UNIVERSITY BRAND: FACTORS, TOOLS AND MAIN TENDENCIES OF DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION ABOUT AUTHORS

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ABSTRACT

Trends toward the transformation of the higher education system create the need for universities to adapt to the dynamically changing conditions of the external competitive environment. In this connection, university branding as a specific distinguishing characteristic from competitors is an integral part of the development strategy of a modern university, and the effectiveness of marketing activities to form a brand of an educational organization depends largely on the influence of internal and external factors and a set of tools applied. However, in the scientific literature, these aspects have come into common use mainly about commercial organizations, giving short shrift to the institutions of higher education, which determines the goal-setting of the study, which is to identify the main directions of the development of a university's brand under present-day conditions of functioning. To achieve this goal, the authors used methods of synthesis, systematization, logical-structural, comparative and cause-and-effect analysis of the literature, highlighting the theoretical and practical issues of university branding. The directions of brand formation identified as a result of the study are based on the method of an expert survey conducted in May 2021. Overall, the systematization of university branding factors has been carried out;

a set of tools for creating a brand of a higher educational institution in the context of the transformation of the education system has been proposed, and the main directions for the development of the university brand from an expert survey have been identified. The authors

have found that the most promising areas of university branding are corporate, educational and reputational aspects of activities.

Keywords: brand creation tools; brand development factors; brand formation; factors; university's brand.

1. INTRODUCTION

A university's brand is a substantial asset through which marketing communications with the public are realized whereby guidelines in relation to consumers in the educational services market are formed; moreover, a strong brand contributes to international expansion (Lebedinskaya & Petruk, 2019; Ong et al., 2020). Since the applied aspects of the positioning of educational organizations today are increasingly attracting the interest of governing bodies, this phenomenon is relevant in the academic environment, which determines the development of theoretical and methodological provisions for university branding (Wathelet et al., 2020).

University as a representative of the knowledge-intensive sector of the economy uses multivariate tools to develop a brand. However, it is worth noting that within the context of present-day realities of interaction marketing, the final consumer-oriented influence reflecting the influence of a set of market factors is necessary (Valverde-Berrocoso et al., 2020).

The theoretical ground for the concept of the brand was covered in the scientific works by Kusraeva (2017), Kalenda, Hyna & Rossi (2018), and Alqahtani & Rajkhan (2020), and others.

The issues of concepts underlying the university branding are reflected in the works by Serbinsky & Sheffer (2011), Lim et al. (2018), and Shcherbak & Arabuli (2021).

The factors influencing the formation of university brands are highlighted by the authors such as: Zazykin and Nefedova (2006), Herman (2008), Bevilacqua et al. (2020), Kebede et al. (2020), and others.

The main purpose of this study is to determine the key focus of university branding in the context of the transformation of the educational system.

The tasks for this goal are as follows:

a) systematization of the factors of creating a university's brand;

b) determination of a set of instruments for branding a modern university;

c) conducting an expert survey to identify significant directions of university branding.

2. METHODS

To solve the first problem, the methods of synthesis and systematization that combine the factors isolated from the scientific literature to identify the tools applied to develop a university's brand have been used.

Each factor under consideration was studied via logical-structural, comparative and causal analyses in relation to the tools that contribute to its formation, thereby addressing to the second problem the study seeks to solve.

The study used the method of an expert survey, the main purpose of which was to obtain reliable information about the main directions of university branding in the context of transformation of the educational system.

For a comprehensive assessment of the events, a minimum allowed a number of experts should be equal to the number of characteristics of an object being assessed (Prokopenko & Omelyanenko, 2018; Hu et al., 2019), which is 6 in this study, but according to the methods of expert survey, not the number of experts but their qualitative compliance with the criteria is prioritized. These criteria are:

a) a managerial position of an expert;

b) experience as a manager is not less than five years;

c) the number of subordinates is not less than five people.

In this connection, the survey engaged 15 knowledge managers.

The expert survey was organized as distant with the use of an online service for creating questionnaires. The main advantage of conducting the expert survey via Internet forms is the convenience of processing the survey results and the respondent's frankness.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the factors described in the scientific literature allows the authors to form the following groups: historical, corporate, associative, reputation, infrastructural, and educational, presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Factors in Developing a University's Brand

Group	Examples of the factors	Essence	Tools
Historical	- University age	This group of factors was	- SWOT-analysis of the

	- The country of location	formed as a result of the actions of not only the university but also other economic entities	territory; - retrospective analysis; - geobranding of the territory, etc.
Corporate	- Personnel - Premises design - External attributes - Financial well-being - The head's image - Business communications - Brand architecture	These factors characterize the corporate values and culture of the university	- PR кcommunications; - targeting and remarketing; - social responsibility; - brandbook; - positive image of employees; - openness of financial reporting, etc.
Associative	- Emotional image of the university - Brand identification	This group is associated with the positioning of the university in comparison with competitors in the minds of consumers.	- Multisensory branding, etc.
Reputational	- Needs of the subjects of educational activities - High market-value appraisal of the diploma - Favorable reputation among employers - Presence in world rankings	This group is reflected in the reviews of the university, as well as in the recognition of its activities at regional and national and international platforms.	- Graduate employability; - interaction with business community; - mission and strategy
Infrastructural	- Organizational framework - Material and technical support	This group is determined by the presence of external and internal infrastructure of the university	- Price policy; - system of management; - fittings with computers; - provision of parking spaces, etc.
Educational	- Adoption of educational technologies - Digitalization of educational process - Continuity of learning - Publication activities	This group includes factors contributing to the innovative activity of the university.	- Introduction of modern information technologies in the learning process and their adaptation to the individual characteristics of a student; - application of active teaching methods, improving the creative and intellectual components of educational activities; - development of innovative approaches to learning; - improving the software and methodological support of the process of learning; - engaging students and staff into scientific activities, etc.

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Highlighting historical factors is determined by the low influence on this group of the very university as a consequence of the absence of such an opportunity at all, for example, the age of the university, or this influence is not only in the sphere of influence of the university. To form the attractiveness of an educational organization at the expense using a brand, passive tools are applied, which reflect the most advantageous positions, such as SWOT analysis of universities in the target market, retrospective analysis, as well as geo-branding of the territory, which is formed by highlighting the attractive characteristics of the region and positioning the university in it, which is associated with its growing role as a cultural, scientific and educational center (Lebedinskaya et al., 2018).

Associative factors are based on the image among stakeholders that the university receives from all the factors presented. One of the most effective tools is multisensory branding that provides an enduring emotional contact with the consumer.

Corporate and infrastructural groups of factors are provided by the internal potential of the university, which shape its culture, while reputational factors are aimed at external assessment of the activities of the university, which in the future can lead to the formation of effective strategic partnerships in the field of science and education with the business community and other universities, authorities, etc. (Baturina & Terentyeva, 2020).

The most sustainable corporate tools include the following: PR communications, targeting and remarketing, social responsibility, financial openness and staff image. Such a tool as social responsibility is particularly noteworthy because it lies in the fact that, in addition to the university's goals, the interests and values of stakeholders are taken into account in implementing it (Andreev et al., 2019).

This tool has emerged as a response to the spread of the third mission in universities (Shumik & Baturina, 2020). Speaking of an infrastructural group of factors, consolidated instruments are the following: financial and investment; organizational and regulatory; modernization and transformational.

Particular attention should be paid to educational factors since they allow to determine the university's adaptability to changing conditions in the main activity of the university: educational and scientific. Thus, the introduction of modern information technologies in the learning process, the use of active teaching methods, the improvement of the software and methodological support of the educational process and the involvement of students and staff

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in scientific activities will be the optimal tools for this group and form lasting advantages in the market of services rendered.

To identify the priority areas of university branding in the future (5-10 years), an expert survey of managers in higher education was conducted. The experts were offered to assess the importance of a factor influencing the formation of the brand of a higher education institute, where according to the expert, a point being equal to one was assigned to the least important factor, and a point is equal to three – to the most important. The results were as follows (Figure 1).
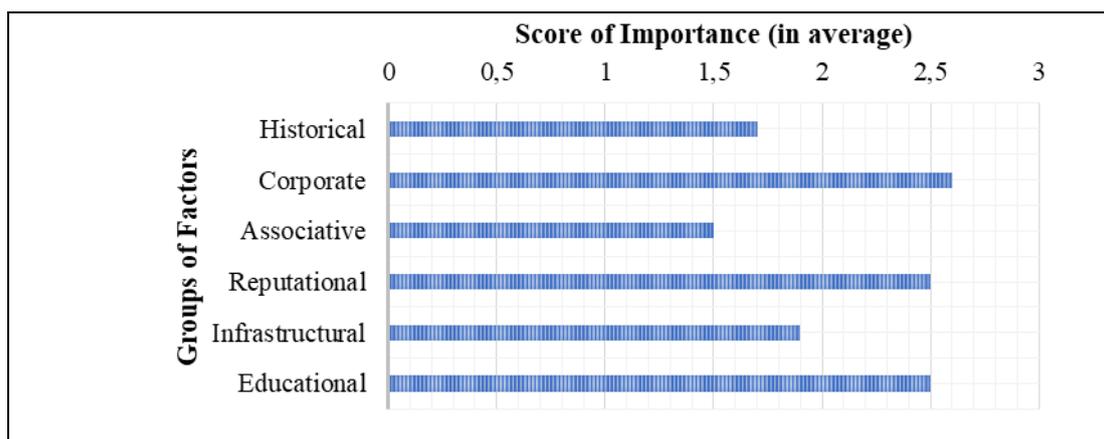

Figure 1: An Assessment of the Importance of Influence of the Groups of Factors on a University's Brand

Among the corporate factors that, according to the survey, are characterized by the greatest influence on the branding of an educational organization, experts especially noted the need to take into account the image of the head, business communications of the university and staff competence.

4. CONCLUSION

The research results are fully consistent with the outlined goals and objectives and can be used by the management of higher educational institutions in the formation of a development strategy in terms of improving marketing activities for the university branding.

Arising from the research undertaken, it has been revealed that over the next five-ten years, the development of the university brand will be largely determined by the corporate, educational and reputational aspects of its activities. In this connection, the most important thing is to improve the processes of PR communication, targeting, and remarketing, develop corporate social responsibility, maintain the image of the university head and staff, introduce

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project activities into the educational process and ensure mutually beneficial partnership with the business community.

For further research, it is reasonable to consider the instructional materials for assessing the brand of the university to determine the most problematic aspects of the development of activities

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