universities (Ministry of Higher Education, 2016).

Universities must find a way to differentiate their institution and tell their story. The increasing competition for students, as well as the battle for ever scarcer staff and resources, require universities to create a clear market position. Universities must also include a focus on developing the university brand, and to have unique brand identity. Since education is an experiential service which spans a long period of time and consists

of multiple components and touchpoints ( with the students), so that adopting an internal focus which investigates the touchpoints for an educational brand would help the experiential aspect of an educational brand to assume vital importance.

Although branding is well known in the business sector from a long time, few studies in the service sector that explore the role of branding in higher education institutions. Literature on branding of higher education institutions is scarce so the researcher is motivated to this kind of topic.

This study bridge the gap through examining the role of the various touchpoints, throughout the journey of the student, that help in building a higher education brand at the (IUG) from the MBA students' perspective.

**Accordingly, the research problem can be formulated by the following main question** “To what extent do the various touchpoints influence the brand building for the (IUG) from the MBA student’s perspective?”

The following sub-questions can be derived:

- To what extent the “pre-admission stage” touchpoints influence the brand building for the (IUG)?
- To what extent “during the course stage” touchpoints influence the brand building for the (IUG)?
- To what extent the “post-passing stage” touchpoints influence the brand building for the (IUG)?
- To what extent the influencing touchpoints have perceived value added to the brand building for (IUG)?
- Are there statistical significant differences among participants due to personal traits (Graduation University, gender, Age, Year of graduation, Major, Years of work experience, family’s income level)?

### 1.3 The Research Variables

To achieve the goal of this study, based on the literature, the following conceptual framework of variables is summarized in figure (1.1) below.

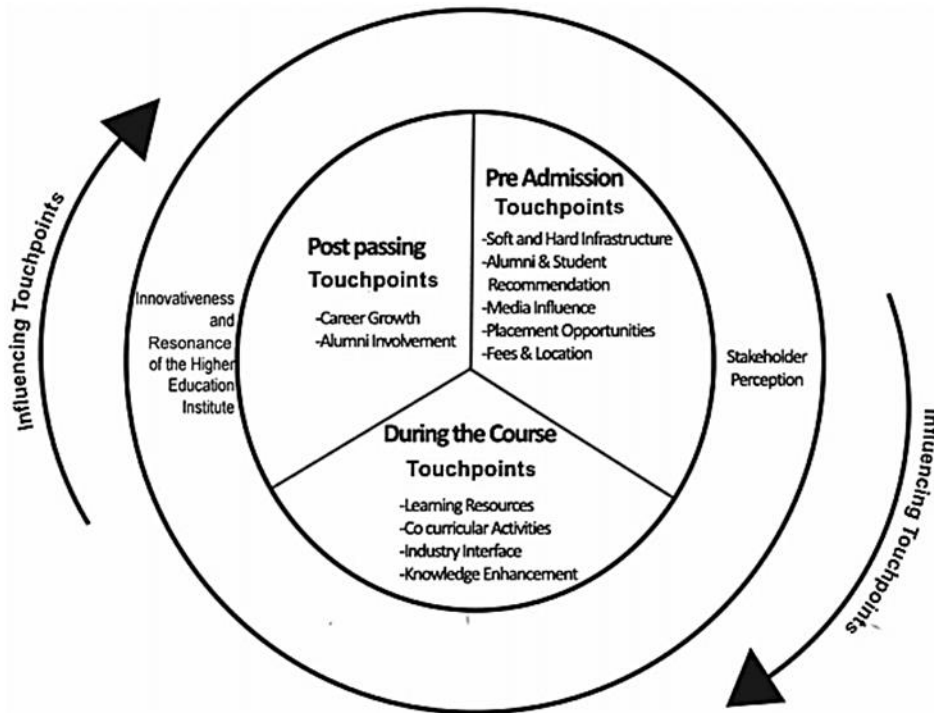


Figure (1.1): Conceptual Framework according to (Khanna et al., 2014).

#### Key definitions:

1. A **university's brand** is a name, an image, a compelling description of an organization that captures the essence of the value that your college provides'' (Judson, Aurand, Gorchels, & Gordon, 2008).
2. **The Touchpoint Wheel** identifies the touchpoints for the potential students before they send their application for admission to a business management school, during the period of their study in the business management school, and after the completion of the business management course as an alumnus (Khanna et al., 2014). The following are the stages.

3. Pre-admission knowledge sources (**pre-admission touchpoints**): This consisted of knowledge sources tapped into for information about the management institute, criteria looked for while short listing a management institute, trustworthy knowledge sources for management school rankings and criteria used for final selection of a management school.
  4. Knowledge sources while pursuing the management course (**during the course touchpoints**): This consisted of the most important sources of knowledge assimilation during the management course, knowledge sources provided by the management institute and extent of usage of these knowledge sources by the student (consumer).
  5. Experience of integration with the real world (industry and society) (**post-passing touchpoints**): This consisted of aspects that generated a feeling of pride and satisfaction after passing out from the management institute, the best possible ways in which an institute could remain in touch with its alumni, and advantages gained in the corporate world and community because of these knowledge sources and the management school brand.
  6. **Influencing touchpoints**: Overall perceptions regarding what factors create an educational brand, constituting aspects such as innovative ways adopted by higher education institutes for executive education and stakeholder's perception of the business management school brand. These touchpoints indirectly help to make an impression of the brand on its consumers and various stakeholders.
- The study adopts the following procedural definition: Brand building in higher education institutions and hence the IUG, can be defined as: all experiences, contacts and touchpoints between the students and the university, with the remarkable attention to the internal and external community, that bridge the gap between them and being able to understand the students' needs and perceptions, in a result the university will be able to articulate its position and reflect it in their dealing with the community, by jointly creating value, goals of all parties will be achieved, this will add value to the overall reputation and image and hence to the overall brand strength.

## 1.4 Research Hypotheses

The research problem will be operationalized through the following appropriate hypothesis:

**H1:** The various touchpoints have statistical significant components on the brand building of the higher education institutions.

**H1a:** Pre admission stage touchpoints have statistical significant components on the brand building of the higher education institutions.

**H1b:** During the course stage touchpoints have statistical significant components on the brand building of the higher education institutions.

**H1c:** Post passing stage touchpoints have statistical significant components on the brand building of the higher education institutions.

**H2:** Influencing touchpoints have provided the brand building of the higher education institutions with perceived value added.

**H3:** There exist statistical significant differences among the respondents toward the brand building of higher education institutions due to personal traits (Graduation University, gender, Age, Year of graduation, Major, Years of work experience, family's income level).

## 1.5 Research Objectives

Therefore, based on previous discussion the objectives of this study will be as follows:

- To shed light on the concept of branding in higher education institutions.
- To advance understanding of the advantages and challenges of branding in higher education institutions.
- To explore the various touchpoints that help in brand building for the higher education institutions.

- To clarify the influencing touchpoints that strengthens the brand building for the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG).
- To clarify the differences in MBA students viewpoints due to (Graduation University, gender, Age, Year of graduation, Major, Years of work experience, family's income level) on the brand building for the (IUG).

## **1.6 Importance of the Study**

**This study is important from different perspectives as follow:**

### **First: Theoretical importance:**

1. Universities or higher education institutions face a high competition and they need to enhance their existence, because competition is no longer limited within national borders. Good brands are key resources for generating competitive advantage. Brands are shorthand measure that universities can rely on to make up the whole criteria of their quality.
2. Whether talking about internal or external audiences for universities, people perceptions are always searching for the best. Students are looking for best academics, curriculum, research facilitating, buildings, locations, and prestige. The brand name is very important to students as the name on the degree and resume is a linkage students will carry for the balance of their career. When students feel that they are belonging to the university they become like ambassadors.
3. The researcher being a student, at the same time, is making the study close enough to have a closer understanding about the university and the different touchpoints which the student experience before, during and after being in the university.
4. Employees, staff, faculty through their day-to-day experience of the university should ideally accumulate enough enthusiasm to identify with and support their university "brand". Those internal audiences are playing a major role, because they dominate the actual experience with the customer brand perceptions. Higher education institutions are competing to attract the best teaching and researching staff and financial resources.



5. Best perceived and ranked universities will benefit the society in the similar way as the university will benefit. Research activities conducted within universities strengthen the relationship between the university and the community. Also the reputation of universities, the perceived brand image, and the success at the global context will reflect the success and the benefits to society. As the branding of higher education will brand cities as well.
6. Education is an experiential service where the active involvement of both the service provider (higher education brand) and the consumer (student) is important. The area of higher education and branding is replete with interesting and critical concepts that need a critical analysis.
7. The gap and the few studies about branding in higher education make the field of researching in this topic more challenging and interesting.

**Second: Practical importance:**

1. This study will help in presenting the experience that the students live throughout the journey at the higher education institution. So in a result the higher education institutions will be more familiar in articulation and creating a strong brand.
2. This study will provide the IUG with perceptions of students regarding different stages in the education experience, this will help the university to advance understanding of student's needs, and this will be articulated in the brand strength of the university.
3. The brand will successfully help IUG to maintain its unique identity, image, and reputation. These possess to successfully differentiate themselves within the competitive field, branding is important for the sustainability of HEIs.

**1.7 Limitations**

This study examines the role of the various touchpoints, throughout the journey of the student that builds a higher education brand at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) from the MBA students' perspective. The study adopted the Brand Touchpoint Wheel model for building higher education brand according to (Khanna et al., 2014) by

examining certain touchpoints (pre, during, post and influencing), so there could be other touchpoints items that could be examined. The study took place in the first semester 2016/2017, and the tool which was used was a questionnaire survey 150 MBA students.

## **1.8 Thesis Structure**

Chapter one includes a general introduction of the study is presented. It introduces mainly a statement of the problem, research hypothesis, objectives, and importance of the study. Chapter two introduces the literature review, it includes a discussion of relevant review of Branding in Higher Education Institutions, and a brief introduction about the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), also the chapter presents relevant studies and research papers. Chapter three includes research design, Study population and sample, the instrument questionnaire, piloting, data collection, data entry and analysis. Chapter four includes percentages, significance and correlation tables relating to questionnaire's data, study constructs and hypotheses. Chapter five related to conclusions & recommendations of the study.

# **Chapter 2**

## **Literature review**

# **Section 1**

## **Branding**

### **2.1 Branding**

Brands are enduring assets as long as they are kept in good shape and continue to offer consumers the values they require (Murphy, 1987). In the last decade branding has emerged as a top management priority due to the growing realization that brands are one of the most valuable intangible assets that firms have (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). The concept of a brand however is not a new phenomenon (Clarke, 2009). Brands are traditionally associated with consumer goods, as historically branding as a concept can be traced back to the late nineteenth century with the development of branded consumer products (Priporas & Kamenidou, 2011).

#### **2.1.1 History of Branding**

The history of branding can be traced back for many centuries before the term came to acquire its modern usage. In Greek and Roman times - and even before that - there were various ways of promoting wares or goods. Messages would be written informing the public that this man, at that address, was a scribe. Much early advertising and marketing (in the literal sense) was thus done on a personal basis with the name of a particular individual as important as that of his product or service. In the earliest days shops, as distinct from individuals, were quick to devise a good method of selling their wares. This was the use of pictures. In classical times many potential purchasers were illiterate and would be able to identify a particular product only from a picture (Murphy, 1987).

According to Wolpert (1999) branding began a thousand years ago “when artisans and tradesmen started putting identifying marks on their products—both as a point of pride and as a sign of quality”.

Brick makers in ancient Egypt placed symbols on their bricks to identify their products; in the sixteenth century name of the producer ‘branded’ (literally) on each

barrel were used; and by the eighteenth century pictures of animals and places of origin were used in lieu of the producer's name (Clarke, 2009).

The very beginnings of issuing trademark laws traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, where France issued a law regarding brands in 1857. This date is considered the birth of the first law of trademarks which saw the light at the whole world level, resulted in an actual birth of legal recognition of trademarks and brands. Regarding Arab countries, Tunisia where the leader when they issued a special law of trademarks, in 1889 (AlMaamari, 2013).

Modern branding came of age in an era of industrial information. At the end of the 19th century, new technologies had industrialized the economy, creating mass production and mass distribution for mass markets (Clifton, 2009). In modern times, the topic of branding in marketing literature appeared for the first time 60 years ago, when Banks in 1950 wrote the first paper on branding, and it has become the core foci of modern marketing (Priporas & Kamenidou, 2011).

The history of branding addresses that the way in which brand was used, it shows that people were using either literal or symbols for informing people about their products, after that it evolved to describe the sense of pride and a sign of quality of their products.

## **2.2 Branding in Higher Education Institutions**

Specifically, literature regarding branding and the affects it can potentially have on an organization can have similar implications in higher education. Even if the business aspect of branding may not be completely parallel to the issues in education, it may be used as a model that higher education can use to determine the effects branding may have (Lambo, 2011).

### **2.2.1 Higher Education Marketing**

Rosenthal (2003) instructed the need to market higher education was becoming apparent for a number of reasons by 1984. Declining national enrollments put

institutions of higher education on notice that they needed to apply a more business-like, formal planning process to respond to both changing market conditions and a new marketing mindset among stakeholders (Lamboy, 2011). The increasing costs of education and the increasing competition among higher education institutions both nationally and internationally force universities to adopt market-oriented strategies in order to differentiate their services from those of the competition in order to attract as many students as possible (Butt & ur Rehman, 2010).

Early research into higher education marketing saw it as a product rather than a service. Kotler and Fox (1985) defined education marketing as: ‘...the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with a target market to achieve organizational objectives’ (Clarke, 2009). At the heart of the marketing concept is the philosophy that in order to maximize the chances of financial success in a highly competitive environment that also features well-informed, intelligent consumers, an organization should strive to achieve two key objectives: (1) understand and satisfy the needs of the consumer, and (2) understand and satisfy the needs of the company (Bristow & Schneider, 2003).

Research into higher education marketing evolved throughout the 1990s and recognized it as a service rather than a product. The definition of which was based on the assumption that in order for a higher education institution to market itself successfully, managers would need to examine the decision making process and the means by which potential students searched for information (Clarke, 2009). Moogan (2010) explained marketers should make sure that they provide accurate information in the first instance and that student expectations are not inflated as a consequence. Providing relevant information sources so that students can make the best possible decision for them is crucial (Lamboy, 2011).

### **2.2.2 Branding Concept in Higher Education Institutions**

“Despite the growing importance of branding in academia, literature searches reveal very few papers that specifically address higher education branding (Lambo, 2011). Although the study of branding in higher education has not been explored widely, the topic of branding itself has been around for many years. Further, it should be noted that although branding a product may not be directly equivalent to branding in education, the research could provide information that would be helpful for educational institutions to follow, with or without modifications to businesses (Lambo, 2011). Heeger (2005) stated, “Brand has returned as an important differentiator in the higher education mass market that the for-profits helped to create” (Lambo, 2011). Branding clearly has a role to play in specific tasks for universities, but there is no simple panacea of what branding a university can and should achieve (Plungpongpan, Tiangsoongnern, & Speece, 2016).

Education branding (especially universities and professional schools) is still largely at the simple stage of differentiating on the basis of self-defined sets of features and attributes. In some cases there is the happy historical accident of prestigious history that differentiates individual university “brands” on the basis of reputation familiar to most of society. Other schools must strive to establish their own basis for value. Most do this today by emphasizing quality of functional attributes that resemble those of many other schools: strong faculty, prestigious alumni, broad course range, and numerous campuses etc. (Harsha & Shah, 2011).

Higher education as a service is special in many ways. Many educational institutions across the world create an image to attract students; this process is called branding. For a college or university, the name and all the symbolism attached to it, either through longevity, reputation, quality, or some other factor, represents its brand (Lambo, 2011). The power of a brand in higher education institution is represented by all thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, and experiences that become linked to the brand in the minds of customers, and what consumers have learned, felt, seen, and heard about the brand over time (Horsha & Shah, 2011).

Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2008) characterized a university's brand as 'a manifestation of the institution's features that distinguish it from others, reflect its capacity to satisfy students' needs, engender trust in its ability to deliver a certain type and level of higher education, and help potential recruits to make wise enrolment decisions' (Ali-Choudhury, Bennett, & Savani, 2009). Within the university setting, "a brand is a name, an image, a compelling description of an organization that captures the essence of the value that your college provides" (Judson et al., 2008). A brand is a mental expression or sign of quality. It entails defining the essence of what a university "is", what it "stands for", and what it is going to be known for (Harsha & Shah, 2011).

A brand, particularly a university brand, is nothing more than the total impression of images, emotions, experiences, and facts that an organization has created in the public mind. It has been said that when one mentions the name of one's university to someone, it will immediately evoke associations, emotions, images, and faces. To work with branding means that one wants to build, manage, and develop these impressions (Bulotaite, 2003). Branding from the perspectives of universities refers to differences a university owns compared to other universities and is viewed as a factor increasing students' interest in universities. According to Black (2008), the branding of higher education institution is highly related to the people, is not constrained with a product or is not a service provided in the market (Karadağ, 2016).

As Waeraas and Solbakk (2009) stated, "To our knowledge, no one has adopted an internal focus by investigating exactly how branding efforts unfold in specific cases and what happens in the course of these processes". Examining the effects of branding within the higher education sector may allow institutions the ability to determine whether branding can be effective in respective areas such as recruitment and enrollment, funding, merchandise, student involvement, and academic reputation (Lambooy, 2011). Initially the entrepreneurial, socially engaged university was marketing its research through patenting, while today the university also markets its reputation through its brand (Drori, 2015).

On the other hand, the concept of branding as applied to higher education is somewhat different from branding in the commercial sector. Branding in higher



education is all about who we are and is not what a particular product offers to the market place. Also an education brand is often symbolic to an institution's academic reputation and the most significant benefit of branding is the focus it brings to an institution (Gupta & Singh, 2010). For universities, brand issue is so sensitive because the name a university has as a brand is showing a university's status for prospective students, families, society, academicians and the community among all universities (Suleymanov & Rajapunsan, 2008).

### 2.2.3 Importance of Branding for the Higher Education Institutions

**Table (2.1): Importance of Branding for the Higher Education Institutions**

No.	Importance Item	Source
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because there are different types of HEI's, operating in different working contexts, with different motives, facing serious problems of faculty shortages and in maintaining the quality of education, the growing importance of branding for HEI's become very vital for their growth and / or survival.</li> <li>• A positive perception of a tertiary brand is expected to have an impact on recruitment of students and academic staff, attracting resources and to create goodwill.</li> </ul>	(Harsha & Shah, 2011).
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The brand itself is particularly important to successfully marketing an academic institution.</li> <li>• Branding institutions in higher education provide the community, and more importantly, prospective students of an institution, an easier way to identify and distinguish them from other schools. Branding also provides students a sense of pride and belonging to an institution. Branding in higher education gives institutions an identity that locates them in the social world.</li> <li>• Promoting an institution's reputation, as well as generating additional revenue for the institution through the sale of trademarked goods.</li> <li>• Branding "makes the consumer's choice process more effective" and this alone could be argued to offer a rationale for brandings' applicability to higher education, ideally consumers choose to have a relationship with a brand if they trust it will deliver specific promises.</li> </ul>	(Lambooy, 2011).

3.	The brand of a university carries with it a promise of a particular level of service bundle of benefits that satisfy customer's needs and student outcomes.	(Clarke, 2009).
4.	HEI branding affords graduates a sense of identification and a way to define themselves, not merely as customers but as life-long organization members of a corporate 'brand community'	(Williams Jr & Omar, 2014a).
5.	Building alliances and partnerships with universities in different parts of the world can also focus institutions more sharply on their brand image, what they stand for, and how they are perceived by all stakeholders not only students	(Hemsley-Brown, Melewar, Nguyen, & Wilson, 2016).
6.	Counteracting declining enrollments, reduced retention, and overall competition; enhancing image and prestige; increasing financial resources; honoring a philanthropic donor; mission alignment; or signifying a merger between institutions	(Williams Jr & Omar, 2014b).
7.	For a university, a favorable brand would enable it to recruit and retain the best and brightest students, faculty, and staff, and build and maintain widespread public, legislative; alumni and donors' support.	(Shaari, Amar, Embong, & Hashim, 2012).
8.	Many university brands also infer promises about a person's job and career prospects on graduation.	(Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009).
9.	Create the correct image of the university, communicate to audiences the performance of the university, communicate to audiences the types of education offered, communicate to all the different audiences the different facets of the university and create a competitive advantage.	(Chapleo, 2011).
10.	People can enrich their image through the image of the brands they buy and use. Therefore, university students, as the most important group of interest are likely to identify their own self with the university they choose and can begin to call themselves "boy / girl of X University".	(Shyle, 2015).

## 2.2.4 Definitions of Related Concepts

- Brand:** Aaker defined a brand as ' a distinguishing name and / or a symbol (such as logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical '(Priporas & Kamenidou, 2011). Customers look at the brand as an important part of

the product, it is believed that the brand adds more value to the product thus the choice of brand is a key element in determining the product mix or product policy. The brand as a word considered as a comprehensive and general, where it includes more precise and restricted concepts. Although there are many definitions to the brand, the most common one is provided by the American Society of Marketing as a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design or any other combination of those features that identifies one seller’s or organization good or service as distinct from those of other competitors (Zakaria, Basset, & Said, 2009). These days a brand is no longer what a company claims it is, as Wired magazine’s Chris Anderson observed, “but what Google says it is”, even if a brand manages to control the distribution of some information online, it can never control what people are saying about it (Clifton, 2009). No one can deny the role of people in the brand related issues; word of mouth is considered a vital issue due to its fast spreading, they can play as your ambassadors and can benefit a lot from them, at the same time the opposite may happen and no one can control the situation.

2. **A brand name**: is the name of the given organization or institution. **A brand mark**, which is known as a **logo**, is an extension that is visually communicated but not spoken (J. W. Lee, Miloch, Kraft, & Tatum, 2008).
3. **Brand Community**: McAlexander et al. (2002) have conceptualized and empirically tested a more comprehensive model of brand community, which they characterize as a web of relationships that connect customers to a brand and, under its umbrella, to its products and services, its associated institution, and its other customers (McAlexander, Koenig, & Schouten, 2006). University Students are the vital factors and the central point in the educational process. From one direction, they are the entrance ”inputs” and from the other they are the graduates “outputs”, they are the final target of the process. Universities established special criteria for admission of students in various faculties. The measurement and evaluation of performance, scientific knowledge, achievement rates and the rates of its evolution of the university students during their university study in various stages is one of the most difficult and

important tasks that organizers of total quality management in higher education are looking for (AlQuraishi & AlMusawi, 2011).

4. **Higher Education “University”**: Every university has a unique profile with differing organizational cultures, development stages, resources, politics, and student profiles, which in turn requires multiple strategic directions, emphasizing different issues in different faculties and institutions (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016). A university is a complex organization. With the historical growth of faculties, institutions, research centers, and departments (Bulotaite, 2003). Several problems faced universities in the whole world, the low level of graduates, the problems of funding, evaluation of university performance, the crisis of universities infrastructure, the problems of scientific research, and the problem of large numbers of students at colleges without need in the labor markets, leading to unemployment catastrophe (AlHarbi, 2015).
5. **Brand Equity**: is the added value endowed to products and services with consumers. It may be reflected in the way consumers think, feel, and act with respect to the brand, as well as in the prices, market share, and profitability it commands. Marketers and researchers use various perspectives to study brand equity. Customer-based approaches view it from the perspective of the consumer - either an individual or an organization- and recognize that the power of a brand lies in what customers have seen, read, heard, learned, thought, and felt about the brand over time (Kotler & Keller, 2016).
6. **University Reputation**: a spread of opinion regarding an entity or as an interaction between stakeholders in which the university has no direct impact. A perception of quality associated with the name, in the university environment perceived brands can be used by as a quality indicator, may be determinant in the future willingness to repurchase or recommended the services offered by the university to others. A good reputation can be passed from one department to a new department or from one branch to another (Shyle, 2015). While university reputation has traditionally been the main indicator for the uniqueness of a higher education institution, with the emergence of branding, the adoption of concepts such as brand identity, meaning,

image, and reputation are becoming increasingly important (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016).

**7. University Image:** consists of two main elements: functional and emotional, the functional component which represent tangible characteristics that can be measured easily and emotional component which represent psychological dimensions manifested in attitudes and feelings about the organization. Image can be affected by a series of factors: academic excellence, friendships formed, feelings of pride as graduate students, and the national image of the university, the image of the university's level of research, social events and homogeneousness among students. Also affected by ancillary services which include: library, computer laboratories, the availability of quiet zones and areas for study (Shyle, 2015). Students perceive the image of their HEI in relation to other HEIs (Williams Jr & Omar, 2014a). Brand image is actually how the brand is perceived by the customers, is considered to be a promise to customers (Amzat, 2016). Cornelissen and Thorpe (2002) defined the reputation as a collective representation of the unallocated images of the past. Bennett and Kottasz (2000) contradicted this definition and add that there is a difference between the image and reputation, because reputation evolves with time and therefore cannot be generated as soon as the image (Shyle, 2015).

**8. University Identity:** a powerful source of competitive advantage, refers to an organization's unique characteristics which are rooted in the behavior of employees", is reflected by five main components: corporate name; symbol and/or logotype; typography; color; and slogan (Melewar & Akel, 2005). The brand identity needs to focus on points of differentiation that offer sustainable competitive advantage to the firm (Ghodeswar, 2008). Also it reflects the factors (tangible and intangible assets of the organization, organizational activities, markets served, corporate ownership and structure, organizational type, corporate philosophy and corporate history) that make the organization distinctive from another (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). The more attractive students perceive the university's identity, the stronger will be their identification with the university, which results in shared goals, identities, and values between the university and the students (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016). According to

Aaker (1996), brand identity is how people perceive the brand, is the output experiences of the customers in the form of trust enhancement (Amzat, 2016). One key to successful brand-building is to understand how to develop a brand identity – to know what the brand stands for and to effectively express that identity. A brand is a distinctive identity that differentiates a relevant, enduring, and credible promise of value associated with a product, service, or organization and indicates the source of that promise (Ghodeswar, 2008). Creating and maintaining brand identity is regarded as a formative brand building step to the creation of corporate reputation and image (Hussain & Ferdous, 2014). So in the university setting, it's how you would like the university community to perceive your institution.

9. **Trademark(s)**: “The name, brand, logo or symbol that is used by and represents the organization or institution” (Lambooy, 2011). For the brand to be registered and protected by the law, it must be unique, distinctive, original and not registered before. When it is registered, the brand become enduring and forever, if only, the payment of the annual fees of the brand paid regularly and without delay (Alttiti, 2011).
10. **Branding principles**: understanding the branding principals is an initial step in creating a successful brand (Amzat, 2016). Therefore, since branding seems to be the only choice for universities and colleges to be one of the key players, four comprehensive effective principles are proposed for marketers by Barbara Apple Sullivan (2012), a founder of the Sullivan brand engagement firm, New York (Amzat, 2016). Those principles are: **People’s views and opinions about your college or university**, be a good listener to know what people are saying about your institution and where you stand. **It goes beyond ranking**; know your rival in the market and other institutions that compete with you with the same brand, value and services. **Value proposition above all**, display what you stand for and how you want to be, and determine what constitutes your brand uniqueness, both tangibly and intangibly. **Brand honesty**, try to admit who you are and make sure that all the points in your brand are truly delivered.

### **2.3 Challenges for Branding in Higher Education Institutions**

Brookes (2003) suggested that commercially focused activities, such as branding, are inherently difficult for universities and articulating real differentiation is often a challenge (Chapleo, 2015). Branding as a strategy has become more popular as a way of differentiating an institution from its competition, but the complexity of higher education makes branding an even more difficult task than in traditional, commercial contexts (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014).

- Cultural issues are one of the most significant challenges. The nature of marketing means that it permeates most areas of an organization and, therefore, marketing people may run into the strongly held views of other staff and departments; where underpinning marketing philosophies are “theoretically uncomfortable” for many academics. Organizational culture may be a source of competitive advantage, but only when brand values are respectful of that culture and embrace it as part of their brand (Chapleo, 2015).
- The changing pace of the external environment was argued to be a challenge, with universities increasingly having to adapt and react to market conditions at a faster pace than they have culturally been equipped to do. However, some felt that this changing environment was forcing a cultural change internally, which has led to more competitive branding strategies being embraced. Overall, cultural resistance to branding, variable internal communication, and associated issues, such as sub branding, were challenges much in evidence from interviews (Chapleo, 2015).
- The university is a complex organization, which includes faculties, institutions, research centers, and departments; it can find itself becoming a jungle of names and logos. Many students and staff members can end up identifying themselves with a concrete department or faculty, not with the university as a whole. Creating a strong brand will promote attraction and loyalty to the organization (Bulotaite, 2003).
- Other research has identified some of the typical challenges universities face in building strong brands. These barriers have been identified by Chapleo (2007) as

organizational resistance to change difficulty in capturing the complex nature of the university, lack of a clear branding direction, and the potentially competing interests and images of schools and faculties within the university. Additional researchers support these identified challenges as Waeraas and Solbakk (2009) pointed to the complexity of a university as a barrier to implementing branding, and Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana (2007) argued that universities need to account for the contributions of schools and faculties in the overall brand image of the university (Heslop & Nadeau, 2010).

- Lack of applied research on marketing and more specifically, branding and brand equity. There has been an absence of education as a specific marketing area from services research. Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, (2006) conducted a systematic review of literature on higher education marketing and concluded that ‘...the literature on HE (higher education) marketing is incoherent, even inchoate, and lacks theoretical models that reflect upon the particular context of HE and that nature of their services.’ There is a clear need for further research in this field (Clarke, 2009).
- The growing competition surrounding recruitment of students. In the context of increasing competition, Universities have recognized the need to market their institutions to attract students. However, it’s important to note that higher education institutions operate in a climate of limited resources and are not always afforded the luxury of large marketing budgets. Therefore, by recognizing the need to market their service does not imply that the institutions will be resourced accordingly (Clarke, 2009).
- One of the problems is that people consider branding only as a name of the institution, a logo or a slogan. In real life it is the management style and a hard work of developing a long term strategy of the institution (Valtere, 2012). Another challenge and one of the controversial issues in education is whether to consider students as partners of academic life (participants in the joint aim) or as clients / customers of the institution, both opinions have been developing during the last decades(Valtere, 2012).



- Ng and Forbes (2009) Proposed an “ideological gap” that is “the difference between designing the service towards fulfilling students’ expectations and designing the service towards what the institution believes the students should experience”. Of these gaps, the ideological gap may be the most fundamental issue to resolve in terms of competitive advantage. This gap is exacerbated because the students’ roles and perspectives change as they move from the status of applicant to enrolled student to graduated alumni (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014).

## **2.4 Brand Experience**

It recognizes that brands are built through the customer’s entire experience, not just marketing or advertising alone and if managed appropriately can be a source of true competitive advantage (S. Davis, 2002). In effect, a brand is the sum of the customer’s experiences with the product or company. It is transmitted in every interaction with the customer over the lifetime of the relationship (Hogan, Almquist, & Glynn, 2005). Experiences asks’ how do we bring our brand to life?’(J. A. Davis & Farrell, 2016).

Academics and the student experience are foundational elements of any higher education institution and are key elements of its brand promise (Lockwood & Hadd, 2007). A person’s feelings about a company can be shaped by something as rough and ready as word of mouth – the standard lore about one unhappy customer telling many others. Typically, though, it’s the product of a series of direct and indirect experiences, each adding or subtracting from perceived status (Hogan et al., 2005). Most students’ decisions may subject to brand experience which refers to what information has been communicated through interactions with influencers such as parents, peers, high school teachers, university staff and alumni, and media (Shaari et al., 2012).

To note here that many studies were using the term customer to represent the student, also some concepts are adopted from studies about the business sector. So in this research, the customer represents the student.

### 2.4.1 Concepts

- **Experience marketing** is not a new marketing concept, as Schmitt (1999) first proposed this concept in 1999. He pointed out that a brand is about more than correct price or correct value. It is also a correct experience by establishing contact with customers. Tsai (2005) argued that in order to improve customer experience, brands need to manage their media image, such as through interaction between media and customer (H. Chen, Papazafeiropoulou, Chen, Duan, & Liu, 2014).
- **Experiential services** are defined as services where the focus is on the experience of the consumer when interacting with the organization, rather than just the functional benefits following from the products and services delivered (Voss, 2007).
  - Regarded as a lifetime's unique experience for most people, higher education has the most complex, highly intangible service attributes and higher credence qualities. Students "experience" the brand, in doing so, they perceive whether or not there is value added to the learning experience. Thus, a strong service brand should be a moral obligation for the HEI to establish (Teh & Salleh, 2011). Alumni give the institution an additional opportunity under the competitive conditions. Previous students are like business card of an institution (Valtere, 2012).
- **Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Theory**, developed by Keller (1993), is a tool that provides users with direction in building a brand. CBBE "is built on the premise that the power of a brand is based on what customers experienced, heard and learnt about a brand over time". Keller believed people make a decision to use a brand depending on the reputation associated with that brand/company/organization (Lambooy, 2011). Specifically, customer-based brand equity is defined as the differential effect that consumer knowledge about a brand has on their response to marketing for that brand (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

## 2.5 Brand Touchpoints

Every touchpoint that the customer has with the organizations is an experience, no matter how mundane the product or service that is being delivered (Voss, 2007). They form the link between the service provider and the customer, and in this way, touch-points are central to the customer experience (Clatworthy, 2011).

Davis (2000) described a brand as: ‘Every touch point your organization has with its ultimate consumer, regardless of industry, regardless of company. These touch points represent the perceptions we build up in our minds about that brand’ (p. 5). These perceptions thus create a brand’s meaning through associations held in the minds of consumers and prospective consumers; clearly a brand’s meaning must be better understood (Chard, 2013).

### 2.5.1 Concepts

- **Brand touch point** is the majority of the diverse ways that a brand associates with and makes an impact on customers, employees and different partners. Various activity and technique which portrays the image of the company whether it is through publicizing, a marketing showcase or a customer service call, is a brand touch point (Jha, 2016). Touchpoints, of course, are all the various points of contact between a brand and the consumers who encounter it. They include packaging, advertising, the in-store experience, telephone product support, and the like (K. Lee, Chung, & Nam, 2013). Touchpoints include the physical environment in which a service takes place as well as the tangible commodities associated with it—a package that we call “the servicescape (K. Lee et al., 2013).
- **Customer experience cycle** is meant to draw attention to an immediate link between touchpoints and the customer’s experience at the touchpoints. It is this experience that must be compelling (Dhebar, 2013). However, what are customer touchpoints? They are points of human, product, service, communication, spatial, and electronic

interaction collectively constituting the interface between an enterprise and its customers over the course of customers' experience cycles (Dhebar, 2013).

- **Service blueprinting** is a graphical representation of the service process and shares similarities with other process modeling approaches - it is a visual representation of the key activities in the service process and the detailed sub-processes and sub-systems, which reflect the service delivery. The blueprint is a living document and should be used to continue to refine the systems and processes it describes. The identification of the key fail and wait points, drawn from the end-user feedback, enables the project team to drill down into these aspects of the service delivery and make recommendations to managers to focus resources to best effect (Baranova, Morrison, & Mutton, 2010).

- ❖ Service blueprinting is a comprehensive technique, which places the student at the heart of the service and focuses on the service delivery process (Baranova et al., 2010).

- **Customer journey**, origins of the concept can be traced back to Shostack (1984) and **the** service blueprints. Each experiential service is represented as a journey during which the customer satisfies his need(s) through distinct experiences created at consecutive stages (i.e., touchpoints, also termed service encounters). The overall customer experience results from the accumulation of touchpoint experiences (Bellos & Kavadias, 2011).

- ❖ The student journey needs to include all the steps that students encounter as part of the service delivery process (Baranova et al., 2010).

### **2.5.2 Brand Touchpoint Wheel Model for Building Higher Education Brand**

The brand touchpoints wheel model is used in this research study, since the assumption being made is that to look at the higher education as an experiential service. This service is represented by a journey where there are multiple touchpoints that the students interact with. Furthermore, these touchpoints form an important component of the customer experience. Higher education institutions need to keep in mind the various touchpoints, be able to articulate its unique features and communicate them effectively

through the various compelling touchpoints, at various points of time. In a result, students' needs must be met since the overall process is dependent on them.

The authors of the study of Khanna et al. (2014) proposed to look at the various factors that build a higher education brand against the backdrop of a conceptual framework provided by the Brand Touchpoint Wheel which has been developed by (S. M. Davis & Dunn, 2002).

Since education is an experiential service which spans a long period of time and consists of multiple components and multiple touchpoints, the authors of this research paper propose that adopting an internal focus which investigates the touchpoints for an educational brand would help the experiential aspect of an educational brand to assume paramount importance (Khanna et al., 2014).

Touchpoints occur whenever a customer "touches" an organization, across multiple channels and at various points in time. A customer is likely to experience a service process consisting of multiple touchpoints prior to, during and after the service consumption. An organization's first step towards managing customer experience is recognizing every single touchpoint that a customer has with the company. Zomerdijk and Voss (2010) illustrated that experience touchpoints influence customers' thoughts, feelings and behaviors, and offer a framework for understanding what "customer experience" actually means and what needs to be improved (Liu, Sparks, & Coghlan, 2014). The brand touch points comes under three distinct customer experience segments: pre-purchase experience, purchase experience and post purchase experience touch points (Jha, 2016). These touchpoints sum to the total experience of a customer with the brand. Hogan et al. (2005) reported these touchpoints can be identified and managed over time to deliver customer experience programs that will have maximum impact on customer perceptions (Pringle, 2014).

## **Touchpoints Stages**

### **1. The Pre Usage - Stage**

Pre-purchase experience touchpoints represent the various ways potential customers interact with a brand prior to deciding to do business with a company. Some typical pre-purchase touchpoints include Web sites, word-of-mouth, direct mail, research, sponsorships, public relations and advertising (R. George, 2003). The pre-purchase experience touchpoints represent ‘the various ways potential customers interact with your brand prior to deciding to do business with your company. Each pre-purchase touchpoint interaction should be designed to shape perceptions and expectations of the brand, heighten brand awareness and drive its relevance. They should also help prospects understand the brand’s benefits over competing brands and the value it brings in fulfilling their personal wants and needs’ (S. M. Davis & Dunn, 2002). As the pre-purchase experience for prospective customers is examined, the focus should be on refining those touchpoints that most effectively will drive customers to put the brand into their consideration set (R. George, 2003).

In the pre-purchase stage customers are still in their decision-making phase and every interaction with service provider matters in forming experiences. Pre-purchase can be viewed as the starting point of customer journey, which makes it a highly valuable factor for companies trying to take a holistic approach to customer centricity. Thus, it is vital for companies to design the pre-purchase stage in a way that draws most benefits for both the customer and the company (Kujala, 2015). Companies should provide great experiences not only to their customers but also to their potential customers (Kujala, 2015).

The pre-usage stage touchpoints include: online information, marketing communication, campus visits, interviews, reputation and admissions process (J. A. Davis & Farrell, 2016).

Advertising, which is viewed as influence, information, persuasion, communication and dramatization, plays a leading role in establishing a strong identity for institutions. Although the use and effectiveness of advertising in higher education

has been questioned because of its persuasive function, many universities and colleges across the globe allocate considerable budgets for advertising as part of their marketing programme. For example, advertising as an important visual brand identity touch-point enables universities not only to persuade future potential students to enroll but can also be used to inform and promote their innovativeness and research excellence to various stakeholders (Hussain & Ferdous, 2014).

Pre-purchase in services differs from pre-purchase of products on several levels. According to Parasuraman et al. (1985) customers purchasing products can rely on tangible cues like color, label, feel, package, and other, when evaluating the product. Due to intangible nature of services, customers have to rely on other cues to evaluate services. Customers buying a service engage in interaction (experience) with the company, its employees, image and profile and evaluate service based on that. Based on this we can say that customer experiences in pre-purchase stage become vital to perception of service quality and value offered (Kujala, 2015).

The main goal in this stage according to Drapińska (2012) is to attract the best quantity and quality of candidates with best results at high school, this will allow the university to build prestige and succeed at the next stage of relationship building. This could be achieved by providing accurate information about the overall system in the university and by meeting expectations of prospective students and by reducing anxieties related to decision making.

## **2. Purchase (or usage) - Stage**

Purchase (or usage) experience touchpoints are those that move a customer from considering a company's brand to purchasing a product or service and initiating a brand relationship. Examples of purchase touchpoints include direct field sales, physical stores and contact with customer representatives (R. George, 2003). The main objective of these points of interaction is to maximize the value that the prospects perceive and instill confidence that they have made the right decision in choosing your brand' (S. M. Davis & Dunn, 2002).

The usage stage touchpoints refer to the student's experiences during their degree program (J. A. Davis & Farrell, 2016). At this stage, it's the sequential years of studies in the university and consequently the relationship, this stage is not homogenous. University role is to minimize the alienation and disorientation of new students, as well as, to facilitate students' interactions and help them in their education, this will help to generate positive emotions and elevate satisfaction level. The main basics are needed so the next will be directed to improve relationship quality. The university role to improve the value for students regarding education services, integration in the university environment, two way communication, the needed up to date information, and to understand the needs and wants of different students (Drafińska, 2012).

### **3. Post Usage - Stage**

Post-purchase experience touchpoints come into play after the "sale" and maximize the customer experience. These can include loyalty programs, customer satisfaction surveys and warranty and rebate activities. These touchpoints are frequently under-leveraged or ignored as brand-development opportunities, even though they offer the potential for businesses to drive sustainable and profitable growth. Three goals of post-purchase experience touchpoints are to deliver on the brand promise, meet or exceed customer performance and usage expectations and increase brand loyalty and advocacy (R. George, 2003).

The post-usage stage touchpoints would include: the alumni experience ( does the school stay in contact, are alumni invited to campus events such as guest speakers), updates about faculty publications, media coverage about the institution's reputation gains, support for a post- graduate professional jobs network, among others (J. A. Davis & Farrell, 2016).

In the case of the university experience, a 'successful outcome' following graduation is typically associated with the course or university responsible for the graduate's learning. Quality of education is closely linked to an appraisal of the results it achieves (Martínez & Toledo, 2013). The time of finishing education, receiving a



certificate, going through all final procedures should bring fond memories. These memories, like the whole experience of studying, influence decisions to continue or sever the relationship with the university (Drapińska, 2012).

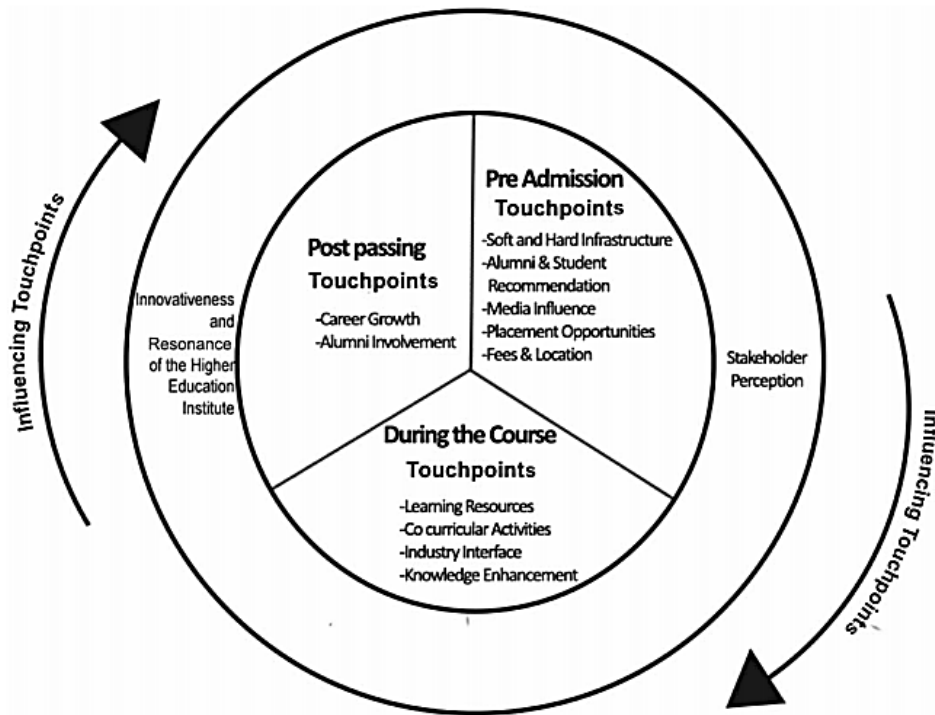
In relation to post-university experience, fitness-for-purpose of studies in relation to the job market refers suitability teaching and demands of workplace (specialization, content, lifelong learning, and so) and preparation by the university for starting employment are opportunities for work placements and other work experience, education to prepare for employment and help provided by the university to find employment (Martínez & Toledo, 2013).

#### **4. Influencing touchpoints**

Above these, Davis and Dunn (2002) have identified the influencing touchpoints which are all of the brand touchpoints that indirectly help to make an impression of the brand on its customers and various stakeholders such as annual reports, analysts' reports, current and past customers and recruiting materials' (Khanna et al., 2014).

Using the framework of the **Brand Touchpoint Wheel** for developing the higher education brand, the authors of this research paper have developed a Touchpoint Wheel for developing a higher education brand specifically for higher education institutes. The Touchpoint Wheel identifies the touchpoints for the potential students before they send their application for admission to a business management school, during the period of their study in the business management school, and after the completion of the business management course as an alumnus (Khanna et al., 2014).

The model comprises four distinct touchpoints involving a total of 13 factors, i.e. 'pre admission' touchpoints (five factors), 'during the course' touchpoints (four factors), 'post-passing' touchpoints (two factors) , and the 'influencing' touchpoints (two factors) (Khanna et al., 2014). Figure (2.1) below showed the proposed brand touchpoint wheel model for building higher education brand, with the four touchpoints and its factors.



**Figure (2.1): Proposed Brand Touchpoint Wheel model for building higher education brand**

**Source: (Khanna et al., 2014).**

A higher education institute must assess its brands' strengths and weaknesses keeping in mind the various touchpoints of the proposed Brand Touchpoint Wheel developed for a higher education institute. These could be meeting the student community's need to achieve their career goals, the industry requirements of employable students, good research, stakeholder perception, etc. (Khanna et al., 2014).

**Table (2.2): The Brand Touchpoint Wheel for higher education with their various components**

Construct	Components	Explanation
Pre-admission touchpoints	Soft and hard infrastructure	Includes infrastructure facilities and reputation of the faculty
	Alumni and student recommendations	Includes recommendations by friends who are already studying in a B School and alumni recommendations
	Media influence	Includes B school rankings in different media, general information of the B school in newspapers and magazines and B school website
	Placement opportunities	Includes the return on investment in terms of job opportunities
	Fees and location	Includes affordable fee structure and locational convenience
During the course touchpoints	Knowledge enhancement	Includes knowledge base of the faculty, teaching pedagogy, interaction with industry experts and conferences and workshops conducted by the B school
	Industry interface	Includes industry tie-ups for getting hands-on corporate work experience on periodic basis and mentorship programs by the alumni
	Co-curricular activities	Includes opportunity to organize and participate in college fests and events
	Learning resources	Consists of textbooks and reading material provided, online databases available and peer interaction
Post-passing touchpoints	Career growth	Consists of qualitative growth in career status, ability to get better jobs, improvement in managerial and decision-making skills and ability to perform better in the job function
	Alumni involvement	Involving the alumni in admission and academic processes
Influencing touchpoints	Innovativeness and resonance of the higher education institute	Includes accreditation by national and international bodies, facilities for research work done, strategic alliances with national and international B schools and executive and management development program
	Stakeholder perception	Community perception about the status of the institute, visibility of the institute in media and sense of belonging to a B school community

**Source: (Khanna et al., 2014).**

Table (2.2) above illustrated the different touchpoints with its components and for each component the explanation of what the factor means and includes. This help the reader understand the different meanings of the different touchpoints.

Among other things, Jenkinson (2007) beautifully depicted that “touchpoint is often called the moment of truth,” and so it is unquestionably important, both for brand success and for branding. A touchpoint can happen at a conscious or unconscious level. Every brand has an unlimited number of possibilities to create distinctive touchpoints; key in their selection is to pick those in which the brand is important for individuals; that is to say, its occurrence brings them benefit: a) in the form of basic needs, or b) those that fall within the higher sphere of human needs (i.e., aesthetics, self-image and social status) (Pompe & Temeljotov Salaj, 2014).

- Four main factors emerged that affect the college selection process: regarding **academic issues** students have expressed an interest in attending an institution that has a good academic reputation, quality professors and a variety of academic majors. These students seek such institutions because they have strong feelings regarding the academic climate at their respective institutions. **Social issues**, these issues relate to the social atmosphere of the campus, the racial composition of the students, on-campus life within the residence halls, and student organizations. **Personal issues** include encouragement and advice from family and friends and self-assessments that students conduct before entering college. The personal factors that affect the college decision process were grouped into three main categories: family or self-influences, psychological or social barriers, and cultural influences. **Financial issues** related to the nature of the country and the level of families’ income. Financial issues related to the total cost of attending the university, assistance received, and the overall financial obligations (Hayden, 2000). Here the student basically compares his investment in the college against any future expected earnings that he/she might obtain from his/her college degree (Abou-Nassif, 2011). The cost of tuition may not be the key factor for measuring the quality of universities but rather the perception people have of the

universities. This perception depends largely on how universities communicate and manage their image (Silva, 2013).

- Significant others, and more specifically parents, have also a great influence in the student ability in school. Parents who are involved in their children studies will most probably facilitate to increase their children's academic ability and therefore increase their children's motivation to continue to college (Abou-Nassif, 2011). The advice of others, namely parents, siblings, friends, teachers, high school and college counselors, also profoundly impacts the decision of students concerning which college to attend (Obermeit, 2012).
- The careers needed in the internal market as well as in the region, will definitely affect the college decision. Since hard economic times are expected ahead, students may prefer majors that offer high employability rates. Higher education institutions need to know early what influences this decision in order to accordingly adjust their recruiting procedures and policies (Abou-Nassif, 2011). Financial considerations such as the cost of tuition, scholarships, loans or grants and the ability to work in addition to studying are of high importance (Obermeit, 2012).
- Post-Graduation Job and Career Prospects (PGJC): Two of the top reasons for choosing a graduate program are the employment rate of graduates and their average starting salaries. Undoubtedly, students place a great emphasis on these factors as they make relevant decisions regarding their career paths post-graduation (Tas & Ergin, 2012).
- Student, faculty and administrative staff appear on the brand creation side and on perceived brand side as these three stakeholders perform the role of "co-creators" of the service. Relationships and interactions created by direct contact between the customer and the service provider. Faculty's role in university is becoming increasingly important today. As quality of teaching, research potential, scope for consultancy and over-all success of the university depends largely on the faculty (Shahaida, Rajashekar, & Nargundkar, 2009).

- In an educational institution the well-known stakeholders are: first, the body of academics and students who through their daily experience in the university should identify and support their university brand. Thanks to social media, the online support has increasing a lot. Second, the alumni that trough their experiences and benefits from university community should become ambassadors. Third are the potential students. The basic stakeholders in higher education are: The professors, who represent the core of the institution and can influence decisions, Staff to support the university in a total way of coordination and efficiency, Public opinion, positively biased if the university can annoverate the best teaching professors and students, Government, that protect the university inside and outside the country, Companies/contacts, that provide and recruit the best students creating a networking. The best students from top universities usually feel they must take jobs with large brands in order to improve their future job prospects (Cuicchi, 2014).

## **2.6 Social Media in Higher Education**

Students are one of the key stakeholders of universities and, as such, the opinions they hold of their university experience are invaluable to university management (Martínez & Toledo, 2013). For universities, it is essential to know what messages they should spread through which media at what time to which target group, to increase the chance of being noticed by the students and convince them to apply and enroll. Most students try to gain information either by actively seeking it or by using the information offered by universities, schools, counselors etc. However, the kind of information they are searching for and are receptive to varies during the decision process (Obermeit, 2012). Moreover, the increasingly mobile media consumption, numerous mobile applications and high online use constitute for marketers further opportunities to reach and serve consumers' ubiquity or, in other words, 'anytime and anywhere', since all inbound techniques may be involved. This is important for higher education since the target audience is using mobiles, smart phones, tablets or other devices for information searches and media communication (Royo-Vela & Hünermund, 2016).

The social web constitutes an important touchpoint within the purchase decision process. Companies not using the social web forgo opportunities to address the customer, influence the customer, keep the customer, and develop a relationship with the customer. The social web provides marketers with the necessary tools for staying connected with existing customers and also getting in touch with new target groups (Fauser, Wiedenhofer, & Lorenz, 2011). The power of social media has just scratched the surface. Most believe its use in higher education is controversial, but what if we started thinking outside the box? (Reuben, 2008). Noel-Levitz (2007) suggested that social networking can be a great resource for recruitment efforts, and could be very beneficial to your program. However, they still believe the majority of your focus should be strengthening the experience perspective students have on your official website (Reuben, 2008). The key focal point of a university's visual image on the Internet is its official website. A university's web portal both reflects and produces its digital life, which is broader and more informative than the physical life alone, as there are no temporal and spatial boundaries in electronic interactions (Okushova, Stakhovskaya, & Sharaev, 2016).

Effective use of social media for engaging target audiences can help shorten the gap between the intended brand message and the brand message that is actually received or perceived. Universities can benefit from the advantage of having a large student community at their disposal because people in the 18-25 demographic segment are the biggest users of social media and information-seeking is an important reason for people to use social networking sites (Ahmed, Shuja, & Chaudhry, 2014).

University websites are considered as one of the brand primary touch points for multiple stakeholders (Shaari et al., 2012). Potential students often visit websites for information, and Facebook to communicate with current students to find out about their experiences at a university. In terms of content, previous research suggests that universities should include reputation, learning environment, graduate career prospects, image destination, cultural integration, and virtual tour on their websites (Shaari et al., 2012).

All these activities (blogs, student videos, testimonials, free online courses, virtual tour etc.) give potential students a sense of what the campus culture is actually like. One of the biggest advantages of using social media is the ability to have a conversation with people as compared to simply pushing an advertisement directed at them. It offers a chance to enter into a two way dialogue with the audience, engage with them, and ultimately, form a positive and mutually beneficial relationship (Ahmed et al., 2014).

The students' social networks have always been a very valuable source of information (Obermeit, 2012). Media such as television, newspapers and magazines are used by universities to place advertisements (Obermeit, 2012). Students can use blogs to document their experiences or to suggest improvements; the faculty can highlight and discuss their research and talk about issues that they are passionate about; and the management can showcase events and activities taking place at the university (Ahmed et al., 2014). The sequence of images – academic buildings, library, research laboratories, and sport structures – creates an image of the university that is able to serve a wide variety of its target audience's interests (Okushova et al., 2016).

This era is the social web era. Students, customers, and generally all people are using social web every day. Facebook is considered the most used, universities and organizations must not forgo this opportunity because the role of mass media is vital in brand building.

In an attempt to engage students in learning outside the classroom, instructors sometimes use their own websites to post topics on which students are encouraged to share their insights and thoughts. Such interaction between students and instructors can be multifaceted and importantly it has the potential to bring a whole new dimension to learning, sometimes from the experiences of each other (Ahmed et al., 2014). This is happening with some professors in our faculty, either through their own pages or through the Facebook group of the commerce master students on Facebook. Figure (2.2) below shows a screen shot of a closed group for commerce master students, this group is created for knowledge sharing, subjects materials sharing and experiences or opinions sharing in different themes. The vast majority of these group members are the ones that



are participating at IUG in which they can communicate, share their common interests and express their opinions, objectives, discuss issues and post photos, all these kinds of activities intended only to spread knowledge and science among the students. These group members are a combination of alumni, new students, professors, secretaries and some experts.



**Figure (2.2): A Screen Shot for a Closed Facebook Group for Commerce Master Students.**

Similarly, Grant (2008), pointed out that usage of social network sites (SNS) in educational environments provides more effective communication between students and teachers, so instructors know their students much better (Mirabolghasemi, Iahad, & Rahim, 2016). Social media offers advancement professionals a great opportunity for keeping in touch with alumni after they graduate. Facebook is one of the more popular tools they are now using to keep in touch with recent alumni (Reuben, 2008).

Social media has shifted the control of the brand from the organization to the consumer. Fournier and Avery (2011) defined this shift as “Open Source Branding”. Open source branding is when “the consumers gain an equal, if not greater, than marketers in what the brand looks like and how it behaves”. It means that the consumers become the creators and disseminators of branded content. In this scenario, it is

important for the organization to become an active listener and be aware of what the audience is collectively talking about. The interests and behavior of the audience are not always in an organization's favor (Ahmed et al., 2014).

It is important to be authentic, open, and honest while communicating through social media. Users grouped together can be powerful advocates of a brand but can also criticize it as a group (Ahmed et al., 2014).

One of the recent examples about international students and how they communicate with others through social media is the Turkish student Rokia Demir, she is now studying master degree in the Islamic University of Gaza. One might ask how a Turkish student leaves his/ her country and come into Gaza, which is considered by the most as a dangerous and entering to it as a big risk. I was sure, that dream will not be achieved if it remains locked into the mind, she said, I have taken the first step, to honestly spoke to a friend from Gaza in what myself needs, his response surprised me, "why not!". All hands helped her to achieve her dream, friends and presidency of the university. Rokia spoke about Gaza and people of Gaza, how friendly and supportive and make to forget the hardship of the road and travel. In my first day at the university, everyone was friendly and nice, university president and his deputies, as well as Chairman of the Board of Trustees, was dealing with me in the spirit of fatherhood, they make me feel as I was in my house, and while some were busy advising me to choose courses of the beginning semester, the other was providing advice how should I be effective in Gaza Strip. The first class, she said, was for a teacher fluent in English, he was explaining the lesson in Arabic and English and this helps me to improve my Arabic as well as understand the lessons well, as the study at the Islamic University either in Arabic or English or both languages according to the specialization and field of study (Demir, 2016, December 17). This example may clarify that when Rokia decided to study in Gaza because it was a dream for her, she selected the Islamic University, and this may reflect and combine the country and the university. She was comfortable with the system of the university and the educational staff, the system of separating males and females in studying areas, buildings and rest time. So Branding higher education institutions may brand countries and vice versa.

## Section 2

### Islamic University of Gaza

#### 2.2.1 About The Islamic University of Gaza (IUG)

There are (29) accredited and licensed higher education institutions in Gaza Governorates, they are vary between Traditional universities, Open Education universities, Colleges, Medium colleges, Polytechnic and Post graduate Academy ( 6,2,10,8,2,1 respectively) (Ministry of Higher Education, 2016).

Based on the information that is published on the IUG website the following information is introduced to express the general information about the life inside the university (IUG-Website, 2016).

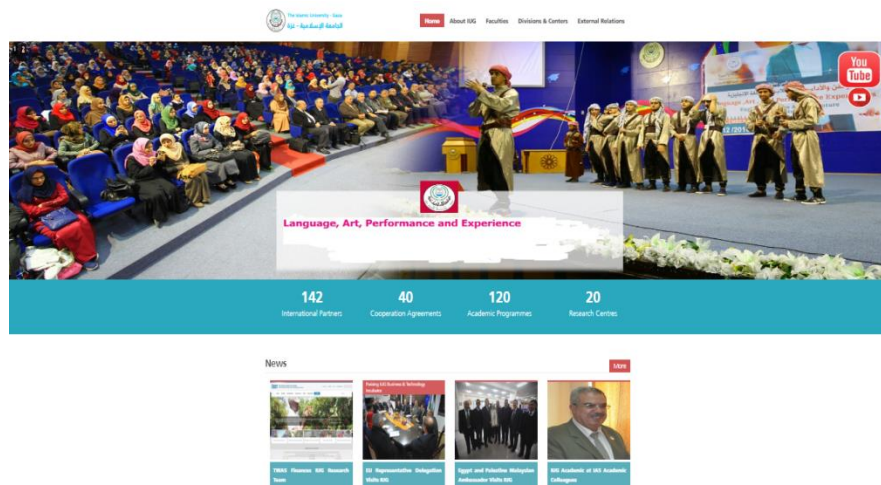
- **University life:** University life creates fruitful learning environment, experiences, and opportunities that energize all students to broaden their capacity for academic success and personal Growth. IUG Provides a wealth of social and leisure for students, staff and members of the public –including library, restaurants, medical centers, conferences hall, tabs, great sporting facilities as well as wide green places.
- **IUG and Community:** being aware of its vital role in improving life quality in Gaza, IUG founded the Community Service & Continuing Education Deanship in 1994. This community-oriented Deanship has actively been participating in promoting professionalism in all fields of life in Gaza.
- **International Cooperation:** currently, IUG has project partnerships with more than 100 European universities and research centers located in 18 EU countries as part of participation in 32 than EU-funded multilateral and bilateral programmes including Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, Erasmus+ , Al Mqadisi (France), Appear (Austria) and Horizon 2020. IUG has also partnerships with more than 66 Palestinian and Arab universities located in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Tunisia.
- **Quality Unit:** quality Unit strives to let IUG meet the requirements and standards of local and global quality. QU would like to improve the institutional academic and

administrative performance in addition to get the confidence of the Palestinian community through graduates according to specific performance standards.

- **Alumni Department:** based on the importance of networking and outreach between the university and its graduates, Islamic University decided to establish Alumni department. This department helps graduates in improving their academic and practical abilities and relationships. Objectives of the department: strengthen IUG relationships with its graduates, strengthen the relationships among the graduates of different majors and faculties, hold various academic and social activities and gatherings, participate in holding training courses and workshops to develop IUG graduates, participate in holding Annual Commencement party and to help graduates to get benefit from IUG utilities.
- **Academic Exchange:** the University is interested in cooperation and exchange of experiences, and specialized professors with Palestinian, Arabic, Islamic and worldwide universities in all fields of sciences.
- **Ranking**
  - According to the green environment standards in the international classification for a university, IUG is number one on the Arab and Palestinian universities for the third time in the last three years. According to the report in (26<sup>th</sup> of January, 2014).
  - According to the green environment standards in the international classification of the World's Most Sustainable Companies Of 2014, IUG is number one on the Palestinian universities for the fourth time. According to the report of (25<sup>th</sup> of January, 2015).
  - According to a report issued by U.S. News & World Report, Islamic University of Gaza IUG has received high status among the top Arab universities scoring the second rank among Palestinian Universities and in the list of first 120 best Arab universities. The assessment is based on 11 indicators to measure the performance of the university including academic reputation rank, cited publication, employer reputation rank, and field-weighted citation impact, among others. According to the report of (26<sup>th</sup> of June, 2016).
  - According to the (2017) League Table of the top (200) Arabic-speaking Universities in the World, the Islamic University of Gaza has received the third rank among the local

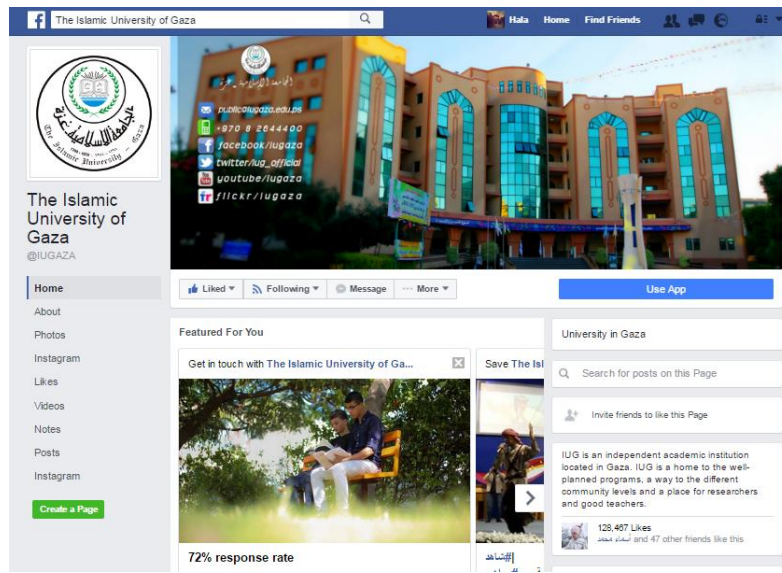
universities and scoring the “twenty eight” ranks among Arabian universities (University Ranking, 2017).

### 2.2.2 IUG logo and Social Media



**Figure (2.3): A Screenshot for IUG Website.**

When Facebook launched the fan pages concept in November 2007, many universities jumped at the opportunity to create an official Facebook presence for their university, In a recent survey, Facebook was named by both men and women ages 18-24 as the most popular Web site they access on a daily basis (Reuben, 2008).



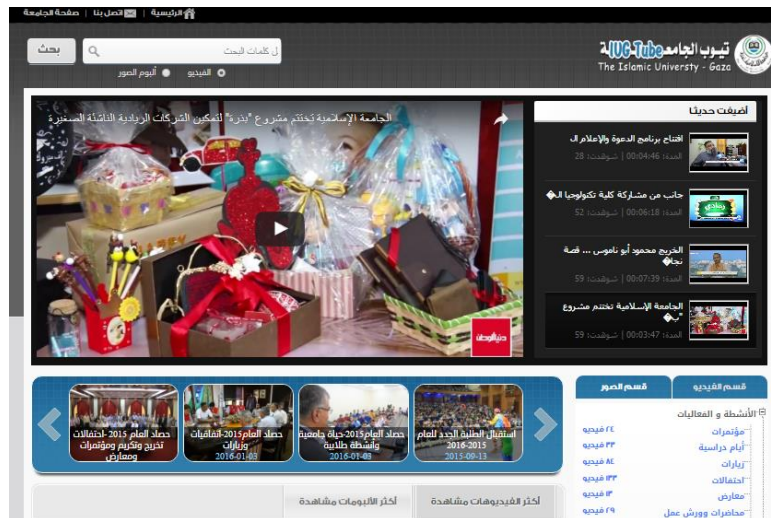
**Figure (2.4): A Screenshot for IUG Facebook.**

Fan pages are similar to personal profiles, but can be used by businesses. They include wall posts, discussion boards, photos, videos, and many other applications. People who view the page can choose to become “fans” of your organization, and this shows on their personal profile page, for their friends to see. This creates a viral marketing effect – when one of their friends sees they’ve become a fan of another organization that interests them, they’re likely to become a fan themselves (Reuben, 2008).



**Figure (2.5): A Screenshot for IUG Twitter.**

Twitter is a cross between instant messaging and blogging that allows users to send short (140-character) updates. Users can also follow the updates of friends they “follow,” send them direct messages, reply publicly to friends, or just post questions or comments as their current status (Reuben, 2008).



**Figure (2.6): A Screenshot for IUG YouTube.**

Universities have been making videos for 20+ years to aid in recruitment efforts. YouTube has given them a platform to easily distribute these videos to a much wider audience, and without the costs of burning to CDs/DVDs and postage to mail to a narrow audience (Reuben, 2008).



**Figure (2.7): A Screenshot for IUG Flickr.**

Flickr is an online photo site where users upload photos that can be organized in sets and collections. Public photos may be viewed and commented on by others. Universities have found Flickr to be a great tool to easily share photos with students, alumni, faculty and staff (Reuben, 2008).



**Figure (2.8): A Snapshot for IUG Instagram.**

Launched in October 2010 by Stanford grads Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, Instagram is known for its photo-sharing app that uses filters to make photos from smart-phone cameras look more professional and allows them to be easily uploaded and shared across multiple platforms simultaneously. These highly valued benefits led the brand to quickly attract more than 100 million users. Instagram’s name was chosen because it combines the concept of “instant” with the notion of connecting with people via a “telegram” (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

### **2.2.3 MBA Program at IUG**

The College of Commerce at the Islamic University is considered one of the leading colleges at the university level and national level, was established to operate in and contribute to meeting the needs of the Palestinian community of specialists and researchers in various administrative, economic and financial fields. The department of business administration is considered from the leading departments in the college, where it worked in a continuous way to diversify in the academic programs to meet the



different needs of the Palestinian Society. The university launched the first Master of Business Administration department in the year (2001/2002), then it was followed by Accounting and Finance department in the year (2003 – 2004), after that, department of Economics and Development was open in the year (2009 – 2010) (IUG - Website, 2016).

Table (2.3) shows the number of the graduated students from the beginning of the Commerce Master Program.

**Table (2.3): Number of Commerce Master Students**

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Master</b>	Business Administration	680
<b>Master</b>	Accounting	406
<b>Master</b>	Economics and political Science	108
<b>Master</b>	Human Resource	78
<b>Total</b>		<b>1272</b>

**Source: (IUG, 2016).**

### **2.2.3.1 Program Objectives**

- To develop the scientific level of Palestine Students in the field of management, marketing and finance.
- To contribute in solving the various administrative problems that face business sector in Palestine and try to develop this sector.
- To prepare competences, qualified and specialized cadres that is able to meet the Palestinian economy needs in the administrative, marketing and financing fields and to provide them with theoretical and practical knowledge.
- To contribute to enrich and develop the scientific research in administrative sciences field.
- To provide physical and mental effort to those who want to continue the advanced studies (IUG - Website, 2016).

## **Section 3**

### **Previous Studies**

#### **2.3.1 Previous Studies**

This section illustrates a number of previous studies which are overviewed, presented and arranged. The researcher examined these studies to enrich the theoretical framework of the current study. It provides guidelines for the researcher to follow the latest research in the founded field. No local studies to the knowledge of the researcher dealing with branding in higher education institutions have been found, which obliged the researcher to depend on international studies mainly. There is one Arabian study, and (24) international one, studies are arranged according to the date of the publication from the latest to the oldest one. The section is ended by general comments on those previous studies.

#### **1. Dean, Arroyo-Gamez, Punjaisri, and Pich (2016), “Internal brand co-creation: The experiential brand meaning cycle in higher education”**

This study extended Iglesias and Bonet’s (2012) work; it explored how employees co-create brand meaning through their brand experiences and social interactions with management, colleagues and customers.

Exploratory research was conducted to gain insight into the co-creation of brand meaning, specifically to capture and understand the relationship between the employee, the brand, and the organization. Purposive sampling was adopted to select participants, who could contribute to building an understanding of the phenomena. Participants, who have lived experiences with the higher education brand meaning development, were recruited from a university in México, which has more than (30) campuses throughout the country, a total of (38) in-depth interviews were conducted in summer, (2013). The sample included (21) males and (17) females with different backgrounds and employment duration.

This study showed that employees act as brand readers in the internal branding process and social interactions (macro cycle). The macro cycle happens together with the micro cycle where employees evaluate, interpret, and appropriate the brand meaning. Then, they become a brand author who communicates their brand meaning with colleagues, and external stakeholders.

Management should provide employees with timely and relevant brand messages, and consistent brand experiences. Consequently, employees will be able to rightly transform the espoused brand identity to brand reality during their interactions with other stakeholders. Thus, higher education should engage employees in co-creating a brand meaning so that employees become committed to live the brand at all brand touch points. Yet, management should be aware the subjective nature of individuals' interpretation of brand information and experiences.

## **2. Kayombo and Carter (2016), “Understanding Student Preferences for University Choice in Zambia”**

The aim of this study was to identify the principal higher education (HE) branding factors in Zambia. These include factors students consider when choosing higher education institutions HEIs, and sources of competitive advantage in the Zambian HE sector.

Data were collected through three focus group discussions with first year students and 20 semi-structured interviews with marketing executives in 13 of the country's 20 universities. Thematic analysis and content analysis were then used to process and analyze the data. The study was qualitative in approach. Purposive sampling was applied in sample selection.

The study revealed that the top five most considered HE branding factors in Zambia are teaching quality, fees, course availability, facilities, and employability. Recognition and credibility were found to be more prominent branding elements of private HEIs in Zambia than elsewhere because most of these institutions are still in their infancy. Other factors identified that may have some impact on the HE decision in

Zambia are reputation, location, timely completion/course duration, collaborations, learning materials, and safety and security. With regard to competitive advantage, course availability, teaching quality, and facilities emerged as the top three sources. The study also revealed that the most consulted information sources about universities are print media, friends, education expos and electronic media, while the most prolific influencers of student choice are friends, parents and self.

To enhance their reputation, private HEIs could benefit from fostering strong relationships with the government, long established foreign and local universities, professional bodies and employers.

### **3. Samson, Granath, and Alger (2016),” Journey Mapping the User Experience”**

This journey-mapping pilot study was designed to determine whether journey mapping is an effective method to enhance the student experience of using the library by assessing our services from their point of view. The study was in Missoula, Montana.

It implemented journey mapping, a methodology that utilizes library experiences and touch points, points at which a student comes into contact with the service. Service scenarios are identified, and maps are produced that reflect the journey from the student’s point of view. The student map is then compared to an “ideal” journey, and the differences are used to explore changes that would improve the service experience. Scenarios included in this project were divided into six checkpoints based on recommendations by Schmidt and Etches. The scenarios were completed by three student interns enrolled in “LSCI 498, Internship: Careers in Leadership”. These checkpoints are: Physical Space; Service Points; Policies and Customer Service; Signage and Way finding; Online Presence; and Using the Library

This survey was also based on the checkpoints identified by Schmidt and Etches, (2014) and was designed to identify staff perceptions of the same aspects of the library that the students were exploring. The goal of the survey was to compare staff perceptions of services with user experiences of these same services.

The results of this pilot study indicated that journey mapping can be an effective method of enhancing user experience. This pilot study reinforces how a journey-mapping methodology can inform decision-making with the intention to identify and to break down barriers for users and improve their experience across different units of the library.

#### **4. Aghaz, Hashemi, and Sharifi Atashgah (2015),” Factors contributing to university image: the postgraduate students’ points of view”**

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors contributing to university image, from the postgraduate students’ point of view. In addition, the impact of the students’ perceived university image on their organizational trust was examined.

The population of this study consisted of postgraduate students in 10 of the top Iranian universities. In all, 950 questionnaires were distributed via a drop-off approach in the faculties of humanities among master’s and Ph.D. students by use of a purposive sample method, in the end, 820 questionnaires were returned. Questionnaires were used to collect the required data. So, using a Likert scale, students were asked to present their perceived image based on the way students of their university and students of the other competing universities perceive the image of their institution. 15 sub factors into 4 main factors: university members, university environment, academic planning, and internal and international reputation were used in this study.

Findings showed that the factors contributing to university image range from internal and international reputation, university members, and academic planning, to university environment. Furthermore, university image has a significant impact on students’ trust in their university.

Maintaining and enhancing desirable organizational image require emphasis on all the factors mentioned contributing to university image. This will lead postgraduate students to willingly apply for Ph.D. programs or even membership of faculties in the same university or other top universities of the country. Theories also support the idea

that members of an organization with favorable image are more likely to stay in that organization.

##### **5. Huynh and Nguyen (2015),” Communicating University Brand via Social Media Case: Communicating Lahti University of Applied Sciences Brand to International Students Using Social Media”**

This study is created to study what were the preferences of international students at Lahti UAS (in Finland) when choosing a university overseas. Specifically, the researchers would like to discover which factors were crucial in persuading the students to select Lahti UAS as their optimal alternative. Moreover, they also want to study the social media performance of Lahti UAS at a deeper level as they seek a holistic assessment of Lahti UAS’ current social media profiles through auditing and benchmarking processes. The researchers have chosen a list of four benchmark education institutions besides Lahti UAS.

The researchers select a deductive approach to conduct this study, and they will utilize a mixed method of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect and analyze the raw data. To obtain primary data for research, the researchers used survey and observation as two main techniques. The population that interests the researchers in this survey is (408) potential and current international students of Lahti UAS. By using emails and internet allows reaching the entire population. The researchers collected 97 responses in total.

Various factors that would contribute to student’s decision of choosing an overseas university for study, these factors are: personal motivation, country image, city image, institution image, program evaluation. Most chosen variables for the factors are: to experience a new culture, overall reputation of education system, safety and security, good university reputation, internationally recognized degree. Also questions related to the most trusted source of information by international students were divided into: internet and social media, university website, family and friends recommendations. Also discovers the amounts of followers, on social media of the university.

The findings showed that when compared to other benchmarks, Lahti UAS is on the right track in managing its social media presence and is investing an acceptable amount of effort into promoting its international image. However, there is still room for improvements in different aspects. Lahti UAS may consider reassessing some channels among its social media assets to apply possible changes which will enhance the effectiveness of its brand communication to international students on social media.

## **6. Abbas (2014),” Brand Management of Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan”**

This study focused on brand management, marketing & promotional practices which are incorporated in Higher Education Institutions, more specifically with reference to universities in Pakistan. The prime objective of this study was to create a promotional strategy for the University of Veterinary & Animal Sciences (UVAS) institution, which ultimately leads to its brand management in the wider perspective.

The primary sources of data collection contributes to comprehensive and self-explanatory questionnaires which have been targeted at graduate and post graduate students with the sample size of 300, so as to get a better idea of their perception, expectation and beliefs about the effects of branding & promotional strategy on their selection process. Also, few unstructured yet informative interviews had been conducted with higher management of case company, so as get a profound picture of their view and expectations regarding branding of the university.

According to the results, majority of students seem satisfy with the quality of education and technological facilities available. Yet, again the same amount of students rating an average grade about the issues like library, teaching and on campus facilities. A little portion of population also exists who seem disagree with both the quality of education and facilities provided but this population can be considered as those people who are always dissatisfied. To conclude, “Branding has become an integral aspect for Universities to survive in hyper competitive environment.

## **7. Bock, Poole, and Joseph (2014), “Does branding impact student recruitment: a critical evaluation”**

This study focused on segmentation feasibility within the private college/university market. Using factors considered by university students in a previous study, the current research sought to further explore the existence of segments within a private university.

The data were collected from 246 undergraduates at a private university in the northwestern USA. The survey asked participants to indicate the importance of (24) criteria in their consideration of the colleges/universities to which they applied. This was followed by asking participants to indicate the importance of these (24) criteria in attracting them to the university that they now attend, participants were asked how they obtained information about the university and whether or not they applied to other universities. The survey concluded by gathering demographic data. Of the (24) consideration criteria evaluated in Joseph et al. (2012), (13) emerged as significantly different for private university student-customers.

University criteria such as availability of financial aid, accredited university, academic programs, quality education, scholarship availability, friendly environment, latest technology, location, faculty student interaction and reputation.

Branding is particularly important in helping to position a product in the minds of the product’s target market. The findings suggested that three segments of students exist – one segment considers all university criteria as important, another places high importance on the financial aspects of attending a university, and another segment moderately evaluates all university criteria. With segmentation, organizations can detect new markets by researching the hierarchy of attributes that consumers will consider when choosing a brand.



### **8. Chen and Chen (2014),” The Effect of Higher Education Brand Images on Satisfaction and Lifetime Value from Students’ Viewpoint”**

This study examined the relationship between the brand image students have of their colleges and their satisfaction and lifetime customer value. The study examined institutes of higher education to explore brand image of institutes of higher education, student satisfaction and customer lifetime value to determine the effect of these variables on the competitiveness of schools and their subsequent creation of an excellent school brand image.

The subjects were college students in Taiwan. Questionnaires were administered and a total of 270 valid samples were collected. Data analysis using structural equation models (SEM) and Multigroup Analysis.

Findings showed that brand image affected customer satisfaction, and subsequently affected customer lifetime value. Customer satisfaction was also a partial mediating variable between brand image and customer lifetime value. Therefore, institutes of higher education should take the initiative to establish an excellent brand image, explore both positive and negative information in the environment that could affect brand image, and manage these influences on customer brand perception in order to become distinctive among a fiercely competitive market of many common products. Therefore, this study showed that only by persistently striving toward quality in higher education to increase student satisfaction toward the campus can schools increase their competitiveness and sustain their operations.

### **9. Cuicchi (2014),” Higher Education Branding: Nova School Of Business and Economics and Bocconi University”**

This study was an overview of higher education branding with a particular focus on two of the top thirty European Business School 2013 ranking of the Financial Times: Nova School of Business and Economics (in Portugal) and Bocconi University (in Milan, Italy). This study was focused on stakeholders brand perceptions differences and improvement suggestion.

An exploratory research was conducted, focusing on the qualitative side. Twenty-four in depth interviews were conducted from two different segments, six current students of NOVA SBE and six current students of Bocconi, six Alumni of NOVA SBE graduated less than three years ago and six Alumni of Bocconi graduated less than three years ago. These interviews were conducted to students and alumni from both universities in order to show the gaps in brand image.

The interviews asking about attitudes regarding reputation, international exposure of the university, experience regarding teaching quality, environment, learning experience, whether adopting practical business cases, support professional careers, mentorship programs and the relationship between colleagues in the university.

Findings indicated different impacts of two different realities stemming from their history, value and culture. Generally, students and alumni expressed similar views relating to attitudes, relationship, needs and Brand Image of NOVA SBE and Bocconi.

#### **10. Gade (2014),” Higher Education Branding: Attracting Brazilian Talent to Danish Higher Education”**

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how Innovation Centre Denmark can succeed in branding Danish higher education in order to attract Brazilian talent. The competition for the best international talent has intensified as a result of the rapid globalization that the world has witnessed over the past few decades.

To identify underlying motivations for Brazilian students’ decision-making for higher education, to understand the decision-making process that Brazilian students go through when choosing higher education, hereunder what touch points are important. Those are two of the main objectives of this study.

The study was guided by a pragmatic research philosophy, where primary data are collected in the format of (19) qualitative in-depth interviews with Brazilian students (13) and (6) Danish representatives for the education sector. The study, however, suggested a continuation of the research in a quantitative format to broaden the applicability of the findings.

The interviews was about this category list: motivations for higher education, needs and wants for higher education, decision making process for higher education, motivations for studying abroad, perceived barriers for studying abroad, image of Denmark and image of Danish higher education.

The most prominent findings from the research included the need for increased integration between nation branding and branding of the Danish educational sector, as well as a need to identify Danish fields of excellence in order to establish a perceived balance between value and price by the Brazilian students. Also, the analysis suggested a new view on identity-image gaps in higher education, and casts light on the Brazilians' fundamental motivations for higher education as well as studies abroad, providing the foundation to better target Danish higher education towards this target group.

#### **11. Khanna et al. (2014), “Identifying and analyzing touchpoints for building a higher education brand”**

The study aimed to propose to look at the various factors that build a higher education brand against the backdrop of a conceptual framework provided by the Brand Touchpoint Wheel which has been developed by Davis and Dunn. The assumption being made while using the Brand Touchpoint Wheel is to look at higher education as an experiential service.

The study was exploratory in nature and the sampling technique used for data collection was convenience sampling. The units of analysis in this study were the students of various management schools across Mumbai. Based on the inputs received during the in-depth interviews and the literature review carried out, the researchers developed a questionnaire which was administered to the students and alumni of these management schools. The mode of data collection was online using qualtrics.com. A total of (276) surveys were usable out of (316) responses for the purpose of this research.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections as follows: Pre-admission knowledge sources (pre-admission touchpoints), Knowledge sources while pursuing the

management course (during the course touchpoints), Experience of integration with the real world (industry and society) (post-passing touchpoints) and Influencing touchpoints.

It has been observed in the study that estimates, namely career growth, innovativeness and resonance and knowledge enhancement, are satisfactory indicators for the latent construct of 'post-passing' touchpoints, 'brand strength' and 'during the course' touchpoints, respectively, with high loadings above (.7). It is also observed that alumni and student recommendations, soft and hard infrastructure, learning resources, co-curricular activities and stakeholder's perception, may have a moderate impact on the latent variables, with low loadings.

## **12. Chard, MacLean, and Faught (2013), "Managing Athletic Department Touch Points: A Case Study of One Institution Using Importance-Performance Analysis"**

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions held by student-athletes about the brand of the athletic department. Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) and brand touch point theory were used to accomplish the study's objective. The purpose of enhancing understanding in this area was to assist athletic department personnel to effectively recruit student-athletes and deliver a quality sport experience.

In total, 561 e-mails were sent to student-athletes. The process yielded (N = 149) Students-athletes participating in athletics at a university in Ontario, Canada took part in the study as having valid response. The sample consisted of (73) men and (76) women. The men were representative of (13) different varsity sports, while the women took part in (11) different sports. The study instrument was developed through a two-stage process. First, a preliminary list of (35) measurement items was generated via an in-depth literature review pertaining to potential recruitment and delivery touch points, the second step involved dialogue with individuals knowledgeable about the context of the investigation. Participants responded on a 10-point Likert scale.

Recruitment Touch Points such as, quality of the athletics website, community relationship programs and reputation of coaches, while the Delivery Touch Points such

as, fostering relationships within teams, recognition given to varsity athletes, and environment for academic success.

The results proved beneficial for highlighting areas of discrepancy between deemed importance and performance on key recruitment and delivery attributes including scholarship support, spectator support, special treatment, recognition, and quality of facilities. All represent touch points in need of managerial attention. Steps by the Athletic Director to address these incongruities would be wise.

### **13. Drapińska (2012), “A Concept of Student Relationship Management in Higher Education”**

The aim of this paper was to present a novel marketing concept of relationship management in higher education (in Poland and globally) and a justification of its application based on the specific character of educational services, the paper highlighted key relationships that should be built by an educational institution with special emphasis placed on students as the most important clients of a school.

The papers proceed to elaborate on the concept of loyalty as the aim of building sustainable relationships with students and its specificity due to the special nature of an educational environment. A student relationship management model proposed and discussed as comprising three basic stages of the educational services provision: pre-sales, sales and after-sales stages. The presented model may serve as a basis for further theoretical research or may be applied in practice as it is.

The proposed concept emphasized the role of value for client, dialog, trust and engagement which combine to increase student loyalty. It also pointed to a number of benefits a university may derive from maintain a positive student relationships and alumni loyalty. Relationship building should start already when candidates make choices about future studies.

#### **14. Durkin, McKenna, and Cummins (2012),” Emotional connections in higher education marketing”**

This paper aimed to describe a brand re-positioning exercise and explore how an emotionally driven approach to branding can help create meaningful connections with potential undergraduate students and can positively influence choice.

A case study description with quantitative analysis in support was used. The case study described offers value and learning for readers of the journal from both a theoretical and practical perspective. This research described a marketing context that existed within Ireland’s largest university “University of Ulster” which has over 24,000 students registered and has undergraduate applications approaching 34,000 each year.

A representative sample of the Northern Ireland population was identified and 1,000 face-to-face interviews conducted across the region in the years 2008 & 2009.

Early research findings indicated that aiming to influence a decision in the mind of the potential young customer can be helped through the use of a branding a marketing strategy which uses emotion as a way of bridging the gap between institutional awareness, understanding and desire for affiliation. The use of an emotionally driven branding concept has positively impacted business development and brand likeability within a UK university.

#### **15. ELBILBAISI (2012),” How To Achieve Stronger Brand Differentiation For The Selected Postgraduate Programs Offered By The School Of Arts And Humanities At The University Of Stirling?**

This study investigated what attributes affect brand differentiation of three main courses: (MSc) Media management, MSc media and Culture and MLitt Publishing Studies offered by the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Stirling in Scotland.

The underlying study was carried out through surveys that targeted students of the designated programs and semi structured interviews designed for the academics, directors and administrative staff involved in the process of delivering any part of the

students' educational experiences. The study was exploratory and inductive in nature relying on a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis. The target population was consisting of 53 students enrolled in the postgraduate programs. The acquired sample size was 23 students and 8 interviews.

The questionnaire was divided into four main sections which were the students' academic experience, students' evaluation of the management of the program, students' perceptions regarding the competitive position of the School and the flexibility and quality of the program structure.

Analysis and findings concluded that students consider the quality of academic staff, the brand resonance within the industry and its effect on employability, and the type of internships offered as major players in the field of brand differentiation. Also, another important factor was the ability of the programs to link theory with practice by allowing students to gain skills needed to secure good jobs. As for the School, there was clear drawback of inability to measure students' expectations in a systematic regular manner and limited investigation of competing offerings and the status of the HE market.

#### **16. Tas and Ergin (2012), "Key Factors for Student Recruitment: The Issue of University Branding"**

The aim of this exploratory research study was to explore specific factors/criteria that Turkish students consider during the process of selecting a graduate degree program at a university in the USA and to contribute to the limited research in the area of university branding.

Students were questioned concerning their reasons for their choice of a US graduate education institution. In the first part of the study, potential selection criteria have been identified by conducting surveys on undergraduate students, interviewing professors, and educational counseling institutions. The survey was applied to third and fourth year students at the management department of a private university. Out of the (160) surveys, (152) have been approved to be included in the study.

Results suggested that students place a great emphasis on the career advancement opportunities they can cultivate through obtaining graduate degrees in the USA. For this reason, their top criterion was reported as career prospects and job opportunities. They reported to be almost equally affected by the brand reputation, ranking and accreditation issues of the higher-education institutions. The in-depth interview with professors/education counselors, student survey applications, and the analysis of previous stream of related research has led to identification of criteria to be used in the study.

Future research may be conducted on a larger, nationally representative sample with students from various public and private universities across the country; also this study is limited to students focusing on a graduate degree in business however similar studies can be carried out in other disciplines.

#### **17. Kim, Periyayya, and Li (2012),” Branding Through Facebook for Institutions of Higher Learning”**

The intention of this study was to determine the perception of students towards the effectiveness of Facebook branding for institutions of higher learning through the use of social networking sites (SNS). It was also to explore the important role they play as a media in branding for institutions of higher learning. Also, it offered some insights into how Internet branding through (SNS) can be used to make a difference to the identity and image of institutions of higher learning.

A survey was conducted through questionnaire, with students from both public and private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia. A total of 200 respondents were used in this study. The sample came mostly from ten institutions of higher learning. The questions asked comprised a) respondent's personal characteristics and b) institutions of higher learning choice decision factors. Variables influencing the choice decision: clear information, relevant Customer promise, quality of teaching, building trust, education fees, duration to complete, facilities, availability of the course, entry requirement, and location.



Responses from the respondents showed that, generally branding through Facebook was more important when compared to the use of other traditional mass media. Many student respondents agreed that branding through Facebook was more effective in finding information as compared to the use of the traditional mass media. Besides that, the findings have also indicated that branding through a website was definitely more effective in influencing the students in making decisions to enroll in their courses when compared to the use of traditional mass media strategy.

#### **18. Mourad (2011),” Role of brand related factors in influencing students choice in Higher Education (HE) market”**

The objective of this empirical paper was to highlight the role of brand related factors in influencing students’ choice in the Higher Education (HE) market. Two phases of empirical work were conducted focusing on the significant role of brand related factors in influencing the consumers’ choice of universities in Egypt.

The first exploratory study included 23 personal interviews with parents and students. The second exploratory study included nine interviews with employers in the Egyptian market. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher asked about four main issues, which are the university that they selected/preferred, the main characteristics of the selected universities, the degree of satisfaction with the educational and non-education services provided, and the overall university selection criteria. The second phase of the empirical work was in the form of quantitative research. The final sample included 300 valid cases. 135 respondents were high school students, and 165 respondents were enrolled in foreign, private and public universities in Egypt.

The findings of this empirical research indicated that a brand is a major tool in influencing the selection of a university. The results gave general insights into the importance of brand ‘university name’ as mentioned by the interviewees vs. other selection criteria such as location, fees, etc. In conclusion, the findings of the research supported the importance of brand image in influencing the choice, as well as the extent to which the reliability and consistency of the brand is reflected in the choice. As a

result, proper positioning of the brand and adopting a marketing oriented strategy should be the main concern of the decision makers within the HEIs.

**19. Hemsley-Brown, Lowrie, and Chapleo (2010), “what defines ‘successful’ university brands?”**

This work built upon Chapleo (2005), the research reported in this paper seek to commence filling the gap of the field of university branding that is lacking understanding of what defines a ‘successful’ brand and the approaches that can lead to building these brands.

The study employed qualitative research techniques in an exploratory study, examining the institutions perceived to be ‘successful’ in terms of brand management, and seeking to explore any commonalities of approach or circumstance. Twenty two Interviews were conducted among HEI Heads of Marketing/ External Relations (HOM) and Heads of Careers (HOC) for UK universities over an eight-month period between February and September (2007). The sample comprised respondents from (11) universities identified in previous research (Chapleo, 2005) to have successful brands.

It was found that even among those brands considered ‘successful’, challenges such as lack of internal brand engagement and limited international resonance may be apparent. Certain common positive success factors are also suggested, however, central marketing teams have grown over recent years and many institutions now also had marketing posts within faculties, almost an “account handler role”.

International branding was identified as a particular issue, and certainly the perception of UK HEIs internationally is an area worthy of considerable investigation. Suggesting appropriate models for managing a brand in the particular context of higher education also may be in need of further exploration. Clear vision and the support of leadership seem to be factors that particularly support successful brand building.

## **20. Heslop and Nadeau (2010),” Branding MBA programs: the use of target market desired outcomes for effective brand positioning”**

What do MBA applicants expect from the MBA experience at different institutions? Asked a different way, what are the MBA brands of different institutions? This paper addressed this issue in the context of one of North America’s largest and most competitive MBA markets, in Toronto, the largest city and the business center of Canada.

A survey was conducted of people who are in the active ‘consideration of alternatives’ stage of the MBA program choice process as evidenced by their attendance at an ‘MBA fair. A total of 401 people were registered at the fair and resided in the Toronto area. Moreover, a focus group of MBA fair attendees was undertaken. The focus group approach was used to search for additional criteria used but not previously reported and to verify what was identified in the academic research.

General criteria for university programs of relevance included location, student body size, quality and composition of the program, specializations/majors offered, and costs. Business school program characteristics from these ratings magazines included student characteristics (quality measured as GMAT score, work experience, internationalism, and gender), faculty quality (including business experience and teaching capability), program reputation, and career support (including networks and job placement services).

The results provided information that helps business schools, particularly major ones but also smaller ones in most locales, determine how to frame and target their market offerings for success. The results suggested that they can seek to enhance their MBA applicant appeal by using promotional elements, stressing that employers are impressed with the graduates since this outcome is part of the same factor

**21. Baron et al. (2009), “Internal branding: an enabler of employees’ brand-supporting behaviors”**

The purpose of this paper was to understand the internal branding process from the employees’ perspective; it empirically assessed the relationship between internal branding and employees’ delivery of the brand promise as well as the relationships among their brand identification, brand commitment and brand loyalty.

Hypotheses were tested from data collected from (699) customer-interface employees from five major hotels in Thailand, The questionnaires were sent out on a census basis to employees from three different departments.

Internal branding was found to have a positive impact on attitudinal and behavioral aspects of employees in their delivery of the brand promise. As employees’ brand commitment does not have a statistically significant relationship with employees’ brand performance, it is not regarded as a mediator in the link between internal branding and employees’ brand performance. Furthermore, the study showed that brand identification is a driver of brand commitment, which precedes brand loyalty of employees.

**22. Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009), “Prospective students’ perceptions of university brands: An empirical study”**

The purpose of the research was to delineate the main elements of a university brand, to identify possible antecedents and consequences of various components, and to develop and test a parsimonious instrument for measuring the favorability of a potential student’s perceptions of the contents of the brands of specific universities.

The study investigated the perceptions of the brands of three post-1992 universities in London (South Bank University, Westminster University, and London Metropolitan University). A model of the composition of a university brand was constructed containing three main constructs: covenant, quiddity, and “symbolic and external representation.” A questionnaire based on this model was created and

administered to a sample of (198) young people who at the time were contemplating going to university.

The questionnaire contained sections that explored the promises suggested by a university brand, the objective circumstances of an institution, and its symbolic and external representation. Linkages between the favorability of the sample members' perceptions of the main components of a university's brand and the participants' conative, affective, and cognitive responses (including those related to a university's reputation) were also examined.

The practicability of an institution in terms of its physical location and convenience was deemed to represent a critical factor in a brand's quiddity; that is, its fundamental reality and essence. Another crucial element of quiddity was the composition of a university's student body, particularly the proportion of the institution's attendees that came from "nontraditional" backgrounds. The respondents' views on a university's symbolic and external representation were dominated by their opinions regarding the caliber of the institution's advertising and other marketing communications. Logos were not reported to convey meaningful messages concerning "what the university is".

### **23. Rosén and Waller (2009),” Consumer Brand Touch Points, a Case Study of Hennes & Mauritz in Sweden and Germany”**

The main purpose of this study has been to determine which of Hennes & Mauritz' (H & M) touch points that were the most important at the Swedish and German markets according to consumer experiences and whether the same kind of touch point management is justified in both countries. The second purpose was to show that touch points differ in their importance.

Descriptive qualitative personal interviews and descriptive quantitative surveys among both Swedish and German consumers have been conducted. The choice fell on psychology students in Germany at Münster University, since that is where we were able to find someone willing to help us. The following choice of the psychology students in

Sweden at Gothenburg University is based on judgment. The sample at the Gothenburg University consists of 430 respondents, at the Münster University consists of 326. In the Swedish survey, 88 respondents have answered and in the German survey, 100 respondents have answered.

The consumer research that followed was divided into the three categories: controllable, influenceable and uncontrollable touch points. Controllable Touch Points such as: advertisement, special features, sales channels, in-shop and outside-shop attributes, product attributes, whereas influenceable Touch Points are about contracted external actors, finally uncontrollable Touch Points about professional information sources and consumers as information sources. The aim of the surveys was primary to get quantitative information regarding awareness of the different touch points, attractiveness of the touch points and influence on the buying behavior.

Results showed that among the research touch points; there is little difference between the consumer preference and experience in Sweden and Germany and little difference regarding which touch points are important. For instance, Word-of-mouth, the product price and outdoor advertisement were all found to be crucial to consumer experience. However, there are still differences, which brings us to the conclusion that not all Hennes & Mauritz' important touch points in Sweden are justified in Germany and not all Hennes & Mauritz' important touch points in Germany are justified in Sweden.

#### **24. Shahaida et al. (2009), "A conceptual model of brand-building for B-schools: An Indian perspective"**

The purpose of this paper was to propose a conceptual model of brand-building for Indian B-schools; the paper examines the viewpoints of various scholars with regard to the role of a student in a B-school. Business school (B-school) branding is crucial to distinguish the services provided by one B-school from another.

A range of published literature related to the topic was thoroughly searched. The paper examined the viewpoints of various scholars with regard to the role of a

student in a B-school. The services marketing perspective was analyzed and the gaps are identified through a robust literature survey. Based on the literature survey, an original conceptual model for brand-building for B-schools was proposed.

Literature suggested that there is an increasing tendency among B-schools to view students as customers of the B-school and B-schools are adopting marketing practices similar to any other service. B-schools should address the needs of all stakeholders such as students, faculty, corporate, society, and media.

The results suggested that Some B-schools have adopted certain branding activities, but extant literature review reveals that B-schools in India do not practice an organized holistic approach to branding activities. The researchers proposed to validate the conceptual model of brand building with a sample of Indian B-schools through an empirical study.

## **25. Moogan, Baron, and Harris (1999),” Decision Making Behaviour of Potential Higher Education Students”**

This paper examined the decision making behavior adopted by candidates hoping to gain entry into higher education, and empirically testing ideas from the broader literature on consumer behavior and services. The concentration was on the “problem recognition”, “information search”, and “evaluation of alternatives” stages of the decision making process.

A longitudinal exploratory study of a sample of (19) pupils from a sixth form “college” of a high school (11 years old to 18 years old) in the Bolton area (NW of England) which contained pupils from a variety of ethnic backgrounds was undertaken. Research was carried out in three stages.

The initial information searching activity included evaluations of course content, locations and reputations of universities, and specific grade requirements. Universities must research their current and potential students’ requirements in such a competitive environment. Finding out why possible students choose not to enroll is just as important as analyzing the motivations of those who did decide to enroll.

Results indicated that applicants do follow the sequential stages from problem recognition, to evaluation of alternatives using parents as well as teachers advice throughout, although there seems to be a gap in the information needs of potential students, which many universities are not currently satisfying.

### **2.3.2 General Comments on the Previous Studies**

The research on branding of higher education institutions has been considered as controversial for many of the researchers. Branding for the higher education in the time of enormous competition is considered a vital issue. People all over the world are searching for the best, such as, the best university. The researcher benefited from the previous studies throughout the thesis chapters. Several studies are reviewed and the followings are the general comments on it.

Many studies are reviewed and the observed issue is the diversification of the chosen practical application. Students (potential, high school, MBA, undergraduates, and alumni), parents, employees, employers, athletics students, HEI heads of marketing, and headers of careers, are examples of samples which were used in different studies. The researcher is intentionally presented that to understand the different topics and touchpoints of different views.

The reviewed studies are from different countries all over the world from Egypt, Mexico, Zambia, Montana, USA, Italy Pakistan, Turkey, Malaysia and others. That issue was reflected on the sample chosen and the findings observed. Studies are quantitative, qualitative, or mixed, many are empirical and others are conceptual and proposing some models or being a qualitative but can be converted to quantitative.

The obvious issue in the previous studies is the study of Khanna et al. (2014), the researcher found it so important and the touchpoints used are clear and vital for universities to concentrate and to take care of each touchpoint. The study helps in different ways and summarizes the journey the student's experience.

Despite that there are different touchpoints the students experience along the journey, some studies concentrate on not all stages such as pre, during and post, some studied the pre stage and the different touchpoints such as fees, course availability, facilities etc...



One of the studies (Bock et al., 2014) segmented the different students into segments and when evaluating the colleges/universities to which students applied revealed that the top 10 of these criteria were nearly similar to the top 10 criteria considered by private university students. Those ten are availability of financial aid, accredited university, academic programs, quality education, scholarship availability, friendly environment, latest technology, location, faculty student interaction, reputation. The findings suggested that three segments of students exist – one segment considers all university criteria as important, another places high importance on the financial aspects of attending a university, and another segment moderately evaluates all university criteria.

Some studies such as Dean et al. (2016) and Baron et al. (2009) are focusing on the vital role the employees play in the brand building of the organizations or universities. This called the internal branding in which the brand building comes from the inside and how they deliver and fulfill the brand promise. This is also connected to the employee's loyalty and commitment and that will be reflected in the delivery of brand promise

Many studies such as Kayombo and Carter (2016) and Mourad (2011) are pointed that the brand is vital and necessary in the selection process since this is the stage where students are in a messy situation and searching for a long time journey and experience.

Reputation, image and identity are considered by many studies as a skeleton for a well overall brand. Quality and customer or student experiences also the skeleton for what defines a well branded university or organization. Without comfortable experience and journey the university will lose its credibility and directly its brand.

Throughout the studies which the researcher reviewed there are opinions of some authors about what does the brand in higher education means, is it better to be labeled as reputation or public relation?. The how the university well performs and how it meets its requirements and the result of being effective is the basis. So as any issue, there will be the opponent and the proponent.

Many studies in a way or another present the significance issue of the social media in the different stages and different touchpoints of the students journey. From the

studies the Facebook won its right in the brand building of universities. In this dynamic world the students are excited to the newest areas of keeping up with them.

Throughout the studies the competition between universities is presented, and many recommendations are about to survive in this competitive environment you have to build a brand and to keep in searching on how to differentiate our brand from others that is brand differentiation.

### **2.3.3 Contribution of the Study to Previous Studies**

The main difference of this study from the previously mentioned studies is that it investigates the role of the various touchpoints, not only concentrating on one stage so that it has combined several fields and items to study, the scarcity of empirically testing studies about the topic makes difficulty on the researcher in every stage of the study. Also it differs in that it is applied at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) from the MBA students' perspective, throughout the journey of the student, that build a higher education brand. It is one of the first Palestinian studies -as the researcher knows- which study this topic. This study is from the point of view of MBA students which the majority of the other studies have different population. The researcher hopes that the results of this study will fill the gap in researches in this field since the study is targeting a very sensitive sector in the market which is the higher education institutions. The study provides a set of recommendations that the researcher hope that it will help IUG to reflect it on its overall brand strength.

### **2.3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter addressed the body of literature about the research study. Brand building of higher education institutions through examining the various touchpoints that the student experience was investigated by literature review. History of branding, related concepts, and importance of branding, challenges, brand experience, brand touchpoints and the brand touchpoint wheel model have been discussed in this chapter. Moreover, brief review about the role of social media in higher education institutions, and introduction about the Islamic University of Gaza was addressed. Finally, previous studies were introduced.

# **Chapter 3**

## **Methodology**

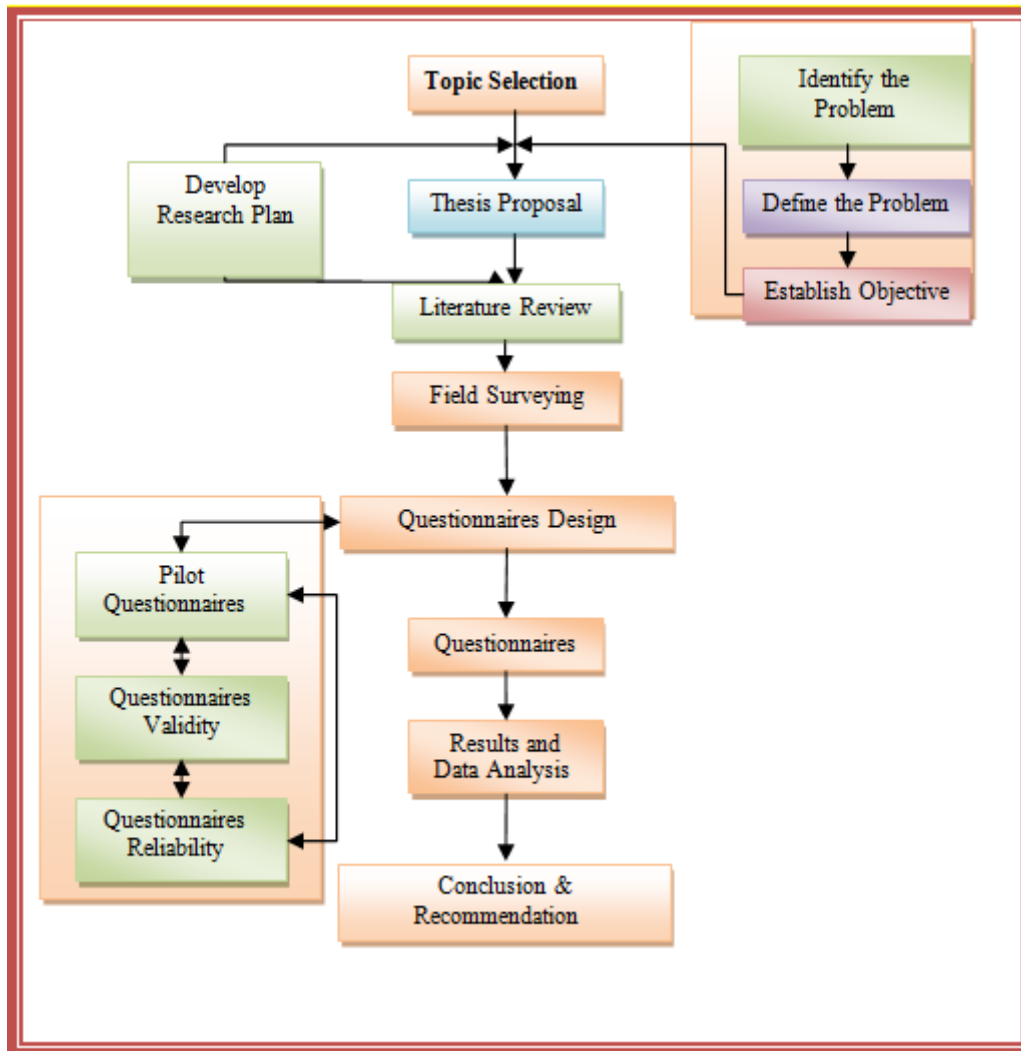
## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This chapter describes the methodology that has been used in this study. The adopted methodology to accomplish this study uses the following techniques: the information about the research design, research population, instrumentation, questionnaire design, statistical data analysis, content validity and pilot study.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Different phases are used and followed in this research study in order to achieve the purpose of the study. The methodologies which have been followed by the researcher and which lead to achieve the research objective are shown the flowchart in figure (3.1).



**Figure (3.1): Methodology flowchart**

As shown, the first phase of the research thesis proposal includes identifying and defining the problems and establishment objective of the study and development research plan. The second phase of the research includes a summary of the comprehensive literature review. The third phase includes a field survey which was conducted about “Brand Building of Higher Education Institutions”. The fifth phase of the research focuses on distributing questionnaire. This questionnaire was used to collect the required data in order to achieve the research objective. The sixth phase of the research is data analysis and discussion. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences,

(SPSS) was used to perform the required analysis. The final phase includes the conclusions and recommendations.

## **3.2 Research Methodology**

The research followed the analytical/descriptive approach in addition to the statistical analysis, which is considered as the most used in business and social studies. This section presents the methods used to carry out the research and answer the research questions, in order to collect the needed data for this research. The method used is a questionnaire. Collected data was analyzed by SPSS.

## **3.3 Data collection procedures**

### **3.3.1 Secondary Sources**

In order to address the theoretical literature of the study, the researcher has used secondary data resources, which included: reference books, reports, papers published in scientific journals and magazines, and university website these were retrieved through databases such as Google Scholar, Emerald, and Science Direct.

### **3.3.2 Primary resources**

In order to address the analytical framework of the study, structured questionnaire was distributed to the target group. Respondents were asked to provide their perspective toward the questionnaire items of this study.

## **3.4 Study Population**

The research is studying the “Brand Building of Higher Education Institutions”; the research population was mainly the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) Master of Business Administration (MBA) students. This category of students was chosen “purposively” because the survey questions were exploring the student’s responses toward three stages of touchpoints, where those touchpoints are divided into pre, during,

and post stages of experience throughout the educational journey of the students, so those students are more experienced, possess more information. This category was also chosen because the researcher field of study was the same, and more familiar with the system, this will help in interpreting the results, and in the recommendation section.

According to the deanery of admission & registration in IUG, the number of MBA students in the first semester 2016/2017 are 253 regular students, 74 are females and 179 are males (IUG, 2016).

### **3.5 Sample Size**

Fellows and Liu (2015), clarified that surveys operate on the basis of statistical sampling, only extremely rarely are full population surveys possible, practical or desirable. The principles of statistical sampling to secure a representable sample are employed for economy and speed. Commonly, samples are surveyed through questionnaires or interviews.

The sample used in this research is a purposive sample. Data collection was carried out during the lectures of the MBA students. In this study, the researcher use Robert Mason equation to calculate sample size. The sample size equals (153) students. The researcher distributes 180 questionnaires to MBA students. A total of (150) completed and valid questionnaires were retrieved with a response rate of 83.3%.

### **3.6 Instrumentation**

The researcher utilized the following questionnaire procedures:

1. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher based on literature review , and was reviewed and modified by the research's supervisor.
2. The modified copy was given to eight academic experts. The final copy of the questionnaire was modified according to the experts' recommendations. (Appendix C) shows the names and the place of work.

3. Next, a pilot study sample of 30 questionnaires was distributed to help test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire.
4. Based on the pilot phase findings, it was concluded that the questionnaire is ready to be distributed as a final copy.

A cover letter explaining the aim of the study and general information about the privacy of the response is provided. The questionnaire has been translated into Arabic for documentation purpose and facilitates the answers from the respondent's part. See (Appendix B).

**The questionnaire which is designed for this research consists of the following parts (see Appendix A):**

**Part one:** consist of seven demographic measures, about the MBA students traits, such as (Graduation University, gender, Age, Year of graduation, Major, Years of work experience, family's income level).

**Part two:** consist of four sections according to the stages used. These stages were adopted mainly from (Khanna et al., 2014), pre admission stage field adapted from (Aghaz et al., 2015), (Mourad, 2011), (Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009) with some modifications.

**1. Pre admission stage:** consist of 23 items divided into six fields. Designed to indicate the extent to which this field influenced the students to enroll at the university.

- **University's Reputation:** consist of six items, clarify the extent to which the respect for traditions and rules, quality of academics... (Etc.) influence the students to enroll at the university.
- **University Infrastructure:** consist of three items; clarify the extent to which the quality of resources, recreational facilities and residence hall environment influence the students to enroll at the university.
- **Referrals:** consist of four items; clarify the extent to which parents, friends, alumni, and number of alumni who obtained jobs after graduation influence the students to enroll at the university.




- **Media Influence:** consist of four items, clarify the extent to which advertisements, website, ranking and impact of social networking pages influence the students to enroll at the university.
  - **Placement Opportunities:** consist of three items; clarify the extent to which opportunity for work- study positions, to develop professional skills and prospects to find a job influence the students to enroll at the university.
  - **Fees and Location:** consist of three items; clarify the extent to which location is physically safe, has many attractions and entertainment facilities and the total cost of attending the university influence the students to enroll at the university.
- 2. During the Course Stage:** consist of 13 items divided into four fields. Designed to determine the extent to which students were satisfied during their study experience at the university.
- **Knowledge Enhancement:** consist of four items; clarify the extent to which students were satisfied during their study experience according to knowledge base of the faculty, Alumni interaction...etc.
  - **Industry Interface:** consist of four items; clarify the extent to which students were satisfied during their study experience according to interaction with profession experts, mentorship programs provided by alumni...etc.
  - **Co-curricular Activities:** consist of two items; clarify the extent to which students were satisfied during their study experience according to opportunity to take part and organize college fests and competitions.
  - **Learning Resources:** consist of three items; clarify the extent to which students were satisfied during their study experience according to textbooks and reading material, Peer interaction ... etc.
- 3. Post passing Stage:** consist of 12 items divided into two fields. Designed to determine the extent to which alumni rate the university.
- **Career Growth:** consist of nine items; clarify the extent to which alumni rate the university according to updating the knowledge base, developing capabilities, and developing decision making skills ... etc.

- **Alumni Involvement:** consist of three items; clarify the extent to which alumni rate the university according to involving senior alumni in the admission and academic process, and continuing the relationship through trips or seminars.
- 4. Influencing Touchpoints:** consist of 11 items divided into two fields. Designed to determine to what extent the influencing touchpoints strengthen the brand building.
- **Innovativeness and resonance of the higher education institute:** consist of seven items; clarify the extent to which students perceive that the items influence the strength of the brand such as the accreditation by national and international bodies, consultancy services... etc.
  - **Stakeholder Perception:** consist of four items; clarify the extent to which students perceive that the items influence the strength of the brand such as the community perception, visibility in the media.....etc.

### 3.7 Data Measurement

In order to be able to select the appropriate method of analysis, the level of measurement must be understood. For each type of measurement, there is/are an appropriate method/s that can be applied and not others. In this research, scale 1-10 is used.

**Table (3.1): Likert scale**

Item	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>									<i>Strongly agree</i>
Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

### 3.8 Pilot Study

A pilot study of 30 respondents for the questionnaire was conducted before collecting the results of the sample. It provided a trial run for the questionnaire, which involves testing the wordings of question, identifying ambiguous questions, testing the techniques that used to collect data, and measuring the effectiveness of standard

invitation to respondents. The collected 30 questionnaires were included in the final sample.

### **3.9 Statistical analysis Tools**

The researcher used data analysis both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods. The Data analysis made utilizing (SPSS 24). The researcher utilizes the following statistical tools:

- 1) Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality.
- 2) Pearson correlation coefficient for Validity.
- 3) Cronbach's Alpha for Reliability Statistics.
- 4) Frequency and Descriptive analysis.
- 5) Parametric Tests (One-sample T test, Independent Samples T-test, Analysis of Variance).

**T-test** is used to determine if the mean of an item is significantly different from a hypothesized value  $\mu_0$ . If the P-value (Sig.) is smaller than or equal to the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ , then the mean of an item is significantly different from a hypothesized value  $\mu_0$ . The sign of the Test value indicates whether the mean is significantly greater or smaller than hypothesized value  $\mu_0$ . On the other hand, if the P-value (Sig.) is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ , then the mean of an item is insignificantly different from a hypothesized value  $\mu_0$ .

**The Independent Samples T-test** is used to examine if there is a statistical significant difference between two means among the respondents toward Brand Building of higher Education Institutions through Students Touch points due to (gender).

**The One- Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)** is used to examine if there is a statistical significant difference between several means among the respondents toward the Brand Building of higher Education Institutions through Students Touch points due

to (Graduation University, Age, under graduate Major classification, Year of graduation and Years of work experience).

### 3.10 Content validity of the questionnaire

The content validity of the questionnaire was conducted through the supervisor review in order to assure that the content of the questionnaire is consistent with the research objectives, and evaluate whether the questions reflect the research problem or not. Also, seven academic experts from the Islamic University of Gaza, and one from Al Azhar University reviewed the questionnaire and provided valuable notes to improve its validity that their comments were taken into consideration.

### 3.11 Statistical Validity of Questionnaire

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to be measuring. Validity has a number of different aspects and assessment approaches. Statistical validity is used to evaluate instrument validity, which include internal validity and structure validity.

#### 3.11.1 Internal Validity

Internal validity of the questionnaire is the first statistical test that used to test the validity of the questionnaire. It is measured by a pilot sample, which consisted of 30 questionnaires through measuring the correlation coefficients between each item in one field and the whole field.

**Table (3.2): Correlation coefficient of each item of “Pre-admission Stage” and the total of this field**

No.	Item	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	P-Value (Sig.)
1.	Academic quality	.685	0.000*
2.	Academic competitiveness compared to other universities	.747	0.000*
3.	Availability of my major	.708	0.000*

No.	Item	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	P-Value (Sig.)
4.	Uniqueness of my course content (Study Plan for the semester courses)	.721	0.000*
5.	Respect for the traditions and religious activities	.795	0.000*
6.	Compliance with regulations laws, and the quality of the administrative system	.830	0.000*
<b>University's Reputation</b>			
1.	Availability and quality of resources (computer, library, classes)	.787	0.000*
2.	Availability of recreational facilities( athletic programs)	.799	0.000*
3.	Residence hall environment at the university	.789	0.000*
<b>University Infrastructure</b>			
1.	My parents' advice	.530	0.000*
2.	My friends' advice studying in the university	.915	0.000*
3.	Alumni recommendation to this university	.895	0.000*
4.	Number of alumni who obtained jobs in their fields after graduating from this university	.871	0.000*
<b>Referrals</b>			
1.	Advertisements of the university in different media (newspapers, magazines, TV)	.869	0.000*
2.	University website	.849	0.000*
3.	University rankings in various media	.801	0.000*
4.	Impact of social networking pages (such as Facebook and Twitter )	.834	0.000*
<b>Media Influence</b>			
1.	Opportunity for work - study positions at the university	.818	0.000*
2.	prospects of landing a job after graduating from this university	.793	0.000*
3.	opportunities I get to develop my professional skills	.640	0.000*
<b>Placement Opportunities</b>			
1.	University is located in an area that is physically safe	.809	0.000*
2.	University is located in a geographical area that has many attractions and entertainment facilities.	.743	0.000*
3.	Total cost of attending this university	.695	0.000*
<b>Fees and Location</b>			

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table (3.2) clarifies the correlation coefficient for each item of the “Pre-admission Stage” touchpoints and the total of the field. The p-values (Sig.) are less than 0.05, so the correlation coefficients of this field are significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , so it can be said that the items of this field are consistent and valid to be measure what it was set for.

**Table (3.3): Correlation coefficient of each item of “During the Course Stage” and the total of this field**

No.	Item	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	P-Value (Sig.)
1.	Knowledge base of the faculty	.567	0.000*
2.	Alumni interaction with the university	.828	0.000*
3.	Teaching pedagogy which includes field assignments and case studies	.850	0.000*
4.	Conferences and workshops	.845	0.000*
<b>Knowledge Enhancement</b>			
1.	Interaction/online contact facility with alumni	.952	0.000*
2.	Interaction with profession experts such as (Seminars that keep pace the theoretical side with the practical side to the requirements of the labor market)	.949	0.000*
3.	Mentorship programs provided by alumni	.948	0.000*
4.	Career counseling programs that offer from the university	.906	0.000*
<b>Industry Interface</b>			
1.	Opportunity to take part in university fests and competitions	.948	0.000*
2.	Opportunity to organize university fests and events	.949	0.000*
<b>Co-curricular Activities</b>			
1.	Textbooks and reading material	.782	0.000*
2.	Peer interaction	.761	0.000*
3.	Scientific research databases available (e.g. Ebsco, Proquest, etc.)	.827	0.000*
<b>Learning Resources</b>			

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table (3.3) clarifies the correlation coefficient for each item of the “During the Course Stage” and the total of the field. The p-values (Sig.) are less than 0.05, so the correlation coefficients of this field are significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , so it can be said that the items of this field are consistent and valid to be measure what it was set for.

**Table (3.4): Correlation coefficient of each item of “Post-passing Stage” and the total of this field**

No.	Item	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	P-Value (Sig.)
1.	Ability to continuously update graduates knowledge base	.841	0.000*
2.	Reduce dependency on other employees	.821	0.000*
3.	Development of one’s capability of gathering correct information	.878	0.000*
4.	Improvement in your managerial and decision making skills	.872	0.000*
5.	Improves ability of constant learning by virtue of being part of university community	.869	0.000*
6.	Qualitative growth in career status	.854	0.000*
7.	Ability to get access to more creative ideas	.824	0.000*
8.	Helps to perform better in the job function	.855	0.000*
9.	Ability to get new job opportunities	.632	0.000*
	<b>Career Growth</b>		
1.	Involving senior alumni in the admission process	.943	0.000*
2.	Involving senior alumni in the academic process	.949	0.000*
3.	Continuing the relationship with alumni by the university through seminars or trips	.943	0.000*
	<b>Alumni Involvement</b>		

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table (3.4) clarifies the correlation coefficient for each item of the “Post-passing Stage” and the total of the field. The p-values (Sig.) are less than 0.05, so the correlation coefficients of this field are significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , so it can be said that the items of this field are consistent and valid to be measure what it was set for.

**Table (3.5): Correlation coefficient of each item of “Influencing Touch points” and the total of this field**

No.	Item	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	P-Value (Sig.)
1.	Accreditation by national and international bodies	.794	0.000*
2.	Facilities provided and the output of research work done	.899	0.000*
3.	Consultancy services provided by the university	.891	0.000*
4.	Strategic alliances with national and international universities	.842	0.000*
5.	Executive and management development programs designed and conducted by the university	.848	0.000*
6.	Qualification and status of the faculty	.816	0.000*
7.	Membership of professional bodies by the university	.786	0.000*
	<b>Innovativeness and resonance of the higher education institute</b>		
4.	Community perception about the status of university( civil governmental and private sectors)	.830	0.000*
5.	Visibility of the university in media	.777	0.000*
6.	Student’s feeling of belonging and loyalty to the university community	.820	0.000*
7.	A sense of internal community of faculty, staff and workers of belonging and loyalty to the University	.852	0.000*
	<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>		

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table (3.5) clarifies the correlation coefficient for each item of the “Influencing Touch points” and the total of the field. The p-values (Sig.) are less than 0.05, so the correlation coefficients of this field are significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , so it can be said that the items of this field are consistent and valid to be measure what it was set for.



### 3.11.2 Structure Validity of the Questionnaire

Structure validity is the second statistical test that used to test the validity of the questionnaire structure by testing the validity of each field and the validity of the whole questionnaire. It measures the correlation coefficient between one field and all the fields of the questionnaire.

**Table (3.6): Correlation coefficient of each field and the whole of questionnaire**

No.	Field	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	P-Value (Sig.)
1.	University's Reputation	.750	0.000*
2.	University Infrastructure	.814	0.000*
3.	Referrals	.701	0.000*
4.	Media Influence	.844	0.000*
5.	Placement Opportunities	.673	0.000*
6.	Fees and Location	.455	0.000*
	<b>Pre-admission Stage</b>	<b>.868</b>	<b>0.000*</b>
1.	Knowledge Enhancement	.815	0.000*
2.	Industry Interface	.896	0.000*
3.	Co-curricular Activities	.835	0.000*
4.	Learning Resources	.739	0.000*
	<b>During the Course Stage</b>	<b>.781</b>	<b>0.000*</b>
1.	Career Growth	.938	0.000*
2.	Alumni Involvement	.746	0.000*
	<b>Post-passing Stage</b>	<b>.838</b>	<b>0.000*</b>
1.	Innovativeness and resonance of the higher education institute	.978	0.000*
2.	Stakeholder Perception	.906	0.000*
	<b>Influencing Touch points</b>	<b>.707</b>	<b>0.000*</b>

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table (3.6) clarifies the correlation coefficient for each field and the whole questionnaire. The p-values (Sig.) are less than 0.05, so the correlation coefficients of all the fields are significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , so it can be said that the fields are valid to be measured what it was set for to achieve the main aim of the study.

### 3.12 Reliability of the Research

The reliability of an instrument is the degree of consistency which measures the attribute; it is supposed to be measuring (D. George & Mallery, 2006). The less variation an instrument produces in repeated measurements of an attribute, the higher its reliability. Reliability can be equated with the stability, consistency, or dependability of a measuring tool. The test is repeated to the same sample of people on two occasions and then compares the scores obtained by computing a reliability coefficient (D. George & Mallery, 2006). To insure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha should be applied.

#### 3.12.1 Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha

Cronbach's alpha (D. George & Mallery, 2006) is designed as a measure of internal consistency, that is, do all items within the instrument measure the same thing? The normal range of Cronbach's coefficient alpha value between 0.0 and + 1.0, and the higher values reflects a higher degree of internal consistency. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated for each field of the questionnaire.

**Table (3.7): Cronbach's Alpha for each field of the questionnaire**

No.	Field	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	Pre-admission Stage	0.900
2.	During the Course Stage	0.919
3.	Post-passing Stage	0.928
4.	Influencing Touch points	0.939
	<b>All items of the questionnaire</b>	<b>0.959</b>

Table (3.7) shows the values of Cronbach's Alpha for each field of the questionnaire and the entire questionnaire. For the fields, values of Cronbach's Alpha were in the range from 0.900 and 0.939. This range is considered high; the result ensures the reliability of each field of the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha equals 0.959 for the entire questionnaire which indicates an excellent reliability of the entire questionnaire.

Thereby, it can be said that the researcher proved that the questionnaire was valid, reliable, and ready for distribution for the population sample.

### 3.13 Test of normality

The One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test procedure compares the observed cumulative distribution function for a variable with a specified theoretical distribution, which may be normal, uniform, Poisson, or exponential. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z is computed from the largest difference (in absolute value) between the observed and theoretical cumulative distribution functions. This goodness-of-fit test tests whether the observations could reasonably have come from the specified distribution. Many parametric tests require normally distributed variables. The one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test can be used to test that a variable of interest is normally distributed (Thode, 2002).

**Table (3.8): Kolmogorov-Smirnov test**

Field	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
	Statistic	P-value
Pre-admission Stage	0.899	0.394
During the Course Stage	0.521	0.949
Post-passing Stage	0.484	0.973
Influencing Touch points	1.142	0.147
<b>All items of the questionnaire</b>	0.525	0.946

Table (3.8) shows the results for Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality. From table (3.8), the p-value for each variable is greater than 0.05 level of significance, then these variables are normally distributed. Consequently, parametric tests should be used to perform the statistical data analysis.

### 3.14 Conclusion

This chapter provided the description of the methodology which has been employed. The research design chosen for this study employed a questionnaire methodology, which is deemed the most convenient method for the required research. It

also provided a description of the study population and sampling that is considered. Both reliability and validity have been assured through the instrument design. It finally presented the statistical methods used in the analysis of results.

**Chapter 4**  
**Data Analysis and**  
**Discussion**

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter includes detailed description of the findings resulted from applying the statistical tests on the collected data from the questionnaires and discussion of the results with explanations for the meaning of these results. Also, it provides a clear idea about the respondents' demographic data, and provides the variance explained with SPSS tools. The collected data of the respondents presented and the findings will be described and discussed.

## 4.2 Analysis of Respondents Characteristics

In this section, the researcher describes and analyzes the respondent's personal traits (Graduation University, gender, Age, Year of graduation, Major, Years of work experience, family's income level). Each one of them is described and analyzed separately. The frequency and percentage for each variable is listed according to the survey categories. The researcher calculated frequencies and percentage of the sample 150 according to the variable of the research as shown in the following tables.

### 1. Graduation University

**Table (4.1): Graduation University**

Type and Location	Graduation university	Frequency	Percent
University, Palestine	IUG	95	63.3
University, Palestine	Al Azhar	17	11.3
University, Palestine	Al Aqsa	9	6.0
University College, Palestine	University College of Applied science	8	5.3
Open Education, Palestine	Al-Quds Open	7	4.7
University, Palestine	University of Palestine	5	3.3
University College, Palestine	Ribat University College	3	2.0
Open Education, Palestine	Al Ummah college	2	1.3
University, Tunis "Arabian"	Tunis El Manar	1	0.7
University, Egypt, "Arabian"	Alexandria University	1	0.7

Type and Location	Graduation university	Frequency	Percent
University, Palestine	Gaza University	1	0.7
University College, Palestine	University College of Science and Technology	1	0.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table (4.1) shows the Statistics of Graduation University. Frequencies and percentages of each university are shown in the table. 63.3 % of the sample study is from IUG and this is the highest percentage. The statistics also indicates that different students from different universities, colleges and countries prefer to continue their study for the Master degree in the IUG, for different reasons, and this indicates that IUG is a favorable place to study and to continue study. Also it indicates that students that were previously studying in IUG continue their education at the same university.

## 2. Gender

**Table (4.2): Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	99	66.0
Female	51	34.0
Total	150	100.0

The gender statistics in table (4.2) shows that 66.0% of the sample size is Males and 34.0% of the study sample are Females. This result is natural to present the population chosen, since the population is consisted of 74 females and 179 males. According to the sample size the statistics for males should be higher than females.

### 3. Age

**Table (4.3): Age**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than 30 years	80	53.3
Between 30 and 40 years	63	42.0
Between 41 and 50 years	6	4.0
Over 50 years	1	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table (4.3) shows the age statistics. The statistics indicate that the survey respondents are from different categories of age, but the majority of the respondents are under 40 years”.

Table (4.3) also shows that about 53.3% of respondents are almost began studying Master degree after finishing the bachelor degree , 42% of respondents began studying master after few years and about 4% began studying master at a later stage. This indicates the trend of youth to join Master programs directly. They are studying Master to develop their expertise and skills, which help them to either get jobs or improve their job status, also will help either in the professional or academic life. Also, the business field is growing and demanding higher levels of degrees that cope with the business and education life. Also the economic situation in Palestine may encourage youth to attain their MBA degree to enable them to pursue their higher education (ex. PHD degree) and to have a better job.

### 4. Under graduate Major classification

**Table (4.4): Under graduate Major classification**

<b>Under graduate Major classification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Commerce	102	68.0
Information Technology	13	8.7
Engineering	19	12.7
Arts	2	1.3
Science	4	2.7
Education	4	2.7
Other	6	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>



Table (4.4) shows the statistics for under graduate Major classification, 68% from respondents are studying commerce master degree and they are already graduated from the same faculty. These percentages indicate that the MBA program involves a variety of different faculties and backgrounds, although the majority is from the same background, this variety needs to be taken into consideration for both students and professors. Moreover, this may indicate that the MBA is desirable from different fields due to its importance. Most of the students they have managerial titles or ambitious to have, most of them are working in schools, hospitals, ministries and NGO's.

## 5. Year of graduation

**Table (4.5): Year of graduation**

<b>Year of graduation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
2005 and less	39	26.0
From 2006 to 2010	31	20.7
2011 and more	80	53.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The year of graduation statistics in table (4.5) shows that 53.3 % of the sample graduated from the year 2011 and above, 20.7% graduated from 2006 to 2010 and 26% from the year 2005 and less. This indicate that the majority of the sample are youth and after graduation they began studying Master, this statistics are related to the age part. This is also indicates that the choice of master degree stretches over a period of time, and can be made from the bachelor degree or before. The image of the higher education is already shaped and the students are more experienced to pursue the master degree in the same university.

## 6. Years of work experience

**Table (4.6): Years of work experience**

<b>Years of work experience</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No prior fulltime work experience	20	13.3
Less than 2 years	25	16.7
2 years to 5 years	35	23.3
More than 5 years	70	46.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table (4.6) shows that 46.7% of the sample has experience more than 5 years, 23.3% of the sample has experience between 2 years to 5 years, 16.7% of the sample has experience less than 2 years and 13.3% of the sample no prior fulltime work experience. This indicates that work experience varies between respondents and the majority is more than five years of experience, still there are 13.3 % are with no prior experience. The Master degree will help in finding a suitable job or for improving the person abilities, also improve their functional level and thus the financial one.

## 7. Family's Income level

**Table (4.7): Family's Income level**

<b>Income level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Low	4	2.7
Average	90	60.0
Above average	42	28.0
High	14	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table (4.7) shows the statistics for the Family's income level. The majority of respondents are average income level (60 % of the sample). This indicates that the Master program costs may not bear the low income level. The average and above average are the two highest percentages. The Master degree may help later in improving the living situation and the career advancement.

Here it could be noted that in Gaza, the low level income are the category of less than 1000 shekel in the month, average (1000 – 3000 shekel), above average (more than 3000-5000 shekel) and high level (more than 5000 shekel).

### 4.3 Criterion scale

In this research study the criterion scale used is shown in table (4.8) below.

**Table (4.8): Criterion scale**

Scale	Percentages
Very low	From 10% to 28%
Low	More than 28% to 46%
Medium	More than 46% to 64%
High	More than 64% to 82%
Very high	More than 82% to 100%

**Source: (Ozen, 2012)**

The table shows that if percentages of the respondents answers were ranging from 10% to 28% it indicates a “very low impact”, More than 28% to 46% “Low”, More than 46% to 64% “Medium”, More than 64% to 82% “High”, and More than 82% to 100% “Very high”.

### 4.4 Research Questions

**4.4.1 Question # 1: “To what extent the “pre-admission stage” touchpoints influence the brand building for the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG)?**

**Table (4.9): Means and Test values for “Pre-admission Stage”**

	Item	Mean	S.D	Proportional mean (%)	Test value	P-value (Sig.)	Rank
<b>➤ University’s Reputation</b>							
1.	Academic quality	7.74	1.66	77.45	12.86	0.000*	5
2.	Academic competitiveness compared to other universities	7.83	1.73	78.27	12.94	0.000*	4
3.	Availability of my major	8.16	2.01	81.60	13.14	0.000*	2
4.	Uniqueness of my course content (Study Plan for the semester courses)	7.29	1.85	72.87	8.53	0.000*	6
5.	Respect for the traditions and	8.37	2.01	83.73	14.50	0.000*	1

	Item	Mean	S.D	Proportional mean (%)	Test value	P-value (Sig.)	Rank
	religious activities						
6.	Compliance with regulations, laws, and the quality of the administrative system	8.11	1.87	81.13	13.81	0.000*	3
<b>All items of University's Reputation</b>		<b>7.92</b>	<b>1.42</b>	<b>79.18</b>	<b>16.60</b>	<b>0.000*</b>	
<b>➤ University Infrastructure</b>							
1.	Availability and quality of resources (computer, library, classes)	7.94	1.89	79.40	12.59	0.000*	1
2.	Availability of recreational facilities( athletic programs)	6.45	2.40	64.47	2.28	0.012*	3
3.	Residence hall environment at the university	7.45	1.84	74.53	9.69	0.000*	2
<b>All items of University Infrastructure</b>		<b>7.28</b>	<b>1.67</b>	<b>72.80</b>	<b>9.41</b>	<b>0.000*</b>	
<b>➤ Referrals</b>							
1.	My parents' advice	7.82	2.14	78.20	10.42	0.000*	1
2.	My friends' advice studying in the university	6.93	2.33	69.27	4.87	0.000*	2
3.	Alumni recommendation to this university	6.88	2.23	68.80	4.82	0.000*	3
4.	Number of alumni who obtained jobs in their fields after graduating from this university	6.43	2.22	64.30	2.37	0.010*	4
<b>All items of Referrals</b>		<b>7.02</b>	<b>1.74</b>	<b>70.15</b>	<b>7.14</b>	<b>0.000*</b>	
<b>➤ Media Influence</b>							
1.	Advertisements of the university in different media ( newspapers, magazines, TV)	6.56	2.32	65.60	2.95	0.002*	3
2.	University website	6.72	2.30	67.20	3.83	0.000*	2
3.	University rankings in various media	7.17	2.18	71.67	6.55	0.000*	1
4.	Impact of social networking pages (such as Facebook and Twitter )	6.29	2.70	62.91	1.31	0.096	4
<b>All items of Media Influence</b>		<b>6.68</b>	<b>2.07</b>	<b>66.75</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>0.000*</b>	
<b>➤ Placement Opportunities</b>							
1.	Opportunity for work - study positions at the university	5.13	2.59	51.34	-4.08	0.000*	3
2.	prospects of landing a job after graduating from this university	6.05	2.31	60.47	0.25	0.402	2
3.	opportunities I get to develop my professional skills	6.88	2.03	68.79	5.30	0.000*	1

	Item	Mean	S.D	Proportional mean (%)	Test value	P-value (Sig.)	Rank
<b>All items of Placement Opportunities</b>		<b>6.02</b>	<b>1.77</b>	<b>60.20</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>0.445</b>	
<b>➤ Fees and Location</b>							
1.	University is located in an area that is physically safe	7.55	2.10	75.47	9.01	0.000*	1
2.	University is located in a geographical area that has many attractions and entertainment facilities.	7.28	1.84	72.80	8.54	0.000*	2
3.	Total cost of attending this university	6.75	2.37	67.53	3.90	0.000*	3
<b>All items of Fees and Location</b>		<b>7.19</b>	<b>1.70</b>	<b>71.93</b>	<b>8.62</b>	<b>0.000*</b>	
<b>All items of the field</b>		<b>7.12</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>71.22</b>	<b>11.04</b>	<b>0.000*</b>	

\* The mean is significantly different from 6

**Table (4.9) shows the following results:**

**1. “Pre admission Stage”: 23 items “touchpoints” divided into six sub fields.**

❖ Six items measured the sub field “**University’s Reputation**”. The mean of the sub field equals 7.92 (79.18%), Test-value = 16.60, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents agreed to sub field of “University’s Reputation”. This indicates that all items are considered important and has a high impact in decision making. Reputation of the university could be a sign of quality and perceived competitiveness. The highest mean score (M = 8.37 (83.73%), Test-value = 14.5, and P-value = 0.000) is associated with the item #5 “Respect for the traditions and religious activities”. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this item is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6, which indicates that this factor influenced and motivated students to enroll to the university more than other factors as responses by MBA students. This also indicates that respecting traditions and religious activities have a high effect on the reputation of the university.

- ❖ Three items measured the sub field “**University Infrastructure**”. The mean of the sub field equals 7.28 (72.80%), Test-value = 9.41, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents agreed to sub field of “University Infrastructure”. This indicates the impact of the items of this field on the decision making to enroll, also media also can be used to communicate the university infrastructure such as the inside life of students from the overall environment to the recreational activities. The highest mean score (M = 7.94 (79.4%), Test-value = 12.59, and P-value = 0.000) is associated with the item #1“Availability and quality of resources (computer, library, classes”. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this item is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6, which indicates that this factor influenced students to enroll to the university, also students want to feel comfortable while studying, since education life is long period, quality of resources is required.
- ❖ Four items measured the sub field “**Referrals**”. The mean of the sub field equals 7.02 (70.15%), Test-value = 7.14, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. It can be conclude that the respondents agreed to sub field of “Referrals”. This reflects that influencers of student choice of HEI play a role in the HEI choice decision making process by swaying or persuading the student to choose a particular HEI. The role of parents, friends, and alumni in advising potential students are important since they are still in the beginnings, and the decision making process still in the awareness stage. Alumni students can provide the prospective students with valuable information about their potential university, since they are more experienced. This can be crucial to brand or recruitment strategists as they can target brand and other marketing information at them, in the hope that the information is used to influence the potential student’s choice. The highest mean score (M = 7.82 (78.2%), Test-value = 10.42, and P-value= 0.000 is associated with the item #1“parents’ advice”. The sign of the test is

positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. This indicates that parents are the most influential part and may reflect that the final decision is probably depending on their advice. Parents' role in supporting the decision of what university to enroll is considered of high relevant influencer.

❖ Four items measured “**Media Influence**” sub field. The mean of the sub field equals 6.68 (66.75%), Test-value = 4.00, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents agreed to sub field of “Media Influence”. This indicates the vital role of media of all its kinds in persuading students, media is an important tool since it can reach a high number and provide the needed information. Also, media which is the most vital communication factor that can be used for recruiting prospective students is of high consideration since students' knowledge base develops over time from this communication experience. The highest mean score ( $M = 7.17$  (71.67%), Test-value = 6.55, and P-value= 0.000, is associated with the item #3 “University rankings in various media”. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. This indicates that students are interested with the ranking of universities in various media; they are following media and grant it a high value. Also high ranking of universities are perceived by students as a way to be provided by solid education and may reflect high job paying prospects.

➤ Item # 4 “Impact of social networking pages (such as Facebook and Twitter)” with mean equals 6.29 (62.91%), Test-value = 1.31, and P-value= 0.096 which is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The mean of this item is insignificantly different than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents (Do not know, neutral) to this item. This indicates that social networking pages “electronic word of mouth” is not well directed as a consulted information source for university selection. Attention must be toward gaining advantage of this factor “touchpoint”. This is also may traced

back that respondents are from different age groups and also that social networking pages were not being founded in the past, so respondents did not observe it as a source of information.

❖ Three items measured “**Placement Opportunities**” sub field. The mean of the sub field equals 6.02 (60.20%), Test-value = 0.14, and P-value= 0.445 which is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The mean of this field is insignificantly different from the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents (Do not know, neutral) to field of “Placement Opportunities”. This indicates that there are reasons behind that MBA students are not sure about this field as an influencer of enrolling to the university. The highest mean score (M = 6.88 (68.79%), Test-value = 5.3, and P-value= 0.000, is associated with the item #3 “opportunities I get to develop my professional skills”. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. This indicates that students are motivated by the opportunity that they will gain to develop their professional skills, get personal advancements and some other potential outcomes.

- Item #1 “Opportunity for work- study positions at the university” with mean equals 5.13 (51.34%), Test-value = - 4.08, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  the sign of the test is negative, so the mean of this field is significantly smaller than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents disagreed to this item. This may reflect that the students don’t observe others that work while study at the university, and this is applicable in most universities.
- Item # 2 “prospects of landing a job after graduating from this university” with mean equals 6.05 (60.47%), Test-value = 0.25, and P-value= 0.402 which is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The mean of this item is insignificantly different than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents (Do not know, neutral) to this item. This indicates that the economic and political situation, market conditions play a vital role in the



minds of prospective and alumni students since the high unemployment rate in the country makes finding a job after graduation is a hard mission, so respondents (Do not know, neutral) to this item.

- ❖ Three items measured “**Fees and Location**” sub field. The mean of the sub field equals 7.19 (71.93%), Test-value = 8.62, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents agreed to sub field of “Fees and Location ”. This indicates the importance of the financial part of the process with the notion of financial situation, since most students are looking for an affordable university; also the location is important with the overall environment around it. The highest mean score (M = 7.55 (75.47%), Test-value = 9.01, and P-value= 0.000, is associated with the item #1“University is located in an area that is physically safe”. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. This indicates that safety location is the right for students, since absence of such area is counter to the very mission of higher education.
- ❖ **In general**, results to pre admission stage touchpoints are attractive and in line with the overall objective of the research study, in that HEIs are in a position that need to be provided by guidelines, help them to get access to the most difficult and important decision that prospective students are making, HEIs information about this stage is somewhat scarce. Also students put huge considerations on this stage since the service is intangible “experiential” and period of studying is a long one. This stage must be taking into critical analysis since its implications on the brand is vital.
- ❖ Results are consistent with (Kayombo & Carter, 2016) study which consider that teaching quality, fees, course availability, facilities, infrastructure, environment, print media, friends and parents recommendations as a vital touchpoints that influence prospective students choice of a university. Also consistent with (Moogan et al., 1999) for similar reasons and in which parents considered a vital

influencer in choosing a university, followed by friends, furthermore the role of the reputation considered as vital, the same as study of (Aghaz et al., 2015). It is also consistent with (Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009) regarding the reputation, environment, location, facilities , sports and libraries. Results are also consistent with (Mourad, 2011), (Cuicchi, 2014) study, in that reputation is vital factor. Ranking of a university is consistent with study of (Tas & Ergin, 2012) (Gade, 2014). Also consistent with (Gade, 2014) in that libraries, program content and alumni recommendation are important touchpoints . Quality of teaching, availability of the course is important factor consistent with study (Kim et al., 2012). The result of “Availability of recreational facilities “(athletic programs)” is consistent with (Chard et al., 2013) study which focuses on the athletics programs touchpoints. The result is consistent to the study of (ELBILBAISI, 2012) in which the reputation of the university encourage students to enroll and in which website played an important role in attracting students.

- ❖ Results are inconsistent with (Gade, 2014), (Moogan et al., 1999), (Mourad, 2011) and (Tas & Ergin, 2012) where post-graduation job and career prospects, opportunities in the labor market, the most prominent criteria and factors in the selection of universities. Also in consistent with (Kayombo & Carter, 2016) in that internet “media” influence is not considered as a factor, this may return to the nature of the country “developing one” which has an inadequate infrastructure or may failure to maintain their websites in a serviceable state. The result of the study (Khanna et al., 2014) where “Alumni and student recommendations, and soft and hard infrastructure” have a moderate impact. Also inconsistent with (Tas & Ergin, 2012) (Kim et al., 2012) where location was the lowest ranked.

❖ **Summary:**

**Table (4.10): Summary of the Pre admission stage results**

Sub Field	Percentages	T value	P value	Criterion	Conclusion
<b>University's Reputation</b>	79.18 %	16.60	.000	High	respondents agreed
<b>University Infrastructure</b>	72.8 %	9.41	.000	High	respondents agreed
<b>Fees and Location</b>	71.93 %	8.62	.000	High	respondents agreed
<b>Referrals</b>	70.15 %	7.14	.000	High	respondents agreed
<b>Media Influence</b>	66.75 %	4.00	.000	High	respondents agreed
<b>Placement Opportunities</b>	60.2 %	.14	.445	Medium	respondents do not know, neutral
<b>All items of the Field "Pre Admission Stage"</b>	71.22%	11.04	.000	High	respondents agreed

The table shows that the highest agreement from the respondents is for the university reputation sub field which includes mainly respect for the traditions and religious activities. Placement opportunities need attention from the university. Also Media could be enhanced to cope with different stages and touchpoints.

❖ **Hypothesis H1a** "Pre-admission stage touchpoints has statistical significant components on the brand building of the higher education institutions". Inferential statistics were conducted on the participants' responses to survey items, and the overall results were as follows:

Item	Mean	S.D	Proportional mean (%)	Test value	P-value (Sig.)
<b>All items of the field</b>	<b>7.12</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>71.22</b>	<b>11.04</b>	<b>0.000*</b>

The mean of the field "Pre-admission Stage" equals 7.12 (71.22%), Test-value = 11.04, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the

hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents agreed to field of “**Pre-admission Stage**”. This means that it could be concluded that overall items of the field are important criteria which respondents are looking for when enrolling to a university. This means that the university should take advantage from this information and articulated it in a way that will benefit the overall brand of the university. This stage as a component of the brand express the essential of taken it into deep consideration, since the reputation, infrastructure, media influence, referrals, fees , location and placement opportunities may cover the overall criteria that potential students are looking for.

#### 4.4.2 Question # 2: “To what extent “during the course stage” touchpoints influence the brand building for the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG)?”

**Table (4.11): Means and Test values for “During the Course Stage”**

	Item	Mean	S.D	Proportional mean (%)	Test value	P-value (Sig.)	Rank
<b>➤ Knowledge Enhancement</b>							
1.	Knowledge base of the faculty	7.39	1.52	73.87	11.18	0.000*	1
2.	Alumni interaction with the university	6.47	1.81	64.67	3.15	0.001*	3
3.	Teaching pedagogy which includes field assignments and case studies	6.55	1.98	65.47	3.38	0.000*	2
4.	Conferences and workshops	6.19	2.07	61.93	1.14	0.127	4
<b>All items of Knowledge Enhancement</b>		<b>6.65</b>	<b>1.47</b>	<b>66.48</b>	<b>5.42</b>	<b>0.000*</b>	
<b>➤ Industry Interface</b>							
1.	Interaction/online contact facility with alumni	5.57	2.48	55.67	-2.14	0.017*	1
2.	Interaction with professional experts such as (Seminars that keep pace the theoretical side with the practical side to the requirements of the labor market)	5.56	2.14	55.60	-2.52	0.006*	2
3.	Mentorship programs provided by alumni	5.39	2.35	53.93	-3.16	0.001*	4

	Item	Mean	S.D	Proportional mean (%)	Test value	P-value (Sig.)	Rank
4.	Career counseling programs that offer from the university	5.39	2.28	53.93	-3.26	0.001*	3
<b>All items of Industry Interface</b>		<b>5.48</b>	<b>2.10</b>	<b>54.78</b>	<b>-3.04</b>	<b>0.001*</b>	
<b>➤ Co-curricular Activities</b>							
1.	Opportunity to take part in university fests and competitions	5.68	2.45	56.80	-1.60	0.056	1
2.	Opportunity to organize university fests and events	5.10	2.45	51.00	-4.51	0.000*	2
<b>All items of Co-curricular Activities</b>		<b>5.39</b>	<b>2.30</b>	<b>53.90</b>	<b>-3.25</b>	<b>0.001*</b>	
<b>➤ Learning Resources</b>							
1.	Textbooks and reading material	7.05	2.18	70.47	5.88	0.000*	2
2.	Peer interaction	7.26	1.95	72.60	7.93	0.000*	1
3.	Scientific research databases available (e.g. Ebsco, Proquest, etc.)	6.53	2.57	65.30	2.52	0.006*	3
<b>All items of Learning Resources</b>		<b>6.94</b>	<b>1.80</b>	<b>69.38</b>	<b>6.38</b>	<b>0.000*</b>	
<b>All items of the field</b>		<b>6.16</b>	<b>1.52</b>	<b>61.61</b>	<b>1.30</b>	<b>0.097</b>	

\* The mean is significantly different from 6

**Table (4.11) shows the following results:**

**1. “During the Course Stage”: 13 items “touchpoints” divided into four sub fields.**

❖ Four items measured “**Knowledge Enhancement**” sub field. The mean of the sub field equals 6.65 (66.48%), Test-value = 5.42, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents agreed to sub field of “**Knowledge Enhancement**”. This indicates that the real base of learning and knowledge is agreed upon. The highest mean score (M = 7.39 (73.87%), Test-value = 11.18, and P-value = 0.000) is associated with the item #1 “**Knowledge base of the faculty**”. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this item is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. This indicates that respondents agreed to this item with a high level, students are

satisfied with the knowledge base of the faculty; this factor is considered as an added value to the brand. Also is considered as the highest rank in knowledge enhancement, this need to be taken into consideration and to reinforce it with more compelling, up to date materials, cases and workshops.

- Item # 4 “conferences and workshops” with mean equals 6.19 (61.93%), Test-value = 1.14, and P-value= 0.127 which is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  . The mean of this item is insignificantly different than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents (Do not know, neutral) to this item. This indicates that conferences and workshops are in need for enhancements and to be directed to students, this make a difference in their knowledge base and hence, advancing for both the educational and professional life.
- ❖ Four items measured “**Industry Interface**” sub field. The mean of the sub field equals 5.48 (54.78%), Test-value = -3.04, and P-value= 0.001 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  . The sign of the test is negative, so the mean of this field is significantly smaller than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents disagreed to sub field of “Industry Interface ”. This indicates dissatisfaction toward the most important factor that considered a vital by students for personal development, educational growth and in career performance. Connection the educational life with the professional one provides solid evidence that the university is observing the needs and efforts of students toward more enhanced career outcomes. This connection helps in creating higher education brands.
- ❖ The mean of the sub field “**Co-curricular Activities**” equals 5.39 (53.90%), Test-value = -3.25, and P-value= 0.001 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  . The sign of the test is negative, so the mean of this field is significantly smaller than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents disagreed to sub field of “Co-curricular Activities ”. Different touchpoints are considered as an experience in the university life. Education life is not directed to only lectures and books, co-curricular activities complement what students are

learning. Students perceptions are diverse, co-curricular activities support intellectual, emotional, social, moral, creative and physical development, it also enhance commitment and loyalty. The results of this vital touchpoints need to be improved and encouraged since the overall experience students get will add positively to the brand.

- ❖ Three items measured “**Learning Resources**” sub field. The mean of the sub field equals 6.94 (69.38%), Test-value = 6.38, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents agreed to sub field of “Learning Resources ”. This indicates that respondents are satisfied with different kinds of learning resources whether textbooks available at the library or online databases or through Peer interactions. The highest mean score (M = 7.26 (72.6%), Test-value = 7.93, and P-value = 0.000) is associated with the item # 2 “Peer Interaction”. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this item is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. This indicates that respondents agreed to this item with a high level. This indicates the importance of the social relations of the students. Learning through interactions with others is vital. Not all students excel academically; they may get help through interactions. Although other items such as the textbooks and online sources are of a high importance, still peer interaction is ranked higher by students. This reflects the university role to enhance and facilitate the appropriate support, maybe through senior alumni interactions.
- ❖ Each touchpoint that add value to your brand should be utilized. Study material, need to be coping with real world industry. Students are looking forward to succeed in the career life, so university role should be directed toward providing, for example, seminars that keep pace the theoretical side with the practical one through professional experts, interaction and mentorship programs by alumni and university side. Moreover, considering students as the university partners as they take part in the process of the development and university fests, competitions and events, is

needed at a high level, since students emotional and social ties to the university is crucial for the long term satisfaction that lead to loyalty and commitment. Recognizing that students' attitudes, beliefs, values and requirements may vary is vital and need hard work.

- ❖ This stage is where the real experience is lived by students; the brand is something exists more in the mind of students. Here are what you as a university “stands for” in terms of values and characteristics and how you are perceived. Learn how your students perceive your brand and how they think you perform at each touchpoint, this help in where should the university focus. Each touchpoint will add positively to the whole added value of the brand. As (Draپیńska, 2012), pointed out an education service typically lasts several years over the course of which a university has a chance to undertake appropriate activities to earn students loyalty.
- ❖ Results are consistent with (Khanna et al., 2014) study where knowledge enhancement satisfactory indicator with a high level. Also results are consistent with (Abbas, 2014) study in which extracurricular activities should be increased, the fact that extracurricular activities add a lot to University's familiarity. Results also consistent with (Cuicchi, 2014) study where colleagues are friendly and support group work, also about the teaching quality in which respondents are satisfied with those experiences.
- ❖ Results are inconsistent with (Khanna et al., 2014) study where learning resources and co-curricular activities are of moderate impact. Also inconsistent with (Cuicchi, 2014) regarding the conferences, workshops and seminars which students experienced them very high, the opposite is experienced in this research where students were neutral/ don't know. Also regarding (Cuicchi, 2014) study respondents are satisfied with mentorship programs. (ELBILBAISI, 2012) study respondents are disagreed to the knowledge base of the faculty, which is inconsistent with this research where respondents are satisfied and rank it the highest. Also results are inconsistent with (ELBILBAISI, 2012) study in which workshops and linking theory and practice are agreed by respondents.



❖ **Summary:**

**Table (4.12): Summary of the during the course stage results**

Sub Field	Percentages	Test value	P value	Criterion	Conclusion
Learning Resources	69.38 %	6.38	.000	High	respondents agreed
Knowledge Enhancement	66.48 %	5.42	.000	High	respondents agreed
Industry Interface	54.78 %	- 3.04	.001	Medium	respondents disagreed
Co-curricular activities	53.9 %	- 3.25	.001	Medium	respondents disagreed
All items of the Field “During the Course Stage”	61.61%	1.30	.097	Medium	respondents do not know, neutral

The table shows that the highest agreement and satisfaction from respondent is for the sub field” learning resources”, so the overall image is observed, and the disagreements are shown. Knowledge enhancement can be made more compelling and effective. The fields of disagreements need major emphasis.

❖ **Hypothesis H1b** “During the course stage touchpoints has statistical significant components on the brand building of the higher education institutions”. Inferential statistics were conducted on the participants’ responses to survey items, and the overall results were as follows:

Item	Mean	S.D	Proportional mean (%)	Test value	P-value (Sig.)
All items of the field	6.16	1.52	61.61	1.30	0.097

The mean of the field “**During the Course Stage**” equals 6.16 (61.61%), Test-value = 1.30, and P-value= 0.097 which is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The mean of this field is insignificantly different than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents (Do not know, neutral) to field of “**During the Course Stage**”. This means that this stage is not being agreed to all its sub fields.

Overall items need to be observed well, since the satisfaction of the students is the goal of perceived strong brand. So the university observed what are the needed improvements and begin to adopt.

#### 4.4.3 Question # 3: “To what extent “post passing stage” touchpoints influence the brand building for the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG)?”

**Table (4.13): Means and Test values for “Post-passing Stage”**

	Item	Mean	S.D	Proportional mean (%)	Test value	P-value (Sig.)	Rank
<b>➤ Career Growth</b>							
1.	Ability to continuously update graduates knowledge base	6.09	2.31	60.87	0.46	0.323	9
2.	Reduce dependency on other employees	6.39	2.06	63.87	2.30	0.012*	6
3.	Development of one’s capability of gathering correct information	6.38	2.09	63.80	2.23	0.014*	7
4.	Improvement in your managerial and decision making skills	6.67	1.93	66.67	4.24	0.000*	2
5.	Improves ability of constant learning by virtue of being part of university community	6.83	1.85	68.33	5.52	0.000*	1
6.	Qualitative growth in career status	6.53	1.93	65.33	3.38	0.000*	4
7.	Ability to get access to more creative ideas	6.51	1.89	65.07	3.29	0.001*	5
8.	Helps to perform better in the job function	6.59	2.02	65.87	3.56	0.000*	3
9.	Ability to get new job opportunities	6.19	2.20	61.93	1.08	0.142	8
<b>All items of Career Growth</b>		<b>6.46</b>	<b>1.71</b>	<b>64.64</b>	<b>3.32</b>	<b>0.001*</b>	
<b>➤ Alumni Involvement</b>							
1.	Involving senior alumni in the admission process	4.73	2.74	47.27	-5.69	0.000*	3
2.	Involving senior alumni in the academic process	4.79	2.69	47.93	-5.50	0.000*	2
3.	Continuing the relationship with alumni by the university through seminars or trips	4.57	2.68	45.70	-6.51	0.000*	1
<b>All items of Alumni Involvement</b>		<b>4.70</b>	<b>2.51</b>	<b>46.97</b>	<b>-6.37</b>	<b>0.000*</b>	
<b>All items of the field</b>		<b>6.02</b>	<b>1.68</b>	<b>60.23</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.435</b>	

\* The mean is significantly different from 6

**Table (4.13) shows the following results:**

- ❖ Nine items measured “**Career Growth**” sub field. The mean of the sub field equals 6.46 (64.64%), Test-value = 3.32, and P-value= 0.001 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents agreed to sub field of “Career Growth ”. The highest mean score (M = 6.38 (68.33%), Test-value = 5.52, and P-value = 0.000) is associated with the item #5 “Improves ability of constant learning by virtue of being part of university community”. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this item is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. This indicates the role of being part of the university community and what it provides of constant learning in the career life. Learning never ends and this requires constant follow up from the university side to maintain the relationship.
  - Item # 1 “Ability to continuously update graduates knowledge base” with mean equals 6.09 (60.87%), Test-value = .46, and P-value= 0.323 which is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  . The mean of this item is insignificantly different than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents (Do not know, neutral) to this item. This indicates that graduates are not well followed up and updating their knowledge base by the university. Being in the professional life, demands being knowledgably up to date, to better perform.
  - Item # 9 “Ability to get new job opportunities” with mean equals 6.19 (61.93%), Test-value = 1.08, and P-value= 0.142 which is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  . The mean of this item is insignificantly different than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents (Do not know, neutral) to this item. This indicates the difficulty in getting new job opportunity; this may traced back to the general situation that Gaza citizens are passing through.

- ❖ Three items measured “**Alumni Involvement**” sub field. The mean equals 4.70 (46.97%), Test-value = - 6.37, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The sign of the test is negative, so the mean of this sub field is significantly smaller than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents disagreed to sub field of “Alumni Involvement ”. This indicates that the university is lack its efforts to continue the relationship with alumni. Engaging students and specially alumni is of high appropriate touchpoint that affect the quality of the mutual relationship that affect satisfaction, loyalty and hence positive word of mouth and general reputation of the university. The degree to which students are integrated into a university’s environment and involved in its academic life and extra activities will affect quality of the relationship and loyalty.
- ❖ **In general:** every touchpoint is an interaction and contact between the student and the university. Heslop and Nadeau (2010), pointed out that branding is about delivering on desired outcomes, it involves the development of a set of expectations about desired outcomes in the mind of the buyer (student) that differentiates the brand from its competitors. So the relationship with students should never ends whenever they are graduated, post passing stage touchpoints are vital and add a lot to the overall brand strength of the university.
- ❖ **Results are consistent with** (Khanna et al., 2014) study where “career growth” satisfactory indicator with a high estimate and in which “Alumni Involvement is very low estimate.
- ❖ **Results are inconsistent with** (Cuicchi, 2014) study in which the students of NOVA SBE being recruits by a lot of companies. This contradict findings of this research where respondents are neutral/ don’t know about finding a new job.

❖ **Summary:**

**Table (4.14): Summary of the Post passing stage results**

Sub Field	Percentages	Criterion	Test value	P value	Conclusion
<b>Career Growth</b>	64.64 %	High	3.32	.001	respondents agreed
<b>Alumni Involvement</b>	46.97 %	Almost low	- 6.37	.000	respondents disagreed
<b>All items of the Field “Post Passing Stage”</b>	60.23%	Medium	.17	.435	respondents do not know, neutral

The table shows respondents agreements and disagreements. Alumni involvement sub field need improvements, alumni considered important to the university so relationship need to be continued. So, by positively and consistently influencing the various critical variables at the pre, during and post stages, the strength of the higher education institute can be enhanced, thus creating a virtuous cycle of brand strength.

❖ **Hypothesis H1c** “Post passing stage touchpoints has statistical significant components on the brand building of the higher education institutions”. Inferential statistics were conducted on the participants’ responses to survey items, and the overall results were as follows:

Item	Mean	S.D	Proportional mean (%)	Test value	P-value (Sig.)
<b>All items of the field</b>	<b>6.02</b>	<b>1.68</b>	<b>60.23</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.435</b>

The mean of the field “**Post-passing Stage**” equals 6.02 (60.23%), Test-value = 0.17, and P-value= 0.435 which is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The mean of this field is insignificantly different than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents (Do not know, neutral) to field of “**Post-passing Stage**”. It can be concluded that this stage items are not totally agreed by respondents, the best possible ways in which an institute could remain in touch with its alumni considered essential and will develop a positive symbiotic relationship, thus building the brand strength of management education brand.

**4.4.4 Question # 4: “To what extent the influencing touchpoints strengthen the brand building for the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG)?”**

**Table (4.15): Means and Test values for “Influencing Touch points”**

	Item	Mean	S.D	Proportional mean (%)	Test value	P-value (Sig.)	Rank
<b>➤ Innovativeness and resonance of the higher education institute</b>							
1.	Accreditation by national and international bodies	7.79	2.43	77.92	9.00	0.000*	1
2.	Facilities provided and the output of research work done	7.21	2.33	72.07	6.34	0.000*	3
3.	Consultancy services provided by the university	7.00	2.21	70.00	5.52	0.000*	6
4.	Strategic alliances with national and international universities	6.89	2.32	68.93	4.70	0.000*	7
5.	Executive and management development programs designed and conducted by the university	7.03	2.07	70.33	6.10	0.000*	5
6.	Qualification and status of the faculty	7.56	1.80	75.60	10.63	0.000*	2
7.	Membership of professional bodies by the university	7.19	2.00	71.88	7.23	0.000*	4
<b>All items of Innovativeness and resonance of the higher education institute</b>		<b>7.24</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>72.36</b>	<b>8.23</b>	<b>0.000*</b>	
<b>➤ Stakeholder Perception</b>							
1.	Community perception about the status of university( civil governmental and private sectors)	7.92	2.05	79.20	11.48	0.000*	1
2.	Visibility of the university in media	7.73	2.15	77.27	9.83	0.000*	2
3.	Student’s feeling of belonging and loyalty to the university community	7.34	2.24	73.40	7.32	0.000*	4
4.	A sense of internal community of faculty, staff and workers of belonging and loyalty to the University	7.58	2.04	75.81	9.43	0.000*	3
<b>All items of Stakeholder Perception</b>		<b>7.64</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>76.36</b>	<b>10.79</b>	<b>0.000*</b>	
<b>All items of the field</b>		<b>7.38</b>	<b>1.75</b>	<b>73.81</b>	<b>9.68</b>	<b>0.000*</b>	

\* The mean is significantly different from 6

**Table (4.15) shows the following results:**

- ❖ Seven items measured **“Innovativeness and resonance of the higher education institute”** sub field. The mean of the sub field equals 7.24 (72.36%), Test-value = 8.23, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents agreed to sub field of “Innovativeness and resonance of the higher education institute ”. The highest mean score (M = 7.79 (77.92%), Test-value = 9, and P-value = 0.000) is associated with the item #1 “Accreditation by national and international bodies”. The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this item is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. This indicates that students perceive the accreditation as having a high impact on the strength of the brand building of HEIs. Being in an accreditation university means a valuable learning experiences, maintain standards of educational quality agreed upon, embarking on an exciting career path and being able to study abroad as a recognized university. All other items of the field are of a high impact.
- ❖ Four items measured **“Stakeholder Perception”** sub field. The mean of the sub field equals 7.64 (76.36%), Test-value = 10.79, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents agreed to sub field of “Stakeholder Perception ”. This indicates the prominence impact of the whole community on the strength of the brand. Whether addressing the governmental, private, media, students, faculty, staff, workers and whole internal and external community of the university, all are vital and perceived by students as having a high impact on the strength of the brand. Sense of belonging and loyalty of the internal community of the university is vital and considered as an added value and a source of competitive advantage over others, they are the assets and ambassadors of your university.

- ❖ Overall results of the field **“influencing touchpoints”** are agreed by respondents. The fact that brand of the university is trying to communicate with inside and outside community. All items of the field are perceived by respondents as a high impact toward the brand of the university. The goal is to try to close the gap of the overall community from management, faculty members, departments, students, outside community. Accreditation, facilities of research, consultancy services, strategic alliances, development programs, faculty qualifications and membership of professional bodies, are ways that add a lot to the brand, these are touchpoints with the inside and outside community that reflect the quality of the institution. Moreover, all community perceptions and the loyalty from the inside members is also vital to the overall brand strength. All of that is hard to be communicated without the power of the media of all kinds, the fact that the world is connecting and communicating through a wide range of media. Today, it is hard to be recognized and succeed without being part of the media nationally and also try to reach the international one. Word of mouth that is communicated through media is influential touchpoints.
- Results are consistent with (Tas & Ergin, 2012) (Mourad, 2011) (Khanna et al., 2014) studies where the overall items of Innovativeness and resonance are of high impact to the brand. Also consistent with (Baron et al., 2009) study in that employees commitment and loyalty will influence the brand positively. Also, consistent with (Shahaida et al., 2009), in that perceived brand aims to build stakeholder satisfaction, defined by two constructs – major and minor stakeholders. Management strives to maximize stakeholder satisfaction. The major stakeholders are student, faculty and corporate, while minor stakeholders are society and government, administrative staff, and media. It will provide an insight into the various parameters on which a brand has to be built.
- Results are inconsistent with (Khanna et al., 2014) in that stakeholder’s perception may have a moderate impact, with low loadings.



❖ **Summary:**

**Table (4.16): Summary of the Influencing touchpoints results**

Sub Field	Percentages	Test value	P value	Criterion	Conclusion
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	76.36 %	10.79	.000	High	respondents agreed
<b>Innovativeness and Resonance</b>	72.36 %	8.23	.000	High	respondents agreed
<b>All items of the Field “Influencing touchpoints”</b>	73.81%	9.68	.000	High	respondents agreed

The table shows that all items of the field are perceived high by participants. The university role is to be able to articulate all the items in a way that will benefit the overall strength of the brand. Those influencing touchpoints are important and vital.

❖ **Hypothesis H2** “Influencing touchpoints has provided the brand building of the higher education institutions with perceived value added”. Inferential statistics were conducted on the participants’ responses to survey items, and the overall results were as follows:

Item	Mean	S.D	Proportional mean (%)	Test value	P-value (Sig.)
<b>All items of the field</b>	<b>7.38</b>	<b>1.75</b>	<b>73.81</b>	<b>9.68</b>	<b>0.000*</b>

The mean of the field “**Influencing Touch points**” equals 7.38 (73.81%), Test-value = 9.68, and P-value= 0.000 which is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The sign of the test is positive, so the mean of this field is significantly greater than the hypothesized value 6. It can be concluded that the respondents agreed to field of “**Influencing Touch points**”. This means that all items of the field are perceived by respondents as a factors that add value to the overall brand strength, so Care should also be taken to manage the overall influencing touchpoints such as stakeholder perception of the brand, perceived innovativeness of the brand with activities like

research, continued executive education and continuous quality enhancement through accreditation by various national and international bodies etc.

**4.4.5 Question # 5: Are there statistical significant differences among participants due to personal traits (Graduation University, gender, Age, Year of graduation, Major, Years of work experience, family’s income level).**

A univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to assess if there were differences in respondents answers. For gender variable, Independent Samples T-test was conducted. Test values and values (sig) are shown in the following tables.

**4.4.5.1 Graduation University**

**Table (4.17): ANOVA test of the fields and their p-values for Graduation University**

No.	Field	Means			Test Value	Sig.
		Al Azhar	IUG	Others		
1.	Pre-admission Stage	6.47	7.23	7.14	2.766	0.066
2.	During the Course Stage	5.54	6.15	6.47	2.261	0.108
3.	Post-passing Stage	5.87	5.98	6.20	0.308	0.735
4.	Influencing Touch points	7.14	7.43	7.38	0.193	0.825
	<b>All items of the questionnaire</b>	6.27	6.77	6.85	1.420	0.245

Table (4.17) shows that the p-value (Sig.) is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  for each field, then there is insignificant difference among the respondents toward each field due to graduation university. It can be concluded that the graduation university has no effect on each field. This may traced back to the fact that the majority of students are from the same university “IUG”.

**4.4.5.2 Gender**

**Table (4.18): Independent Samples T-test of the fields and their p-values for gender**

No.	Field	Means		Test Value	Sig.
		Male	Female		
1.	Pre-admission Stage	7.23	6.92	1.443	0.151
2.	During the Course Stage	6.12	6.24	-0.479	0.632
3.	Post-passing Stage	6.06	5.95	0.374	0.709
4.	Influencing Touch points	7.50	7.14	1.196	0.234
	<b>All items of the questionnaire</b>	6.80	6.61	0.851	0.396

Table (4.18) shows that the p-value (Sig.) is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  for each field, then there is insignificant difference among the respondents toward each field due to gender. It can be concluded that the gender has no effect on each field. This may indicate that perceptions of both genders toward the touchpoints are the same. The reason may traced back to the nearly the same environment, learning, teaching, and communication are provided to them.

#### 4.4.5.3 Age

**Table (4.19): ANOVA test of the fields and their p-values for age**

No.	Field	Means			Test Value	Sig.
		Less than 30 years	Between 30 and 40 years	Over 40 years		
1.	Pre-admission Stage	7.21	6.94	7.80	1.964	0.144
2.	During the Course Stage	6.15	5.99	7.79	4.664	0.011*
3.	Post-passing Stage	5.97	5.93	7.40	2.551	0.081
4.	Influencing Touch points	7.20	7.47	8.68	2.479	0.087
	<b>All items of the questionnaire</b>	6.72	6.62	7.88	3.369	0.037*

\* The mean difference is significant a 0.05 level

Table (4.19) shows that the p-value (Sig.) is smaller than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  for the field “During the Course Stage”, then there is significant difference among the respondents toward this field due to age. It can be concluded that age has an effect on this field. The result is logical because different age respondents have its own needs, concerns, aspirations and vision. Also during the course is a dynamic period where students observe things differently and the youth are more demanding and their needs and interests is different from others.

- For field “During the Course Stage”, The mean for the category " Over 40 years " respondents have the highest among the other age category, then it can be concluded that the category " Over 40 years " respondents is agreed much more than the other age category. The result may indicate that this age group has its own characteristics and interests where other age groups don't have, youth needs more interaction with the university and they are more active. Youth may need more communications,

workshops, conferences, also they may need more interactions with professional experts and to be up to date with labor market, they also need more activities and events to feel that they are having opportunities in participating in such activities.

- For the other fields, the p-value (Sig.) is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ , then there is insignificant difference among the respondents toward these fields due to age. It can be concluded that the age has no effect on the other fields.

#### 4.4.5.4 Under graduate major classification

**Table (4.20): ANOVA test of the fields and their p-values for under graduate major classification**

No.	Field	Means				Test Value	Sig.
		Commerce	Information Technology	Engineering	Other		
1.	Pre-admission Stage	7.18	7.32	6.66	7.11	1.056	0.370
2.	During the Course Stage	6.25	6.41	5.57	6.10	1.226	0.303
3.	Post-passing Stage	6.13	6.40	5.23	5.97	1.803	0.149
4.	Influencing Touch points	7.34	7.66	7.14	7.70	0.432	0.730
	<b>All items of the questionnaire</b>	6.79	7.00	6.22	6.76	1.377	0.252

Table (4.20) shows that the p-value (Sig.) is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  for each field, then there is insignificant difference among the respondents toward each field due to under graduate major classification. It can be concluded that the under graduate major classification has no effect on each field. This may traced back to the fact that the majority of the undergraduate major, are the faculty of commerce.

#### 4.4.5.5 Year of graduation

**Table (4.21): ANOVA test of the fields and their p-values for year of graduation**

No.	Field	Means			Test Value	Sig.
		2005 and less	From 2006 - 2010	2011 and more		
5.	Pre-admission Stage	7.03	7.01	7.21	0.435	0.648
6.	During the Course Stage	6.05	6.04	6.26	0.350	0.705
7.	Post-passing Stage	6.13	6.04	5.96	0.142	0.868
8.	Influencing Touch points	7.72	7.54	7.15	1.554	0.215
	<b>All items of the questionnaire</b>	6.76	6.70	6.74	0.024	0.976

Table (4.21) shows that the p-value (Sig.) is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  for each field, then there is insignificant difference among the respondents toward each field due to year of graduation. It can be concluded that the year of graduation has no effect on each field. This may indicate that perception of the MBA students are the same and year of graduation didn't affect the perceptions. Also it may be traced back that the majority of the sample are youth.

#### 4.4.5.6 Years of work experience

**Table (4.22): ANOVA test of the fields and their p-values for years of work experience**

No.	Field	Means				Test Value	Sig.
		No prior fulltime work experience	Less than 2 years	2 years to 5 years	More than 5 years		
1.	Pre-admission Stage	6.68	7.32	7.21	7.13	1.133	0.338
2.	During the Course Stage	5.71	6.06	6.26	6.28	0.799	0.497
3.	Post-passing Stage	5.21	6.28	6.13	6.11	1.911	0.130
4.	Influencing Touch points	6.92	7.41	7.40	7.49	0.553	0.647
	<b>All items of the questionnaire</b>	6.21	6.85	6.82	6.80	1.396	0.247

Table (4.22) shows that the p-value (Sig.) is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  for each field, then there is insignificant difference among the respondents toward each field due to years of work experience. It can be concluded that the years of work experience has no effect on each field. This may be traced back to that the majority of MBA students have a prior work experience.

#### 4.4.5.7 Family's income level

**Table (4.23): ANOVA test of the fields and their p-values for income level**

No.	Field	Means				Test Value	Sig.
		Low	Average	Above average	High		
1.	Pre-admission Stage	7.22	7.11	7.10	7.22	0.044	0.988
2.	During the Course Stage	6.27	6.19	6.06	6.26	0.096	0.962
3.	Post-passing Stage	7.27	5.88	6.13	6.23	1.069	0.364
4.	Influencing Touch points	7.25	7.41	7.35	7.32	0.029	0.993
	<b>All items of the questionnaire</b>	7.03	6.72	6.72	6.83	0.107	0.956

Table (4.23) shows that the p-value (Sig.) is greater than the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  for each field, then there is insignificant difference among the respondents toward each field due to income level. It can be concluded that the family's income level has no effect on each field. This may be traced back to that the majority of MBA students are working and so not depending on the family income, also it may due to that the touchpoints are not directly linked to the income level.

- The results of the demographic section is inconsistent with (Bock et al., 2014) study in that there are differences between students due to personal traits.
- The results are consistent with (Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009) study where there is no significant differences emerged in terms of the personal traits of students. Also overall results are consistent with (Aghaz et al., 2015) study regarding that there are no differences between students regarding gender and the undergraduate university.

**Chapter 5**  
**Conclusions &**  
**Recommendations**

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusions & Recommendations**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In chapter five an explanation of the results, including a discussion and implications of these findings were presented. This chapter reviews the conclusions of the findings of the study, also recommendations are presented. Finally, the future research thoughts are listed.

#### **5.2 Conclusion and findings of the Study**

This research investigated the brand building of higher education institutions, with the MBA of IUG perceptions, the different stages and touchpoints were considered. Pre, during, post and influencing touchpoints were investigated and research respondents answers were discussed.

From the findings that were presented in the previous chapter, the most notable conclusions are:

##### **5.2.1 First: Pre admission stage touchpoints**

Results to pre admission stage touchpoints are attractive and in line with the overall objective of the research study, in that HEIs are in a position that need to be provided by guidelines, help them to get access to the most difficult and important decision that prospective students are making, HEIs information about this stage is somewhat scarce. In this stage awareness, interests and considerations are built.

1. Overall items of the “pre admission stage touchpoints” were agreed by respondents and have a high level of impact. Overall items were important criteria which respondents are looking for when enrolling to a university. This means that IUG



should take advantage from this information and articulated it in a way that will benefit the overall brand of the university.

2. “University’s Reputation” has a high level of impact to enroll to a university from the perception of the respondents. Reputation of the university could be a sign of quality and perceived competitiveness. All items of this sub field have a high level of impact to the university reputation and hence to the pre admission stage, so in a result affect the overall brand strength of the university. The highest mean item was “Respect for the traditions and religious activities”.
3. “University Infrastructure” has a high level of impact to enroll to a university from the perception of the respondents. Availability and quality of resources, availability of recreational facilities ( athletic programs) and residence hall environment at the university all considered as having a high level of impact.
4. “Referrals” also have a high level of impact to enroll to a university from the perception of the respondents. The role of parents, friends, and alumni in advising potential students are important since they are still in the beginnings, and the decision making process still in the awareness stage. Alumni students can provide the prospective students with valuable information about their potential university, since they are more experienced. Parents’ role in supporting the decision of what university to enroll is considered of high relevant influencer with regard to respondents perceptions.
5. “Media Influence” has a high level of impact to enroll to a university from the perception of the respondents. The role of media is vital, since this era is the social media one. Students are interested with the ranking of universities in various media. Impact of social networking pages were neutral by respondents, this indicates that social networking pages “electronic word of mouth” is not well directed as a consulted information source for university selection.
6. “Placement Opportunities” have a medium level of impact to enroll to a university from the perception of the respondents. There were items agreed, disagreed ,and neutral by respondents. “opportunities I get to develop my professional skills” item

was agreed, “Opportunity for work- study positions at the university” item was disagreed, “prospects of landing a job after graduating from this university” item was neutral by respondents. knowledge about market conditions and situation might being considered by respondents, the fact that they are more experienced and answers are being influenced by this experience.

7. “Fees and location” has a high level of impact to enroll to a university from the perception of the respondents. The fees to attend the university is of high impact to enroll, this financial part is important for many students and a lot of considerations are put to this part. Safety location is the right for students; also the geographical area that has many attractions and entertainment facilities is important, the general environment is vital.

### **5.2.1 Second: During the course stage touchpoints**

This stage clarified the students perceptions and the real experience as being day by day interacting and studying in the university. In this stage assessment of the strength and weaknesses points were clarified, the university must be able to articulate it's unique features and communicate them effectively through compelling touchpoints. Evaluations of the students are of a high importance, since the overall image of the university is being evaluated by them.

1. Overall result of the field indicate that the level of satisfaction by respondents toward the touchpoints need to be taken into real attention. Result of the field was neutral by respondents, indicating that experience of this stage needs care.
2. “Knowledge Enhancement” has a high level of satisfaction by respondents, with the highest satisfaction was toward “Knowledge base of the faculty”. Conferences and workshops in the university was neutral and need caution.
3. “Industry Interface” items was disagreed by respondents indicating dissatisfaction. Connection the educational life with the professional one is an important touchpoint and indicating care of the university toward the future career of the students.

4. “Co-curricular Activities” items was disagreed by respondents indicating dissatisfaction. The importance of social interaction and engagement in the different activities and events of the university will tight the relationship between the students and their university.
5. “Learning Resources” has a high level of satisfaction and agreed by respondents so the bases of the learning is available. The peer interaction has the highest scores and indicating the good interaction and exchanging knowledge between them. It can be concluded that superior learning experience and emotional ties for students reflects the sign of quality and reputation of the university brand.

### **5.2.3 Third: Post passing stage touchpoints**

The best possible ways in which a university could remain in touch with it's alumni, and how they are feeling of pride and satisfaction after passing out from the university are reflecting the brand of the university. It's the pride of where did you get your degree?.

1. Overall results of the field “Post-passing Stage” were not totally agreed by respondents. Brand building can't be bought, it is not an easy task, it relates to what students experience and what stabilize in their minds. A promising future is considered invaluable touchpoint.
2. “Career Growth” has a high value by respondents, the fact that university life is the basic stones for a promising future that is articulated by a promising career. How the university provides the constant learning in the career life , follow up and maintain the relationship is vital touchpoints.
3. “Alumni Involvement” has almost a low rated level by respondents. Engaging students and specially alumni is of high appropriate touchpoint that affect the quality of the mutual relationship that affect satisfaction, loyalty and hence positive word of mouth and general reputation of the university.

#### **5.2.4 Fourth: Influencing touchpoints**

Impression of the brand from students perception is vital, university role is to take advantage from those perceptions as a supportive feedback and a tool of competitive advantage.

1. All items of the field are perceived high by respondents as a factors that add value to the overall brand strength.
2. “Innovativeness and resonance of the higher education institute” has a high level of impact to the overall brand of the university. Accreditation, facilities of research, consultancy services, strategic alliances, development programs, faculty qualifications and membership of professional bodies, are ways that add a lot to the brand, these are touchpoints with the inside and outside community that reflect the quality of the institution.
3. “Stakeholder Perception”: the prominence impact of the whole community on the strength of the brand is of vital importance. Whether addressing the governmental, private, media, students, faculty, staff, workers and whole internal and external community of the university, all are vital and perceived by students as having a high impact on the strength of the brand.

#### **5.2.5 Fifth: Respondents personal traits**

The majority of the respondents are graduated from the IUG, of age under 40 years, from faculty of commerce as their undergraduate major classification, fresh graduates, having a prior work experience, and from an average family income level.

1. There was insignificant difference among the respondents toward each field due (graduation university, gender, under graduate major classification, year of graduation, years of work experience and income level), these personal traits has no effect on each field.
2. There was significant difference among the respondents toward “during the course stage” due to age. The mean for the category " Over 40 years " have the highest

among the other age category." Over 40 years " respondents is agreed much more than the other age categories toward this field.

### **5.2.6 General Conclusions**

Education is an experiential service, where students go through a long journey. The Higher Education Brand Touchpoint Wheel is a strong conceptual model to build a compelling Higher Education Institute brand. Students knowledge base develops overtime from communications such as news stories, media, word of mouth, and experience. In this research study, brand building is estimated by different stages which students contact with the university and every touchpoint is taken into consideration to have a full picture about the components that help to build the brand. By positively and consistently influencing the various critical factors at the pre, during and post-stages, the strength of the higher education institute can be enhanced, thus creating a virtuous cycle of brand strength. Care should be taken to manage the overall influencing touchpoints.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the research analysis, findings and conclusions, the researcher proposes the following recommendations that can help in the brand building strength:

#### **5.3.1 First: Pre admission stage touchpoints**

1. Pre admission stage touchpoints findings clarified that a university should be charged with creating a map of the experience students will have and their expectations, so they can by doing so identify every opportunity, contact, and touchpoint students connect with the university.
1. The need to take into consideration to renew and update the university's internal and external form that cope with the students and employees requirements.
2. Take advantage of giving employment opportunities or volunteered during the study for outstanding students.

3. Take into consideration the different categories of students, in that there are different needs, backgrounds and interests.
4. Enhance the social media tools in a way that will be targeting prospective students.
5. The need for a university tour guide either printed or through employees. This help prospective students, parents, guests to have a full image about the university. Also it could be activated on the university website.

### **5.3.2 Second: During the course stage touchpoints**

1. Create a sense of community between the students and employees inside and outside the university. Create a sense of informal friendly environment between professors, students, and employees, this emotional connections play a vital role.
2. The teaching methods and curriculum need improvements, remarkable attention is needed to scientific research.
3. Consonance with students through student orientation and counseling.
4. Improve attention toward the complaints of students and lack of admiration for certain lectures, for example, through questionnaires during lectures. Take the comments of the students in the social media carefully.
5. To be proactive not just reactive, in that, to deal with the university in an innovative and inspiring way.
6. Support the extracurricular activities, in which it impact the level of the whole university.
7. Seminars that keep pace the theoretical side with the practical one to the requirements of the labor market must be taken into a serious attention. Workshops and conferences, need to be enhanced, famous professional experts, are necessary.
8. Give the opportunity to students along with the alumni to participate and organize events and participate in the admission and academic process. Social interactions strengthen the level of loyalty and satisfaction.
9. Take a proactive step in the beginning of the semesters, deal as it's not just a welcome day. Alumni and suitable organizations speeches may be possible.

### **5.3.3 Third: Post passing stage touchpoints**

1. Follow up the relationship with the alumni in different aspects. Improve contacts with them, share their success stories in the career and educational life.
2. Develop the interaction between alumni and undergraduates, maybe through social media or by engaging them in workshops, this will reinforce the interchanging of knowledge.
3. Follow-up of internal and external events and activated it on social networking sites of the university. Take the advantages of the power of social media.
4. Activate the hashtags in different languages, the social media play the role of ambassadors. Also to be updated with the websites that have many followers, and try to be close enough and respond quickly and carefully to students comments.

### **5.3.4 Fourth: Influencing touchpoints**

1. The need for effective understanding of the marketplace perceptions and requirements by the university management.
2. Enhance the communication and support relations with institutions both locally and internationally.
3. Develop the inside and outside surrounding environment of the university. Keep attention to the green standards.
4. The need to assign a brand marketing executive manager for the university.

### **5.4 Future researches**

1. Take the research from others point of view, such as employees and professors. So the next study could be “Higher Education Branding, from employees and professors point of view”, “The role of internal community in branding higher education institutions”.
2. “Social networking sites for brand attractiveness of the higher education institutions”.
3. “The role of higher education institutions in branding cities as an educational centers”.

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# Appendices



## Appendices

### Appendix (A): English Questionnaire

The Islamic University–Gaza  
Research and Postgraduate Affairs  
Faculty of Commerce  
Master of Business & Administration



الجامعة الإسلامية - غزة  
شئون البحث العلمي والدراسات العليا  
كلية التجارة  
ماجستير إدارة الأعمال

Dear Students,

The purpose of this survey is to gather information concerning “**Brand Building of higher Education Institutions**”, throughout the educational journey of the MBA students of IUG. This survey also comes as a part to complete graduation requirements within the master's program, which involves the researcher within the Faculty of commerce in the Islamic University

Completion of the survey is voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential. Please answer each item as honestly as possible. Please read the instruction associated with each section and each question carefully.

**Definition of brand for higher education institutions:** a manifestation of the institution's features that distinguish it from others, reflect its capacity to satisfy students' needs, engetrust in its ability to deliver a certain type and level of higher education, and help potential recruits to make wise enrolment decisions.

Thank you for your sincere cooperation.

**The Researcher**

**Hala Naem Al Shorafa**

**Section 1: Will capture required demographic measures**

**1. Name of graduation university** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Gender**

Male       Female

**3. Age**

Less than 30 years       Between 30 and 40

Between 40 and 50       Between 50 and 60

**4. Undergraduate Major classification**

Commerce     Information Technology     Engineering

Arts       Science       Education

Other- please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Year of graduation** \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Years of work experience**

No prior fulltime work experience     Less than 2 years

2 years to 5 years       More than 5 years

**7. I would describe my family's income level as being**

Low     Average     Above average     High

**Section 2:**

The research questions on these topics are operationalized through a series of statements, to which participants responded using a (1 to 10) scale.

- **The first series of questions are designed to indicate the extent to which the following factors influenced you to enroll at this university.**

Pre-admission Stage		1-10
➤ <b>First: University's Reputation</b>		
8.	Academic quality	
9.	Academic competitiveness compared to other universities	
10.	Availability of my major	
11.	Uniqueness of my course content (Study Plan for the semester courses)	
12.	Respect for the traditions and religious activities	
13.	Compliance with regulations laws, and the quality of the administrative system	
➤ <b>Second: University Infrastructure</b>		
14.	Availability and quality of resources (computer, library, classes)	
15.	Availability of recreational facilities (athletic programs)	
16.	Residence hall environment at the university	
➤ <b>Third: Referrals</b>		
17.	My parents' advice	
18.	My friends' advice studying in the university	
19.	Alumni recommendation to this university	
20.	Number of alumni who obtained jobs in their fields after graduating from this university	
➤ <b>Fourth: Media Influence</b>		
21.	Advertisements of the university in different media ( newspapers, magazines, TV)	
22.	University website	
23.	University rankings in various media	

Pre-admission Stage		1-10
24.	Impact of social networking pages (such as Facebook and Twitter )	
<b>➤ Fifth: Placement Opportunities</b>		
25.	Opportunity for work - study positions at the university	
26.	prospects of landing a job after graduating from this university	
27.	opportunities I get to develop my professional skills	
<b>➤ Sixth: Fees and Location</b>		
28.	University is located in an area that is physically safe	
29.	University is located in a geographical area that has many attractions and entertainment facilities.	
30.	Total cost of attending this university	

- **In the following section a series of statements are designed to determine how satisfied you were with each of the following during your student experience at the university.**

During the Course Stage		1-10
<b>➤ Seventh: Knowledge Enhancement</b>		
31.	Knowledge base of the faculty	
32.	Alumni interaction with the university	
33.	Teaching pedagogy which includes field assignments and case studies	
34.	Conferences and workshops	
<b>➤ Eighth: Industry Interface</b>		
35.	Interaction/online contact facility with alumni	
36.	Interaction with profession experts such as (Seminars that keep pace the theoretical side with the practical side to the requirements of the labor market)	
37.	Mentorship programs provided by alumni	
38.	Career counseling programs that offer from the university	
<b>➤ Ninth: Co-curricular Activities</b>		

During the Course Stage		1-10
39.	Opportunity to take part in college fests and competitions	
40.	Opportunity to organize college fests and events	
<b>➤ Tenth: Learning Resources</b>		
41.	Textbooks and reading material	
42.	Peer interaction	
43.	Scientific research databases available (e.g. Ebsco, Proquest, etc.)	

**➤ As alumni how would you rate university, in the following areas?**

Post-passing Stage		1-10
<b>➤ Eleventh: Career Growth</b>		
44.	Ability to continuously update graduates knowledge base	
45.	Reduce dependency on other employees through graduates gate	
46.	Development of one's capability of gathering correct information	
47.	Improvement in your managerial and decision making skills	
48.	Improves ability of constant learning by virtue of being part of university community	
49.	Qualitative growth in career status	
50.	Ability to get access to more creative ideas	
51.	Helps to perform better in the job function	
52.	Ability to get new job opportunities	
<b>➤ Twelfth: Alumni Involvement</b>		
53.	Involving senior alumni in the admission process	
54.	Involving senior alumni in the academic process	
55.	Continuing the relationship with alumni by the university through seminars or trips	

➤ **To what extent the existence of the following features influence in creating an educational brand.**

<b>Influencing Touchpoints</b>		<b>1-10</b>
<b>➤ Thirteenth: Innovativeness and resonance of the higher education institute</b>		
56.	Accreditation by national and international bodies	
57.	Facilities provided and the output of research work done	
58.	Consultancy services provided by the university	
59.	Strategic alliances with national and international universities	
60.	Executive and management development programs designed and conducted by the university	
61.	Qualification and status of the faculty	
62.	Membership of professional bodies by the university	
<b>➤ Fourteenth: Stakeholder Perception</b>		
63.	Community perception about the status of university( civil governmental and private sectors)	
64.	Visibility of the university in media	
65.	Student's feeling of belonging and loyalty to the university community	
66.	A sense of internal community of faculty, staff and workers of belonging and loyalty to the University	

## Appendix (B): Arabic Questionnaire



الجامعة الإسلامية - غزة  
عمادة الدراسات العليا  
كلية التجارة  
قسم إدارة الأعمال

### موضوع الاستبانة

زملائي / زميلاتي الأعزاء

تحية طيبة و بعد ،

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو جمع المعلومات المتعلقة بـ "بناء العلامة التجارية لمؤسسات التعليم العالي" طوال المسيرة التعليمية لطلاب ماجستير ادارة الاعمال في الجامعة الاسلامية غزة. كما تأتي هذه الاستبانة في اطار اتمام متطلبات التخرج ضمن برنامج الماجستير الذي تشارك به الباحثة ضمن كلية التجارة في الجامعة الاسلامية.

على أن تبقى معلوماتكم الشخصية سرية ولا تستخدم إلا لأغراض البحث العلمي. لذا أرجو التكرم بالاجابة عليها بصدق وموضوعية و يرجى قراءة التعليمات المرتبطة بكل قسم ولكل سؤال بعناية.

تعريف للعلامة التجارية لمؤسسات التعليم العالي : مظهر من مظاهر ميزات مؤسسة التعليم العالي التي تميزها عن غيرها ، تعكس قدرتها على تلبية احتياجات الطلاب، تولد الثقة في قدرتها على تقديم نوع ومستوى معين من التعليم العالي، ومساعدة المنتسبين المحتملين على اتخاذ قرارات التسجيل الحكيمة . العلامة التجارية هي اسم، صورة، ووصف مقنع و جذاب لجوهر القيمة التي توفرها المؤسسة التعليمية .

شاكراة لكم حسن تعاونكم

الباحثة

هلا نعيم الشرفا

• الجزء الأول: البيانات الشخصية

1. الجامعة التي تخرجت منها \_\_\_\_\_

2. الجنس

ذكر  أنثى

3. العمر

أقل من 30  من 30 – أقل من 40  
 من 40 – أقل من 50  من 50 – أقل من 60

4. تخصص درجة البكالوريوس

تجارة  تكنولوجيا معلومات  هندسة  
 اداب  علوم  تربية  
 أخرى – رجاء التحديد \_\_\_\_\_

5. سنة التخرج \_\_\_\_\_

6. عدد سنوات الخبرة في العمل

لا توجد خبرات عملية سابقة  أقل من سنتين  
 من سنتين إلى خمس سنوات  أكثر من خمس سنوات

7. أصف دخل أسرتي بأنه

منخفض  متوسط  فوق المتوسط  مرتفع



• الجزء الثاني:

تم تصميم أسئلة هذا الجزء ليقاس إجابة المستطلع على مقياس من ( 1 ) الى ( 10 ) .

◀ تهدف المجموعة الأولى من الأسئلة لقياس الى أي مدى أثرت المعلومات التالية في انتسابك لهذه الجامعة.

10 - 1	مرحلة ما قبل الانتساب الي الجامعة
	◀ <b>أولاً : سمعة الجامعة</b>
	8. الجودة الأكاديمية
	9. القدرة التنافسية الأكاديمية بالمقارنة مع الجامعات الأخرى
	10. توفر تخصصي الجامعي
	11. تميز محتوى المواد الفصلية ( الخطة الدراسية للمساقيات الفصلية)
	12. احترام التقاليد والأنشطة الدينية
	13. الالتزام بالانظمة و القوانين و جودة النظام الاداري
	◀ <b>ثانياً: البنية التحتية للجامعة</b>
	14. توافر ونوعية الموارد (كمبيوتر، مكتبة، قاعات)
	15. توفر المرافق الترفيهية (البرامج الرياضية)
	16. البيئة و المحيط الداخلي في مقر الجامعة
	◀ <b>ثالثاً: التوجيهات</b>
	17. نصيحة الوالدين
	18. نصيحة الأصدقاء الذين يدرسون في الجامعة
	19. توصية الخريجين بهذه الجامعة
	20. عدد الخريجين الذين حصلوا على وظائف في مجالات عملهم بعد التخرج من هذه الجامعة
	◀ <b>رابعاً: تأثير وسائل الإعلام</b>
	21. إعلانات الجامعة في وسائل الإعلام المختلفة (الصحف والمجلات و التلفاز)
	22. الموقع الالكتروني الخاص بالجامعة
	23. تصنيف الجامعة في مختلف وسائل الإعلام

10 - 1	<b>مرحلة ما قبل الانتساب الي الجامعة</b>	
	24.	تأثير صفحات التواصل الاجتماعي مثل ( فيسبوك و تويتر)
<b>خامسا: فرص التوظيف</b>		
	25.	فرصة تولي العمل أثناء الدراسة داخل الجامعة
	26.	امكانية الحصول على وظيفة بعد التخرج من هذه الجامعة
	27.	فرص الحصول على تطوير مهاراتي المهنية
<b>سادسا: الرسوم والموقع</b>		
	28.	المنطقة و الموقع الامن للجامعة
	29.	المنطقة الجغرافية التي تحتوي على العديد من المرافق الترفيهية للجامعة
	30.	التكلفة الاجمالية للانتساب الي الجامعة

**المجموعة الثانية صممت لتحديد مدى رضاك عن كل مما يلي أثناء التجربة و الخبرة كطالب في الجامعة**

10 - 1	<b>مرحلة أثناء الدراسة في الجامعة</b>	
<b>سابعا: تعزيز المعرفة</b>		
	31.	القاعدة المعرفية لاجراء هيئة التدريس
	32.	تفاعل الخريجين مع الجامعة
	33.	تنوع طرق التدريس التي تشمل مهمات ميدانية ودراسات حالة
	34.	المؤتمرات وورش العمل
<b>ثامنا: التفاعل المهني</b>		
	35.	التفاعل و الاتصال عبر الانترنت مع الخريجين
	36.	التفاعل مع خبراء المهنة مثل ( ندوات تواكب الجانب النظري مع الجانب التطبيقي لمتطلبات سوق العمل)
	37.	برامج الارشاد المقدمة من الخريجين
	38.	برامج الارشاد المهني التي تقدم من الجامعة
<b>تاسعا: الأنشطة المصاحبة للمناهج الدراسية</b>		
	39.	فرصة المشاركة في مهرجانات و مسابقات الجامعة
	40.	فرصة للمشاركة في تنظيم مهرجانات و مناسبات الجامعة

10 – 1	مرحلة أثناء الدراسة في الجامعة	
	عاشرا: المصادر التعليمية	
	الكتب و مواد القراءة	.41
	التفاعل بين الزملاء	.42
	قواعد البيانات العلمية البحثية المتاحة (مثل EBSCO، بروكويست، الخ)	.43

### كخريج ، ما هي درجة تقييمك للجامعة في المجالات التالية؟

10 – 1	مرحلة ما بعد التخرج	
	الحادي عشر: التطور الوظيفي	
	القدرة على التحديث المستمر للقاعدة المعرفية للطالب بعد التخرج	.44
	تقليل الاعتماد على الموظفين عبر استخدام بوابة الخريجين	.45
	تطوير قدرة الطالب على جمع المعلومات الصحيحة	.46
	التطور في المهارات الادارية و صنع القرار	.47
	تحسين القدرة على التعلم المستمر بحكم كونك جزء من مجتمع الجامعة	.48
	التطور و النمو النوعي في الحالة المهنية	.49
	القدرة على الحصول و التوصل على الأفكار الإبداعية	.50
	المساعدة في أداء أفضل في المهام الوظيفية	.51
	القدرة على الحصول على فرص عمل جديدة	.52
	الثاني عشر: مشاركة الخريجين	
	اشراك كبار الخريجين في اجراءات القبول الجامعي	.53
	اشراك كبار الخريجين في العملية الاكاديمية	.54
	مواصلة العلاقة مع الخريجين من قبل الجامعة من خلال ندوات او رحلات	.55

إلى أي مدى يؤثر وجود المزايا التالية في قوة بناء علامة تجارية تعليمية. <

10 - 1	المؤثرات و المزايا	
	الثالث عشر: الابداع و الموثوقية من مؤسسة التعليم العالي <	
	الاعتماد من قبل الهيئات الوطنية والدولية	.56
	توفير التسهيلات اللازمة للقيام بأعمال البحث العلمي	.57
	الخدمات الاستشارية التي تقدمها الجامعة	.58
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	تصميم و تنفيذ البرامج التنفيذية و الادارية التطويرية من قبل الجامعة	.60
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### Appendix (C): Arbitrators

Name	Place Of Work
Prof. Dr. Samir Safi	Islamic University of Gaza
Dr. Khalil Elnamroty	Islamic University of Gaza
Dr. Khalid Dahleez	Islamic University of Gaza
Dr. Yousef Baher	Islamic University of Gaza
Dr. Akram Samour	Islamic University of Gaza
Prof. Dr. Faris Abu Mouamer	Islamic University of Gaza
Prof. Dr. Yousef Ashour	Islamic University of Gaza
Dr. Wafiq Elagha	Al-Azhar University of Gaza