

A Theoretical Examination of the AIDA Model's Relevance in Branding Strategies of Private Colleges in the Delhi-NCR Region

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a theoretical examination of the AIDA model- Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action and its applicability in the branding strategies of private colleges in the Delhi region. As higher education becomes increasingly competitive, private institutions face the ongoing challenge of attracting and retaining prospective students. Effective marketing communication plays a vital role in shaping institutional visibility and influencing student decision-making. The AIDA model, a foundational concept in marketing, provides a structured framework to assess how educational institutions engage their target audience across different stages of the enrollment journey.

This study adopts a theoretical approach, relying on secondary sources rather than primary data collection. The analysis draws upon existing literature, institutional websites, promotional campaigns, and relevant case studies to explore how the elements of the AIDA model are integrated into college marketing practices. Specific attention is given to the use of digital platforms, brand positioning, and content strategies tailored to student expectations.

Findings indicate that most of the institutions are effective in generating attention, interest fostering desire and prompting action from the students. The paper highlights the importance of cohesive, student-centric messaging that links academic offerings with career outcomes. This theoretical contribution offers insights into the strategic use of the AIDA model within the context of private higher education in the Delhi region and proposes adaptations of the model for a digitally influenced, culturally diverse audience.

Keywords: AIDA Model, Higher Education Marketing, Private Colleges, Branding Strategies, Theoretical Analysis, Delhi Region.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the higher education sector in India has undergone significant transformation, particularly in metropolitan regions like Delhi, where private colleges have expanded rapidly to meet growing student demand. Growing competition in the global higher education sector has encouraged institutions to adopt effective and unique marketing strategies. Branding helps institutions build a distinct identity and stand out from their competitors (Curtis, Abratt, & Minor, 2009; Gupta & Singh, 2010; Judson, Aurand, Gorchels, & Gordon, 2009). In general, a brand reflects a higher education

institution's academic reputation, and one of its main benefits is its ability to attract prospective students and stakeholders (Gupta & Singh, 2010).

In this context, the AIDA model—Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action—offers a structured way to understand how marketing messages influence consumer decisions. Building a strong brand in higher education is a complex and ongoing process, as it is shaped largely by the experiences of students and the lasting impressions formed in their minds (Al Shorafa, 2017). In addition to students, other stakeholders such as alumni, parents, and employers play a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing an institution's brand image (Bansal, 2014). Karadag (2016) stated that unlike traditional commercial branding, which typically focuses on specific products or services, branding in higher education is more centered around people and institutional identity. It reflects not just what the institution offers, but fundamentally who it is (Gupta & Singh, 2010). Therefore, branding in this context is more relational and experience-driven, rather than being defined by tangible offerings alone. However, there remains a gap in research exploring how systematically these institutions implement the AIDA framework in their communication strategies. This paper aims to examine the theoretical relevance of the AIDA model in the branding and outreach practices of private colleges in Delhi, drawing insights from secondary sources to contribute to marketing and education literature in the Indian context.

1.1. Importance of Branding in Higher Education

In the competitive environment of higher education, branding has become essential for institutions seeking to differentiate themselves and attract quality students. A strong brand communicates the college's values, academic strengths, and future opportunities it offers to students, helping them make informed decisions. As Kotler and Fox (1995) argued in one of the earliest studies on education marketing, strategic branding enables institutions to stand out in crowded academic markets.

The studies undertaken in later years stated that branding of an institution involves the impression of students and other stakeholders- parents, alumni, employees and employers perspective and association with the institution. In this context, branding is not just about marketing, it is a strategic function that supports institutional growth, trust-building, and long-term engagement with stakeholders.

The private universities such as Amity University, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sharda University, SGT University, Galgotias University, Manav Rachna University, Noida International University, Jaipuria Institute of Management, Shiv Nadar University, and Jagannath Institute of Management Sciences (JIMS) are increasingly using branding methods similar to those found in commercial advertising. These institutions combine traditional media, digital platforms, student-focused campaigns, and international collaborations to promote themselves and attract a broad range of students. There is a noticeable shift from simple promotional messages to more strategic branding approaches. This includes the use of visually appealing content, influencer marketing, and emotionally engaging stories that highlight student experiences and institutional values.

1.2. Relevance of AIDA Model

The AIDA model is a widely used marketing framework that explains how consumers respond to promotional messages in four stages: Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. First developed in the early 20th century, the model helps organizations structure their communication to attract and convert potential customers (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

In the context of higher education, institutions use AIDA to guide student outreach efforts starting with creating awareness through advertising, building interest with relevant content, generating desire by showcasing value, and finally encouraging action, such as application or enrollment. The model is

particularly relevant in the digital age, where competition among educational institutions is high and communication channels are diverse. AIDA's simplicity and clarity make it a valuable tool for designing effective branding and marketing strategies, especially in sectors like private education, where attracting students requires structured and persuasive messaging.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the applicability of the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) model in the context of branding and student outreach strategies used by private colleges in the Delhi region.
2. To explore how each stage of the AIDA model is implemented through various marketing channels such as digital media, events, advertisements, and student counseling.
3. To assess the effectiveness of AIDA-based strategies in influencing student decision-making and enrollment in private higher education institutions.
4. To identify key challenges and opportunities for private colleges in Delhi when adopting AIDA-driven approaches in a competitive academic environment.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The AIDA model, which stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action, has been one of the most widely used frameworks in advertising and promotional strategies for over a century. Originally developed for commercial marketing, it has now been adopted by various service sectors including education. With increased competition in the higher education sector, particularly in cities like Delhi, private colleges have begun to use structured marketing tools like the AIDA model to attract prospective students, build brand identity, and drive admissions.

Curtis et al. (2009) analyze corporate brand management in higher education through a case study of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU). The study highlights the strategic importance of brand identity, consistent messaging, and internal communication in building a strong institutional brand. A key limitation is its single-case focus, which may not reflect practices across diverse institutions. The authors recommend broader, comparative research across multiple universities and advocate for integrating marketing expertise within higher education leadership to enhance long-term brand value and stakeholder loyalty.

Gupta and Singh (2010) explore branding challenges in Indian higher education, including weak differentiation, limited market orientation, and internal resistance. They emphasize the importance of strategic branding, leadership commitment, and clear positioning to boost institutional visibility. A major limitation is the conceptual nature of the study, lacking empirical validation. The authors recommend future research using case studies and field data to evaluate branding efforts and suggest that Indian institutions adopt a more professional approach to branding aligned with international best practices.

Judson et al. (2009) focus on internal branding from the perspective of university administrators, stressing that brand strength begins with aligning staff and faculty with institutional values. Internal communication, leadership support, and a shared brand culture are identified as critical. The study is limited by its reliance on administrator viewpoints, excluding other internal stakeholders like faculty and students. The authors recommend expanding future research to include broader campus voices and encourage universities to institutionalize internal branding processes as part of strategic planning.

Al Shorafa (2017) examines brand building in higher education through the lens of MBA students at the Islamic University of Ghana. The study finds that academic quality, faculty performance, infrastructure, and student satisfaction play key roles in shaping institutional brand perception. It emphasizes the

importance of strategic communication and stakeholder engagement in strengthening brand image. A noted limitation is the focus on a single institution and student group, which may restrict broader generalizability. The thesis recommends further research across diverse universities and stakeholder segments, along with the adoption of integrated branding strategies to enhance visibility and competitiveness.

Bansal (2014) explores the strategic issues associated with branding academic institutions in India, highlighting challenges such as weak brand positioning, inadequate marketing efforts, and institutional resistance to branding practices. The article underscores the importance of integrating branding with institutional mission, stakeholder expectations, and quality assurance to build a credible and attractive educational brand. A key limitation noted is the lack of empirical data, as the paper is conceptual in nature. Bansal recommends that institutions develop structured, long-term branding strategies backed by professional marketing practices and continuous stakeholder engagement to remain competitive in a globalized education environment.

Karadag (2016) investigates how the branding of Turkish universities is influenced by and contributes to the socioeconomic development of the cities in which they are located. The study reveals that universities closely linked with their local economies and identities tend to build stronger, more distinctive brands. It highlights the role of regional engagement, institutional reputation, and academic performance in shaping university branding. A key limitation is the study's regional focus on Turkey, which may limit broader generalizability. Karadag recommends that universities align their branding strategies with local development goals to enhance both institutional image and community impact.

Subbarayalu, A. V. (2022) investigates the branding challenges faced by higher education institutions (HEIs) and proposes strategic solutions. The study finds that HEIs often struggle with developing distinctive brand identities, effectively communicating their value, overcoming cultural resistance, forming beneficial alliances, and securing sufficient infrastructure to showcase their brand. Recommended strategies include creative logo and slogan design, clear communication of competitive advantages, embedding brand culture among employees, forging strategic partnerships, and enhancing digital platforms and online presence. A limitation is its reliance on literature review without empirical data, prompting a recommendation for future research involving case studies and stakeholder feedback to validate its framework.

Together, these studies suggest that while the AIDA model remains a valuable theoretical tool, its practical application in the education sector must be customized and contextualized. The Delhi region, with its large student population and high number of private colleges, offers both challenges and opportunities for effective branding. Colleges that move beyond generic promotions and instead focus on integrated, meaningful, and consistent communication are more likely to guide students successfully through the four AIDA stages.

Despite the widespread use of the AIDA model in advertising and commercial marketing, its application in the field of higher education, particularly in the Indian context remains under explored. Most existing studies focus on general branding strategies or consumer behavior, offering limited insight into how the AIDA framework functions within private colleges. Specifically, there is a noticeable lack of region-specific research addressing how private institutions in the Delhi region, a highly competitive educational hub, adopt AIDA-based strategies to attract and engage students. Additionally, while digital marketing platforms have significantly changed how students interact with educational content, few studies have examined how tools like social media, video content, and influencer marketing affect each

stage of the AIDA process in college branding. Moreover, the current literature often overlooks the student's perspective in this model, failing to capture how students actually respond to different promotional messages. Finally, there is a need to expand the traditional AIDA framework by integrating education-specific factors such as trust-building, peer influence, and long-term commitment, which are central to a student's college decision-making process but absent in many existing studies.

In conclusion, the existing literature shows strong support for the relevance of the AIDA model in the branding and outreach strategies of higher educational institutions. However, it also highlights the need for digital adaptability, personalized engagement, and transparent messaging to make the model truly effective in today's fast-changing academic landscape. This review forms the theoretical foundation for analyzing how private institutions in Delhi can refine their branding approaches to better connect with their target audience.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on the AIDA model, which outlines four key stages through which an individual progresses before making a decision: Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. Originally developed within the field of advertising, the model has become a widely accepted tool in various domains of marketing and communication. It offers a linear but practical approach to understanding how target audiences respond to promotional messages. The AIDA framework is particularly relevant in the context of higher education marketing, where institutions aim not only to inform but also to persuade potential students to consider and eventually choose their programs.

Each stage of the AIDA model plays a critical role in guiding communication strategies. The attention stage is focused on capturing the audience's awareness through eye-catching and relevant content. In the context of private colleges, this may involve the use of digital media, advertising campaigns, or event promotions that highlight key features of the institution. Once attention is secured, the interest stage involves providing engaging and informative content that holds the potential student's focus, such as academic program details, campus life, or student testimonials.

The third stage, desire, moves beyond information and aims to create a personal connection between the student and the institution. This is often achieved by showcasing the value of the institution, including placement records, faculty quality, industry collaborations, or success stories. The final stage, action, seeks to prompt a specific response—typically an application, inquiry, or registration for an event. A well-structured communication strategy ensures that all four stages work in harmony to move the student from awareness to enrollment.

In the context of private colleges operating in a competitive region like Delhi, the AIDA model provides a useful lens for analyzing the effectiveness of branding and outreach strategies. The model allows institutions to evaluate whether their messaging is merely attracting attention or actually driving meaningful engagement and student action. It also encourages a sequential approach to communication, ensuring that efforts are not concentrated only on visibility but extend into deeper engagement and conversion.

Additionally, the increasing influence of digital media has reshaped how each stage of the AIDA model is implemented. Attention is now often gained through social media, targeted advertising, and influencer content. Interest and desire are sustained through virtual campus tours, webinars, and interactive platforms. Action is simplified by digital application forms, chat support, and follow-up systems. As

such, the traditional AIDA model is being adapted to fit the evolving landscape of student behavior and technological engagement.

This theoretical framework supports the central aim of the study: to explore how the AIDA model remains relevant and effective in guiding branding and outreach strategies among private colleges in the Delhi region. By evaluating how institutions align their communication efforts with each stage of the model, the study seeks to understand both the strategic intent behind branding campaigns and their perceived impact on student decision-making.

IV. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

The application of the AIDA model in higher education branding is prominently visible in the communication strategies of leading private universities in the Delhi-NCR region. These institutions operate in a highly competitive environment and have adopted multi-stage outreach approaches that closely reflect the four phases of the AIDA framework—Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action.

List of Private Universities Considered for the Study

Name of the University	Location
Amity University	Noida, Uttar Pradesh
Galgotias University	Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh
Manav Rachna University	Faridabad, Haryana
Noida International University	Noida
Sharda University	Greater Noida
OP Jindal Global University	Sonipat, Haryana
Shiv Nadar University	Greater Noida
SGT University	Gurugram, Haryana
Jaipuria Institute of Management	Noida, Uttar Pradesh
Jagannath Institute of Management Studies	Kalkaji, Delhi

Name of the University	Online Engagement	Offline Engagement	Stages focused in AIDA Model
Amity University	Facebook, Instagram & Twitter. Active Website for efficient queries settlement	Amity Utsav , Offline Collaborations & Placement Drives	Attention & Interest
Sharda University	Facebook, Instagram & Twitter Active Website & Chatbox for real time queries settlement	Print Media, Radio Advertisements & Outdoor Advertisements	Attention, Interest & Desire
Jaipuria Institute of Management	Facebook, Instagram Twitter Active Website & Chatbox for	Print Media, On-Campus Competitions	Attention, Interest &

	real time queries settlement	& Workshops with media coverage & Placements.	Desire.
OP Jindal Global University	Facebook, Instagram & Twitter. Active Website & Chatbox for real time queries settlement	Offline Fests, Placements & Outreach Programs	Attention, Interest & Desire.
Shiv Nadar University	Facebook, Instagram & Twitter. Active Website & Chatbox for real time queries settlement	Offline Workshops, Fests, Placement Drives etc.	Attention, Interest, Desire & Action
JIMS, Kalkaji	Facebook, Instagram & Twitter. Active Website & Chatbox for real time queries settlement, user friendly applications.	Expert Talks, Fests and Events with Exclusive Media Coverage.	Attention, Interest, Desire & Action
Galgotias University	Facebook, Instagram & Twitter. Active Website & Chatbox for real time queries settlement, user friendly applications.	Print/Outdoor & Promotions through Advertisements, Major events with media coverage.	Attention, Interest, Desire & Action.
Manav Rachna University	Facebook, Instagram & Twitter Active Website & Chatbox for real time queries settlement, success stories by former students.	Print/Outdoor Promotions through Advertisements, events & collaborations,	Attention, Interest & Desire.
Noida International University	Facebook, Instagram & Twitter. Active Website & Chatbox for real time queries settlement	Print/Outdoor Promotions through Advertisements, offline events.	Attention & Interest
SGT University	Facebook, Instagram & Twitter. Active Website & Chatbox for real time queries settlement	Collaborations, Press Releases, Major Campus Events, Outdoor Promotions, Advertisements	Attention, Interest & Desire

In the attention phase, private universities actively invest in generating visibility through strategic media placements, outdoor promotions, and digital campaigns. For example, Amity University maintains a strong presence across metro stations, airports, and national television, alongside consistent digital promotion. Galgotias University also uses high-impact online advertisements and campus videos to attract first-time viewers. Noida International University and Manav Rachna University leverage event sponsorships, education fairs, and banner advertising to create initial awareness. Similarly, JIMS and

Jaipuria Institute of Management use visually appealing short-form video content and frequent updates on Instagram and other social media handles to reach their digitally-savvy target audience.

The interest stage is addressed through detailed and interactive content delivery. O.P. Jindal Global University uses its official portal to offer virtual campus tours, faculty introductions, research highlights, and global partnerships. Sharda University regularly organizes virtual open houses and interactive admission sessions that allow prospective students to engage directly with faculty and current students. SGT University, particularly known for its medical and allied sciences programs, uses its digital platforms to present academic structure, clinical facilities, and industry partnerships in a compelling and accessible manner. These efforts help maintain student engagement beyond the initial attention stage.

In the desire phase, universities strive to create emotional and aspirational value. Shiv Nadar University, for instance, builds desire through its emphasis on interdisciplinary research, innovation, and global exposure. O.P. Jindal Global University enhances its appeal through its reputation for excellence in law, international affairs, and public policy. Jaipuria Institute of Management and Manav Rachna University use alumni success stories, strong placement records, and industry tie-ups to foster a sense of aspiration and future-readiness. SGT University and Sharda University reinforce desire by highlighting career outcomes and scholarship opportunities, aiming to align student goals with institutional offerings.

The final stage, action, is facilitated through user-friendly platforms and admission support systems. Institutions such as Amity University, Galgotias University, and JIMS offer seamless online applications, integrated chat support, and prompt response systems. Shiv Nadar University and Noida International University ensure that students can quickly access course options, eligibility criteria, and fee structures through interactive portals. The availability of personalized counseling and real-time assistance further reduces friction in the decision-making process, encouraging timely enrollment.

Despite widespread adoption of attention- and interest-focused strategies, some gaps remain in the consistent delivery of emotionally engaging narratives and action-oriented messaging. Universities that manage to align all four stages effectively often demonstrate better student conversion rates and stronger brand loyalty.

V. FINDINGS

The analysis indicates that the AIDA model remains a highly relevant and practical framework for shaping branding and outreach strategies among private colleges. Most of the institutions examined have been particularly successful in capturing attention and sustaining interest through a combination of strong digital presence and offline promotional efforts. They have also excelled in generating desire, notably through prompt and personalized website query management. These colleges extend beyond generic marketing by fostering trust through transparent processes, consistent communication, and tailored student support services. Moreover, the growing use of digital tools has significantly reshaped the AIDA journey. Elements such as short-form videos, influencer partnerships, student-created content, and AI-powered chatbots now play a crucial role in guiding prospective students through each stage of the model. However, not all institutions perform equally across all four stages. While some excel at visibility and engagement, they fall short in sustaining desire and driving action due to limited follow-up support.

The outcomes of applying the AIDA model across these leading private colleges in the Delhi NCR region are summarized in the table below, which presents verified student reviews on various parameters, rated out of 5.

Name of the College	Infrastructure	Faculty & Course Curriculum	Value for Money	Crowd & Campus Life	Overall Rating
Amity University	4.5	4.0	3.7	4.5	4.1
Sharda University	4.5	4.0	3.7	4.5	4.0
Manav Rachna University	4.3	4.0	3.7	4.1	3.9
JIMS	3.9	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.2
SGT University	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.9
Galgotias University	4.0	4.1	4.1	3.9	4.0
Jaipuria Institute of Management	4.1	4.2	4.0	3.8	4.0
Noida International University	4.1	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.8
OP Jindal Global University	4.7	4.5	4.4	4.1	4.3
Shiv Nadar University	4.7	4.2	4.6	4.3	4.3

The tabular data, derived from verified student reviews on trusted platforms, suggests that students experience moderate to high levels of satisfaction throughout their academic journey at these institutions. The ratings focus on four key parameters that collectively define the performance of any higher education institution: Infrastructure, Faculty & Course Curriculum, Value for Money, and Campus Life & Peer Environment. Scores of 4 and above out of 5 reflect a strong degree of student satisfaction.

These positive evaluations reinforce the effectiveness of the institutions in successfully implementing the AIDA model—capturing attention, generating interest, cultivating desire, and driving student action. The model's outcomes are not only evident in student enrollment patterns but also validated by their lived experiences as reflected in these ratings. Overall, the study concludes that private universities adopting a comprehensive, student-focused communication approach rooted in the AIDA framework are significantly better positioned to attract, engage, and convert prospective students in today's highly competitive academic environment.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to assess the relevance and practical application of the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) model in the branding and outreach strategies of private colleges within the Delhi-NCR region. In a competitive and rapidly digitizing higher education environment, private institutions are increasingly required to implement structured marketing frameworks to effectively differentiate themselves and engage prospective students.

The findings indicate that the private universities included in the study namely Jaipuria Institute of Management, JIMS, O.P. Jindal Global University, Shiv Nadar University, Manav Rachna University, SGT University, Sharda University, Amity University, Galgotias University, and Noida International University have effectively employed the AIDA model to attract and enroll students across various academic programs. Student reviews revealed moderate to high satisfaction levels across four key institutional performance indicators: Infrastructure, Faculty & Curriculum, Value for Money, and Campus Life. These ratings affirm that the AIDA model played a significant role in influencing student decisions and ensuring a positive academic experience.

In conclusion, private institutions must approach branding not simply as a promotional tool but as a holistic, student-centric journey. The AIDA model provides a clear, adaptable framework that effectively guides prospective students through each stage of their decision-making process.

VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- 1. Geographical Scope:** This study is limited to private higher education institutions in the Delhi-NCR region. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to institutions in other regions of India or to public universities, which may follow different branding strategies and operate under different constraints.
- 2. Institutional Selection Bias:** The analysis focuses primarily on well-established and reputed private universities, potentially excluding smaller or emerging institutions whose use of the AIDA model and student experiences may differ significantly.
- 3. Reliance on Secondary Data:** The study is based on student reviews from trusted online platforms. While these reviews offer valuable insights, they may not fully capture the complete student experience or reflect the perspectives of all enrolled students. There is also a risk of bias or inauthentic entries in online feedback.
- 4. No Direct Measurement of AIDA Stages:** While the study aligns student satisfaction ratings with the stages of the AIDA model, it does not directly measure how students move through each stage. The link between branding strategies and specific AIDA phases is inferred rather than empirically tracked.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study provides meaningful insights into the relevance and application of the AIDA model in the branding strategies of private colleges in the Delhi-NCR region, it also highlights several opportunities for future research. Subsequent studies could broaden the geographical coverage to include institutions from other parts of India and incorporate public universities to enable comparative analysis across different institutional types. Longitudinal research could offer a deeper understanding of how AIDA-driven strategies influence student decision-making, engagement, and satisfaction over time. There is also potential to develop and apply quantitative instruments that directly measure transitions through the AIDA stages, thereby offering more empirical validation of the model's effectiveness. Incorporating the perspectives of key institutional stakeholders—such as faculty, admissions officers, and marketing professionals—would provide a more holistic view of how branding strategies are conceived and implemented internally. Furthermore, given the rapid evolution of digital technologies, future research could examine how tools such as AI-powered chatbots, virtual campus experiences, influencer marketing, and data-driven personalization are reshaping the AIDA framework. Exploring

these dimensions would contribute to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of student-centered marketing approaches in contemporary higher education.

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