

# Path Analysis of Constructing First-Class Universities With Brand Features of Private Colleges in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

Mingchao Li<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Zhuhai College of Jilin University, Zhuhai, Guangdong, China

\*Corresponding author. Email: 630808521@qq.com

## ABSTRACT

Private colleges have now become an important part of higher education. After extensional expansion, they have entered the stage of connotative development. In the context of university construction in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, brand management has become a key task of university construction, especially for private colleges. Based on the relevant theories of corporate brand management, this research analyzes the necessity and feasibility of brand management in private colleges in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, discusses the existing problems of brand management in private colleges, and proposes construction strategies and paths.

**Keywords:** *Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, private colleges, brand*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Burton Clark puts forward: "Once the reputation is formed, it is the unique and greatest resource for universities." And this reputation is the brand awareness and brand reputation in the minds of consumers. In recent years, private colleges have faced increasingly fierce competition from China and foreign countries, and building superior brands has become the only way for private colleges to develop. At present, the number of students in private colleges in China has reached more than 6 million, accounting for about a quarter of ordinary colleges and universities nationwide. Private colleges are already an important part of China's higher education, and they have the same mission as public colleges. Facing the fiercely competitive environment of development, how private colleges demonstrate their own characteristics, build brand leadership, give play to their superior resources, do a good job of brand management, and seize opportunities to seek development are important issues that must be taken seriously in the construction of colleges with local industry characteristics. It is of

great significance for private colleges to gather strength and enhance the core competitiveness of brand building.

Guangdong ranks first in the number and scale of private colleges in China, and these private colleges are an important part of Guangdong's higher education. By the end of 2017, Guangdong had 50 private colleges (excluding Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run universities), including 23 undergraduate colleges and 27 academies. The vast majority of private colleges in Guangdong are located in the Pearl River Delta, accounting for 92%, of which the proportion of private undergraduate colleges is 95.65% [1]. Determined by the status of Guangdong private colleges in Guangdong higher education and their regional location, Guangdong private colleges have an unshirkable responsibility in promoting the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. At the same time, the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area also provides a rare historical opportunity for the further development of private colleges in Guangdong. Therefore, it is of great significance to think about the development of private colleges in Guangdong in the context of the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

\*Funds: Research Project on Party Building of Guangdong Province's "13th Five-Year Plan" for Education Science in 2019 "Research on the Plan of Party Building in Higher Education Leading Higher Education to 'Strive to the First Class, Make up for Shortcomings, and Enhance Features' — Exploration on the Party Building Work of Colleges and Universities in the New Era to Cast the Brand of Independent College", Project Number: 2019JKDJ001; The Research Project of the Party Building Research Association of Higher Education Institutions in Guangdong Province in 2019 "Research on Party Building Leading Private Colleges (Independent Colleges) Branding Development Strategy", Project Number: 2019MB038.

## **II. THE BRAND BUILDING BACKGROUND OF PRIVATE COLLEGES FROM THE STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE OF THE GUANGDONG-HONG KONG-MACAO GREATER BAY AREA**

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is a concept of strategic significance, which has changed from an initial idea to a national strategic plan. The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is not only a new measure for China to further expand its opening-up pattern from an international perspective, but also a major strategy for China to build a world-class bay area and comprehensively enhance the level of international competition from a global perspective. Private colleges in the Bay Area should extensively learn from the successful experience of joint development, cooperative development and coordinated development of regional higher education in China and foreign countries, continuously summarize, refine and innovate based on the actual situation of China, combine theory with practice closely, completely break the system barriers in the process of linkage, cooperation, coordination and exchanges in the higher education of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, establish a brand management system and mechanism with core competitiveness for private higher education, build up a new pattern of branding development for private higher education in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and provide stronger intellectual support for the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

## **III. CONCEPT DEFINITION OF BRAND AND COLLEGE BRAND**

The market environment of the 21st century will be a time of knowledge explosion and great turbulence [2]. Marketing activities aimed at building a strong brand to enhance customer demand and loyalty are becoming more and more important. Brand positioning represents an organization's strategic focus [3], and therefore is becoming one of the most important elements of an organization's recognizability in a business environment. Brand is an economic concept. A successful brand is a product, service, person or place. It can be considered as the element for customers or users to obtain relevant and unique added value. Most of these added values can meet their needs. [4]. The college brand aims to establish a specific association and desired image in the minds of consumers. Higher education brands are now considered to be a key factor for success [5]. A good brand is a key resource to create a competitive advantage for all organizations, including higher education institutions [6]. Higher education is a complex system with 11 different types of experience, including student feedback, graduation, course design, communication with service personnel, grading,

classroom behavior, classroom learning, personal learning, teaching methods and curriculum design [7].

Due to its own characteristics, private colleges should take the school-running characteristics as the main body, and based on the quality of education, scientific research level, and service capabilities, to shape a good image of private colleges and form their own brand characteristics. Brand is the soft power of colleges and universities. Under the fierce competition pressure of colleges and universities, for private colleges, brand building is an inevitable choice to stand out.

## **IV. PROBLEMS IN BRAND BUILDING OF PRIVATE COLLEGES**

First of all, private colleges are not sufficiently aware of college brands. Most of them lack long-term development vision and do not earnestly manage their own brands. Even some colleges and universities blindly copy the brand strategies of others and lack their own brand characteristics. Secondly, many private colleges have inaccurate positioning of themselves, and their positioning is too low. In order to pursue the number of students, many private colleges lower their minimum passing scores, which not only causes poor quality of students, but also causes various problems in the school management process, which is not conducive to the long-term development of students and the school, and also reduces the reputation of private colleges. In addition, many colleges and universities blindly pursue the expansion of the scale of running schools. Compared with the establishment of professional categories in comprehensive public universities, the homogeneity of major settings is serious. Private colleges with insufficient strength can't support the "comprehensive" major setting with their own teaching and research capabilities. The result will only reduce the quality of running schools and affect the evaluation of private schools by the society and enterprises. Finally, due to the lack of hardware and software conditions to attract talents, the faculty of private colleges is not optimistic, and there are problems of unreasonable structure and low stability. Finally, the brand management of some private colleges ignores the satisfaction of the needs of students as consumers. This neglect is fatal to private colleges. Because the nationally renowned brands largely depend on the satisfaction, sense of achievement and sense of gain obtained by students after college training to work in enterprises or government departments, as well as the feedback from enterprises and government units, so as to produce positive or negative evaluations of the colleges and universities they work in.

## **V. THE CONSTRUCTION PATH OF PRIVATE COLLEGES' BRAND MANAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF GUANGDONG-HONG KONG-MACAO GREATER BAY AREA**

### *A. Focusing on the construction needs of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, planning the brand of private colleges, and implementing precise positioning management*

The precise positioning of the brand of private colleges is the first and most critical step of brand management, which purpose is to allow customers to establish in their minds a kind of thought that connects a particular need with serving the college. Against the background of the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Guangdong private colleges should consider their own school-running positioning issues, and they must also be targeted. It is necessary to pinpoint one's own school positioning in serving the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and meeting the needs of industry construction and development in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

First of all, they must target their service object in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Service object positioning means that the school must clarify the spatial geographic area that it wants to serve. In the context of the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the service objects of private colleges in Guangdong are primarily the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Second, they must position their school scale in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The scale of school generally refers to the number of students in school and the number of corresponding school staff. To determine the scale of running a school in Guangdong, private colleges must consider the needs of the society and determine the amount to be collected based on expenditure; they must also consider their own conditions for running schools and do according to their abilities. Third, they must position their disciplines and major setting to meet the needs of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area construction industry. The "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development Plan Outline" puts forward the construction goals of building a modern industrial system with international competitiveness, including accelerating the development of advanced manufacturing, cultivating and expanding strategic emerging industries, accelerating the development of modern service industries, and vigorously developing the marine economy, etc. When planning their own brand positioning, private colleges in Guangdong should clarify the specific content of these modern industries, grasp their specific requirements and development trends, take the initiative to connect, make

precise judgments, and plan their own school positioning.

### *B. Reforming the brand management system of private colleges*

Private colleges in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area should learn from the experience of corporate marketing, promote the innovation of the discipline brand management system, and improve the overall level of discipline management. Regarding private colleges, the personnel position setting, internal organizational structure, and incentive mechanism of discipline management should be reformed to conform to the trend of the development of the Greater Bay Area. From the perspective of personnel position setting, it's necessary to set up leaders for key disciplines, let them lead the development of key construction disciplines, give full play to the leader's charisma, and gather talent echelons; in the job setting of the talent echelon, it's necessary to abide by the organizational design principles of setting up positions based on work, so that "everything is done" in the process of brand management of private colleges; in terms of the selection of key and non-key development disciplines, discipline development planning, and quality management of discipline development, it is equivalent to the production aspect of an enterprise; in terms of publicity and dissemination of key disciplines, it is equivalent to the marketing aspect of an enterprise, and relevant positions and talents should be set up in both production and marketing. From the perspective of internal organizational structure, there are two basic management organizational structures in general organizations, namely, flat structure and cone structure. The flat structure has larger management scope, fewer management levels, and fast information transmission [8], which facilitates leaders to understand the situation of the entire talent team in depth, and is more suitable for the characteristics of private colleges that require timely information and response to brand management. From the perspective of the incentive mechanism, a reasonable reward and punishment system should be adopted for the leaders of the disciplines and the persons in charge of the relevant talent echelon, so as to mobilize the enthusiasm and creativity of the personnel and to punish those with insufficient professional ability. And only when rewards and punishments are clear can the brand management tasks be successfully completed.

### *C. Paying attention to the satisfaction of students' needs as consumers in brand management of private colleges*

The core of the brand is the consumer group. Private colleges should focus on satisfying consumer needs and first identify customer needs. In this stage, it's

necessary to conduct investigation and analysis of students, their parents, and business units respectively. The survey of students and their parents should understand their future career plans and preferences, and the survey of business units should make clear their job demand and the demand for talents in society as a whole. Secondly, it's necessary to carry out a differentiated analysis of customers and classify the needs of consumers. Finally, it's necessary to locate and meet individual needs.

*D. Laying emphasis on the fulfillment of social responsibility in the brand management of private colleges*

The social responsibility of an enterprise is to meet customer needs, achieve employment, improve the working environment, and pay taxes to the government on the basis of the profits obtained by the enterprise. In terms of private colleges, the fulfillment of social responsibility should not only meet the needs of consumers, but also enable students to master talents skills to serve the society and contribute to the country after graduation. This requires private colleges to introduce high-quality teachers to the construction of key disciplines. And the introduction of high-quality teachers requires financial support, and financial support requires the brand reputation of private colleges. Therefore, to form such a virtuous circle, the state and the government should provide appropriate financial support to enable the brand management of private colleges to be implemented.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The research on brand management of private colleges in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is a brand new topic. It's needed to stand on the commanding heights of higher education in the world, follow the development trend of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and explore the brand building, development, and governance mechanisms of private colleges in the Bay Area. The research team analyzed the status quo of regional higher education brand governance, and pointed out that only by focusing on the development and construction, overall planning, and brand enhancement mechanism of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, can the private higher education brand of the Bay Area be built, so as to excavate more abundant and effective strategies to make the private colleges gradually develop and grow stronger. This kind of innovative research has important reference value for private higher education and higher education reform.

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