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SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF UNIVERSITY BRANDING

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Articles:


University brand in higher education

- Jevons, 2006
- Chapleo, 2007
- Bleiklie, Kogan, 2007
- Stensaker, 2007
- Wæraas, Solbakk, 2009
- Chapleo, 2010

What is a university brand?

Why a university needs branding?

What marketing and social functions does the branding have?

How branding affects the functioning of the university?

What determines the method of brand implementation and what factors influence this process?

new university management paradigm

- Jongbloed, 2003
- Steiner et al., 2013
- Прохоров, 2016
- Droulers, 2016
- Nguyen, Melewar, Hemsley-Brown, 2019
What is a university brand?

A brand is a unique set of associations that arise in the minds of stakeholders, which adds perceived value to a product or service, and also creates a primary idea of an organization [Keller, 2005].

Branding is the organization’s purposeful activity in building the necessary emotional and functional associations between target audiences (stakeholders) and the organization [Aaker, Jochimstailer, 2003].

In the classical sense, the branding process is aimed at creating a value reflection of the organization in the minds of those people who are associated with it. From the point of view of the university, the branding process, first of all, forms and maintains the image, reputation and image of the university for all target audiences (stakeholders).

The university brand is a single concept of the university’s external and internal positioning, incorporated into the organizational structure and forming the university’s position in the education market.
Social context of the university branding process

University Branding Issues:
- blurring of a single image and lack of positioning capabilities when elements are disconnected in the system of visual self-representation [Demin, 2018];
- difficulties in determining the mission, strategy for further development and the search for growth points during the reorganization or transformation of their identity (Tomsk State University and St. Petersburg State University);
- lack of a priori legitimacy of a new university brand (Sechenov University, NRNU MEPhI);
- conservative perception that there is no need for branding for the university [Prokhorov, 2016];
- unjustified investment in a long-term “amorphous” brand project [Chapleo, 2011];
- conflicts between departments within the university, causing reluctance to identify with the university and the desire to form an independent brand [An, 2016].

Conclusion: Branding is a complex process that cannot function only as a marketing tool and requires taking into account the social context of the university’s functioning, understanding the social functions of the brand for the university and a comprehensive analysis of the conditions of the organizational field in higher education.
State as an incentive for the branding process in Russian universities

1. **N = 917** Russian universities: 58% state-owned and 42% non-state ($\chi^2 = 42.2$, sig = 0.000).
   42 universities have a brand book, of which only 2 are non-state.

2. **Participation** in federal support programs of state universities is associated with the presence of a **brand book**:
   - $R_{\text{Pearson}} = 0.633$, sig=0.000 – for participants of the «5-100» program.
   - $R_{\text{Pearson}} = 0.443$, sig=0.000 – for participants of all support programs.

3. **82 universities** are participants in federal support programs, of which they **have a brand book**:
   - 75% participants of the "5-100" program;
   - 70% federal universities;
   - 35% NRU / NITU;
   - 13% supporting universities.

   • according to the validity period of the program, there is no connection between the presence of a brand book and university participation;
   • according to the size of financing of universities, communication can be observed (5-100 universities are financed much more);
   • among the selection criteria for program participants, there are no indicators characterizing the university’s brand.

4. **The presence of corporate identity in the university is associated with its presence in international ratings**: 46% of Russian universities with a brand book are in the Top 500 best universities in the world.

5. **Participation in the program can be a factor in the activation of the branding process** at the university (cases of ITMO University, Sechenovskiy University, NSU, etc.).

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Each university is unique, but without a brand it has no way to stand out!
Problem statement: university branding is increasingly occurring (but still rare), but the role of brand and branding for a university is not clearly defined. The cultural and social meanings of branding, as well as the process functions for the university as an organization, remain outside the scope of the review.

The branding process can be considered as a factor in the formation of the university’s position in the organizational field, which stratifies its position and determines the nature of its social status among all stakeholders.
Social functions of university branding

- the university’s brand unifies external and internal communications, substantiating the value (‘promise’) and the usefulness of the services provided for all stakeholders involved;

- the brand forms stakeholder’s loyalty to the university, so they prefer to interact with it much more often than with other similar organizations in the field;

- creating a brand allows the university to easily explore new areas of activity (“new markets”), gain trust and improve the perceived quality of its “products” even among uninvolved audiences;

- the brand stimulates the growth of the prestige and reputation of the university in the national and international context among various groups of stakeholders;

- during rebranding, the university changes its position in the organizational field of higher education;

- one of the main stakeholders at Russian universities is the state, since it is the main regulator of the organizational field and the generator of financial flows of the university;

- it is the state that encourages Russian universities to form their own brands, since branding occurs mainly among those Russian universities that were selected by the state as priority in implementing support and development programs (“5-100”, “supporting universities”, etc.).
Success of a university branding process

• The **university brand can be determined** by the position of the university in the organizational field of higher education [DiMaggio, Powell, 2010] and **mainly reflects** the local character, technical specialization and historical context of the university.

• As a result, **overcoming problems during branding** for its successful implementation involves finding consensus between the parties involved by eliminating conflicts, clarifying the functions and justifications for such an event, as well as coordinating the actions of the administration and the departments responsible for working with the university brand.

• **Main conclusion**: the principle of finding consensus between the ideologists of branding and its performers is a key criterion for the success of the process both in the short and long term.
• “There is reason to believe that at the very point where the research attention of sociologists shifts from the explicit functions to the latent functions that are explicit to the plane, sociologists make their specific and main contribution to the study of society.”

Robert Merton, “Explicit and latent functions”

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